

PREFACE

One of the *Centre for Democratizing Information's* (CDI) key projects aims to offer insight on community wellbeing and agency using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. The organisation is implementing a large scale quantitative and qualitative community capability study exploring nine dimensions of community wellbeing and agency in poor communities in five provinces. These dimensions include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Education | 6. Environment |
| 2. Health, Nutrition and Safety | 7. Media |
| 3. Culture and Tradition | 8. Technology |
| 4. Democracy | 9. Work Life / Unemployment |
| 5. Managing Money | |

CDI's Context of Public Primary Education Research Project is an extension of this South African Community Capability Study, in that it further zooms into the education dimension within communities by investigating its relationship to formal schooling in its location. While there is a growing local literature on learning and teaching within schools and on functioning schools, the notion of community agency and its relationship to formal schooling is less explored. CDI's Context of Public Primary Education Research Project attempts to explore this relationship between community perceptions of education and their interaction with the local schools and vice-versa. The study is implemented in four phases:

- Phase 1: Understanding the landscape of public primary education in South African using a combination of literature review and interviewing local experts and project stakeholders.
- Phase 2: Understanding the perceptions of communities that experience multiple deprivations (extremely poor communities) with regard to education in general.
- Phase 3: Exploring learning theories and alternative models of education.
- Phase 4: Investigating the state of learning and teaching in public primary schools in the communities sampled in the Community Capability Study with the intention to increase understanding of schooling within the broader context of society.

An additional component of CDI's Context of Public Primary Education Research Project pays attention to the Community Work Programme (CWP) that is implementing its 'meaningful work for basic income' intervention in certain schools, including in four of the communities in the study. This report presents the findings of the perceptions and experiences of public primary schools that are beneficiaries of the CWP as well as the

experiences of Community Work Programme participants' in working in public primary schools. For an in-depth understanding of the context of public primary schools in poor communities and the context of Community Work Programme's 'meaningful work' in school, the CDI Context of Public Primary Education Report can be read. The main insights from the latter report are however contained in Appendix A for easier reference.

We trust this report will contribute to the debates on Community Work Programme in public primary schools and doing 'meaningful work' in public primary schools.

Centre for Democratising Education Research Project Team

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Work Programme is a government intervention that provides a basic level of income security through part-time work in communities with high unemployment levels. Participants are provided with eight days of work per month, or two days per week. The work is identified at the local level, in response to local needs, and is centred on improving the overall wellbeing of the community. It includes cleaning public spaces; creating community food gardens; harvesting and distributing the vegetables to needy members of the community; supporting home-based care; and providing additional human resources to clinics and schools.

The Community Work Programme Education Research Project is part of the Centre for Democratising Information's Context of Public Primary Education Research Project that aims to investigate the relationship between community wellbeing, agency and formal public primary schooling in local communities, with particular focus on poor communities. The Context of Public Primary Education Research Project provided a vehicle to investigate perceptions related to the contributions made and value added by the Community Work Programme to public primary schools in poor communities. In the initial stage of the interviews respondents were not directly probed on issues relating to the Community Work Programme and were rather allowed to talk about their schools including interventions and social partners that support their schools. After this stage the interviews included a set of questions relating to the Community Work Programme, specifically on awareness, value, challenges and needs of the school that such a programme can address. Hence the specific objectives are to investigate the:

- i. perceived value of CWP amongst public primary schools
- ii. perceived challenges facing CWP in working in public primary schools
- iii. kinds of work interventions that CWP may be able to make to improve the quality of learning and teaching in public primary schools.

Methodology

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather primary data in ten schools that are beneficiaries of the Community Work Programme in four provinces. The schools were located in Randfontein in Gauteng, uMthwalume in KwaZulu Natal, Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga, and Joe Morolong in Northern Cape. Focus group discussions allow participants to interact with each other, clarify issues, raise questions, and actively create research questions to further the discussion. In-depth interviews offer depth and detail and were

ideal for gathering insights from experts and senior managers. The reader should therefore keep the qualitative nature and perception-based nature of the project in account when going through the results.

The fieldwork was conducted in October 2012 collecting information via:

- 9 focus group discussions with teachers
- 6 focus group discussions with parents
- 10 focus group discussions with learners
- 8 focus group discussions with school management teams
- 4 focus group discussions with Community Work Programme participants
- 4 focus group discussions with Community Work Programme coordinators
- 4 in-depth interviews with circuit managers
- 4 in-depth interviews with Community Work Programme site managers.

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

The work that Community Work Programme participants do in schools varies from school to school and province to province. CWP participants are in several cases parents of learners enrolled at the schools they work in and are committed to making a positive contribution to the schools. The contributions of CWP in public primary schools in the study include the following (these are cumulative across all the schools in the study and not per school):

- Assist to implement the National School Nutrition Programme (feeding scheme)
 - by providing fresh vegetables from the food gardens established by CWP as well as cooking, serving and cleaning the dishes.
- Assist with establishing and maintaining community vegetable gardens in schools
 - that provides fresh vegetables to the school, vulnerable learners, and needy households in the community.
- Assist with general gardening by planting flowers, keeping the lawn manicured, and clearing the weeds.
- Assist with school administration
 - by photocopying, typing, and entering data e.g. marks.
- Assist with recordkeeping

- by monitoring attendance and maintaining attendance registers.
- Assist with orphaned learners
 - by playing with them and providing them with fresh vegetables to take home.
- Assist teachers in the classroom
 - by supervising when teachers are not in their classrooms i.e. when teachers are in meetings or workshops or absent; providing individual support to learners; marking learners' books, and implementing lesson plans.
- Assist with sporting activities
 - by preparing sports fields, coaching and encouraging playing sports at school.
- Participate in school events especially sports.
- Assist with routine school maintenance and school upgrades.
- Assist with keeping the schools clean
 - especially cleaning toilets and the common spaces.
 - However, it appears that cleaning of classrooms by CWP participants are not universal across schools that are beneficiaries of CWP and this remains the tasks of learners in most schools in the study.
- Assist with maintaining order in the playgrounds and disciplining learners in their presence.
- Assist with creating a safe playground
 - by removing stones and keeping the ground level.
- Assist with forging a link with the community
 - by relaying messages from parents to teachers and vice versa.
- Assist with road maintenance
 - hence improving access to school during the rainy season.

Perceptions about Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools

Generally parents, teachers, school managers, and circuit managers are grateful to the Community Work Programme participants for making their schools cleaner, safer, and more attractive. However, key stakeholders are insufficiently informed about the actual role of the CWP in contributing to community wellbeing, providing a basic income through employment opportunities and some are uncertain about the role and potential of the programme in their schools.

Public Primary Schools as Workplaces for Community Work Programme

The Community Work Programme is introduced to the school via engagement with the principal. Principals and CWP coordinators decide on the work priorities in schools and coordinators oversee that the work is done. This modus operandi seems to be working and prevents conflict of oversight as well as exploitation of Community Work Programme participants by workplace managers. However the programme does not seem to be formally introduced to learners, parents, school managers, support staff and teachers and this creates a distance between CWP participants and the professional and support staff at schools that they support. Hence, there are conflicting reports about collegiality in schools. Some CWP participants have been well received in schools while others are shunned and are perceived as ‘spies’ or treated as outsiders and not part of the school staff, especially in schools with divisive management styles and an ethos of individualism. Furthermore, in some schools the support staff feel threatened that CWP participants will replace them and this fear contributes to a hostile working environment. Similarly, several CWP participants working as teacher assistants have the impression that teachers are not fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities in class and that their presence creates anxiety amongst these teachers that the teacher assistants may expose their negligence.

Schools are unique workplaces; it requires greater safety and a pleasant and creative environment so that learners are able to fully develop. Hence the deployment of the Community Work Programme must be a well-considered process. Since working in schools it appears that Community Work Programme has refined its deployment process and in several cases improvements are mentioned.

Working for Community Work Programme

Participants enjoy the nature of work, and are proud of working in their communities and for their communities even though some people in their respective communities consider their work as low in status. However, late payments and lack of equipment, consumables, and safety gear are reported to be the most frustrating aspects of working for the programme and the limited amount of public land and water to establish more food gardens frustrates participants.

The programme has the usual management tensions, where participants feel that their direct line managers are unfair and their direct managers feel that the workers are lazy and require constant supervision. An interesting finding is the need for local site managers to navigate local politics and to assert their mandate and resist any ploys of misappropriation.

Contribution of Community Work Programme to Participants' Personal Lives

The Community Work Programme has made the following contribution to participants' personal lives:

- Securing a basic income to meet some of their essential needs and household priorities.
- Becoming more self-confident and able to be more assertive.
- Engaging with their communities and learning about their communities.
- Gaining world of work experience.
- Attaining technical skills from doing different work.
- Feeling confident in securing livelihoods from the workplace experiences.
- Getting fresh vegetables from the community food gardens they establish and maintain.

Other Needs Community Work Programme May be Able to Address in Public Primary Schools

The list of different types of work done by CWP participants in supporting schools is extensive (the list above is cumulative and not necessarily per school). As such respondents would like to see CWP consistently contribute to:

- Cleaning classrooms in foundation phase.
- Assisting in libraries and computer laboratories.
- Improving the playground and making it safe for playing (such as levelling).
- Supporting orphan and child-headed households.
- Training teacher assistants.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this report are based on discussions with different stakeholders in the schools and in the Community Work Programme. To ensure positive impact these possible interventions need further investigation.

The following are short term recommendations that may be possible to implement within the current structure of the programme:

1. **Raising awareness of the broader goals of CWP in beneficiary schools:** This will facilitate in deepening the understanding of CWP in contributing to community wellbeing and the opportunities it offers to under-resourced schools; especially in school improvement programmes.
2. **Making community vegetable gardens in schools the pivot for schools as part of community life:** The vegetable gardens tilled on school property serve vulnerable households in the community as well as supplement the provisions of the National School Nutrition Programme. This important production process can be leveraged to create stronger links between schools and the communities that they serve.
3. **Leveraging CWP participants in promoting greater parental involvement in their children's schools:** CWP participants who are parents seem to be learning about the formal demands of learning and ways in which they need to help their children's school careers. They can assist with advocacy (communication for social change) about the role of parents in school improvement and in their children's learning. Substantive grassroots participation (in this case parents) in formal institutions like schools is a potentially complex/difficult process that requires a paradigm shift as well as technical skills to manage the implications e.g. ensuring that parents who are CWP participants at their children's school understand the difference between working at the school versus being involved in their children's education.
4. **Inducting and introducing CWP participants to schools:** This may allow schools to deploy CWP participants to meet respective school needs as well as reduce the fear of support staff that CWP will take their work functions, or spy on teachers and expose under-performance. This process may facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 and 3.
5. **Addressing implementation challenges that undermine the programme.** Especially providing consumables, safety gear, and equipment on time and in correct quantities.

The following are longer term recommendations with more far-reaching consequences for the design and implementation of the programme and therefore require in-depth investigation to ensure validity:

6. **Offering structured workplace training:** CWP participants are 'learning by doing', however this can be improved through structured workplace training opportunities.
7. **Intensive training for teacher assistants:** In some instances, CWP participants perform the functions of teacher's assistants in various ways. While this role for CWP participants was generally accepted by teachers in the study; CWP participants noted that 'negligent' teachers were less supportive and considered them as 'spies'; similarly lead agencies in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal, Free State and

Mpumalanga reported resistance from teacher trade unions. Nonetheless lead agencies on the ground see the contribution of teacher assistants in improving the quality of learning and teaching and would like to develop this part of the school support element into a more rigorous initiative. For teacher assistants to contribute to learning and teaching, there will need to be a greater level of screening of appropriate candidates for this role, as well as intensive training in aspects such as classroom management, learning theories, and using learning, teaching support material, and the requirements of the National Curriculum statement will be necessary – depending on the tasks deemed appropriate after further investigation. This would require some shifts in the design of the programme, with more specialised support (and appropriate budgets) for this group of CWP participants.

Conclusion

The work CWP do in schools is contributing significantly to making public primary schools in the study safer, cleaner, more attractive and productive. This enhances the learning environment at schools. CWP participants have also created an organic link between the schools they work in the community which is further strengthened by the vegetable gardens grown on school property that serves both the school's nutritional programme and vulnerable learners and households in the community. Where CWP participants are functioning as teachers' assistants, they are making a positive contribution to overcrowded and under-resourced schools but, should a decision be taken to further develop this part of the programme, intensive training and on-going professional support as well as more in-depth consultations with teachers and school managers will be required. Clear guidelines on what tasks can and cannot be delegated to the teacher's assistants would be required. Lastly, the greater awareness amongst CWP participants (especially those who are parents of learners enrolled in the school they work in) of the way schools function (or dysfunction) and the role of parents in strengthening schools and supporting their children's learning may offer avenues to build stronger ties between communities, parents and the schools. If well managed, this can be the spark to greater parental involvement in schools in learning, school improvement, and governance. This form of substantive local participation requires a paradigm shift, time, and new management skills; however this may not be within the mandate of CWP.

