NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

The Centre for the **COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Reimagining our schools,
strengthening our communities

FOREWORD BY PROFESSOR SIBONGILE MUTHWA

Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University

Prof Sibongile Muthwa

As knowledge hubs, universities need to engage in critical conversations about reinventing education and addressing contemporary 'wicked problems' – highly complex social, economic and environmental challenges whose potential solutions require creative thinking beyond the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge. These include the COVID-19 virus pandemic, climate change, a rapidly expanding population of unemployed youth, and deepening inequality between those who have access to basic needs and education, and those who do not. In particular, we need to draw on our namesake Nelson Mandela's belief in the power of education to catapult the marginalised and vulnerable in society out of persistent poverty and exclusion.

It is worth noting that, per capita, the South African government spends more on education than many advanced economies, yet our primary education system was ranked 116th out of 137 countries in the World Economic Forum 2017–2018 Global Competitiveness Report, while the quality of mathematics and science education was ranked 128th. Deficiencies in the South African schooling system are further borne out by the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which indicates that the educational achievement of fourth and eighth grade learners in mathematics and science ranks amongst the poorest performing countries in the world, although the scores have been slowly improving since the advent of democracy in 1994. In addition, South Africa ranked last out of 50 countries in the Progress in International Reading Literacy (PIRLS) study, which found that 78% of South African pupils at this level could not read for meaning in any language.

At the same time, it is estimated that 10% of the country's teachers are absent from school each day, while research has found that 79% of South African Grade 6 mathematics teachers were classified as having content knowledge below the level at which they were teaching.

It is well known that the foundations of education in South Africa are weak and the academic performance of school learners is uneven across the schooling system. From the evidence, it is clear that the majority of South African learners are not receiving a quality education and these unequal educational foundations are already laid in the early childhood development phase, with large differentials in performance opening up between children who attended quality preschools and those who did not. Studies have shown that, of 100 children that start school, approximately 60 will reach and write matric, 37 will pass and 12 will access university. Only four will complete an undergraduate degree within six years.

Given that teacher quality is one of the most significant factors determining the learning outcomes of school learners, it cannot be disputed that universities fulfil a crucial role in improving teacher quality and professionalism through relevant, high-quality initial teacher education qualifications, as well as continuing professional development opportunities for practising teachers. To this end, our Faculty of Education excels in equipping graduates as critical thinkers with a profound understanding of the crucial role education fulfils in advancing human progress. Our Faculty of Education has long embraced a humanising pedagogical approach that aims to release the full transformative agency and potential

of each graduate to form clear and purposeful goals, work with others with different perspectives, identify untapped opportunities and develop creative solutions to the problems confronting our education system.

To enable agency, educators must recognise the individuality of each learner, but they must also acknowledge the wider set of relationships – with peers, families and communities – that influence their learning. In a concerted effort to enhance the fitness-for-purpose of the teacher education qualifications offered by the university, the Faculty of Education actively encourages its staff and students to put their knowledge to work in addressing the plight of vulnerable communities through the engagement and activities of the Centre for the Community School (CCS).

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The CCS works with a growing network of schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and the wider Eastern Cape to reimagine schooling under challenging conditions, especially in working class communities. A key feature of the CCS's engagement is to ensure that the voices of all participants, including community members, principals, school governing body members, teachers, learners, volunteers and parents, are valued, recognised and acknowledged, thereby establishing platforms for the university to partner with communities in co-creating meaningful strategies to improve the quality of schooling in resource-constrained contexts.

Schools by themselves will not solve the education crisis in South Africa. Strong leadership from multiple sectors, including post-school education and training institutions, is needed to build community networks that create a sense of common ownership and accountability for interventions aimed at promoting a quality education for all learners. The African proverb *"If you want to walk fast, walk alone; but if you want to walk far, walk together"* articulates the kinds of collaborative approaches required to bring about sustainable improvements to our education system. The unwavering commitment of the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr Muki Moeng, the Director of the CCS, Dr Bruce Damons, and their teams, to develop models of school improvement that are relevant and responsive to the contextual realities of schools, are exemplary and inspirational. I salute their decisively activist stance on education in our communities and the scholarship of teacher education. This approach aligns substantively with our university's promise to position our intellectual enterprise for the improvement of the human condition.

EDUCATION IS THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING

Message by Dr Muki Moeng, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University

Education is the centre of everything, and a key goal of the Faculty of Education is to revive teacher education as an esteemed profession. We are proactively recruiting strong students to study teaching, and implementing the faculty's motto: *Dare to teach!* This motto emerges from Brazilian educator–philosopher Paulo Freire's *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to those who dare to teach*.

In one of these letters, Freire (1998) promotes a progressive educational practice and identifies qualities and dispositions that progressive educators should possess. These are, among others: humility, lovingness, courage, tolerance, decisiveness, wisdom, and joy of living. He argues that none of these qualities can be realised if the educator lacks the urge to permanently seek for justice.

We are committed to bringing to life Madiba's famous 'weapon' quote: *Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world*. We continually interrogate and reposition its contextual relevance for the 21st century and within the drive for a transformed, decolonised education system. To this end, we established, together with different education stakeholders, a coalition called *Letsema*. The manner in which this group was established epitomised the definition of *letsema: a group of people working together building and nurturing one another towards one objective*. This is a collaborative, generative, co-creative space in which members of the community have a powerful voice.

Dr Muki Moeng

As part of the decolonisation and transformation agenda, we are addressing the entire educational system. This includes looking at South Africa's poor matric results overall, what we as a faculty are doing to improve the standard, and how we are assisting learners to do better. We regard matric results as the culmination of 13 years of formal schooling. Monitoring, support and preparedness has to start in Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the Foundation Phase and continue all the way through to matric.

We currently have 2013 students registered in the faculty and 47 academic staff members, 28 of whom have PhDs. Annually we have over 11 000 applications for first year. Foundation Phase training is our faculty's flagship and we are producing

outstanding teachers from our four-year B.Ed Foundation Phase degree for all our communities in the Eastern Cape, with many of our graduates now teaching in our working class, township and rural schools.

Foundation Phase teachers are responsible for the educational foundation of children from Grade R to Grade 3 (generally aged 5 to 9). They guide the development of each child's mathematical ability, language and literacy, self-concept and self-confidence, which profoundly influences the rest of these children's lives.

From 2019 we are partnering with *Early Inspiration*, an ECD organisation in Port Elizabeth, headed by faculty graduate Dr Lauren Stretch, to explore ways in which we could assist ECD care-givers in attaining an NQF-aligned qualification in the future. *Early Inspiration* focuses on young children's development and stimulation, and equips students, parents and care-givers to enhance the child's development from an early age.

To help improve high school education in the Eastern Cape, over the past ten years we have focused on attracting graduates with subject-specific strengths and degrees such as a BSc or BCom or BA. They do our one-year postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE), which qualifies them as high school teachers.

To assist Grade 12 learners to achieve the best possible results, including university entrance passes, we partner with other faculties in a range of programmes, and collaborate with schools in Nelson Mandela Bay and other parts of the Eastern Cape province, including the deep rural areas.

Our faculty is especially proud of the Centre for the Community School (CCS), fittingly situated in the iconic Foundation Phase building on the Missionvale Campus in Port Elizabeth,, close to a number of primary schools in the surrounding townships of Missionvale, Zwide and New Brighton. It was specifically built here to convey to communities that we are committed to all children receiving a first-class educational start in life.

"To help improve high school education in the Eastern Cape, over the past ten years we have focused on attracting graduates with subject-specific strengths and degrees such as a BSc or BCom or BA."

The CCS is deeply engaged in improving the quality of education in communities in the greater Nelson Mandela Bay and throughout the Eastern Cape by engaging with schools and communities in the co-

creation of what we call the community school – a school that is deeply part of its community and a community that is deeply part of the school.

The challenges facing our schools require a multipronged approach with different faculties, units and departments from the university participating at different points, depending on the expertise required, and ranging from school management training, to psychology, to youth literacy.

Our faculty scholars have produced considerable research and many seminal papers, chapters and books on new approaches to education and curriculum development. An example is *The Pedagogy of Mathematics in South Africa: is there a unifying logic?* published in December 2017 and co-edited by the faculty's Professor Paul Webb and Professor Nicky Roberts from the University of Johannesburg.

This book on mathematics education is the outcome of a research project commissioned by the Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA), towards understanding why learners in many of our schools do so badly in maths. It identified three ways to change this, namely, developing mathematical identities where teachers believe they *can* teach maths, and children believe they *can* do maths; developing teachers' in-depth understanding of maths; and using multilingualism as a resource for maths teaching. It is this kind of scholarship that enables us to improve our teaching and our engagement work.

In all our endeavours we focus on the 'humanisation of education' and Nelson Mandela University is recognised as a leader in this field.

It is about:

- Dislodging outdated theories and narrow-minded preconceptions of teaching, learning and human engagement in order to stimulate an oxygenated, enquiring approach to education;
- Re-looking at who owns the power of knowledge in the classroom and school, recognising that it is not only the educators, but learners, students, parents and community volunteers in our schools, who bring their own knowledge and intelligence, which needs to be acknowledged, encouraged and incorporated; and
- Holding people to high expectations and helping them to achieve these.

Humanising pedagogy recognises the need to leverage the cultural and intellectual wealth that South Africa's diverse communities offer, and to incorporate our homegrown knowledge into education and the curriculum. It also recognises the diversity of backgrounds in which learners grow up and to ensure this is recognised and developed within our schools and universities.

We hope to see the commitment to excellence and generosity of spirit so visible in the CCS and our community schools, recognised as an example to be embraced in all South African schools as we strive for sustainable educational solutions.

REIMAGINING WHAT SCHOOLS IN OUR COMMUNITIES SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Overview by Dr Bruce Damons, Director of the Centre for the Community School (CCS)

The CCS is an Engagement Entity in the Faculty of Education, Nelson Mandela University

South African schools in poor socio-economic communities are facing a crisis of inefficiency and inequality. The impact of COVID-19 further highlights these inequalities as many learners from these communities are unable to benefit from the digital support platforms offered by multiple stakeholders.

The failure of the present education system to address the needs of the majority of local communities, requires a reimagining of the concept and function of schools. We believe that to adequately address the current education realities in the country, schools need to re-evaluate how they can best serve their communities by opening up possibilities for a better future for all.

Dr Bruce Damons

Using lessons from our engagement with members of both rural and urban South African communities, we reflect on how fostering mutually beneficial partnerships between a school and its community can contribute towards the holistic development and well-being of all school stakeholders.

Our goal is to reimagine what schools should look like, with an initial focus on those in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and rural Eastern Cape. The majority of schools here are located in areas faced with high unemployment and the severe socio-economic challenges that are common to many

Vision and Mission

The Centre for the Community School (CCS) aims to contribute to the quality of public education in South Africa by developing theoretical and practice-based models of school improvement that are relevant and responsive to the contextual realities of schools and the communities they serve. This is aligned to the vision and mission of the Faculty of Education which is to be a dynamic community of teachers, leaders and scholars in education, committed to creating a vibrant, socially just and democratic society.

contexts but are pronounced in the working class and rural communities of our country, where the quality of education is plagued by the impact of poverty.

We firmly believe that to advance teaching and learning effectively, we need to give attention to the multiple socio-economic issues. We simultaneously need to move away from the notion of getting schools 'back to the way they were'. Instead, we need to envisage new ways of dealing with current and future challenges.

The space of learning, the school, is complex and, at present, is often perceived as chaotic. Trust-building and co-defined purpose with the school, learners, parents, volunteers and the community are essential, so that out of caring and commitment we reach an agreement as to what quality education is – with continual reflection as a key process.

"We advocate that in order to provide quality education, public schools in South Africa should encompass the key characteristics of a community school ... "

We advocate that in order to provide quality education, public schools in South Africa should encompass the key characteristics of a community school – a school *of* the community – by positioning themselves as places that foster and nourish hope on the personal, relational and collective levels. In doing so, these schools can become more responsive to the impact of socio-economic challenges on their learners, staff and community members, which in turn allows for improved dialogue, promotion of positive relationships, and collaboration towards improved education for all.

Objectives and Goals

- Connect to schools across the province that are effectively engaged in a range of school and community activities designed to improve educational outcomes and benefit the community they serve
- Build the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of the community school
- Draw from the work of community schools as a knowledge base to inform the work of the Centre
- Promote, strengthen, and support the work of community schools in the Eastern Cape
- Serve as a national resource centre that focuses on the community school as a model for school improvement in South Africa
- Promote and develop a critical form of participatory action-learning and action-research

Ultimately, we believe that it is through collective action that schools and communities can make a meaningful impact on the education of their children, and through this contribute meaningfully to improve the trajectory of their own lives and that of the community as a whole.

There is a growing national and international interest in the work of the CCS, with great willingness to share knowledge in the education space and to be receptive to new concepts of knowledge.

We are a small team and rely on collaboration and support from a broad range of stakeholders not only to implement co-constructed projects identified by various communities but also to develop our scholarship around the community-school.

The CCS was awarded an NRF engagement grant in 2019 to support the continued exploration of the scholarship in the discipline of community-schooling. Through the grant, the CCS seeks to contribute meaningful learning and evidence-based practices on school improvement by investigating:

- alternative approaches to school improvement that are relevant and responsive to the contextual realities of under-served schools and communities in the country;
- how to promote engagement where school communities are encouraged to re-imagine new ways of dealing with

current and future challenges, as well as redefining school success and functionality;
- the efficacy of multi-stakeholder communities of practice (CoP) in promoting participation and involvement from all stakeholders with an interest in creating a functional school in their community.

The CCS is part of a collaboration with Rhodes, North West, Free State and Stellenbosch universities to explore scholarship around community engagement.

Faculty of Education and cross-faculty collaboration is also increasing, especially with the social development professions, and we have worked with colleagues in human movement sciences and community psychology.

The CCS was invited to form part of a collaboration with the University of Cape Town , to focus on school and community engagement in 2018. The collaboration culminated in a national imbizo, held from 25 to 27 September 2019 at Nelson Mandela University. Under the theme, *Exploring partnerships between Schools-Communities-Universities*, multiple national stakeholders engaged critically with how to build knowledge, language, and praxis that responds to educational challenges confronted by poor working-class communities.

The reimagined approach to schools is important for:

- ***Teaching and learning*** that is organic, co-constructed, multifaceted and which values the diversity of knowledge across various contexts. Its products must be shared and interrogated in order to be mutually beneficial for all engaged in the process.
- ***Engagement*** that is a mutually beneficial and collective process which recognises the multiple voices present. The social, political and economic context of communities provides the catalyst for this praxis to occur. It is an iterative process that acknowledges and attempts to minimise power differences.
- ***Scholarship*** which is developed through praxis that allows for the creation, interrogation, documentation and dissemination of knowledge in accessible ways to multiple stakeholders.

ORIGINS OF THE CENTRE FOR THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Addressing the Needs of the Majority of our Schools

In 2011 Professor Denise Zinn, then Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education at Nelson Mandela University, successfully applied for the establishment of the Centre for the Community School (CCS) in the faculty. Prof Zinn went on to become Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Learning and Teaching at the university from 2015 to 2019.

'The reason we established the CCS is that as a faculty we needed to be more connected to the schools. We would send students to do their practical training but they mostly went to schools that were properly resourced, and we felt that we needed to include all schools and to transform our curriculum so that we addressed the needs of the majority of those in our metro, province, and country.'

Establishing the CCS was an exciting coming together of like-minded scholars, including Prof Zinn, and Dr Alistair Witten – whom Prof Zinn met at Harvard where they were on doctoral scholarships – and who had a rich source of people contributing to his thinking, including Dr Peter Senge, guru of organisational theory, and author of *The Fifth Discipline*.

> "Committed school leadership and the work of the CCS is evident in schools that are succeeding despite the overwhelming odds and challenges of continuing high levels of poverty and inequality."

Witten's doctorate was on the community school practices he had developed as he principal of Lavender Hill High School in Cape Town, which suffers from conditions of poverty and violence similar to schools in parts of Port Elizabeth's Northern Areas. He approached Prof Zinn's husband, Allan Zinn, then programme director of the Imbewu School Project – a British government-funded educational programme for township and rural schools in the Eastern Cape – to link him up with schools in the province that were focused on community involvement in their schools.

Allan Zinn identified schools in Uitenhage and Grahamstown, whose approaches Dr Witten included in his doctoral thesis to broaden his development of the theory and principles of how commitment from the community, parents and teachers enables the success of schools and learners in socio-economically depressed areas. These schools become 'beacons of hope' as they draw on the principles of agency and asset-based community and school development, instead of relying on the government for their well-being.

'Dr Witten is the creator and innovator of the community school model where communities develop an ownership of their schools and take on the responsibility of ensuring their children get the best possible education in a safe, clean environment,' says Prof Zinn. 'The model paved the way for Nelson Mandela University to engage with our schools in the development of the community school and in the scholarship of engagement.

'Dr Witten was committed to developing the CCS in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, with a coalition of schools that

shared our approach, notably the Manyano schools; the Manyano Network of about 14 township schools in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage became a reality in 2010. This became the basis for the CCS, which I initiated in the Faculty of Education and in all the relevant university committees, with strong support from the Vice-Chancellor at the time, Professor Derrick Swartz.

'The establishment of the CCS was approved, with Dr Witten as the director, but we lacked funding and I therefore leveraged funds through the faculty, University Council, a special national Department of Education programme and a fundraising drive to establish it and to pay for Dr Witten's salary, as well as administration, field workers and other expenses such as transport.

'In 2010 we had a magnificent launch of the CCS in the sports centre on the Missionvale Campus, which was attended by a huge number schoolchildren, members of the Department of Basic Education, the VC and members of the university and leading scholars, both local and international. A special guest was Pedro Noguera, Dr Witten's doctoral supervisor, and Distinguished Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at UCLA. His research entirely resonates with the CCS as it focuses on the ways in which schools are influenced by social and economic conditions, as well as by demographic trends in local, regional and global contexts.'

When Dr Witten's commute between Port Elizabeth and his family home in Cape Town became unsustainable, in 2016 former principal of Sapphire Road Primary School in Port Elizabeth, Dr Bruce Damons, took over as director of the CSS, having joined the Faculty of Education the previous year. As part of succession planning for the directorship, Dr Whitten had supervised Damons' master's degree, and his doctorate was co-supervised by Dr Whitten and Prof Zinn.

'The CSS is extremely important in the faculty's transformation of how student teachers are educated in the realistic settings of 80% of our schools,' says Prof Zinn. 'It has helped us to develop the "new teacher" along with community ownership of our schools. New schools are being added to the network as we grow and the scholarship of the community school is

developing into a rich research field, with increasing numbers of scholars pursuing it and Dr Witten continuing the work nationally.'

Authenticity in the South African Education Space

'Leadership at every single level is more important than even before and that is why the CCS needs to be foregrounded nationally,' says Dr Alistair Witten, the first director of the CCS. He is currently a partner in LeadershipLabSA and an Adjunct Professor at the Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town.

'Committed school leadership and the work of the CCS is evident in schools that are succeeding despite the overwhelming odds and challenges of continuing high levels of poverty and inequality. We all know the effects associated with poverty and inequality – malnutrition, ill-health, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence, the fragmentation of the family unit and child neglect. Children cannot leave the effects of these forces in their lives at the school gate – it is brought into the school and affects the teaching and learning processes, severely constricting the educational choices and opportunities available to young people and their families in these communities, and negatively affecting education outcomes.'

Dr Witten says the potential of the community school to overcome many of these outcomes through broad-based leadership is very close to his heart and the model he introduced when he worked as a school teacher and principal at Lavender Hill High in Cape Town.

'In the late 1990s and early 2000s, things in our community were so violent that the government wanted to bring in the police and put up electric fences around our schools. I argued against this as we didn't want to turn our schools into isolated islands, we want to turn them into centres of change in our communities.

'To achieve this, we started working with a number of schools in Lavender Hill. As part of addressing the problem, we approached the gang members and asked them if they wanted to help make the bricks and blocks for families building homes in the area. To make sure it was properly

done, we got UCT Business School involved to develop a pricing model for the brick and block business.

'Within eight months, the issues of vandalism and violence on our school premises had dropped and disappeared almost completely and this got us deeper into the community engagement approach. For the first time ever, we had an overflow of people at meetings as they were so interested in what we were doing.'

The model for the community school grew organically into the topic for Dr Witten's PhD and as a new model for schools in South Africa after he connected with Allan Zinn, then programme director of the Imbewu project for schools in the Eastern Cape.

In the early work he did with Zinn in the Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage schools that Zinn identified through the Imbewu programme, Dr Witten said three leadership characteristics stood out, despite the schools' socioeconomic hardships:

1. They had leaders (principals and teachers) who were proactive, extremely committed and had a bigger vision for the role of the school in society; they located the school as a site of hope, transformation and improvement, and they actively mobilised stakeholders to support them in achieving this vision.
2. They had a strong school–community connection with the parents, the churches, the mosques, shops, public libraries, and police to try and mobilise stakeholder groups to help them address their challenges. They would come together as a community to participate in the decisions that needed to made about the schools,
3. They exercised their own agency – their capacity to act on and change the situation – and there was a strong focus on not waiting for help from outside but mobilising themselves.