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND OVERVIEW

The Community Work Programme (CWP) is a South African government programme that provides an employment safety net. It aims to supplement existing livelihood strategies by providing a basic level of income security through work¹. CWP is implemented in communities with high unemployment levels. Participants work eight days a month or two days a week. The work is identified at the local level, in the community and centres on improving the overall wellbeing of the community. As such CWP work includes cleaning public spaces; creating community food gardens (mainly vegetables); harvesting and distributing the vegetables to needy members of the community; supporting community home-based care; and providing additional human resources to clinics and schools.

The CWP Education Research Project is part of the Centre for Democratising Information (CDI) Context of Public Primary Education Research Project that aims to investigate the relationship between community wellbeing, agency and formal public primary schooling in local communities, with particular focus on poor communities.

The CDI Context of Public Primary Education Research Project uses Amartya Sen's Capability Approach as the lens for understanding community wellbeing, agency, and the relationship between communities and public primary schools. The outcome of the study is to generate a set of recommendations for future initiatives that are aimed at improving the quality of educational outcomes within public primary schools and foundation phase in particular. As such the CDI Context of Public Primary Education Research Project is extensive; including the voices of stakeholders in the project, experts working in the education sector, community members, circuit officials, school managers, educators, learners and parents.

The broader study was conducted in four phases over 10 months; starting in March 2012 and completing in December 2012.

- Phase 1: Exploring the state of learning and teaching (or quality) in South African public schools using a combination of literature review and in-depth interviews with project stakeholders and local education experts.
- Phase 2: Understanding the perceptions of communities that experience multiple deprivations (extremely poor communities) with regard to education in general.
- Phase 3: Reviewing the latest literature on the role of new digital technology, especially mobile devices in supporting education delivery.

¹ <http://www.tips.org.za/community-work-programme>

- Phase 4: Investigating the context of public primary schools in communities that experience multiple deprivations and the kinds of support that is needed to improve the quality of foundation phase education in public primary schools.
- Phase 5: The CDI Context of Public Primary Education Research Project provided a vehicle to investigate the contribution of and value added by the Community Work Programme in public primary schools in poor communities as the study focussed on listening to stakeholders.

The study was not designed to solely focus on the CWP but rather focussed on the context of school/education - allowing respondents (especially parents, learners, teachers, school managers, and circuit managers) to talk about their schools including the interventions and social partners that support their schools. Hence a set of questions directly related to CWP was included in all the instruments and focussed on the awareness of the programme among respondents, the perceived value of the programme, challenges of implementing the programme in public schools, and ways in which the programme can be tailored to meet their unique circumstances.

This report focuses on the findings in relation to the CWP and should be read in conjunction with the Context of Public Primary Education report by CDI which provides detailed analysis of the context of public primary schools.

The following section provides a brief description of Sen's capability approach, followed by the suitability of the approach to education. Section 3 presents the overall aim and objectives of the study, while section 4 provides a description of the various research methodologies used in achieving the aims of the study. The last section introduces the report structure.

1.1. Capability Approach

In 1979 Amartya Sen introduced the notions of 'capability space' and 'basic capability equality' as a means of measuring development and equality, which he later formulated into the capability approach. The capability approach offers a framework for determining development and wellbeing and the extent of achieving equality. Development as a means to extend individual and communities' freedom is at the centre of the framework. In this capability space, it is about measuring the real opportunities individuals and communities have in doing and being what they

The foremost measure for development is economic growth, i.e. per capita income or gross national product which is calculated as the total goods and services produced within a country for a given period divided by the total population at that time. This calculation does not consider the distribution of income and hence provides a skewed reflection of individual wealth. Furthermore, income does not adequately reflect a person's wellbeing in many areas of life be it health, education, or happiness, for example a person may have the necessary resources but is unable to do things due to personal, social or environmental constraints.

reason to value. The capability approach provides an alternative lens for assessing development as it looks at the objective conditions of people and communities; what individuals and communities are able to do and be and their opportunity set, i.e. their possible ‘opportunities and successes’². Opportunities and successes are core concepts of the capability approach, where opportunities are referred to as capabilities and successes are functionings. Functionings are what individuals and communities are able to do and be and capability is the set of various combinations of functionings a person or community can achieve. Hence capability is an individual or communities’ set of choices or freedom to lead one or another kind of life (Sen, 1987, Saito, 2003, Zheng, 2009). In Sen’s words (1987, p36):

“A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead.”

Zheng (2009) notes that Sen differentiates between ‘means to achieve’ (what one values), ‘freedom to achieve,’ and ‘actual achievement.’ Hence individual or community wellbeing is determined by the freedom to choose a set of functionings that is of value.

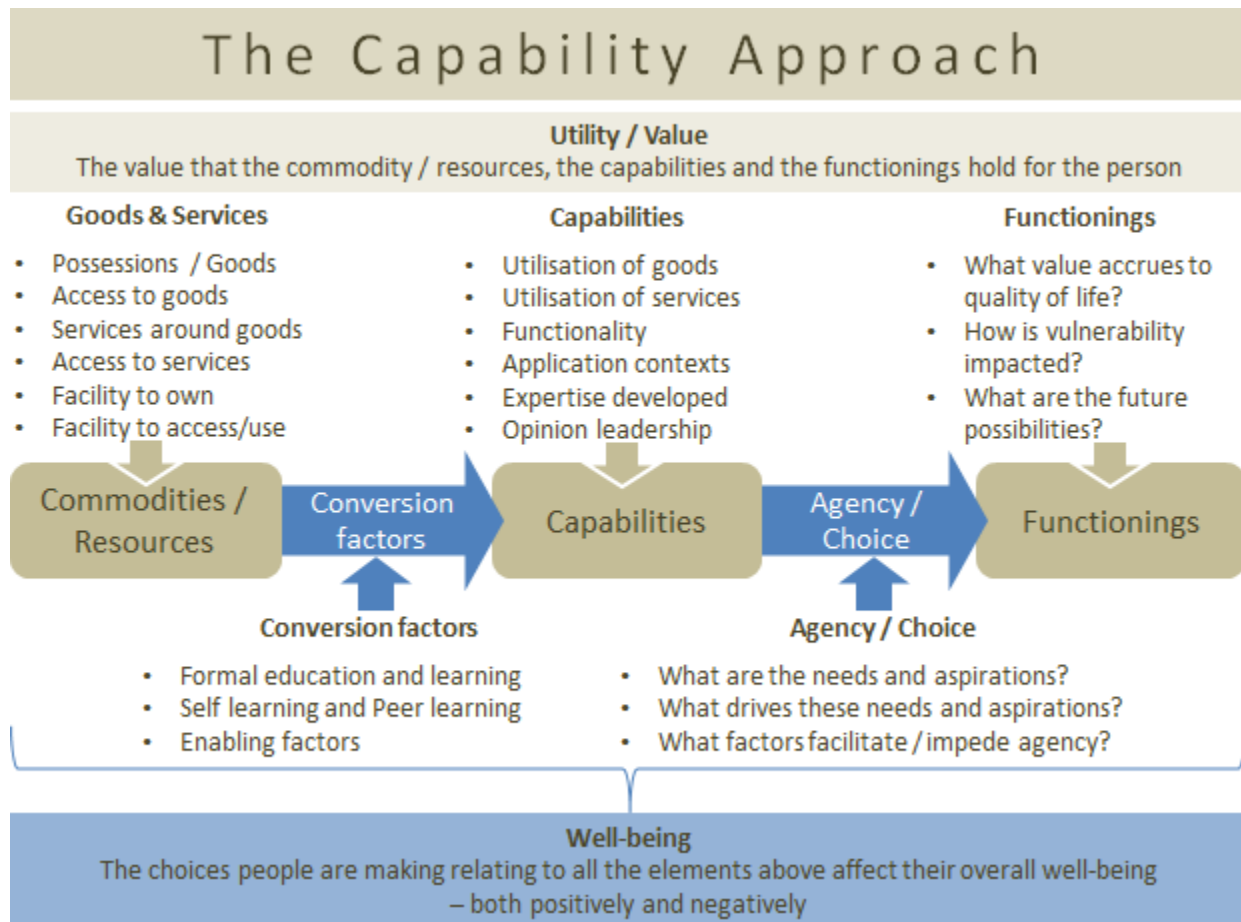
The capability approach acknowledges that resources or commodities are useful because of the characteristics they have, for example bread for its nutritional value and social utility or a bicycle for transport or leisure activities or a book for learning or relaxation, etc. The capability approach goes a step further and looks at transformation of commodities into valuable doings and beings, for example access to a bicycle does not necessarily translate into transportation if the road or terrain is unsuitable for this mode of transport or a person may be gluten intolerant and cannot digest the bread in his possession or the book available to a blind child is not in braille. The factors that enable transformation of commodities into functionings are referred to as conversion factors. Chigona and Chigona (2010) offer three categories of conversion factors, these are:

- personal characteristics, e.g. mental and physical condition, literacy and gender
- social setting characteristics, e.g. social norms (e.g. rule of behaviour, materialism, etc.), social institutions (e.g. political rights, public policies, etc.), and power structures (e.g. hierarchy, politics) and
- environmental factors, e.g. climate, infrastructure, resources and public goods (Sen, 1992).

² Sen, A. (1993). Capability and Well-Being. In *Quality of Life*, edited Nussbaum, M, Sen, A, 1993, p50

Since choice is an integral part of selecting doing and being that which is of value, the notion of agency that is “one’s ability to pursue goals that one values and that are important for the life an individual wishes to lead; agency and well-being are hence deeply connected. Because agency is also central to Sen’s ideas of the freedom to make choices, a lack of agency or a constrained agency equates to disadvantage” (Walker, 2006). In the capability approach individuals and communities are active; they make choices and take actions to bring about the change they value. Thus to determine substantial development requires examining both wellbeing freedom and agency freedom (Saito, 2003; Walker, 2006; Chigona and Chigona, 2010). Figure 1 presents an illustration of the Capability Approach.

Figure 1: Illustration of the Capability Approach



1.2. Capability Approach and Education

Education is generally seen as a means to secure better work opportunities for the individual and at a national level as a way of getting skilled and knowledgeable citizens or a workforce that will contribute to economic growth and development (Sen, 1997; Unterhalter in Deneulin, 2009). This view of education is referred to as the human capital theory and views humans mainly in terms of production resources. The capability approach recognises this instrumental role of education, but sees education more broadly as having both intrinsic and instrumental value. Sen (1997) sees human capital and human capability as related but distinct:

“Consider for example. If education makes a person more efficient in commodity production, then this is clearly an enhancement of human capital. This can add to the value of production in the economy and also to the income of the person who has been educated. But even with the same level of income, a person may benefit from education, in reading, communicating, arguing, in being able to choose in a more informed way, in being taken more seriously by others, and so on. The benefits of education, thus, exceed its role as human capital in commodity production. The broader, human-capability perspective would record – and value these additional roles. The two perspectives are, thus, closely related but distinct.”

While education is underspecified in the capability approach (Saito, 2003; Walker, 2006), Unterhalter (2003) argues that education fulfils three roles, namely:

- instrumental,
- empowering, and
- redistributive.

In addition to these 3 roles, in using the capability approach the emphasis is not limited to employment opportunities but on the freedom to achieve what a person values. Hence, Walker (2006) suggests that we should ask this question: What does education enable us to do and to be? Furthermore as agency is an integral part of the capability approach and education contributes to individual empowerment, it enhances individual freedoms. In other words education is a basic capability which enhances an individual’s wellbeing freedom and agency freedom to be and do what they value. Walker (2006) captures the dimension of education as:

“We might therefore argue that education in any context should promote agency, and as a key element of this agency that education should facilitate the development of autonomy and empowerment”.

The capability approach, as an evaluative framework, can also be used to determine the extent of national achievement in terms of education. One operational use of the capability approach is the United Nations Human Development Index which comprises adult literacy and school enrolment, life expectancy at birth and real gross domestic product per capita (adjusted for purchasing power parity). While there is debate that adult literacy and school enrolments do not adequately reflect an education system and the quality of the system, Saito (2003) argues that it nonetheless forces nations to put education on their development agenda.

At a systemic level the capability approach offers a powerful space to investigate whether an education system contributes to enhancing individual and community wellbeing by enhancing their freedoms to be and do what they value. Where traditional methods to systemic evaluation focus on inputs such as teacher qualification, textbooks, curriculum, classrooms and outputs such as learner performance in standardised tests such as the matric or the Annual National Assessments results, the capability approach centres on what learners are able to achieve as a result of their education and whether their opportunities to choose a life they value have expanded. Their achievements or functionings as well as their opportunity sets are the real test for equality in education and genuine development.