'They inspired me; they were a model for what a new approach to school improvement could look like in South Africa,' says Dr Witten.

'In collaboration with the Zinns, we came up with the idea to set up a centre that would develop an alternative response to school improvement from the ground up, focused on active engagement in authentic ways, and which could serve as a hub for schools countrywide.

'Since its launch in 2014, the CSS has been part of the circle that connects schools, communities and all the faculties in the university; naturally, the Faculty of Education, but other faculties such as the Faculty of Health Sciences, to address the health challenges facing the schools.

> "In the late 1990s and early 2000s, things in our community were so violent that the government wanted to bring in the police and put up electric fences around our schools. I argued against this as we didn't want to turn our schools into isolated islands ... "

'Being the CCS Director was one of the most wonderful and exciting times of my life as it allowed us to create something that is authentic in the South African education space. The CCS has a strong intellectual base and from the outset we encouraged school principals, teachers, parents and community members to be critical intellectuals and to study further. We set up the Community Studies Writing Circle which opened up the CSS space for everyone to come together and discuss ideas and approaches.

'Dr Damons shone through in this as the then Principal of Sapphire Road Primary. He had a vision of what society could be and his moral purpose and commitment and passion for working on the ground, together with the social capital he brought through the rich community relationships he had established, helped Sapphire to achieve their goals.

'Too many of our schools in similar situations of financial poverty and socio-economic inequality, are lacking in these qualities; they sit and wait for external support and it is not always forthcoming. The difference between them and community-engaged schools is vast; the latter believe in their own ability, they have a bigger vision despite their circumstances and they have leadership that can mobilise the community to help achieve the school's goals.

'The CCS should be recognised for the value it can contribute to education and society by being elevated to a centre that extends beyond the university and that is funded by the Department of Basic of Education or education-focused funders.

'And because the CCS adopts a transdisciplinary approach, it should also be connected the Departments of Health, Social Development, Women, Children and People with Disabilities, and the Police and other services, because the challenges the schools face are not just education related.

'I think the CCS hasn't yet received the recognition it deserves because the mental models of managing schools are still by and large very traditional. Most school models continue to be driven from the top down and those in senior positions at national educational level and funding boards have a very conventional view of the school and what it is; they don't see the school and the community as one.

'The CCS needs to keep articulating its alternative approach to schooling in South Africa, to keep defining excellence differently, where excellence is generally confined to the former Model C view, and not with our township and rural schools.

'There is no model like the CSS and a national conference on "Revisiting People's Education" needs to be facilitated by the CSS. It needs to invite other universities, schools, communities and government departments to relook at the role of people's education in the post 1994 dispensation.

'The school is a shared public space, it sits in a community, and that public space not only provides learner education, it provides the community with volunteering and developmental activities that help them to become more active in society and the economy, such as adult education in the evening.

'The school is a shared public space, it sits in a community, and that public space not only provides learner education, it provides the community with volunteering and developmental activities that help them to become more active in society and the economy ... "

Our schools are potential sites for community development but we haven't developed that model and it is due to the lack of vision of those developing educational policies that we are missing a huge opportunity.

'My personal opinion is that during Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga's time, there have been small incremental changes, but, in general, the higher you go up in the Department of Education the more you find that appointments to key positions are politically driven, not educationally based, and often that is at odds with the educational expertise and improvements we so badly need.

'When big decisions are built by party loyalty and politics rather than expertise, the political always trumps the professional. If we had more people with a professional education focus in the Ministry of Education, who are free from political interference, we would have been much further in terms of improving our education system. In the absence of this, as we are experiencing, it is all the more important for all our schools to start on focusing on their own agency.

'In my role with LeadershipLabSA, part of the work I do is to engage in leadership development for schools, I also lecture on partnerships in education at UCT and on systemic improvement on education for the National Education Trust. For all of this I hold the model of the community school foremost in my head and use it to inform the research and the work that we do on the ground. In my leadership presentations, I often speak about the community school as a different way of doing things in South Africa. I am strongly connected to this because I know what can be achieved if we replicate what has been accomplished through co-creation in our community schools. I have seen how it can turn a community around and how our schools can become centres of change.'

A **CO-CONSTRUCTED** APPROACH TO THE REIMAGINED SCHOOL

The reimagining of school, within the context of the community school, requires an exploration beyond the notion of a space for only academic outcomes for the learners, but also an evolving site of possibility for the betterment of the community that it serves. We therefore advocate for an approach to a reimagination that will embrace the voices, knowledges and agency of all stakeholders wanting to contribute towards the reimagined school. We further argue that the approach should challenge the deficit definition of a community school as a dysfunctional school located in our townships and rural areas, and conceptualise it instead as a school that nurtures, develops and demonstrates personal, relational and collective hope. (Damons and Cherrington, 2020).

The CCS emphasises the phrase 'co-create' as we seek, and value, the advice of all stakeholders with an interest in schooling. The primary stakeholders are the schools, learners, parents and community in which the school is situated. We recognise, however, the important role that secondary stakeholders like non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and government, play in support of the schools, and we work with primary and secondary stakeholders to assist schools in making progress.

Intrinsic to co-creation is ensuring that the voices of all participants, including community members, volunteers and parents, are valued, recognised and acknowledged. There is extensive goodwill in working-class and rural communities, where many people are volunteers in educational and other fields. They have substantive knowledge, which, as part of a decolonised education, needs to be both recognised and harmonised with formal education through critical engagements.

All participants are co-creators of the exploration to find contextually relevant solutions. The different ways in which poor working-class communities, schools and

external stakeholders come together to create an enabling environment for learning is rapidly emerging as a practice and scholarship (Vince Whitman & Aldinger, 2009; Damons 2012,2017)).

This contests the outdated educational paradigm in which power is solely vested in the 'experts' in the formal educational sector, and demonstrates how the community school requires the participation of the informal sector (parents, volunteers and community members) and the non-formal sector (NGOs and non-profit organisations), to make a significant difference in the educational space.

Methodological Approach

Here we set out the basis on which the methodological work of the CCS can serve as a catalyst to develop a broader framework for social facilitation within and beyond Nelson Mandela University.

The starting point when engaging authentically with various stakeholders has to be the love of the people. As Paulo Freire says in the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1970), "If I do not love the world, if I do not love life, if I do not love people, I cannot enter into dialogue." It requires the willingness to want to contribute to the improvement of people's lives. It requires of us to create authentic dialogical and dialectical spaces to allow the stakeholders to engage with the challenges confronting them.

We understand engagement as a mutually beneficial and collective process, which recognises the multiple voices present and in which we see seek to build personal, relational and collective hope. The social, political and economic context of communities provides the catalyst for this praxis to occur. It is an iterative process which is messy, contradictory and not linear, that acknowledges and attempts to minimise power differences.

The teaching and learning which emerges is organic, co-constructed, and multifaceted, valuing the diversity of knowledge across various contexts. The outcomes of the process must be shared and interrogated in order to be mutually beneficial for all engaged in it. The material that results from this praxis allows for the creation, interrogation, documentation, and dissemination of knowledge to multiple stakeholders in appropriate ways. Spaces for this type of engagement can be created by an approach described as participatory action learning and action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011).

"The teaching and learning which emerges is organic, co-constructed, and multifaceted, valuing the diversity of knowledge across various contexts. The outcomes of the process must be shared and interrogated in order to be mutually beneficial for all engaged in it."

PALAR is a synthesis of action learning (AL), action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR), and is ideally suited for 'personal, professional, organisational or community development' through action leadership. Action leadership is developed with others in an actively creative, innovative, collaborative, shared way. With this approach, people are encouraged to take ownership of their problems and devise a means to resolve them themselves through the combined processes of AR, using AL and PAR. (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011).

PALAR further fosters the creation of a community of common purpose through the encouragement of voice and agency among the participants (Zinn and Rodgers, 2012). It is during the fostering of these communities of common purpose that democratic, participatory relationships are built. For these relationships to be successful, the engagement must adhere to the values of integrity, trust, honesty, respect for others, diversity and difference (Damons, 2017). These values should facilitate resilience and openness to new perspectives, opportunities, and innovation – all key traits of action leadership. Central to the design of the process should be the following principles of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR): communication; commitment; competency; character building; critical reflection; collaboration; and coaching (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011). The 'doughnut model' (Figure 1) provides a blueprint for the design of an engagement process.

Figure 1: **PALAR concepts, models & values (The doughnut model)**

Figure 2: **CCS cycle of engagement**

CCS Cycles of Engagement

Informed by the theoretical framework the CCS advances the following cycle of engagement (Figure 2):

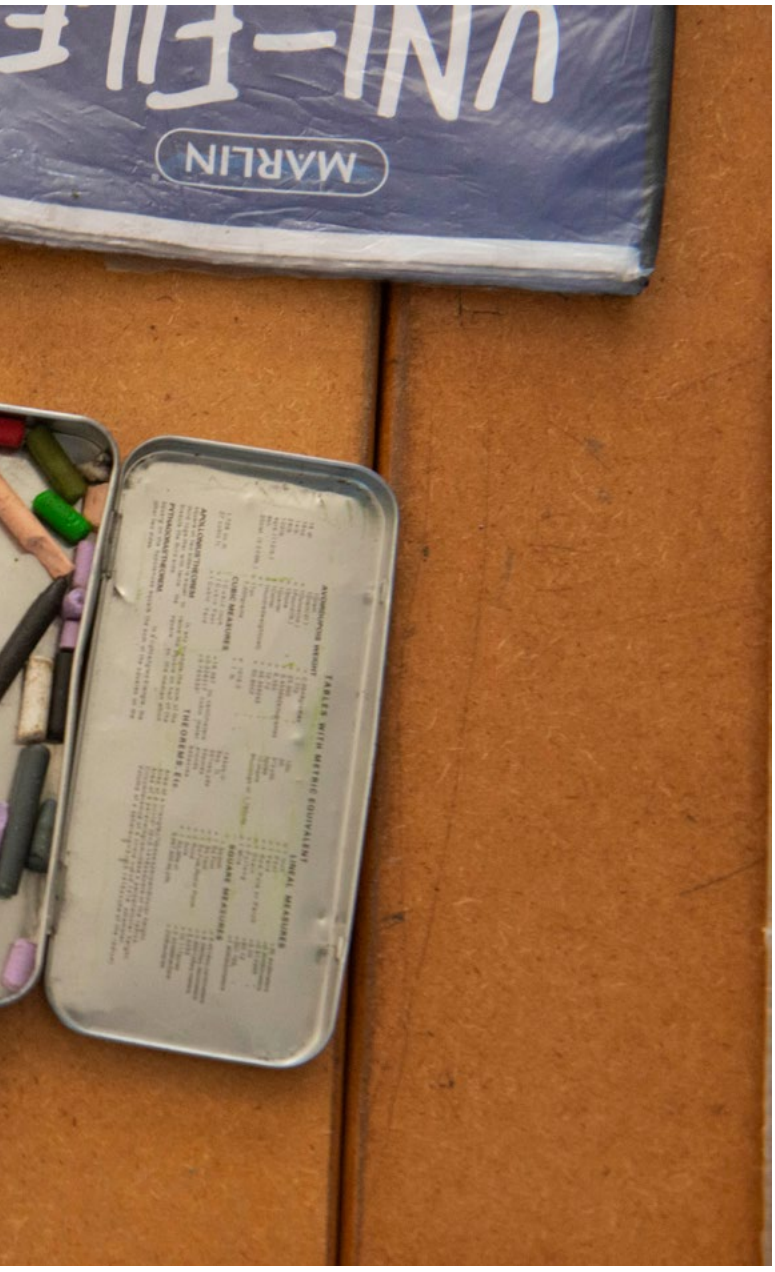
Our physical science, life science, English and mathematics programme (PLEM) is an example of how the various cycles in the engagement process are applied to co-constructing a school improvement plan.

1. **Multi-stakeholder start-up workshop: building trust; problem identification; assets; challenges; themes for support.**

Problem identified: How to develop a contextually relevant plan to support improving Physics, Life Science, English and Maths in the school(s).

Stakeholders identified: the principal, the SGB chairpersons, learner representatives and subject educators, university science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) representatives and the CCS.

The activity starts with a trust-building and power-reducing exercise as we encourage all stakeholders to critically present their views. We then proceed to develop a common understanding of the problem, which includes identification of what the challenges and assets are and suggesting a basket of responses to address these challenges. Challenges, assets and responses are ranked using the Nominal Group Technique for data generating, and we identify the top five key factors. At the completion of this activity the process map (Figure 2) is presented to participants.



After the activity a report is generated which summarises the process and resolutions. All the stakeholders are then invited to provide input and once ratified we then proceed to activity 2.

2. **Individual Stakeholder Workshops: analysis of material from activity 1 through the lens of stakeholder grouping**

The stakeholders are then convened according to their category: principals, SGB chairpersons (in the case of PLEM, we allowed chairpersons to convene with the school principals), teachers, and learners. Here the stakeholders further explore the material that emerged from activity one, especially as it relates to their individual activity.

The important part of activity 2. is that the stakeholder grouping also prioritises what projects they think would be responsive to the specific challenges raised in activity 1.

3. **Multi-stakeholder workshop: presentation of proposed projects; identification of priority projects; adopting programme timeline; election of a steering committee**

The multi-stakeholder grouping is reconvened for engagement around the project proposals from the various individual stakeholder workshops. The projects are presented in a consolidated form under the specific themes which emerged from activity 1 (in the case of PLEM the four themes identified were: risk factors, interpersonal relationships, subject/content knowledge, and resources). Participants are then allowed to seek clarity around any of the suggested projects, and at this stage, proposed projects could be amended, merged or deleted.

The full basket of projects, per theme, is then collated during the workshop and prioritised using the Nominal Group Technique. PLEM agreed that each theme should cover one or two projects. The projects are then populated against a broad project timeline.

Participants then elect a project steering committee comprising representatives from the various stakeholder groupings, to oversee the implementation of the plan. The PLEM steering committee consists of a principal, teacher, three learners, parent, CCS and STEM.

4. **Presentation of Programme to School Community: input; amendments and adoption**

The school representatives are then required to take the proposed programme back to their school communities for ratification. The programme is presented to everyone, and everyone has an opportunity to comment on it, effect the changes and ultimately to formally adopt the report. Individual schools will decide on their approach to facilitating the feedback. In one of our other programmes, the Principal Action Learning Set, the six schools involved decided to conduct joint feedback sessions as their schools are situated in the same geographic area. They convened a meeting in a hall where they invited the SGBs, the school management teams and local community members and organisations that have an interest in the school.

Only once the programme is approved and has buy-in does it move to implementation and the co-construction of the specific project plans in activity 5.

5. **Co-construction of Project Plans**

The plans for implementation of the projects adopted in activity 4 are now developed. The development happens with the help of people with different disciplines and skills who are identified from the university and broader society.

Champions are then selected to work closely with the programme steering committee. In PLEM we have the following collaborators across the themes:

- risk factors – a social worker from a private company working with unemployed social work graduates from the university;
- interpersonal relationships – NGO;
- subject/ content knowledge – university staff member and STEM practitioners; and
- resources – PLEM steering committee.

6. Implementation: regular community of practice meetings;; celebration; school community report-back meetings; multi-forms of sharing emerging knowledge

Meetings of the steering committee, project teams, and multi-stakeholder meetings are held at least once a quarter to monitor, learn from, support, and evaluate the progress of the programme. Another important component of the process is to build in celebratory moments when specific milestones are achieved. Again implementation strategies will vary, given the context and make-up of the programme. PLEM, for example, decided that each school will have an opportunity to pilot one theme.

7. Consolidation

The final activity is to write up the work and decide on how to proceed once the project outcomes are actualised. Multiple forms of documentation are possible but have to be agreed to by all participating stakeholders. The programme is then concluded by mutual consent of all participants.

Each workshop or meeting commences with a check-in session and concludes with a check-out session, guided by a prompt. The check-in session gives a good idea where participants are at a personal level across a number of dimensions of their lives, and the prompt normally directs to the whole wellness of the individual. The check-out reflects how participants feel at the end of the engagement, in particular as it relates to the project and the progress being made.

Strengths of method and process

The approach we have adopted allows for an immersive long-term engagement with the various school communities and stakeholders we collaborate with. It further creates platforms for multiple forms of multidisciplinary collaboration among the formal, informal and semi-formal sectors in education. Learning is also ongoing, and theory is generated through praxis, which is owned by all those involved in the process.

The process is structured in such a way that participants are afforded the opportunity to engage with the issues confronting them. It is through these critical engagements that people find a voice (personal) and realise the potential they have, if supported, to respond to their challenges in collaboration with others (interpersonal). Agency is further enhanced by learning that we cannot do this alone, we need one another (collective). These opportunities are seldom offered to stakeholders due to the fact that they are mainly seen as implementers and not as constructors.

Challenges

The process is iterative, non-linear and messy. Facilitators have to be comfortable to work in discomfort and the unknown. They also have to wide range of skills to be able to engage authentically with communities. To address the development of these skills, the CCS is collaborating with six other universities is to develop a short learning programme that will suggest possible tools when following the suggested approach.

Summary of the Process

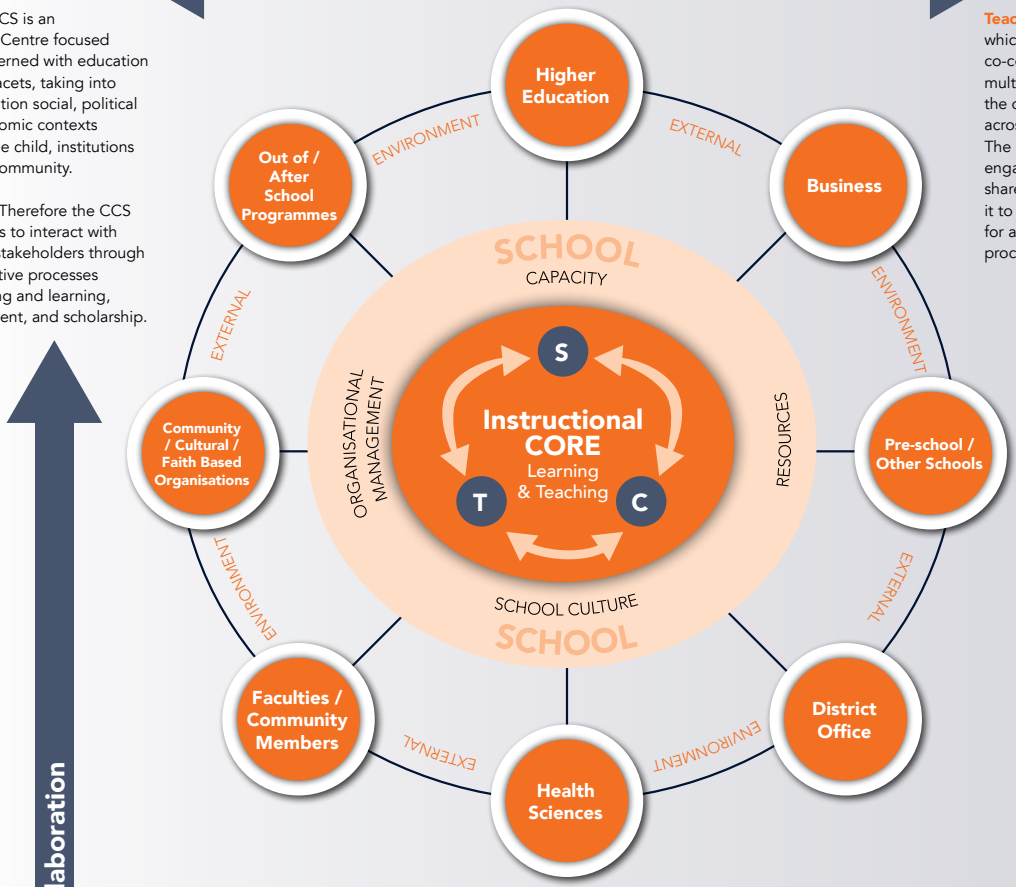
Faculty of Education | Centre for the Community School

Integriy: Mutual Respect, Transparency

Vision: CCS is an engaged Centre focused and concerned with education in all its facets, taking into consideration social, political and economic contexts around the child, institutions and the community.