The capability approach can also be used to assess different elements of an education system. Unterhalter (2003) paid attention to gender in education in South Africa and Chigona and Chigona (2010) explored the use of Information, Communication Technologies (ICT) in schools. Both these studies offer a sophisticated and robust analysis of the education system as a result of using the capability approach as a lens for exploration, as their analysis considered achievements, opportunities, agency, conversion factors and wellbeing. Chigona and Chigona (2010) using Sen’s capability approach identified that teachers’ insufficient technological skills and lack of technological pedagogical content knowledge, inflexible policy on the use of the technology, lack of freedom for some educators to access the laboratories, inadequate technical support, and high learner-to-teacher ratio reduced teachers’ ability to convert the availability of the computer laboratory into their learning and teaching strategies. Unterhalter found that while schools enhance the capabilities of individuals in terms of learning opportunities, the context of schools must be considered. If schools do not offer a safe environment for girls from sexual violence than schooling may destroy her capability.

The CDI Public Primary Education Research Report applies the capability approach to help identify the conversion factors that supply leverage to public primary schools in communities facing multiple deprivations to

survive under their harsh conditions. These conversion factors coupled with the schools' and communities' agency will contribute to distinguishing and selecting educationally sound interventions that are relevant to these communities.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the CWP Education Research Project

The CDI Context of Public Primary Education Research Project aims to understand the state of learning and teaching in public primary schools; the CWP Education Research Project explored the contribution made by the efforts of the Community Work Programme to schools. The specific objectives are to investigate the:

- i. perceived value of CWP amongst public primary schools
- ii. challenges facing CWP in working in public primary schools
- iii. kind of work interventions that CWP can make to improve the learning and teaching environment in public primary schools.

The findings from the study are used to formulate a set of recommendations for CWP to improve its interventions in public primary schools.

1.4. Methodology

The CDI Context of Public Primary Education Research Project employs a combination of reviewing local and international literature, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The review of literature focussed on five aspects of school improvement; namely: the state of South African public schooling, learning theories, large-scale interventions, multi-grade classroom and the use of ICT specifically mobile technologies in learning and teaching. Focus group discussions were the dominant data gathering technique used in communities and in schools, as it allows participants to interact with each other, clarify issues, raise questions, and actively create research questions that will help to further the discussion. Hence focus group discussions help in exploring 'not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way' (Kitzinger, 1995). Furthermore, focus group discussions were the most appropriate research tool for communities in the study as Kitzinger (1995) notes that focus group discussions:

- do not discriminate against people who cannot read or write
- can encourage participation from those who are reluctant to be interviewed on their own (such as those intimidated by the formality and isolation of a one-on-one interview)

- can encourage contributions from people who feel they have nothing to say or who are deemed unresponsive (but engage in the discussion generated by other group members).

Similarly focus groups were used with learners in foundation phase as a means to listen to their voices in relation to decisions that directly affect them and their education. The group interaction that focus group discussions allow as well as the interaction with the researcher was critical in gaining an understanding of the way children view education and their own experiences of learning and teaching (Kitzinger, 1994; Morgan, et al, 2002). A limitation to hosting the group discussions in school is the possibility that children may view it as a formal test or perceive the facilitator as an honorary teacher (Morgan et al, 2002). In the CDI Education Research project all attempts were made to make the children feel comfortable and to gain their confidence that the discussion is not related to their school work.

In-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders of the project and experts in the field of education improvement and change due to the depth and detail the technique offers (Boyce and Neale, 2006). The experts interviewed were people who have worked extensively in education and included academics, researchers, implementing agents, sponsors and practitioners. All have grassroots experience of working to improve the quality of learning and teaching in South African public schools. A snowballing sampling technique was used to identify experts – commencing from the stakeholders of the project. Hence a total of 39 stakeholders and experts were interviewed, four CWP site managers, and five circuit managers. Table 1 presents a summary of the sample frame including the primary research techniques for the different research phases.

Table 1: Sample Frame Including Data Gathering Techniques per field Research Phase

| Phase | Region | In-depth Interviews | Focus Group Discussions | | | | |
|--------------|--|---|----------------------------------|---|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| | | | CWP | Teachers | Parents | Learners | School Management Team |
| Phase 1 | National | 39 stakeholders and education experts | | | | | |
| Phase 2 | Randfontein, uMthwalume, Thabazimbi, Bushbuckridge, Joe Morolong | | | 20 focus group discussions with community members on education in general | | | |
| Phase 4 | Randfontein in Gauteng | 1 circuit manager 1 CWP Site Manager | 1 coordinators 1 participants | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| | uMthwalume in KwaZulu Natal | 1 circuit manager 1 CWP Site Manager | 1 coordinators 1 participants | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| | Thabazimbi in Limpopo | 1 circuit manager | | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| | Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga | 1 circuit manager 1 CWP Site Manager | 1 coordinators 1 participants | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| | Joe Morolong in Northern Cape | 1 circuit manager 1 CWP Site Manager | 1 coordinators 1 participants | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| | Wellington in Western Cape | | | 2* | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 48 | 8 | 13* | 9 | 14 | 12 |

*Please note that, due to the small staff complement in the multi-grade schools in Wellington the teacher focus groups and the school management focus groups were conducted simultaneously.

1.5. Organisation of the Report

This report is organised into the following chapters including this introductory chapter:

- CHAPTER 2: FINDINGS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN POOR COMMUNITIES
 - Presents the findings from the research done in 14 public primary schools across six provinces on the perceptions of CWP. The CWP is implemented in four of the six provinces.
- CHAPTER 3: RECOMMENDATIONS
 - List the recommendations that emerged from the findings specifically related to CWP interventions in public primary schools.
- CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION
 - Offers concluding remarks on the findings.
- APPENDIX A: KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC PRIMARY EDUCATION REPORT
 - Presents the key Insights from the Context of Public Primary Education Report as a quick reference to the findings from the larger study.

2. CHAPTER 2: FINDINGS ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY WORK PROGRAMME IN PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN POOR COMMUNITIES

This chapter summarises the perceptions about CWP amongst teachers, learners, school managers, and circuit managers as well as the experiences of CWP participants working in public primary schools.

2.1. Contribution of Community Work Programme to Public Primary Schools

The work CWP participants do vary from school to school and province to province. In Gauteng, CWP participants do not offer much classroom or administration support as the province provides homework and sport assistants to schools in poor communities (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference). The CWP in Northern Cape is only recently introduced; while in uMthwalume and Bushbuckridge the programme is longstanding (multi-year). In the latter provinces, CWP participants

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 151):
“In Gauteng the provincial education department is implementing the Extra School Support Programme where 13 000 part time workers will offer primary school learners one hour supervised homework and one hour supervised recreational activities after school every day.”

working in schools also offer administration and classroom management support. The CWP Implementation Manual³ states that the programme be carried out in the education, agriculture, infrastructure, environment, and health and social sectors as well as in two general sectors. The actual work in schools is described under ‘anchor activities’ as “school support in the form of teacher assistants managed by SGB. They could provide classroom support, assist with sport and extra-murals, do minor repairs, start gardens and do general maintenance. The school governing body might be able to assist with some materials”⁴. However, there is no formal policy on the nature of work or school support by CWP participants, especially in regard to learning and teaching. Lima Rural Development Foundation has drafted a policy document for school support which is being circulated internally and not yet ready for wider dissemination.

An interesting finding is the majority of CWP participants interviewed in the study are also parents of learners attending the schools. This finding is not unusual considering that CWP participants are drawn from the

³ Department of Co-operative Governance. (2011). *Community Work Programme: Implementation Manual*, Pretoria

⁴ Ibid. pg.70

communities in which the schools are located. The CWP participants want to make a positive contribution to the schools they work in.

- *“We have a solid relationship with parents because they understand very well what we do because 80% of CWP participants have children studying at this school. If we say the school should be clean, Teacher Aids should arrive early at school, they understand better.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*

The list below describes the kinds of work CWP participants are doing in public primary schools in the study as reported by respondents (the verification of these activities was not part of the study). These activities are cumulative, i.e. not necessarily in every school but across schools:

- **Assist to implement the National School Nutrition Programme (feeding scheme):** CWP participants help to implement the feeding scheme in four ways. The vegetable gardens supplement the food provided by provincial departments of education; the participants help with cooking; serving the meals to learners; and cleaning the dishes. This is a significant contribution to alleviating teachers’ responsibilities outside the classroom as in many schools teachers are also in charge of serving meals to their learners (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference). Hence CWP allow teachers to spend more time on learning and teaching or time on task.
 - *“They are really helping us a lot, we now have a food garden which they started and they are maintaining it as well not always because the food is actually provided by the GDE but some of the food comes from there, we get carrots and spinach from their garden.” School Management Team, Randfontein*
 - *“They cook for us.” Learners, uMthwalume*
 - *“Help feeding learners in break time.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- **Assist with school administration:** CWP participants help with school administration. In the main their work entails photocopying, typing, and entering data such as marks.
 - *“Since it is exam time we photocopy papers for the school kids. We make sure that each child has their own question paper. After that we prepare the answer sheets and we stamp them. So we give them to the teachers.” Parents and CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- **Assist with recordkeeping:** CWP participants help schools with registration of new learners as well as monitoring attendance and maintaining attendance registers.

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 154):
“The National School Nutrition Programme is understaffed at school level and teachers are often required to help with operational issues such as dishing out which adversely affects their learning and teaching time. Most of the schools do not have fully equipped kitchens to support the programme and improvise using existing facilities. None of the schools have ‘dining halls’, so classrooms are used by learners to eat their meals, further reducing learning and teaching time.”

- *“Another one helps with writing down the names of children who want to come to that school next year. Another one checks every day in the classes, he checks children who are present and who are absent and that children have eaten. That is what he does every day.” CWP Supervisors, Joe Morolong*

- **Assist with orphaned learners:** CWP participants help learners who are orphans including playing with them for a while after school and providing them with food.

- *“Even after school they take the orphans to the grounds and play with them so that they don't think that they do not have parents.” Parents and CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *“The kids that are orphans, we clean their homes, and do the gardening for them because gardening is different.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

- **Assist teachers in the classroom:** CWP participants help with classroom management especially supervising and minding the classrooms when teachers are not in their classrooms i.e. when teachers are in meetings or workshops or absent. They also help with providing individual support to learners, marking learners' books, and implementing lesson plans. Most rural schools are overcrowded and teachers generally struggle with classroom management and offering learners individual

support. Teachers' coping strategies include using rote learning or behaviourist pedagogy and focussing on their top learners. This teacher behaviour may demonstrate their need for assistance in class.

- *“Their teacher assistant contribution is critical particularly in rural schools without adequate teacher numbers. They help with class supervision.” Circuit Manager, uMthwalume*
- *“They spent most of their time in the classrooms, assist them with the slow learners taking them step by step.” Parents, uMthwalume*
- *“You see that we are here now. If they were not there the kids would be playing, hitting each other and all that. I just took my work for Thursday and I told HLE [CWP participant] what she is going to teach them. I gave her the time table and the preparation. She will teach them and show them what to do, mark their work and do corrections. If then it is time for home language maybe they will do reading and they know the books for reading. She is the teacher now.” Teachers, uMthwalume*
- *“Sometimes if the teacher is not in we ask them to go there and just see to the children.” Teachers, Bushbuckridge*
- *“They just keep the learners quiet and make them orderly.” Teachers, Bushbuckridge*
- *“The Teacher Aid is able to help the teacher in assisting that slow learner. Sometimes the Teacher Aid picks up a problem and tells the teacher, then the teacher will say, I will speak to the principal. When the investigation was*

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 122):

“Two dominant teaching strategies are used by teachers in the study to implement curriculum policy,

- *first they use behaviourist teaching methods including ‘lecturing’, ‘choral reading’, ‘constant explanations’ and ‘repetition’, etc., and*
- *second they focus on their ‘top performing’ learners.*

These pedagogical approaches that dominate classroom practices do not preclude teachers from using constructivist approaches such as learning from play, collaborative learning, learning by making, etc. There appears to be awareness amongst teachers that learners must be active in their learning process for effective teaching. Hence teachers appear to introduce their lessons or new concepts through constructivist approaches and then resort to behaviourist learning theory. Their preference for behaviourist teaching practices appears to be influenced by their initial training, secondly by their perceptions of their learners as being ‘slow’, and their context of large numbers of learners per class. For example, teachers in the study feel very comfortable with using choral reading as the preferred reading methodology, because they feel that this approach is most suitable for their learners’ aptitude and that it is appropriate in overcrowded classrooms.”

done in one case, it was discovered that the person responsible was inside the school.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong

- *“That person will work with a teacher and will observe when I’m teaching and assist me for instance when I’m doing an activity he/she can go around the class and help the learners, monitoring, checking their work. But when I look at it there are just a few of them here at the school.” School Management Team, Bushbuckridge*

- **Assist with sporting activities:** CWP participants help with coaching and encouraging playing sports at school. The post provisioning norm does not allocate special teachers for sports or cultural activities (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).