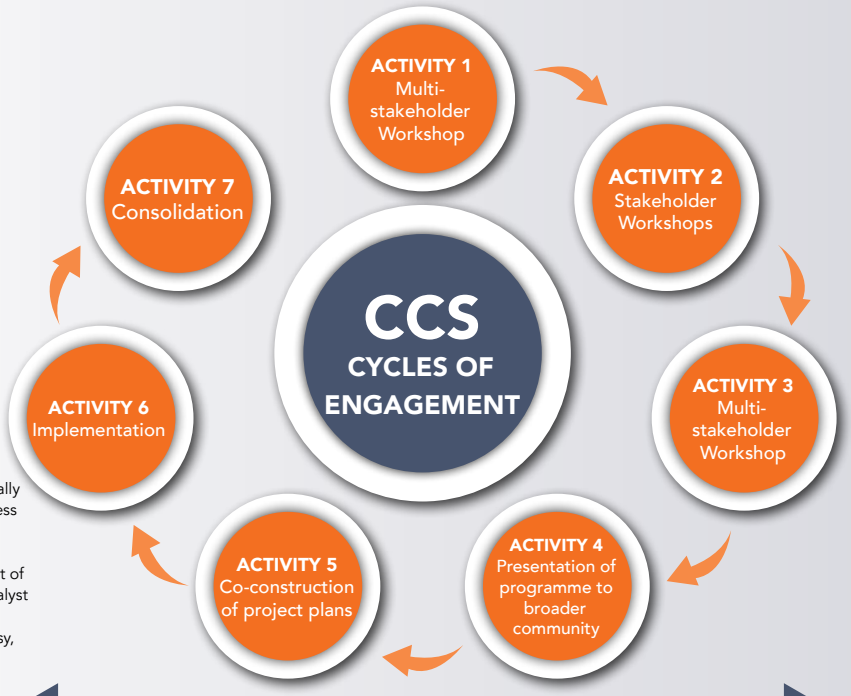
Mission: Therefore the CCS endeavors to interact with multiple stakeholders through collaborative processes of teaching and learning, engagement, and scholarship.

Teaching and learning which is, organic, co-constructed, and multifaceted which values the diversity of knowledge across various contexts. The products of these engagements must be shared and interrogated for it to be mutually beneficial for all engaged in the process.



Collaboration

Inclusivity



Engagement which is a mutually beneficial and collective process which recognises the multiple voices present. The social, political and economic context of communities provides the catalyst for this praxis to occur. It is an iterative process which is messy, contradictory and not linear, that acknowledges and attempts to minimise power differences.

Scholarship which is gained through praxis that allows for the creation, interrogation, documentation and dissemination of knowledge in appropriate ways to multiple stakeholders.

Diligence, Commitment, Accountability

CCS INITIATIVES

The Centre initiates various programmes guided by its mission and vision. Also, several of the programmes have their origin as part of institutional directed Memorandums of Understanding; projects directed to the Centre through university agreements with communities or organisations; projects co-constructed with financial support from external funders; and internal and external strategic projects. Table 1 highlights the present activities in the CCS.

Table 1: CCS current projects

Programme	Description	Collaborators
Physics, Life Sciences, English and Mathematics (PLEM)	• Co-construction of a sustainable physical science, life sciences, English and mathematics (PLEM) support programme for high schools • 4 high schools offering PLEM subjects (2 in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro; 2 in Kirkwood)	• Educators • Learners • SGB members • District Office of Department of Basic Education (DBE) • STEM in Action: Department of Mechanical Engineering • Nedbank
Principal Action Learning Set (PALS)	• Teacher wellness; school safety and security; learner agency; leadership wellness • Six high schools in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay • Four communities of practice (CoP): learners, teachers, principals, multi-stakeholders	• Educators • Learners • SGB members • Community volunteers • M Secure Foundation
Manyano Schools Network	• Reading and maths clubs in schools; school-based support teams; SGB and SMT capacity building; Early Childhood Development advocacy and support; Representative Council of Learners leadership development; Community volunteerism; Development of qualitative monitoring support and evaluation tool • 13 schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro (3 high schools and 10 primary schools)	• Educators • Learners • SGB members • Community volunteers • Funder • Faculty of Education staff
Cala – Sakhingomso	• Focus: teaching and learning support (academic/co-curricular); psycho-social support; infrastructure; capacity building/ relationships; community stakeholder support • 4 schools in Cala District (2 high schools and 2 primary schools)	• Educators • Learners • SGB members • iKhamvelihle Development Trust
OASIS (Organising After School & In School)	• CoP of organisations providing support in the after- and in- school space (30 on database) • Piloting of an integrated school improvement plan	• Representatives from the various organisations • The Learning Trust • Stakeholders from the pilot school

Social work student placement	• Supporting the placement of 2nd- and 4th-year social work students in schools to complete practicals	• Department of Social Development • Faculty of Health Sciences • Schools
Faculty of Education (FoE) students	• Placement of FoE students to support programmes	• ○ Faculty of Education students
KaziBantu	• Intellectual and practical support for the implementation of health programme in schools	• Human Movement Sciences, Faculty of Health Science • Basel University, Switzerland • District Office of DBE
CCS NRF Grant	• Community Engagement Grant 2019 – 2021 • Reimagining school improvement: a collaboratively constructed framework of schools as beacons of hope that promote social cohesion in working-class in working class communities	• Inter- and trans-disciplinary management team • 2 PhD and 3 master's students • Education practitioners pursuing or intending to pursue postgraduate qualifications
The Bookery	• Creation of African literacy spaces in schools in the Eastern Cape • 3 schools in Nelson Mandela Bay and 1 in Cala District	• CoP comprising teachers and principals from the various schools • The Bookery school library project
Letsema Nelson Mandela Bay	• Multi-stakeholder collaboration from FoE 2018 Mandela Colloquium • Exploring a collaborative project among the various education sectors	• Stakeholders from formal, informal and semi-formal sectors of education
Missionvale Campus Community Engagement	• Exploring collaboration between the university and the local community surrounding the Missionvale Campus	• CoP comprising representatives from the three municipal wards surround the Campus • Ward Councillors • Internal university stakeholders
Missionvale Care Centre (MCC)	• Development of school improvement plan for an independent school, located in a working-class community	• School stakeholders • Trustees and Manager of MCC • Faculty of Education staff
North West NRF grant	• NRF collaboration between North-West University, Rhodes, Stellenbosch, Free State and University of the Western Cape • 'Developing an inclusive, ethical and sustainable framework for mutual learning and development through community-university partnerships'	• Representatives from the various universities • Participants in engagement project

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES IN THE **RURAL EASTERN CAPE**

Research on rurality often focuses on the negative aspects, including poverty, isolation, disease, entropy and marginalisation. Few studies report on how people in these communities interact, engage with and shape their lives and define schooling (Moletsane, 2012). What is missing is research on how these communities engage and shape their lives, and how certain schools in rural contexts have triumphed in spite of the severe socio-economic, unemployment and other adversities they are facing, and the strengths of the communities in which they are situated.

In addressing this, our faculty through our engagement entity The Centre for the Community School (CCS) and the IKamvelihle Development Trust (IDT) have partnered to co-construct school improvement plans with four pilot schools in Cala, rural Eastern Cape, two high schools and two primary schools.

Five themes

Numerous engagements were held from 2017 with multi-stakeholders (principals, educators, parents, learners) of the pilot schools, leading to the establishment of a programme called *Sakhingomso* (building a better tomorrow), guided by five themes of collaboration namely: teaching and learning support; psycho-social support; infrastructure; capacity building; and community and stakeholder support. Participants identified various projects under these themes for contextually relevant school improvement plans for 'scaffolded' implementation from 2018, based on priorities and available resources.

The group drew on the metaphor of a funnel (*from broad societal challenges to the specifics that can be addressed at Cala*), a potjiekos pot and a fire (*to unleash latent potential, we will light the fire for a better tomorrow, working as a collective*).

Working with rural schools is a fantastic learning experience as it challenges our notions of rurality. In the rural areas there is huge agency and willingness to engage and think through the challenges, the engagements are so enriching and we bring so much knowledge back with us to share with our other communities of practice.

We are developing a blueprint for rural schools from our engagements in Cala, Willowvale, Mvezo and Qumbu to encourage Higher Education institutions in the province to participate in programmes that directly work with schools in addressing some the rural challenges.

The CCS hosts and supports various capacity-building workshops, symposiums and discussions. In August 2018 we hosted a participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) workshop which was facilitated by a national and international expert on action research. The participants of the workshop came from the various faculties at the university. As part of a collaboration with Schools Improvement Unit (SIU) of the University of Cape Town we have had multi-stakeholder collaboration since 2016. This culminated in a national imbizo in 2019, under the theme, 'Exploring partnerships between Schools–Communities–Universities', attended by more

than 250 participants from across the country. In 2019 we hosted a community engagement workshop facilitated by an international scholar on action learning.

The centre continues endeavouring to make a more critical contribution to the community school methodology as it believes that this will allow the CCS to be even more responsive to the grand challenges facing not only education but society as a whole. From the engagement that we undertake we are not only able to document activities but also to make a meaningful scholarly contribution to school improvement and critical participatory methodologies.

The awarding of an NRF grant in 2019 will allow us to take this forward by examining, conceptualising and reimagining community schools as beacons of hope. These findings will further our understanding of the value and role of community schools in promoting social cohesion and agency in working-class communities, and provide evidence for conceptualising a theoretical framework for school improvement in the South African education context.

With our collaborators – including community participants when possible – we presented at the following national and international conferences on the work being done in the CCS:

2012	Basic Education Conference, Durban, South Africa
2012	Strategies to overcome Poverty and Inequality: Towards Carnegie III Conference, University Cape Town
2014	Education Association of South Africa, Free State, South Africa
2015	Action Learning and Action Research Association World Conference, Centurion, South Africa
2016	Community Engagement Seminar, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa
2016	South African Education Research Association, Cape Town, South Africa
2016	Collaborative Action Research Network, Lincoln, United Kingdom
2017	Action Research Networks of the Americas, Cartagena, Colombia
2017	South African Education Research Association, Nelson Mandela Bay, South Africa
2018	Community-Engaged School Partnerships Symposium, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa
2018	17th Boleswana International Biennial Educational Symposium, Namibia
2018	South African Education Research Association, Pretoria, South Africa 2019 World Education Research Association, Tokyo
2019	South African Education Research Association, Durban, South Africa
2019	World Education Research Association, Tokyo
2019	NWU Comber, Potchefstroom, South Africa

Some of our scholarly contributions include:
2009 Damons, B., & Abrahams, S. (2009). South Africa: Sapphire Road Primary. In C. V. Whitman, C. E. Aldinger, C. Vince Whitman, & C. E. Aldinger (Eds.), *Case studies in global school health promotion* (pp. 115-126). New York: Springer.

2013 Wood, L. with **B. Damons** (2013). Developing virtuous leaders: an action research approach to improving school leadership in a South African Context. In J. McNiff, *Value and Virtue in Practise-Based Research* (pp. 54-69). Dorset: September Books

2016 Müller, I., Yap, P., Steinmann, P., **Damons, B. P.**, Schindler, C., Seelig, H. ... & Pühse,

U. (2016). Intestinal parasites, growth and physical fitness of schoolchildren in poor neighbourhoods of Port Elizabeth, South Africa: a cross-sectional survey. Parasites & Vectors, 9(1), 488.

2017 Wood, L., & **Damons, B.** (2017). Fostering a School-Community Partnership school- and community-based action research school-community partnership for Mutual Learning and Development: A Participatory Action Learning and Action Research Approach. In The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research (pp. 771-783). Palgrave Macmillan US.