- *“What I do is help with the soccer at the school because soccer makes sure that the children stay off the streets and makes them focus so that our community becomes safer.” CWP Participants and Coordinators, Joe Morolong*

- **Assist with routine school maintenance and school upgrades:** CWP participants are seen as additional human resources for schools to draw on. Hence, CWP participants have helped schools in their construction endeavours such as erecting fences, building ramps, painting, levelling the playgrounds for sporting events, preparing the school for special events such as sports or conferences amongst others.

This also helps schools to save money as all schools in poor communities are no-fee schools, hence there is very little in their budgets for general school maintenance and improvements.

- *“Like at the back there (school yard), it was disorderly; so, they tried to fix things there.” Teachers, Randfontein*
- *“There would be a problem because the SGB would have to find a person who would do the job that they were doing.” Parents, Joe Morolong*
- *“These people [CWP Participants] really help us a lot because even when we were revamping the library they were there and helped us move the books and all the other things.” School Management Team, Randfontein*
- *“They helped us with the paving last month.” Teachers, Joe Morolong*
- *“CWP painted this school.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*

- **Assist with keeping the schools clean:** CWP participants play a significant role in keeping public primary schools in poor communities clean. Schools in these communities are understaffed in terms of support services such as cleaners, gardeners, or maintenance personnel and the schools do not have extra budget (being no-fee schools) to employ additional support staff (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference). In addition the presence of CWP ‘cleaning

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 162):

“Review of the Post Provisioning Norm: while the post provisioning norm established in the late nineties was aimed to facilitate equity and transparency in educator provisioning in public schools, i.e. using learner: educator ratios as means of determining the number of educators per school. This formula is not sufficiently sensitive to the unique needs and contexts of small schools particularly multi-Grade schools and rural schools that want to offer a wide curriculum. According to schools in the study the post provisioning norm does not accommodate for specialists such as librarians, computer technician, etc. Furthermore, most schools in the study are understaffed, where the learner: teacher ratio is as high as 60:1. The goals of the post provisioning norm do not translate into equity as poor schools cannot afford additional teacher posts that can be paid from school fees.”

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 159):

“learners are generally responsible for cleaning their respective classrooms. The schools have on average two cleaning support staff responsible for the common spaces including toilets, offices, and the playgrounds. While the community work programme provides additional support staff for gardening, cleaning, and administration to some schools, the schools have limited control over the management of these additional resources and hence cannot deploy them optimally to meet their unique priorities. Teachers use learning and teaching time to clean their classrooms.”

staff' has inadvertently created awareness amongst learners about maintaining a clean environment:

- *"Our kids learn from the women who always clean here. They learn cleanliness." Teachers, Randfontein*
- *"Because for the school of this size, we are having one cleaner per month, which is unbelievable. So, they are of great help." School Management Team, uMthwalume*
- *"And they also clean our verandas because birds poo on them." Learners, uMthwalume*
- *"They do help, as they are the ones who clean at the school." School Management Team, Joe Morolong*

However, it appears that cleaning of classrooms by CWP participants are not universal across these schools. In nearly all schools in the study learners, including grade R learners, are responsible for cleaning their classrooms which is another activity that reduces time on task (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).

- *"If they could clean inside the classes, because in the foundation phase, kids do the cleaning themselves ... but the girls mostly." Teachers, Randfontein*
- *"The schools used to be very dirty, the classroom floors would be dirty and not like this one, it would be dusty. In some cases you find that some children sit on the carpets and that time the carpets are dirty and dusty, children cough and get sick. At the school where there are older children we make sure that they clean their classrooms because with the little ones the desks are too heavy for them. So to us it means the CWP did a great job to help the children because it is too much for the children because we clean on Thursdays. The children would not be concentrating on schoolwork because they know afterschool they have to clean the classrooms." CWP Participants and Coordinators, Joe Morolong*

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 133):

"None of the schools in the study are able to complete the curriculum in any given academic year. School managers and teachers justifications for noncompliance with curriculum policy include:

- *Distractions by circuits and districts such as unplanned meetings and training workshops*
- *Overcrowded classrooms*
- *Learners are ill-disciplined*
- *The curriculum content is overloaded*
- *The curriculum standard is very high*
- *Frequent changes to the curriculum*
- *Contradictory demands and directives from circuit, district, provincial, and national departments of education*
- *Grade 1 learners are not ready for school*
- *Learners cannot cope with curriculum demands*
- *Their own competence in the subject content knowledge*
- *Time for cleaning the classrooms*
- *Time for implementing the National School Nutrition Programme*
- *Multilingual classrooms"*

- **Assist with establishing and maintaining community vegetable gardens in schools:** CWP participants appear to be the main drivers for successful vegetable gardens in the schools in the study. They grow a variety of vegetables that are distributed to the school feeding scheme, to needy learners, to destitute households, and to vulnerable old and ill people in the community. The presence of food gardens in schools has a positive impact on learners' knowledge and skills. According to teachers interviewed learners will feel more confident to also grow food gardens in their own yards. In one school in Joe Morolong, the harvest is sold and the money is used to purchase school uniforms for orphan and vulnerable learners in the school.
 - *"We have all kinds of vegetables, green pepper, red cabbage, carrots, etc. They are really working." School Management Team, uMthwalume*

- *“At times the people, who are in charge of home-based care, will then take vegetables for those who are needy or with prolonged illnesses.” CWP Participants and Coordinators, uMthwalume*
- *“The kids from squatter camps also learn that they can also plant vegetables at their homes so that they cannot keep on buying vegetables.” Teachers, Randfontein*
- *“There is a Trust Fund in this school that was formed by the Supervisor and the Principal for the children who cannot afford to buy school uniforms. We sell the vegetables and keep the money and buy school ties for those children who are poor and it is very helpful to the school.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*
- **Assists with maintaining order in the playgrounds:** CWP participants feel free to discipline unruly learners. They prevent learners from fighting and help to maintain decorum in the playground.
 - *“By discouraging any fights and warning them when they fight when the teachers do not see them fighting.” CWP Participants, Randfontein*
- **Assists with general gardening:** CWP participants help with maintaining the school gardens. They plant flower beds, keep the lawn manicured, and the garden clear of weeds.
 - *“Some work in gardens, some clean the yard and flowers.” Parents, uMthwalume*
 - *“We clean and do the gardens.” CWP Participants, Randfontein*
 - *“They do the garden they plant vegetables spinach in their gardens and they have flowers as well.” Parents, Bushbuckridge*
- **Assist with creating a safe playground:** CWP participants remove stones and level the playgrounds in schools they work in. Majority of public schools in the study have no built-up playground, there are only open fields that are rocky and uneven and dangerous to play on (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).
 - *“Yes the kids learn to appreciate their environment; the people from CWP also remove the stones from the playground so when the kids play on the playground, they play on a safe ground.” Teachers, Randfontein*
 - *“This is our playground it is too rocky, dusty, and it’s not safe for the kids.” Teachers, Randfontein*
- **Assist with forging a link with the community:** Many CWP participants are also parents of learners attending the schools that they work in, and are able to offer a link to other parents in the community. Schools often use CWP participants to relay messages to parents who live far from the school or are unable to visit the school. Similarly parents of learners also draw on CWP participants to relay messages to teachers

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 161):

“there was a general plea for sports and recreational facilities. A decent playground is urgently required in the schools in the study. Presently learners play on dirt ground that is uneven and rocky. Bullying is rife in the schools in the study and young learners want to have a separate play space where they are safe from older learners.”

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 149):

Parents interviewed acknowledged that parental participation in their children’s school is often neglected for two reasons, first parents are working far away from their children’s school and second parents are not able to engage with teachers because of their low literacy levels.

- *“Some things that cause parents not to come like we are different as people. Some parents do not have particular things like a parent who did not do sub A has a problem. So they just take the children there and they know that the children get what they require there but they do not bother about school matters. They do not find out about the child’s progress they do not ask about how the child is coping at school and when they have to look at the child’s books they do not know what to do because everything is written on paper and they have a problem understanding.” Parents, Joe Morolong*

about their children. Recognising that few parents participate in school events or that parents often feel insecure to engage with teachers and parents; this link can be seen as a positive outcome of CWP as it shows that schools are not 'alien' places (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).

- *"Most of them are parents in our schools, so they become a faster link to the parents that are far from the school. We can just send messages to other parents through them. And when parents have messages or they have money to bring to the school, the parents also send them."* Teachers, Randfontein
- *"People in the community see us as mediators between teachers and their kids, one lady said to me you'll explain the problem my child has better to the teacher."* CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge
- *"Some parents will say, do take care of my child and some will want to know how the child's performance is in the class-room."* CWP Participants, uMthwalume
- *"It makes me happy to work here at school, I could see the child who is hungry and also struggling children and inform teachers and I know such cases since I no longer have the husband which means there is always some shortage of food. I wake up and come here to work."* CWP Parents and Participants, uMthwalume
- *"Like if a child doesn't want to come to school, they call you at times from your house and say please help us with this child."* CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge

These quotes reveal that CWP participants working in schools (not necessarily only those working in classrooms) provide valuable information about the context of the feeder school community to teachers and school managers; in the main teachers and school managers are not from the communities that they work in and often do not have the links to parents or understand the challenges facing learners outside the classroom. Although the data did not indicate tensions or conflict arising from CWP participants who are working in schools where their children are enrolled this study did not specifically explore this aspect and further investigation may be necessary to understand the current and potential consequences thereof.

- **Participate in school events:** CWP participants actively involve themselves in school events, especially in sporting events. They cheer learners participating in sports and sometimes assist with coaching.
 - *"There is that encouragement that if there are athletics, they stand there and encourage the kids to run. They give them that courage. Moral support."* Teachers, Randfontein
- **Assists with road maintenance:** CWP participants repair gravel roads after rains which allow the community to travel easily. Hence they indirectly contribute to teacher and learner attendance to school through ensuring safe road access (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).
 - *"We have gravel roads in this community so after every rain the roads will be left damaged mostly with potholes and as the CWP; we make sure that we fill those potholes."* CWP Site Manager, uMthwalume

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 158):
"Bad road infrastructure which contributes to learner and teacher absenteeism during the rainy season. Teachers who live far from schools are unable to travel to their schools due to road erosion."

2.2. Perceptions about Community Work Programme in Public Primary Schools

Parents, teachers, school managers and circuit managers are aware of the presence of CWP participants working in their schools and the positive contribution. This include keeping their schools clean, creating vegetable gardens, assisting with administration and classroom management, helping with the National School Nutrition Programme, and being available for general school maintenance and upgrades.

- *"I see them doing gardening, cleaning the environment and cleaning at school." Parents, Joe Morolong*

However, schools are uncertain about the current and potential role of CWP relating to the programme providing a basic income through employment opportunities, contributing to community wellbeing and adding value to their respective schools.

- *"Other than making sure that the premises are clean, I don't know what else they could do." Teachers, Randfontein*
- *"We do not know because most of them we do not work with them." Teachers, Randfontein*
- *"Yes, we just see them there." Parents, Joe Morolong*
- *"They do help but maybe they can be given more work or maybe know what they have to do because right now they just helped when they are asked and we don't know what they will be doing next year. So it would help if we knew what they have to do exactly." School Management Team, Joe Morolong*
- *"You see we are not sure what they are supposed to do, we only involve them in doing things like photocopying and sometimes when there is something urgent from the department we use them so that we complete whatever is needed to be completed." School Management Team, Bushbuckridge*
- *"They [CWP] are even here at school but we don't know much about their responsibility." Teachers, Bushbuckridge*

Only one respondent made the link between CWP and a basic income that contributes to poverty alleviation in the family and community at large.

- *"CWP has created jobs and as they are parents, it also helps their families because if the parent is unemployed, the kids also get affected and that also affects their school work. So if the parent is working then the child can also relax and focus on their school work." Teachers, Randfontein*

Generally parents, teachers, school managers, and circuit managers were grateful to CWP participants for their contributions to the school. CWP work in schools has made schools cleaner, safer, and more attractive.