2018 Damons, B.; Sathorar, H; Geduld, D (2018). University community engagement: Living the contradiction; http://www.sinergiased.org/index.php/revista/item/137 Page 5 of 6

2018 Brydon-Miller, M. & **Damons, B.** (2018). Action Research for Social Justice Advocacy**.** *The Wiley Handbook of Action Research in Education* (the "Work"), edited by Craig A. Mertler

2020 Bruce Damons & Lesley Angelina Wood (2020) Transforming traditional views of school leadership for school-community collaboration: a PALAR approach, Action Learning: Research and Practice, DOI: 10.1080/14767333.2020.1755825

Articles in Progress

Damons, B. & Cherrington, A**.** Re-imagining schools as beacons of hope and possibility: A South African conceptualisation of a community school (accepted for publication in 2020)

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
PAST AND PRESENT

Schools and Communities in Nelson Mandela Bay
The schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay discussed here are in working-class areas that face severe economic challenges and unemployment. Yet the dedication of their principals, teachers and community members, demonstrates the power of the community school.

NARRATIVE 1

(Manyano school)
Charles Duna Primary, New Brighton
Grade R to Grade 7, 1063 learners
Principal: Nombulelo Sume

Principal Nombulelo Sume has led Charles Duna since 1998. The school epitomises what a community school should be. Suma trained as a Foundation Phase teacher and started her career in 1989 at a school in the Nelson Mandela Bay community of Kwadwesi. She is currently doing her master's degree in leadership and new knowledge where the ethos is all about being a human being first, before being a leader.

'In our classrooms, in addition to the curriculum, we address the issues our learners deal with in their daily lives. Our grade 7s (12 to 13 years) learn about peer pressure, body shaming and puberty,' Sume says. 'They learn that we are all different, we are all unique, in our looks and size but what is important is how we use our brains and hearts, and to realise that the power of dealing with our circumstances is in our hands, with education as the pinnacle.'

She explains that many of the learners come from informal settlements where their lives are unspeakably hard. There are many different daily tragedies in an area where most of the parents are unemployed, and gang-related shootings and stabbings are commonplace. There are six shebeens situated around the school, and the community is plagued with HIV/AIDS.

Despite this, there are also grounds for optimism. 'What I love, and it is certainly a great triumph, is that our school is moving into becoming a true community school with much heart.' This required thinking beyond the money they receive, because from 1998 to 2013 Charles Duna was incorrectly classified in the quintile system and was receiving only five rands per learner from the Department of Basic Education. 'The parents in my school cannot afford to pay and at the same time we need to make sure these kids are getting a quality education and we need to make a difference in the community,' Suma continues.

'That is when we gravitated to becoming a community school and we started calling on our parents and community members to be part of the school. We joined the Manyano network of community schools and called for parent volunteers and today we have 27 parent volunteers on site. Our on-site coordinator, Nomawethu Swartbooi, who opens the school every day, has been with us since 2006 when she started as a parent volunteer. She had no money but she wanted to contribute to her child's education and she did so by cleaning the classrooms.

'She is now employed by the school and has since completed her matric, her Early Childhood Development (ECD) Level 2 and 4 training, she manages the slow learners, and she is very good at administration – all gained through her volunteerism. All our volunteers have been incredible, from helping us to tile the classrooms to cleaning the toilets, we are doing things for ourselves.

'Engaging with the Manyano network has been invaluable for capacity building and skills development of our teachers, learners and volunteers. Our parents know that when they bring their child to Charles Duna, we take care of their child and them.'

Nombulelo Sume, Charles Duna Primary Principal

Principal Sume outlines the programmes and facilities the school has established:

'We have a well-managed library and reading clubs that concentrate on reading for meaning; we are busy establishing two science labs for Grade 5 to 7 with funding sought from the Motsepe Foundation; a computer lab with internet for IT skills training where the learners can research topics and where community members can learn computer skills; and we have provided multimedia projectors for the Science, Maths and Foundation Phase teachers.'

The school has also started science and maths clubs. In partnership with the Mott Foundation, Nomawethu Swartbooi is running maths clubs with the Grade 2s and has also started robotics lessons.

'My belief is you can't just teach kids, you must give them different opportunities, academically, in sport and with life skills,' emphasises Principal Sume. 'Our kids have represented the province in national sporting competitions, we are doing well in netball, rugby and hockey, and one of our girls was given a full scholarship to Collegiate Girls School in Port Elizabeth in 2019, based on her netball achievements. Another two girls and one boy have scholarships at Alexander Road High School, for netball and rugby, and I have applied for 12 kids to attend the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Gauteng; and we have approached Allan Gray Orbis Foundation for scholarship support.

'We also started swimming lessons in the municipal pool in Kwazakhele and we had two kids who were excelling but the lessons were interrupted as a result of the drought when they closed the pool. Our kids want to learn to swim and we want a school swimming team. Swimming is an essential life skill.

'Our learners are also doing really well at chess, including Nomawethu's son who went to Johannesburg to compete. He is now in grade 11 at our feeder school, Cowan High. He is doing well in mathematics, which he wasn't as a young boy, but with extra input from that age, he has shone through. Our school also does well in the choir and music competitions.'

Former Charles Duna learners have also gone on to establish their own clubs. One is Samkelo Dumse, now a national handball player, who started playing handball when he was here for primary school. He has since established his own club in Kwadwesi and he is also studying mechanical engineering at PE College.

Principal Sume's approach is forward-focused. She sees that South Africa has a shortage of specific professionals such as engineers, and she motivates the learners so that they can be the next generation of engineers or entrepreneurs or whatever they aspire to. From Grade 1 they work on crafts, which they sell to learnt to make and manage money. They give some of their profits to the school and the school then lends them money to reinvest in their next project. 'I don't want any sense of entitlement here,' says Principal Sume.

At the same time, the school works tirelessly to help their learners advance. The Adopt a Learning Child programme they started in 2009, in which those with means could help support the learners' academic needs, has been a huge success. Several of the initial beneficiaries are now in 3rd year at Nelson Mandela University. 'And when they are working, they, in turn, must adopt a learner,' Principal Sume adds.

The school also has a meal-a-day feeding scheme and HIV/AIDS and TB programme. 'We worked with the university of Pretoria, as we had HIV-related deaths until 2007. We are really proud that 2017 marked our 10th year of not burying any kids with HIV/AIDS and TB. But we still face other tragedies. In February 2019 we had a 9-year-old girl committing suicide. Her family and friends said she was raised by her paternal grandmother in nearby Motherwell but recently sent to live with her mother and maternal grandmother in a shack where there was a lot of drinking in the home, and she was burdened with collecting water and looking after the younger ones. She never told any of us, which is we have to be even more vigilant about the signs of silence. We now have a learner support agent who has sessions with the kids.

'It is so important to partner with universities and organisations who have the skills, experience and resources to work with us in addressing our issues, but at the same time we only work with people who understand engagement, and don't capitalise on the opportunism around pandemics such as HIV. We have worked together with so many people over several years, we are incredibly proud of this collective achievement for our community school, but there is still so much more to achieve and so many challenges, so we keep working on.'

Teacher, Koleka Ndzuta, started as a parent volunteer and went on to get her BEd Foundation Phase with a Funza bursary. She graduated in December 2018 and is now studying towards an Honours degree in Education, at Nelson Mandela University, with a focus on psychology.

Jarren Gangiah , science and tech teacher at Charles Duna Primary

Charles Duna, from parent volunteer to honours graduate: Koleka Ndzuta

'In 2003 my child was at Charles Duna when the teacher called me and asked if I would help as a volunteer. I said I would and met with the principal and teachers to exchange ideas. I was unemployed at the time but I had skills as I had worked at an NGO that helped people who had been unfairly dismissed.

'The concept of the community school interested me as I had previously thought of parenting as helping the children at home, but I saw great potential in parents helping at the school. Our schools needs to work with the community and I wanted to be part of that link and to also look at what surrounds the school to make it safe for our children. I was interested to see how many parents were responding to the call for volunteers, and the principal was keen to listen to our ideas, both in terms of how we could contribute as volunteers, particularly in maintenance issues, and also to apply for support from the extended public works programme. I got R500 a month for doing this.'

Subsequently, Ndzuta was appointed to Charles Duna by the Department of Basic Education as a psychosocial support caregiver. 'If a teacher was having a problem with a learner or parent then I would help.' She rose through the system and in 2011 she was appointed as a Grade R teacher at Charles Duna, and completed her ECD Level 4 and 5.

'I enjoyed learning and teaching, and in 2015 I decided to enrol for my B.Ed Foundation Phase at Nelson Mandela University, for which I received a Funza Lushaka teaching bursary. It wasn't easy going to study, as my six children and I were staying with my parents and they saw it as an indulgence that wasn't bringing in money for the family. But I persevered and I graduated in 2018. I am now doing my honours in education psychology – hopefully followed by a master's – and there has been a total shift in attitude about higher education in my family. My parents can't believe what I have achieved and the child that first led to the link with Charles Duna is now at Nelson Mandela Union studying logistics. My oldest child is a lawyer.

'The gift of the community school approach is that through this, people here were able to identify my strengths. I would be sitting with professors discussing education when I was just a parent. Principal Sume kept on exposing me to greater things, she never limited me.'

Charles Duna Grade 6 maths, science and tech teacher, Jarren Gangiah

'These kids have so much potential already, roots and all, but what we are doing is fertilising the soil,' says the maths, science and tech teacher at Charles Duna, Jarren Gangiah, who graduated with his B.Ed at Nelson Mandela University in 2018 and joined the school through the CCS programme.

'This is my first full-time post and it is an amazing feeling as you are the person the kids put their hope in, says Gangiah', who is from KwaZulu-Natal where his mother is a principal of a school and his family has a potato farm. Having done his student teaching in working-class areas in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, Gangiah felt a need to contribute here.

'I would never have been able to deal with the realities of the community without being exposed as a second-year student to Charles Duna and to working with people at grassroots level,' he explains. 'Dr Damons was a lecturer of mine at the time and we engaged about how education is so different in township or working-class areas. Initially I taught at Sapphire Road Primary in Booysen Park where, because of Dr Damons' participation, there is now a clinic, police station and skills development programme at the school. It was not always like this.

'Going there for the first time was actually terrifying for me, as the only thing I knew about Booysen Park was that three of my friends had been shot at there. People have very little and you see kids with tattered uniforms and broken shoes, but the biggest smiles you'll ever see as they greet you or line up for their meal.