- *"They have made the school look better." Teachers, Joe Morolong*
- *"We do appreciate them a lot ... they clean because they help the guys who are cleaning, they sweep, they cut the grass and they also help us in class." Teachers, Randfontein*
- *"They are helping. They help with everything." Teachers, uMthwalume*
- *"Our school is clean." School Management Team, uMthwalume*

2.3. Public Primary Schools as Workplaces for Community Work Programme

The general modus operandi is CWP coordinators and school principals meet to discuss the needs of the school and the contribution that CWP can make within its mandate. Principals identify tasks for CWP participants that are within CWP ambit of meaningful work and the coordinators oversee the work. The coordinators are responsible for managing CWP participants in schools and hence principals and school staff cannot directly supervise CWP participants. However it is important to note that the CWP Implementation Manual clearly states that “school governing bodies are approached to identify where the CWP may provide services such as supervision of homework classes and sports activities, labour for school-based food gardens and other support activities.”⁵

- *“I will go into the schools firstly, make a meeting to meet with the principal and then go there and talk to her and tell her that we are from the CWP and this is the type of work that we do and this is how we can assist the school but then we also ask them if there are any other areas in which they feel help is needed the most ... the principal will tell us in which areas they can do with our help and we also evaluate the place before we make any decisions. We look at the challenges and see if we will be able to have staff who can come in and help in the areas and we also keep in mind that we must be there every day and so we look at how big the need is and if we have enough staff willing to do the work ... we meet daily at 7:30 and then I mark the register and then I allocate the sites, then I divide them into groups of 5 each and give them an area they will be going to on that day.” CWP Coordinator, Randfontein*
- *“Through the help of the site committee because in the useful work the scope that we are giving them it does involve education. They are the ones who will say we need our school to be attractive, to look attractive. Then they are the ones who will say go into the schools and then we come to the schools as the site manager check with the principal, we first explain to the management team and then we check and identify them, the needs of the school then they will say they will identify that this is what we need the human resource and we go back to the participants and check with them but we want those who are willing to do that particular work because some of them do help with health and nutrition with the school kitchen and some do work with admin and some are cleaning the environment.” Site Manager, Joe Morolong*
- *“We only communicate with the school principal.” CWP Site Manager, uMthwalume*

The current management approach appears to be working and prevents conflict of oversight as well as exploitation of CWP participants by workplace managers. At the same time this management approach creates a distance between CWP participants and the professional and support staff at the schools they assist.

- *“What is good about them is that when they did something wrong and you try to make them see reason they listen to you.” Teachers, uMthwalume*

The distance is further increased by the absence of formal introductions or any form of induction between CWP participants and teachers, school managers, and learners in the schools they are working in. Teachers, school managers, and learners do not understand the role of CWP in their respective schools or the timetabling of participants, i.e. four days per week for two weeks a month per participant or the working hours of CWP

⁵ Ibid. pg. 20

participants or their authority to deploy CWP participants to meet their priorities and needs. While the creation and maintenance of vegetable gardens and the cleaning of school grounds and toilets appear to be the mandate of CWP participants working in schools, schools are unsure how else to employ this additional resource especially teacher and administrator assistants and often use them arbitrarily.

- *“When they were brought here we were not really informed what they would be doing and what they are expected to do. That’s why when we try and involve them we just think what to give them to do. Sometimes some of us give them work to mark the learner’s work and sometimes when they are given tasks to do they say ‘that’s not our work’... Actually we are also not sure about this, maybe if there was a document that says this is what they should do and this they shouldn’t do, it would make it easier for us to work with them properly.” School Management Team, Bushbuckridge*
- *“Before we used to work 8 days a month and school Teacher Aids were forced to work for 20 days. CWP teachers had to work extra 12 days. And they were not paid for those days because that’s not the policy of CWP, all workers work for only 8 days and they can’t work for more than that.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*

There are conflicting reports about collegiality in schools. Some CWP participants have been well received in schools while others are shunned and perceived as ‘spies’ or treated as outsiders and not part of the school staff.

- *“I communicate with the principal every day, I’m always with the staff of this school as well, they even call me one of their staff because even if a teacher is not in the class and maybe I was walking pass, they know that I will enter that class and tell the students to be quiet.” CWP Coordinator, Randfontein*
- *“The teachers we work with treat us decently and I like that and enjoy working there.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *“At times you see a teacher harassing a child and you know this child, you feel like taking sides, but you can’t, they will report you to the CWP ... Yes and you’ll be perceived as a spy, like you are going to start telling the community everything that happens at the school.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

In schools with divisive management styles and an ethos of individualism, CWP participants are inescapably drawn into this byzantine web which makes them uncomfortable and compromises their own work ethics.

- *“You find that there’s no order, the principal and teachers are fighting among themselves ... Teachers have favourites amongst participants and that causes division. As a supervisor it’s difficult to work in that environment because you have people watching each other ... Teachers are overbearing to the participants and that makes them tense, and that interferes with the productivity of that participant ... And the participants get really upset.” CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*

According to Andersson⁶ (representing an implementing agent) teacher assistants positively contribute to small group learning in overcrowded classrooms (making such activities difficult for teachers to consider). However, Andersson reported that while teacher assistants were well received in uMthwalume, they were resisted in Eastern Cape Sites. Apparently, school CWP sites in the Eastern Cape were opposed to ‘outsiders’ in their

⁶ Andersson, G. (2012) *In-depth Interview on the 16th March 2012 in Houghton Johannesburg.*

classrooms. Furthermore, in some schools the support staff are threatened that CWP participants will replace them and this fear contributes to a hostile working environment.

- *“Some of the staff members especially the general workers some of them feel that their position is being taken, so we do clarify it. Even though at times we do take time we say we clarify the role of the person who is coming there but that thing still exist they would think that they are taking away their jobs.” Site Manager, Joe Morolong*
- *“Also, remember the school has permanent people that are employed to do that, so these people from CWP have that tension not because they like it, but because of the conditions that they are working under. Even those that are employed by the school, when they see them, they think that they are taking their work.” Parents, Randfontein*

A serious concern about working in a school environment where there are multiple work opportunities requiring diverse skills and knowledge is the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of CWP in schools. Schools are unsure about the kind of work or the level of responsibilities they can allocate to CWP participants deployed at their respective schools. Teachers and school managers are often rebuked by CWP participants working in their schools that they are not employees of the school or that it is not their job to do certain tasks. A few CWP coordinators confirmed that they are selective of the work that they will endorse in schools.

- *“Cleaning the walls was a no-no ... the classroom chairs as well I refused for them to clean them ...I refused because the general worker there does not do that job and when I went to that school they did not tell me that they will want them to clean chairs. So that means there is no work for them to do. So if there is no work for them at that school why don't they tell me to take them to schools that require assistance?” CWP Coordinators, Joe Morolong*
- *“I was saying they also help but they have their own boss. That's why we say we are not clear about their responsibilities.” Teachers, Bushbuckridge*
- *“Some of them do have the attitude of saying that you did not employ us.” School Management Team, uMthwalume*
- *“They tell you the money comes slow they'll also work slowly.” Parents, Randfontein*
- *“They think they are not employed by the school so the school can't tell them anything.” Parents, Randfontein*
- *“CWP and schools need ground rules.” Parents, Randfontein*
- *“Teachers must not give participants school books to correct [mark].” CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*
- *“Before, not now the qualified teachers used to have a problem with the Teacher Aids, where our participants refused to take instructions from them. The Teacher Aid would say things like ‘you go and do it because I don't get the thousands of rand you get.’ But the Teacher Aids that we have now, know what they need to do.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*

However, some CWP participants feel that some teachers in particular shift their responsibilities to CWP assistants. Some also have the impression that teachers are not fulfilling their professional duties and responsibilities in class and that the presence of a CWP teacher assistant creates anxiety amongst these teachers that CWP participants may expose their negligence. Participants also noted that teachers appear to lack subject content knowledge and require professional development support. There are few teacher assistants in the schools in the study; hence very few teachers had direct experience of working with a teacher assistant. Those

who had worked with teacher assistants, in general, reported positively on the work of CWP in their classrooms as discussed in the section on CWP contribution to public primary schools (the study did not visit any schools in the Eastern Cape).

- *“We see teachers having colourful lipsticks but lacking teaching knowledge, so developing them could be good.” Parents and CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
- *“At times some people are not doing enough in the classroom. I was a teacher before I came across teachers who are should I say they are not committed to what they are doing. Sometimes there are frustrations there are situations at home, it is causing them to sit down in the classroom and say take out your books and read and then they just sit. They do not check the individual abilities of kids so they are not doing enough in the classroom and they hide themselves. The teachers know very well when I get into the classroom I’m alone nobody knows what is happening the kids can’t stand up and say this is not happening especially in primary schools but I think this program will be helpful because the teacher will know that I have to prepare myself, I have to do what is right.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*

The school day starts early (although varying between schools) and teachers and school managers prefer that CWP participants working in their schools should adhere to the schools’ working hours.

- *“They arrive after 08h00 ... And even much later than that ... From 08h30 to 09h00 ... We would like the Teacher Aids to come earlier, during the assembly time.” School Management Team, uMthwalume*
- *“There are a lot of children in this school so they should come in the morning to clean the toilets, the school is nice but the toilets are dirty.” Teachers, Northern Cape*

Schools are special workplaces because this is where parents send their children to learn and hence safety is critical. Furthermore, for effective learning to occur and children to develop and grow the classroom must be a creative and friendly environment. The selection of CWP participants for deployment to schools must be a considered process, as learners’ safety is paramount. Since working in schools it appears that CWP has refined its deployment process.

- *“Some of them look like thugs which might rape the learners ... I just want to explain that the coordinators removed those thugs because it proved that we as the teaching staff did not work with them ... They just brought us very arrogant men who are smoking dagga in the school premises. That is something of the past because they removed them from the school.” School Management Team, uMthwalume*
- *“The main concern regarding the CWP teacher assistants is that those individuals should at least have a matric qualification and be well presented so that learners regard them in the same light as teachers.” Circuit Manager, uMthwalume*
- *“And the people who have learnt till standard 8 or 9 we do not consider but those that have completed matric are considered. But what I consider is your attitude as well so if you have completed your matric but do not have the right attitude I do not consider you.” CWP Supervisors, Joe Morolong*

An interesting finding is that CWP performance varies between schools according to parents from Randfontein interviewed in the study. The factors contributing to varied performance were not probed and it may be an

interesting study on its own. Nonetheless there is recognition amongst CWP coordinators that CWP participants require constant oversight and that management is not an easy task.

- *"We have CWP but with us they don't have control ... There are 2 gardens they work at one garden with a team of 10 people it's only 4 that are working 6 people are not doing anything. They treat it as if they doing the school a favour ... they don't see it as a community project ... Likhanyo school the Community Work there clean the school and do gardening ... Then I wonder what about us. Why are they not as active as they are there?" Parents, Randfontein*

2.4. Working for Community Work Programme

Participants and CWP coordinators are proud of working in their communities and for their communities. They also sometimes save on travel expenses as they walk to their workplaces. They enjoy the positive feedback that they receive from community members about their beneficial contributions in their respective communities.

- *"I like that I don't need transport, I walk to work. So I don't have to spend money on transport." CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *"I stay locally and so I wouldn't say I have any challenges as far as resources are concerned, I just walk, wherever I have to go and the distance is not so bad really." CWP Site Manager, Randfontein*
- *"I like wearing uniform. Our T-shirts are written CWP that makes me feel proud that means we work for the communities." CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*
- *"Like there's a time when we had to put up a fence in a grave yard the community was very pleased and that's one of the projects that make us feel appreciated as CWP workers." CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *"It makes me happy to see CWP making a change in our community." CWP Site Manager, uMthwalume*
- *"People love CWP because they are receiving help from us. Even those who are unemployed receive help from us with food and stuff." CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
- *"I'm happy to say I make a difference in people's lives every day." CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*
- *"Yes we are proud, I went to Rustenburg and some woman asked me if I was working and I told her yes, I found a job even though the money is little. I told her that if you walk in our community you will see that there is some change and if she knew our community she would have seen the change." CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*

However, working for CWP is considered a low status job and CWP participants are in some cases 'looked down upon' by their communities. There is also a perception that nepotism is rife within CWP.

- *"They say that the CWP employs family members and they are not being employed." CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
- *"They employ their friends and no more following the idea of employing people who are needy and desperate." CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
- *"At times people say hurtful things to them like 'I will never sweep the streets'." Parents, Randfontein*
- *"They say CWP workers are cowards and that they earn little money." CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

Late payments and bank charges are major challenges facing people working for CWP. Other challenges include lack of equipment, consumables, and safety gear on site, despite the existence of budgets for these. An

interesting finding is the limited awareness amongst respondents both CWP participants and non-CWP participants about the social benefits of CWP, such as access to unemployment insurance and being covered by occupational health and safety insurance.

- *“These people earn little and at times they get paid while at times they do not get paid. You can work three months or four months without getting paid.” Parents, Randfontein*
- *“If the CWP could provide us with the equipment and all the things that we need and also provide them on time because like now, I’m stuck I need seedlings, other participants still don’t have their proper uniform, things like boots and overalls.” CWP Coordinator, Randfontein*
- *“As it is raining, we cannot go into the gardens. We were supposed to have boots, which will allow us to work in the garden at any day and time.” CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
- *“You borrow money, promise people I’ll pay you this day CWP gives you money on the 45th day of the month, and you fight with people ... CWP must pay us at the end of the month like everyone else and not later because we get into trouble.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *“We are looking after sick people and in my team at times you find a person not wearing safety clothing and helping a sick person.” CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*
- *“People should get UIF. If CWP closes down, people will get money from UIF until such time that they find other jobs.” CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*
- *“I have worked for 3 years at CWP they increased the money with R2.50, what can I do with that amount of money, things are expensive these days.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- *“I worked at the graveyard, one day I was at work and when I was packing away a snake appeared out of the grave, but by the grace of God it did not strike me. We left that place and the next day when we came back we found the snake and we killed it, so all those things make our jobs difficult in terms of safety which is on the poor side.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
- *“The other problem is that we do not know when to expect our pay but they want the work to continue.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
- *“They deposit it at the bank and when we go to the bank the money is deducted, the bank charges, and we get less than what we worked for.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
- *“There is also shortage of gloves which is not good as we help the sick people who need to be bathed and cleaned.” Parents and CWP Participants, uMthwalume*

The limited training and lack of training to do their work is also a concern for CWP participants. Many participants in Bushbuckridge have worked for over three years without any form of workplace skills training.

- *“When you arrived first day they gave you a spade and said go do gardening ... They didn’t even give us working tools, they made that very clear bring your tools and uniform.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

However, coordinators attend health and safety and first aid courses. Some coordinators and site managers who have worked for CWP for a long time have attended courses on leadership and management. Participants in the main have received life skills or living positive lifestyle workshops by loveLife. Generally participants gain their skills through working in different workplaces such as construction or gardening.

- *“They called people from loveLife. They didn’t teach us about our work, only how we should take care of ourselves.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

- *"I have had a lot of training, I have a conflict management certificate, I have a certificate in agriculture, first aid level 3, a business certificate, I also have a project management certificate."* CWP Coordinator, Randfontein
- *"... we have identified is there is a problem should I say of attitude or they do not know how to relate to other people so we think through regular training because we have monthly training with loveLife so we think that they will get the direction."* CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong
- *"The only training we received was the first aid."* CWP Participants and Coordinators, Joe Morolong

Creating and maintaining vegetable gardens appear to be a core skill amongst CWP participants and they are keen to help establish food gardens in people's yards and in public spaces. However, shortage of seeds and lack of water are the major impeding factors in increasing food gardens in their respective communities.

- *"Like me dealing with agriculture, a person says come do gardening when you get there she says there's no water."* CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge

Coordinators of CWP find their management responsibilities overwhelming; they find it difficult to reprimand or warn their colleagues, and to effectively manage teams working in different sites. Their teams appear to require constant supervision and observation and are not 'productive' in their absence.

- *"If left on their [CWP participants] own, they just stop working, if they don't see you, they just down tools and stop working."* CWP Site Manager, Randfontein
- *"If my team doesn't come to work I must talk to them or mark them absent and I don't like that."* CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge
- *"The community and participants, management are looking at me, they expect me to solve their problems I don't like that. Also, when I must go to work just the thought of talking all day long I don't like that."* CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge
- *"For example, we may have a team working in the garden. When you leave that team to go and check on other teams, the garden team finds reason to slack."* CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume
- *"The community always has complaints. Though we try to serve them at times we're unable to solve their problems."* CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume

While CWP participants offer conflicting views about their direct managers. Some see their line managers as authoritarian and insecure; who create a restrictive working environment that stifles creativity and opportunities for dialogue and innovation.

- *"It's a one sided thing, you just take instruction ... If you suggest anything they say you want their jobs ... An example is, we were doing agriculture in another place, it was damp like a swamp, you couldn't work at that place ... And that place was a hired place, we tried to tell her this place is infertile nothing will grow on this soil, she was adamant she knows it all ... They always think you want to shine in her place so we don't say anything."* CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge

However they simultaneously report that CWP has acted on their recommended interventions in schools such as erecting a fence around the school hall, or providing paint to paint the school, etc.

- *"We did ask them to put a fence around a hall and they did do it."* CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge

Local CWP managers or site managers are also required to navigate local politics and to assert their mandate and resist any ploys of misappropriation.

- *“A councillor will phone the individual to go and do some work. He once told one of our participants to dig a road that goes to his house. We intervened and stopped him. We argued a lot with him because he even told us that if we are owned by the government he is also a part of the government. This is for the community, we told him, whatever you do, do it for the community not for yourself.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*

2.5. Contribution of Community Work Programme to Participants’ Personal Lives

Participating in CWP ensures a basic income according to all participants in the study. They also reported that being part of CWP is empowering. Other benefits include access to fresh vegetables, gaining skills, and getting workplace experience. The contribution of CWP to participants’ personal lives includes:

- **Securing a basic income:** CWP participants are guaranteed a monthly income for eight days work. This basic income ensures that they are able to meet some of their essential needs and to allocate the money according to their individual and household priorities. However if they are ill and are unable to work during those days they do not get paid.
 - *“They pay you for the job we do every month, so we get a salary and we are able to live normal lives like everyone else.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
 - *“Some of the participants are using their salaries as little as they are but they are using that money to further their studies.” CWP Coordinator, Randfontein*
 - *“Because I get money I can buy food for my children and do things for myself so there is no longer a need to ask.” CWP Participants, Randfontein*
 - *“Crying, it helped me a lot ...It is just that there is some money we make. No matter how little it may be, it does help us a lot, because we are able to do some of the things we wish for.” CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
 - *“I may say that most of the things we are satisfied with but the only thing which is a problem is the pay date, because at times the month will end without us having received our wages. That is what’s troubling us.” CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
 - *“Before we were under the CWP because jobs are scarce we could not even buy children food and clothes we struggled to do that.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
 - *“You see at times we get sick and I was absent for 3 days, so you lose a lot of money when that happens, they don’t give you another opportunity to make up the 3 days which I think is unfair and we have debts to pay, so they need to think for us.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- **Becoming self-confident:** CWP participants feel the programme has contributed to their self-assurance and confidence.
 - *“Yes, we are very confident ... We are proud of ourselves.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*
- **Engaging with their communities:** CWP participants enjoy the opportunity provided by the programme to engage with their communities and learn about the happenings in their respective communities.
 - *“I do enjoy it because I went to the school I work for now. So, I enjoy lending a helping hand.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*

- **Gaining world of work experience:** CWP participants through working in diverse workplaces are getting exposure to the functioning of different sectors and workplaces.
 - *“We used to complain when kids fail now we can see how the marks work to achieve a pass rate or how a child has failed and what led to that.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- **Attaining technical skills:** CWP participants are gaining technical skills by working in community home-based care, schools, construction, and agriculture. Managers (coordinators and site managers) are becoming more competent in planning, writing reports, and leadership. They also feel that their communication skills have improved significantly since joining the CWP management teams.
 - *“Yes, I was helping build a house, I learned things like plastering when I have the day off, I get piece jobs and do it for people and earn money.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
 - *“Before I was very shy, now I can address situations and communicate with confidence.” CWP Coordinators, Bushbuckridge*
 - *“From what I already knew I would say I improved. I used to take care of the elderly, but mostly white people. CWP has exposed me to the elderly of my own race and I’ve merged all this knowledge and became a better person.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*
 - *“I’m even setting a good example to my children and I’m a better parent and family person. I now listen with an intention to understand.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*
 - *“To be honest I could not paint, I never painted in my whole life but now I can paint, at least I can do that now.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
 - *“Before I did not know how to lead people but when I became a supervisor I taught myself how to talk to people and listen to people.” CWP Supervisor, Joe Morolong*
 - *“The skills they have gained the person who is at admin had not used a computer and at least they know now.” CWP Coordinators, Joe Morolong*
- **Feeling confident in securing livelihoods:** CWP participants have gained technical skills through the programme and this has given them confidence to look for new livelihoods and a sense of security that they can earn or create their own livelihoods.
 - *“Even if this CWP job can get finished, I can survive because I know how to make my own manure, so I can plant vegetables and fruit trees and sell to people and stores.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
 - *“And I think that afterwards even if it stops but at least I will have the experience of teaching people how to plant and grow vegetables and teach them things they did not know.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
 - *“During school holidays I work [plastering] for people and I would not have had that knowledge if it wasn’t for the CWP.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*
- **Getting fresh vegetables:** CWP participants can take fresh vegetables for their families from the gardens they establish and maintain. This is considered a huge benefit to participants.
 - *“We enjoy that we get to interact with people and we are able to get the little food that we grow and that helps the community.” CWP Participants, Joe Morolong*
 - *“Yes, we do get vegetables for ourselves.” CWP Participants, uMthwalume*
 - *“And our families also enjoy good food from us.” CWP Participants, Bushbuckridge*

2.6. Other Needs Community Work Programme Can Address in Public Primary Schools

Respondents listed numerous needs in their schools that are within the mandate of CWP. Some of the work is already being done in some schools. The needs enumerated include:

- **Cleaning classrooms in foundation phase:** most no-fee public schools are generally understaffed. Very few schools in poor communities have the required number of cleaning and gardening workers, as such learners are required to clean their classrooms. Often it is the ‘girl child’ that carries the bulk of this responsibility. Cleaning classrooms (not tidying) often takes time away from learning and teaching and younger learners are not capable of scrubbing floors and windows. In some schools in the study, CWP participants clean the classrooms; however this task should be considered a must in schools where learners in foundation phase are responsible for cleaning their classrooms.
 - *“Another thing, it could be very helpful for us if we could get people who can help us with the cleaning of classrooms because the ones who are cleaning at the moment, I think they have a lot of work to do, they clean the toilet and they help with other things as well, so we do not have anybody to clean for us, so we have to use the learners, which is maybe unfair but there is no other thing we can do. Sometimes they help with the classes, it is not their jobs to clean the classes, they are there for the garden.” Teachers, Randfontein*
- **Assisting in libraries and computer laboratories:** the post provisioning norm only considers the ratio of learners-to-teachers and does not accommodate specialised teachers such as full-time librarians or computer technicians. Participants in CWP who have computer skills or can work in a library may be deployed to schools (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).
 - *“If we can have them trained to become teacher assistant, then library, librarians, our schools do not have libraries some, those that have libraries they are not utilizing them. Computer centers are not being utilized they are white elephants so I think if we can focus on those then it will help.” Site Manager, Joe Morolong*
- **Levelling the playground and making it safe for playing:** most schools in the study did not have suitable play areas or adequate sporting facilities for their learners. Their learners play in rocky and uneven fields. In some schools CWP have levelled the playground and made it safer for learners to play. Like cleaning the classroom this task should be considered a must in schools where learners play in rocky and uneven grounds.
 - *“Mine doesn’t like the place where they are playing because the ground is not smooth, they fall and hurt themselves.” Parents, Randfontein*
- **Supporting orphan and child-headed households:** many learners come hungry and dirty to school because they live with extended families or grannies that are too old to take care of them or in child-headed households. It may be useful for CWP participants in schools to work in tandem with their colleagues in community home-based care to help children prepare for school.

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 155):

“Orphaned children and child headed households: schools in the study reported that a significant number of learners live in child-headed households due to the death of both parents or simply neglect by parents. Learners from child-headed households get little support in their homes to help them prepare for school or to adequately fulfil basic schooling norms such as cleanliness, punctuality, etc. They also had a lot more responsibilities in their homes such as taking care of younger siblings.”

- *“The child goes hungry to school and some stay with their old granny’s and they can’t take on the responsibilities of being parents.” Teachers, uMthwalume*
- *“So they come to school without eating and they cannot focus at school because they are hungry.” Teachers, Joe Morolong*
- *“And maybe they can interact with the orphans; they can be able to also go to the homes to see what’s going on there. Even though the teachers do go sometimes when the issue is serious but because they are from around here as well they can take that time to go check if the kids have had something to eat, or if they slept well and things like that.” Teachers, Bushbuckridge*
- **Training teacher assistants:** generally schools in rural and poor communities are overcrowded (high learner-to-teacher ratios) and multi-grade schools are further compromised by the post provisioning. Teacher assistants may be able to play a significant role in improving the quality of foundation phase learners. However, teacher assistants must receive intensive training on aspects deemed related to the tasks allocated to them – this may include classroom management, learning theories, and utilisation of learning and teaching resources and more.

The notion of teacher assistants as a form of “cheap labour” was not common place in the study and no mention was made of teacher assistant potentially replacing the professional cadre of teachers or that they would serve as an instrument to weaken trade unionism in the schooling sector or compromising the quality of learning and teaching. However, Lima Rural Development Foundation as the lead implementation agent for the programme in KwaZulu Natal, Free state, and Mpumalanga experienced resistance from teacher unions in formally implementing a teacher assistant project via CWP in schools in 2008⁷. Similarly Andersson⁸ reported that schools in the Eastern Cape resisted the presence of ‘outsiders’ in their school.

- *“It would be nice for them to be developed or get bursaries so that they can be well equipped especially when it comes to class work. We talk sometimes and then the issue of salaries comes in and they ask us how much we are getting and you just estimate even though you don’t tell them exactly and you could see the pain in her eyes. You see that she has interest that someday the Lord will bless her with something.” Teachers, uMthwalume*
- *“Training – It is important that participants get proper training especially those who are working with children since they come from different backgrounds.” CWP Site Manager, Joe Morolong*
- *“I just wish the teacher aids could be trained. And we could have a rotating system, with goals and milestones.” CWP Coordinators, uMthwalume*

⁷ Lima Rural Development Foundation. (2013). *Background to CWP Education Support Programme: Context, Policy, Rationale, and Methodological Framework*, Pietermaritzburg

⁸ Andersson, G. (2012) *In-depth Interview on the 16^h March 2012 in Houghton Johannesburg*.