'The atmosphere in the school revealed itself as an oasis of hope and happiness in the community. Those kids will be able to improve their situation and make it better for their families. The same applies to Charles Duna, where I knew from the first day I visited that I would teach here. When I first walked through the gates with Dr Damons, he said: "I am not going to say anything, I just want you to experience, listen, hear, smell what it is like to be at township school." I loved what Principal Sume and her team are doing, and the passion of the people who are tangibly creating hope here – something we don't always see in South Africa.

'I teach in classrooms with multicultural learners who are Christians, Moslems or who follow ancestor belief systems. One of the parents permanently sits in my classroom to help me communicate better in isiXhosa, as it is my fourth language. The learners who come from the widest range of backgrounds, including violent and impoverished circumstances. I have learners in my classrooms who are the head of their household, with younger siblings to look after. I have a child with epilepsy who has to eat before taking his medication but when I went to his home there was no food; he relied on his meal at school.

'I know I can make a difference and I love teaching here. I love the idea of the community in the school – it melts inside of me – there's a nice word in isiXhosa for this: *nyiblikha*. I have learnt there is magic in these working-class communities, as people are prepared to volunteer whatever they are able to do with their two hands to fix the problems at the school. We also have British and German students volunteering here. It is a living example of the community coming together because everyone has a skill, everyone can teach you something, there is experience, knowledge. Here, we don't ask outside people to sort out our problems; we all get together, parents, learners, teachers, volunteers.

"The school is literally a beacon of hope and care. It is the place where many of the children eat their only meal of the day; the place where they smile and laugh; the time of the day when they can be a child, as many of them go home and have to be an adult, wash clothes, face harsh real life problems, be street smart."

'My whole concept of the purpose of education changed with the CCS. Previously, I saw education as someone going to school and then going home to their family, whereas at working-class schools, you are the child's mother and father and nurse, sometimes you are everything to that child and you develop a very deep bond.

'The school is literally a beacon of hope and care. It is the place where many of the children eat their only meal of the day; the place where they smile and laugh; the time of the day when they can be a child, as many of them go home and have to be an adult, wash clothes, face harsh real life problems, be street smart. Suicide and HIV/AIDS is a very real reality; many learners are in one parent homes or they are orphans; they simply don't have the support regime children need.

'This is the real reality of South Africa, and I want to do postgraduate research on what lifts up these and other communities, hopefully to influence policy in recognising the pivotal role of the community school and how wholescale change in basic education in working class.'

Alicia Baatjes, Sapphire Road Primary School Principal

NARRATIVE 2

(Manyano school)
Sapphire Road Primary School
1200 learners, Grade R to 7
Principal: Alicia Baatjes

Sapphire Road Primary School is close to Dr Bruce Damons' heart as he was the principal here from 2000 to 2015.

This is what he wrote at the time:

Foreword from the Principal

Sapphire Road Primary embarked on a vision in 2000 to ensure that we change the lives of not only our learners but the communities that serve our school. On analysis of the resolutions, taken at the 2000 meeting, we have successfully managed to realise 99% of these resolutions. Probably the most significant achievement is that were able to change the image of the school from that of being a 'building' to being a place that truly reflects the aspiration of our communities. Parents are motivated, children want to learn and teachers are eager to develop.

As we begin to chart a new course for the school, as influenced by the changing conditions around us, we realise that although we have achieved amazing results, we now have to have a more structured and organised approach to dealing with our future. We are therefore aligning our school around a self-developed programme, pillars of success that are strongly influenced by the six pillars of health promotion, with the th pillar being educational excellence. We are confident that through this programme we will be able to develop strong readers, numerically exceptional and healthy learners (pupils, community and teachers).

Our vision of 'liberating the mind from mental inferiority' is becoming a reality and we are confident that with the involvement of so many wonderful people who want to make a difference, this will happen sooner than later.

Principal Alicia Baatjes has been principal since 2016

'We are part of the Manyano Schools network of 14 schools in township and working- class areas in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. We collaborate with each other and our respective communities to see how we can develop our schools, as many have the same challenges and we work on them together,' says Principal Alicia Baatjes of Sapphire Road Primary in Booysen Park, which has 1200 learners. Its biggest funder is the Mott Foundation.

Neziswa Mntwini, Sapphire Primary volunteer site coordinator of the reading club

'As part of our Manyano Schools project we appointed a site coordinator, Neziswa Mntwini, who coordinates the projects at our school, including teachers and staff, as well as training for the School Governing Board, which includes a committee of community members. The site coordinator goes for training at Nelson Mandela University, leads the maths and reading club and works with the psychometrist who assesses our learners with learning barriers, concentration problems and mild retardation, so that we can give these learners the input they need.

'The school is a mirror of what is happening in the community. We have learners from good, stable homes with supportive parents, but we also have a lot of parents who are not taking care of their children properly as they are drug or substance abusers. It's not surprising to us that many of the children start smoking marijuana at a young age or selling it at school.

'When there are problems at home, the children act out in class in one way or another and we need to interact with them to understand what is happening, as you can't just put it down to bad discipline. As educators we need to do everything we can to support our learners because if we give up hope or give up on them, what will become of them? It's definitely not easy, our teachers have a lot to deal with, and it is highly stressful. My deputy and I have regular debriefing sessions with our teachers.

'The reason we can do all this is because of our partnerships and, very importantly, because of our 30 amazing community volunteers. If you come to our school you will see the community helping to run this school on a daily basis, including cleaning, maintenance, security, assisting in the classrooms and with training in the computer lab, sitting in for teachers when they are absent, helping the children to learn to read, attending to minor medical issues such as when a child scrapes their knee or falls ill, and they take care of the child until their parent can come and take over. The Department doesn't give us maintenance people and other forms of logistical support we need, or we have to wait too long for it, and it is when you don't attend to issues straightaway, that the school goes down.

'At this school our children learn that they need to be part of keeping the school at a high standard, such as helping to keep their school clean and neat, and their parents reinforce this because several are volunteer cleaners here and they work hard to keep the classrooms, school grounds and toilets clean,' says Principal Baatjes, who regularly uses the loudhailer to encourage all learners to throw their rubbish in the bin.

'We are also fortunate to partner with *Ready for Life*, an NGO that brings students from the Netherlands and Belgium to our school to work with us. We currently have six social work

students and two psychology students doing their practical with us.

'As you can see, we have to go far beyond the extra mile for our learners because of their context. What makes it all worthwhile is when we see our learners shining, doing well at school and getting scholarships to excellent high schools such as the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls (one of our girls is there), and getting into university – several of our learners are now at Nelson Mandela University.'

Neziswa Mntwini
Site Coordinator at Sapphire Road Primary

'I joined Sapphire in 2010 as a teacher's assistant (TA) on a stipend of about R1300 per month,' says Neziswa Mntwini, who subsequently joined Sapphire's administration office as she could type and use a computer, and is now the school's site coordinator, overseeing its projects, training and learner assessment programmes, and leading the maths and reading club.

'When I started out as a TA I was assigned to teacher Carmilla Ismail, who taught me so much about assisting. This led to me participating in a workshop of 60 teachers, TAs and community members, organised by education professor Dr Lesley Wood to improve learner support. At the workshop we had many grannies from the community who parent the learners and we addressed all sorts of issues, such as practical ways in which they could assist the learners with homework. We taught them how to check homework and to create a space in their shack where the learner can focus on homework; and that the TV must be off.'

'Dr Bruce (Damons) was the principal then and he was doing his PhD on the community school. He brought all the volunteers together … security, gardeners, the clinic and kitchen volunteers, the TAs … and we had a six-hour session on how we saw the community school. In the beginning we couldn't understand what he was saying about the scholarship of learning and the community school, but we pushed on and got it. With Dr Bruce, a group of us co-created a community school volunteer manual for which we were given the authoring credits, and copyright.

'We explained to Dr Bruce that the best way to grow the model, was to give the volunteers something to sustain them and build their trust by showing you value them because these areas have high levels of poverty and unemployment. The contribution can be in the form of skills, such as teaching them computer skills, which they can use to earn an income or giving them a stipend or food parcels, so that they can get by. This ensures that schools develop a reliable group of volunteers.

'My work with Dr Bruce led to me joining a leadership group of volunteers, and we have spoken at national academic conferences, engaged with other universities, and we are planning a national imbizo on community school engagement in partnership with Nelson Mandela University and the University of Cape Town, which will take place at Nelson Mandela University's Missionvale campus. I learnt to be able to present and speak at all levels, which is not easy, but when you speak from the heart, you can't go wrong, and whatever I have learnt I share with others.'

> What makes it all worthwhile is when we see our learners shining, doing well at school and getting scholarships to excellent high schools such as the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls (one of our girls is there), and getting into university

Mother, daughter
Sapphire Road Primary parent volunteer, Esther Mtshelu and her daughter Lufuno Khonza, now a Nelson Mandela honours graduate

'As a parent you have to have confidence in yourself and trust in a higher being to guide you along the way in producing these children and instilling in them a sense of the need for education, so they understand their current circumstance doesn't need to be their life,' says Esther Mtshelu, a retired domestic worker who was one of Sapphire's first volunteers, cooking the daily meal for the learners, and not being paid anything for it. Her daughter Lufuno Khonza attended Sapphire at the time and went on to graduate with a BA and Honours in labour relations and human resources.

'I grew up in very difficult situations and I didn't have a choice about being married at 18 and having a child at 19. The marriage didn't last, and I was not able to achieve my dream

of acquiring a tertiary education, and so it gives me great pleasure that Lufuno has achieved this.'

'I grew up with my Mom and she has done a great job,' says Lufuno. 'I learned to be responsible from a young age, and to maximise whatever I have to sustain myself. In my first year at university, for example, I only had two pairs of jeans and I would make sure I had breakfast and then skip lunch as I only had enough money for transport. I lived at home in Booysen Park and I would get up really early to make sure I got to my classes on time.'

Lufuno says she feels so fortunate that she attended Sapphire 'because it gave me such a strong early grounding. We don't regard it as a school, we regard it as a community that goes out of its way for each other. Dr Bruce Damons was the principal when I was at Sapphire, and he did so much for our school and our community. Even now, all these years later, when I come here, I know it is home, I still WhatsApp Dr Damons and visit the school where the staff are always interested in what I am doing.'

Mother, daughter

Sapphire Primary parent volunteer Beauty Nqezane and her daughter Sethu Nqezane

'When I was a girl, because of circumstances and traditions, the only thing for girls was to have an arranged marriage where your parents would send you to another family for marriage,' says Beauty Nqezane, a retired domestic worker. 'It was a really bad time for me and that is why I wanted my children to be independent and I didn't want my girls to have to rely on men for their future. I don't even want my girls to marry because of my experience and because my firstborn was brutally killed by her husband in 2010.'