3. CHAPTER 3: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are deduced from the information gathered through this perception-based study and will require further investigation to explore the potential to add value. The first set is short term recommendations that may be possible to implement within the current structure of the programme:

3.1. Raising awareness of the broader goals of CWP in beneficiary schools

Raising awareness of the broader goals of CWP in beneficiary schools and its potential of stronger partnerships with the community. Some CWP participants are parents of learners in the schools they work in as well as members of the community the school is located in. If well managed, this may be a powerful partnership and resource to schools in poor communities. It can also contribute to making schools the centre of community life, an important goal of the Department of Basic Education which has been elusive and difficult to achieve. Furthermore teachers in rural schools are often not part of the community in which they teach and in many instances are not proficient in the local languages (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference). Hence, it is important that all members (learners, parents, teachers, managers, and support staff) of beneficiary schools are aware of CWP and its role in their community and in their schools. Moreover, CWP participants should be considered partners in the schools' improvement plans, especially in infrastructure upgrades.

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 134):

“Language of learning and teaching is a contentious issue for parents and teachers. Most parents and teachers in the study would prefer that the language of learning and teaching be English. Their argument is that home language or first language is taught very academically at school which is very different from that spoken by learners in their home - especially the technical terms are foreign to learners. Furthermore, most classrooms are multilingual and most learners' homes are multilingual (parents who have different home languages). Another challenge facing home languages is the shortage of teachers who are qualified to teach in specific home languages per province. The current readers and workbooks for home language are badly written with many errors, which are also contributing to making learning and teaching home languages difficult.”

3.2. Making community vegetable gardens in schools the pivot for schools as part of community life

CWP has been very successful in the establishment of food gardens in communities they work in. Furthermore CWP participants have promoted the creation of vegetable gardens in private homes through the skills gained at CWP (see South African Community Capability Study Report: CWP). In the schools in the study learners, teachers, school managers, and circuit managers identified and acknowledge the vegetable gardens established by CWP in their schools and its contribution to the schools' feeding scheme and food security to vulnerable learners in their schools. Currently the produce is distributed to needy households as well as sold to teachers and the local community. Schools can leverage this powerful resource to forge stronger links with the communities they serve. One school uses the income gained from selling the harvest to purchase school uniforms for orphans and vulnerable learners. There are many such opportunities schools can use to be part of their communities' lives. Making schools part of community production process has, in some cases contributed to improving

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 88):

At a national and systemic level the Cuban Education System remains a model for both developing and developed countries. Multi-grade schools receive greater resources and support by the system. Gasperini (2000) identified the following characteristics that allow the system to continue to produce quality educational outcomes in the face of huge resource constraints and challenges:

- Sustained and high levels of investment in education
- Consistent policy environment and political will in support of education for all
- Quality basic education, including early childhood and learner health initiatives
- Literacy, adult and non-formal education programs
- Universal access to primary and secondary school
- Highly professional, well-trained teachers of high status
- On-going professional development of teachers
- Quality low-cost instructional materials
- Creativity on the part of local educators in adapting and developing instructional materials
- System-wide evaluation
- Solidarity within schools and classrooms; competition among schools and classrooms;
- Significant community participation in school management
- Compensatory schemes for disadvantaged and rural children
- Clear connections between school and work
- An emphasis on education for social cohesion and values education.

educational outcomes of schools in rural and poor communities.⁹ Gasperini (2000) reviewed the Cuban Education System on behalf of the World Bank and identified the Cuban emphasis between school and work as a significant contribution to quality education in rural schools (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference).

⁹Gasperini, L. (2000). The Cuban Education System: Lessons and Dilemmas, The World Bank downloaded on the 30th October 2012 from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDS/IB/2000/10/21/000094946_0010130548138/Rendered/PDF/multi_page.pdf

3.3. Leveraging CWP participants in promoting greater parental involvement in their children's schools

The presence of these CWP participants has begun to form an organic link between parents and the school. While this relationship is nascent; schools can harness CWP participants' involvement in schools to encourage greater parental engagement in their children's schools and their children's learning. Currently schools in the study struggle to get their learners' parents involved in their schools and in helping their learners with their learning and

Extract from CDI Context of Primary School Education Report (page 149):

"Parents interviewed acknowledged that parental participation in their children's school is often neglected for two reasons, first parents are working far away from their children's school and second parents are not able to engage with teachers because of their low literacy levels."

in particular homework (see The Context of Public Primary Education Report reference). The South African Schools Act, 1996 makes clear that school governing bodies are responsible for the governance of schools and hence should reflect the concerns of parents and the wider community the schools is located in. However, school governing bodies to date have been struggling to facilitate full parental participation in school events, school development initiatives, and in their own children's school careers. If well managed (through proper induction and training), the CWP participants who are parents of learners' enrolled at the school can help to promote the importance of parents being involved in school development programmes. While teachers and school managers urge greater parental involvement in school activities and in their learners' learning and school careers, substantive grassroots participation (in this case parents) in formal institutions like schools is a difficult process that requires a paradigm shift as well as technical skills to manage the approach. Furthermore building strong community institutions takes time and genuine commitment by all stakeholders. This is not the mandate of CWP, yet is may be part of the programme's goals of building community assets.

3.4. Inducting and introducing CWP participants to schools

Currently the relationship between CWP and schools is reliant on the liaisons between the principals and the CWP coordinators. Teachers, learners, and parents are observers; while CWP participants are merely doers. Recognising that CWP participants are also assistants to professional and support staff and that CWP participants are parents of learners in the school and that they have diverse skills and commitments, it may be valuable for a proper induction and introduction session. This can contribute to correctly positioning CWP workers within the school system as well as for the school to understand the work of CWP in their respective communities. It may aid in removing fear of loss of jobs by support staff or of being perceived as an informer on teachers' classroom practices. More importantly it may help to address the different contexts in which CWP

works such as the acceptance of CWP teacher assistants in uMthwalume versus resistance in the Eastern Cape. Teacher negligence is a major contributory factor to the weak educational outcomes of public primary schooling and requires concerted effort by all stakeholders to eradicate this scourge. While negligence is an ethical issue that must be addressed by the South African Council for Educators; overcrowding is an objective condition facing schools in the study and in the short-term teacher assistants, if well trained, may be able to help alleviate this challenge and build a cadre of new entrants into the teaching profession; to use Andersson’s phrase “small contributions make a big difference”. Furthermore, this process may facilitate the implementation of recommendations 1 and 3.

3.5. Addressing implementation challenges that undermine the programme: providing consumables, safety gear, and equipment on time and in correct quantities

The lack of safety gear and equipment is a major drawback of CWP recognising that the nature of some CWP work may be hazardous. Furthermore, consumables such as seeds, manure, gloves, cleaning material are, in general, reported to be in short supply and often late which place participants at a disadvantage in their workplaces. While provision for all of these is made in CWP budgets, shortcomings in payments of implementing agents and participants and logistics require urgent attention.

The following longer term recommendations have a more significant impact on the design and implementation of the programme and need more in-depth investigation to fully understand their implications – which could be strongly positive.

3.6. Offering structured workplace training

Recognising that CWP offers work opportunities as a means to providing a basic income and that the work is temporary and often transitory for participants, the skills shortage and weak schooling system brings the need for workplace skills development to the door of the CWP – even though this falls outside the mandate of the CWP. The data shows that through the skills gained at CWP, some participants were able to find fulltime work or to earn a livelihood. A model with a combination of on-the-job training and more intensive training may be considered. Should this be deemed appropriate for the CWP it may be achieved through partnerships with

Sectoral Education and Training Authorities or with extension workers from the Department of Agriculture or other state supported interventions.

3.7. Intensive training for teacher assistants

Generally public primary schools in the study are overcrowded and some schools are forced into offering multi-grade classes. Teacher assistants may be able to play a major role in alleviating overcrowding and improving the quality of educational outcomes at foundation phase. However, to be able to add real value, teacher assistants will require intensive training in fields identified as appropriate for engagement.

4. CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

The work CWP do in schools is contributing significantly to making public primary schools in the study safer, cleaner, attractive and productive. Such changes improve the learning environment within the school and although this is not directly within the classroom it may positively impact on school outcomes. Further investigation into the impact of improving the learning environment may be a worthwhile exercise.

The community vegetable gardens located on school properties produce food for vulnerable households in the community and supplement the fresh ingredients provided by the National School Nutritional Programme. Orphaned and vulnerable learners also receive fresh vegetables from the gardens to take home. This is a visible and successful enterprise that can be used as an example for creating self-reliant community projects. Poor communities are currently dependent on the state and the private sector to create employment opportunities. The Department of Basic Education sees public schools as centres of community life; however this has been elusive because teachers and school managers are often not from the communities that they serve. The production of food can serve as a platform in making schools part of community lives and a partner in community projects.

The CWP participants working in schools are also parents of learners in the school and feel committed to making a difference in the school. These are parents who are generally very poor and who are unlikely to fully participate in their children's schools. Thus having parents working in school seems to have created an organic link between the school and the community it serves. The endeavours of the post-apartheid democratic state were to institutionalise parental and community participation through school governing bodies, hence inadvertently entrenching the distance between parents and schools. While this link is not apparent to schools, teachers and parents are using CWP participants to relay messages. Also CWP participants are keen partakers in school events such as sports. If well understood and well managed, this positive presence of parents in schools can be harnessed to improve parental participation in their children's school and their children's learning.

In general, teacher assistants are well received by teachers, learners and school managers in the study and one of the recommendations made by teachers and schools managers was that CWP could offer this. However they appear to be used mainly as keeping the classrooms quiet when a teacher is not present in the class or marking learners' books – which is more contentious. Recognising that schools in poor communities are overcrowded and that many rural schools are small and compelled to offer multi-grade classes, teacher-assistants may be able to significantly help teachers and learners. However they should receive adequate training to make an impact on

learning and teaching; and real consultations should be conducted with teachers and school managers to better understand the potential as well as risks involved.

Quality and nature of education and schooling in particular generally provoke passion and fervour amongst communities; however in schools in the study there appears to be limited engagement or discourse on the nature and quality of education in school. It almost appears as if there is a general apathy or indifference to taking action in their schools. This may appear surprising as communities regard education highly and schooling as a means to access educational opportunities. However, parents in the communities in the study often feel inadequate to participate in their children's schools; CWP workers in schools are also parents and may be a vehicle to unlock creativity in schools and spark genuine school improvement that is community driven. However, this form of substantive grassroots participation requires a shift in the ethos underpinning school management, time and high levels of school management skills.

5. APPENDIX A: HIGH-LEVEL INSIGHTS GENERATED FROM THE CDI CONTEXT OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS EDUCATION REPORT

5.1. Overall Insights

- The majority of public primary schools are located in poor black communities. The schools are under-resourced with high learner-to-teacher ratios. There are classroom shortages and the majority of public schools have no libraries, computer or other laboratory facilities. Very few schools have any form of connectivity. There is a serious shortage of quality learning and teaching resources in foundation phase from basic counters to readers to wall charts. Teachers cannot rely on their learners to bring recycled material from their home to improvise as their learners' home environments are deprived of learning resources including magazines or newspapers. Nonetheless teachers make rudimentary learning and teaching resources such as wall charts, worksheets, as well as use recycled material and sometimes resources from the environment like clay.
- The post provisioning norm is creating havoc in no fee schools or schools in poor communities. The number of educators per school is determined by the learner: teacher ratios. This formula is not sufficiently sensitive to the unique needs and contexts of small schools particularly multi-Grade schools and rural schools that want to offer a wide curriculum. According to schools in the study the post provisioning norm does not provide accommodation for specialists such as librarians, computer technicians, etc. Furthermore, most schools in the study are understaffed, where the learner: teacher ratio is as high as 60:1. The goals of the post provisioning norm does not translate into equity as poor schools cannot afford additional teacher posts that can be paid from school fees.
- Education is highly regarded by learners and their parents in poor communities. They see education and schooling in particular as a means to lead meaningful lives, secure well-paying careers, and to be able to live independently as adults. At an intrinsic level education and learning allows personal independence to function fully in communal, social, religious, cultural, and economic activities. Learning and education also cultivates self-awareness, self-esteem, confidence, helps individual to remain motivated, enables individuals to make decisions, find information that empowers their lives and assert their rights, and allows continued learning. At an instrumental level learning and education facilitates intergenerational mobility, cultivates socially acceptable behaviour and promotes respect and deeper understanding, and a negative outcome of education entrenches gender stereotypes (the different roles and responsibilities of males and females in society). The accepted view is that women and men are responsible for different social responsibilities.
- Learners enjoy school so that they can be with friends, play, and learn. Schools are also unsafe and bullying is the most dangerous part of being at schools. Corporal punishment appears to be part of the psyche of poor communities as the most effective means of disciplining children and learners. Positive discipline remains on the periphery and has not become part of schools' mainstream discipline programme.

- Learner performance of the majority of public primary schools in standardised tests is extremely low. The Annual National Assessment results for 2011 show average scores of 30% and lower in languages and mathematics in all the grades. Teachers and school managers find the Annual National Assessment unfair, they feel that the standard is too high and does not accommodate their school contexts. The majority of teachers are not completing the curriculum. Their main reasons for noncompliance are overcrowded classrooms, 'slow learners', content overload in the curriculum, too many distractions from teaching time such as cleaning classrooms, feeding learners, attending workshops and meetings. Furthermore teachers and school managers in poor communities seem to spend a lot of time on mitigating the impact of poverty on their learners. They act as social workers, police officers, primary health practitioners, food servers, donors and then teachers. Nonetheless it looks like teachers have weak subject content knowledge and subject pedagogy content knowledge and that they are spending too little time on learning and teaching. Teachers and school managers do not feel that they are lacking in subject content knowledge or subject pedagogical knowledge. They blame their uncertainty around the curriculum on frequent changes to the national curriculum policy. Generally teachers and school managers of schools in poor communities appear to resist sincere reflection on the quality of the learning and teaching they are offering their learners. Accountability, delivering quality curriculum and high learner performance do not appear in teachers and school managers reflections on their work and the challenges facing them. The objective conditions of their school environments and their learners' poverty stricken backgrounds dominate their discourse on weak learner performance.
- Teachers find their profession extremely rewarding. They became teachers because they enjoy helping young people to learn and to develop their full potential. It is also a means to contribute to their communities' wellbeing.
- Learners from poor communities face multiple barriers to formal education and schooling in particular - they do not have enough to eat at home; they are often neglected by their parents; they have limited learning resources in their homes; their parents and caregivers often have low literacy levels; they have no access to basic services in their homes such as water and electricity; they live in shacks or crowded homes; some of their parents are young and insecure; they live far from their schools; and they have limited access to social and health services. They attend schools that are overcrowded and are often neglected by their teachers because their teachers perceive them as being 'slow learners' or their teachers are too overwhelmed to offer them any individual attention. They come to school because they want to learn and because they are guaranteed a meal at school. However, many are left behind and are not on par with the expectations of local and international education standards.
- School-Based Support Teams (a committee of teachers from the school) are the only real and consistent help that vulnerable learners get in schools in poor communities. However, the teachers on these committees are untrained for this role and are overwhelmed by the number of cases of learners requiring special attention and the long process to access services from both the departments of education and social development. This is further exacerbated by the lack of support schools receive to assist learners with special educational needs. Streaming in classrooms, repetition, and peer learning dominate teachers' approaches to supporting learners with special educational needs. The National School Nutrition Programme has made a significant contribution to learning and teaching, while it is only one meal during the

school day, learners, parents, teachers, and school managers appreciate the programme. In addition to alleviating hunger amongst learners, the programme also reduces bullying, improves learner attendance, and contributes to the efficacy of HIV/AIDS treatment of infected learners. Free school uniforms to orphaned and vulnerable children have also contributed to increasing access to schooling for poor children.

- The National Curriculum Statement and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement provide teachers and school managers with benchmarks for the cognitive level they need to ensure their learners reach at the end of a grade. In addition it stipulates the required content to be covered and the number of formal assessments to be implemented and recorded. In foundation phase the curriculum policy articulates the daily programme the teacher must follow in order to meet the content and cognitive demands of the curriculum. Lesson planning has become much easier for teachers with the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. The pace setters and content specifications have eased lesson planning. Their main resources in lesson planning include textbooks, resources on the internet and policy documents. However, their actual classroom practices are restricted by the limited learning and teaching resources available in their classrooms and schools. Interestingly teachers are overwhelmed by the variety of textbooks in the markets. Teachers are planning individually as well as collaboratively. The quarterly and annual plans are done with their colleagues in the same grade / phase / subject area, while daily and weekly lesson plans are done individually. It appears that collaborative planning is contributing to their professional development and improving collegiality. Teachers and school managers appear to be compliant with on-going assessment as required by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Furthermore they are aware of the need for formal and informal assessments in their teaching. Textbooks, department of education database of questions, resources on the internet, and school's own databank of assessments are used to set examination questions and other formal assessment tasks including tests and assignments and projects.
- Foundation phase teachers use two dominant strategies to implement curriculum policy in their context of overcrowded classrooms; i.e. behaviourist teaching approaches such as lecturing and choral reading and they focus on their 'top performing' learners. The preference to behaviourist teaching methodology is influenced by their initial training as well as their perceptions that their learners are 'slow'. Few teachers use basal reading techniques - a scientific method for teaching reading which focuses on phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension. They prefer choral reading that centres on single letters and individual words often with single consonants. Teachers do use constructivist teaching and learning approaches sporadically including learning by play and learning by doing, collaborative learning and situated learning. They recognise the value and efficacy of these teaching strategies but resist using them all the time. It appears that the management of large classes and their perception of having 'slow' learners have created a fear that constructivist teaching methods may be impractical to do all the time. An interesting finding is that young learners in foundation phase understand quality learning and teaching and can make informed decisions about the quality of their teachers because they inherently understand their learning styles and their learning needs.
- The language of learning and teaching is a complex issue. The majority of parents and teachers want English as the language of learning and teaching from foundation phase for their children mainly because it is seen as the 'language of work' and that it will improve their chances of performing well at secondary school.

Teachers complain that the home languages as taught in schools is very formal and almost foreign to the language learners speak at home and the technical terms especially in mathematics are more difficult in the home languages than in English. The home language resources are few and the quality is bad with lots of errors. They also find that their classrooms are multi-lingual. Furthermore there is a shortage of home language teachers and that all the curriculum policy documents are in English. Only a few teachers recognise the value and efficacy of teaching in the learners' home languages at foundation phase.

- Homework is another multifaceted issue. Teachers and school managers' report that their learners do not fulfil the homework requirement, while parents and learners say that they meet this requirement. However, parents do not feel competent or confident in helping their children with homework. They have few learning resources at home and often rely on their child's textbook and notes in their child's exercise book. They draw on given examples to help their children with homework. However there is a shortage of textbooks and teachers do not allow their learners to take home some of their books for fear of carelessness. Interestingly, parents know very little about their children's school curriculum and are keen to learn more about it. Low literacy levels amongst parents and caregivers are also a reason for learners' noncompliance with regard to homework according to teachers and parents. There is also a perception amongst some parents that teachers are abdicating their teaching responsibilities when they give their children homework, while others are unsure about the purpose of homework. Homework also appears to further disadvantage learners who are orphaned and living in child-headed households, learners who are living with extended families and learners who live in dysfunctional home and are face neglected.
- Parental participation is low in their children's schooling and is another multi-layered issue. Teachers and school managers are frustrated and feel that parents are neglectful while acknowledging that parents are working far from their homes and are unable to be very active in their children's school events. Teachers also recognise that many of their learners' parents have low literacy levels and often feel intimidated by formal institutions such as schools. Parents also acknowledge that they may not be doing enough to help the school but are exasperated by their own poverty and limited resources in the home to share with their children's school or to make learning conducive in their homes. Both teachers and parents are aware that a significant number of learners and children live in child-headed homes with minimal support or living with their grannies that are unable to participate in school events.
- Professional development that is continuous and coherent to meet the developmental needs of educators is non-existent in the schools in the study. Teachers and school managers receive ad hoc training mainly in the form of short workshops or they can access bursaries to read for a qualification at a tertiary institution. Schools as workplaces have no budgets for internal professional development. Both teachers and school managers see this as a major contradiction of the Integrated Quality Management System that is underpinned by developmental appraisal.
- A third of South African public and community schools are categorised as multi-grade schools representing 0.4% learners and 7.07% teachers. Multi-grade schools are largely in rural areas and on farm schools with the exception of Gauteng. Multi-grade schools are small with 1 to 2 classrooms. Since 2004 there is an increase in multi-grade schools in South Africa. The increase is largely due to migration of learners from rural schools to urban schools, resulting in a drop of learner numbers in primary schools in rural areas. The post provisioning norm only considers learner enrolment figures in determining allocation of teachers to schools

resulting in a shortage of teachers in rural schools. Multi-grade schools receive no unique support by national and provincial departments of education. They are required to function like mono-grade schools and meet all the requirements of curriculum policies. Teachers are not trained and supported to teach multi-grade classes and resort to revision and repetition to reinforce basic concepts and use peer tutoring to alleviate their burden as well as a means to organise their classrooms.

- There are major interventions by the Department of Basic Education and the Gauteng and Western Cape departments of education. The Department of Basic Education has designed and distributed workbooks in all languages covering key subject areas from grade R to 7. The workbooks are free to schools and all learners should have a workbook and must write in them and take them home to continue with activities. The workbooks can also be downloaded from their website. The Gauteng and Western Cape departments of education have implemented large scale literacy and numeracy improvement strategies targeted to primary schools and foundation phase in specific. In the most recent McKinsey report (2011) - *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* – Western Cape Education Department is one of 20 education systems in the world that are showing improvement.
- South African experts in education policy and policy implementation have noted eight factors that are contributing to low educational outcomes in public schools, including: apartheid's legacy of unequal education; high levels of poverty in communities; weak quality of learning and teaching; lack of accountability across the system; corruption and inefficiencies in the system; ineffective leadership and managements; on-going changes in the curriculum; and ineffective implementation of the language policy. They recommend that school improvement programmes should focus on creating a positive learning and teaching environment; building capacity across the schooling system; increasing access to quality learning and teaching resources; and using technology to support the functions of schools.
- The McKinsey Report – *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* identify six actions that improving school systems have in common. These are revising the curriculum and standards, ensuring an appropriate reward and remuneration structure for teachers and principals, building the technical skills of teachers and principals, assessing learners, establishing data systems, facilitating improvements through the introduction of policy documents, and education laws.
- Successful international interventions to improve the quality of multi-grade schools show the following critical components: adapting or re-organising the curriculum to meet multi-grade teaching and learning; developing learning and teaching resources specific for multi-grade teaching and learning; focussing on active learning and facilitating learners to learn independently and in collaboration with their peers; sustained teacher support and on-going professional development especially in improving teachers pedagogical content knowledge and skills; community involvement, especially in governance; policy commitment and acknowledgement of the unique needs of multi-grade classrooms; and pressure and support (i.e. policy directives and related support).
- Mobile phones are ubiquitous in South Africa with 88.9% of household ownership and only 14.5% households have a working landline telephone. The internet in South Africa is accessed mainly through mobile phones. The average mobile phone user spend on data has increased by half in the last 18 months, while spending on voice calls has declined.

- Young people use the internet to keep in touch, mainly using Facebook and Mxit (cheaper than making a call or using short message services). They also used the internet in the main to look for work (15.5%), search for information (15.5%), and to send and receive e-mails (14.5%).
- Teachers, parents, school managers, and circuit managers are keen on using information and communication technologies in education. They want to teach learners about technology as well as use technology to learn and to teach. Currently technology is used for administration; communication; creating worksheets and examination papers; making learning and teaching resources and improving content knowledge. Parents also appear to use technology for child minding. Teachers prefer mobile devices mainly laptops and data projectors or smart boards over desk-top computers for learning and teaching in their classrooms. In a study in rural schools in the Eastern Cape in 2002/3 on using hand-held computers for professional development, findings showed positive improvements in rural teachers' contents knowledge, professional knowledge, fostered sharing, and enabled collaborative planning. Teachers find computer laboratories difficult to use because it takes time to get learners to the laboratory, there is not enough computers in the laboratory, and scheduling use of the laboratory is time consuming. Furthermore the lack of technical support is another major barrier to effectively using computer laboratories at school. It appears that school computer laboratories are seldom used in the foundation phase. Teachers also value television and radio sets as learning and teaching resources. Some schools in the study tune into the public broadcasters' educational programming offered on radio.
- Parents, teachers, and school managers acknowledge that learners are adept with mobile phones and that there may be educational value to mobile phones, especially accessing the internet through smart phones.
- Teachers routinely use their mobile phones in their work. They use the calculator to work out percentages; the calendar for lesson planning, the clock for timing their teaching and learning activities and the web browser to access the internet. While their learners use mobile phones to calculate, make voice calls, send and receive messages, download music, take pictures, share music, send 'please call me', play games, chat, and browse the internet.
- There is a significant gap between learners and teachers in both internet usage and using the applications available on mobile phones. Learners (82%) are more confident on advanced internet features than their teachers (51%). Learners (87%) tend to use the applications available on their mobile compared to their teachers (49%). Teachers' technological content knowledge is weak to effectively engage with information and communications technology available to them. In order for teachers to be able to effectively integrate technology, particularly information, communication technology, teachers must have sound technological pedagogical content knowledge. Technological pedagogical content knowledge is the intersection between teachers' content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and technological knowledge.
- Schools in the study have prohibited the use of mobile phones in the classroom for fear of classroom management demands the technology will impose. They fear that their learners will be distracted by social networks and instant messaging services available, theft of mobile phones, accessing pornography, and cyber bullying.