Beauty's younger daughter Sethu Nqezane is studying civil engineering at PE College and her sister's daughter, Khanyisa Futshane (15), who lives with her, is on a scholarship at the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in Gauteng. Both of them did their primary schooling at Sapphire, where Khanyisa was head girl.

'When she got accepted to the Oprah Winfrey Academy, all the teachers at Sapphire supported her, including with lifts to the airport and sharing the costs of toiletries,' says Beauty.

'There is so much we can say about Sapphire, as it has always felt like home for us,' adds Sethu. 'In 2015, our matric year, for example, a group of us were finding it difficult to study because our homes are small, and so we came to Dr Damons, who was still principal here at the time, and asked if we could camp out at the school and study here for our finals. Which we did, and everyone made us feel welcome and supported. That's Sapphire; it's our family and they want us to succeed.'

Retired domestic workers (L)Beauty Nqezane and (R) Esther Mtshelu

Mandisa Jikela Henry Nginza Primary Principal

NARRATIVE 3

Henry Nginza Primary, Kwazakhele

1090 learners Grade R to 7
Principal: Mandisa Jikela

'I introduced my school to Manyano in 2011. It was difficult to involve the community in the school at first as they thought it was only for professionals, but through Manyano we changed this,' recalls Principal Jikela.

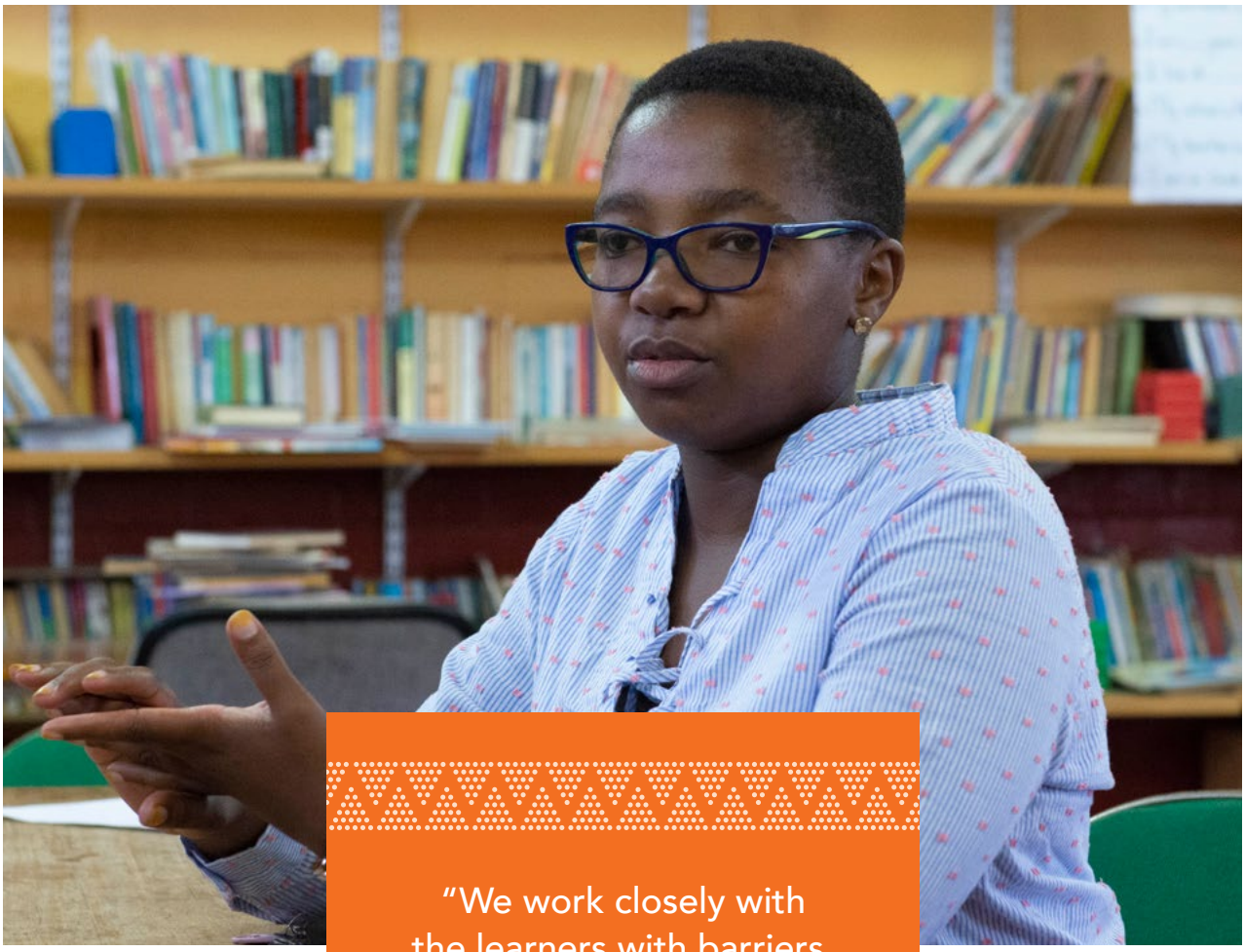
'We explained that schools are not islands, they need the parents to be involved and to help the teachers, as we do not have enough staff to run the school. We need parents to help with our food garden and keeping the school clean and to help and participate in our reading clubs.

'We try to give our volunteer parents a little something and they take home some of the vegetables we grow. We also get them to participate in activities at the school, including art competitions for the parents, for which the winners receive medals.'

Nomthandazo Gedze
Site Coordinator at Henry Nginza Primary
Head of the Zukhanye (Shine Bright) Reading and Maths Club

'I studied Human Resources Management at Nelson Mandela University and graduated in 2014. The CCS and Manyano Network decided to place site coordinators in each of the 14 participating schools. Our core function is to manage the reading and maths clubs and to make sure they are stimulating and fun for Grade R to Grade 3 learners to encourage them in these subjects. We also help the teachers by going over work with the learners that they've done in class.

'We work closely with the learners with barriers, including those who are battling to read and write or to concentrate. Some of the learners have very difficult home lives, some don't even have parents at home. One of the learners in



Nomthandazo Gedze, Henry Nginza Combined reading club Site cooridinator.

> "We work closely with the learners with barriers, including those who are battling to read and write or to concentrate. Some of the learners have very difficult home lives, some don't even have parents at home."

Grade 6 would stare into space or play by himself, and it turns out he has no parents, and lives with his older brother and sister, who leave him alone at home at night. So I asked why is he sometimes late or absent, and he said there is no one to wake me up at home.

'As a site coordinator you are a social worker, teacher, aunt and even mother. We create an environment where they learn to communicate freely and where they can safely talk to us about anything. We never shout at the learners, it's a comfortable environment and in this atmosphere they feel they can tell us when they don't understand something.

'I have grown so much since becoming a site coordinator, and through the CCS and Manyano Network I have considerably expanded by knowledge and network, and attended a number of national workshops and symposiums, such as the School Improvement Initiative (SII) symposium at the University of Cape Town where we shared our projects and approaches. We reciprocated with a national conversation, hosted by Nelson Mandela University.

'The difference between the CCS's and other approaches is that we mainly work with volunteers from the community whereas in other projects most of their volunteers and coordinators are students. We feel our approach is far more sustainable and encourages agency and participation in the community.'

Felicity Cloete, Teacher at Westville Secondary School

NARRATIVE 4:

Westville Secondary School (PALS)

West End, Northern Areas
1072 learners, Grade 8 to 12
Principal: Adam January
Teacher Felicity Cloete
Grade 8, 10, 11, 12 Afrikaans teacher
Average class size: 40

'Because of my involvement with the CSS I was motivated to do the Postgraduate Diploma in Education, it's an honours degree equivalent that I am currently pursuing at Nelson Mandela University, and which other teachers have asked me about as they are interested in registering for it,' says Afrikaans teacher Felicity Cloete, a graduate of Nelson Mandela University.

Cloete is on the committee of the CCTs Wellness Action Learning Set (WALS), run by teachers, for teachers, with six participating schools in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro.

'The question we ask is "What is a teacher?". As teachers we are a combination of educators, parents and advisers to our learners as they bring their socio-economic and home circumstances with them, and many of them come from very difficult backgrounds. Teachers carry a lot of responsibility and the committee serves to help teachers to develop ourselves, based on the ethos that "a happy teacher makes a happy learner". We address all aspects of teacher wellness – from teachers' physical and psychological health, to financial management, to teacher absenteeism.'

Cloete is a strong proponent of retaining Afrikaans as one of the languages of learning and teaching at Westville Secondary. 'I am Afrikaans speaking and I love the language. A high percentage of our learners at this school are also Afrikaans speaking and it's important that learners are able to express themselves in their first language, be it Afrikaans, isiXhosa, English or any of our other languages, as it affects their results. People also lose their identity when they are not proud of their own language, and when that happens people battle to make their way in the world.'

Naslie Chan-King, Chatty Senior Secondary School Principal

NARRATIVE 5:

Chatty Senior Secondary School, Bethelsdorp (PALS)

1002 learners, Grade 8 to 12
Principal: Naslie Chan-King

'When I was appointed Principal at Chatty Senior Secondary in 2014, the school was in a bad way. The school buildings were in disrepair, no textbooks had been delivered, we were ten teachers short, there was no money in the bank, in fact we owed the bank R8000,' Principal Chan-King explains.

'The first thing I did was to call a big parent meeting and ask every parent for R50 or R100, which was a big ask as not many parents in this community are working. We also looked for donations, and we slowly sorted things out. Today, the infrastructure is sound, the textbook issue is almost sorted out, we have lights in every classroom, we have water, the toilets are in good condition, the school grounds are well fenced, our teacher numbers are on track, we have a strong senior management team, and our finances are run very tightly. We have a positive bank balance and we have regular audits.

'At the same time, we are a community in crisis, situated in a war zone in the Northern Areas where we desperately need the powers that be to provide extra security as we only have one security guard. There are regular gang shootouts in the community surrounding the school and this spills over into sporadic gang-related stabbing incidents in our classrooms.

'There is only so much we can do, but we are certainly doing our best in our classrooms where I have appointed 16 young teachers in the past two years, including four teachers straight after they graduated from Nelson Mandela University. Our teachers are so motivated, they renew our belief that we can make a difference, as we are dealing with severe social problems, such as learners who get to high school but still cannot read and write, and the system does not allow them to be retained in a grade for more than one year. They need

to be in remedial classes with teachers specially trained to teach them the basics.'

Chan-King is part of the CCS's Principal Action Learning Set (PALS), which she says helps enormously: 'Going it alone you feel like an island, sitting with all the problems, but being part of a community of practice, you share what you are facing with other principals, many of whom have similar problems, and you work on solutions together. This is far more effective than trying to follow the Department of Basic Education memos and prescriptions, which simply do not fit the challenges we are experiencing.

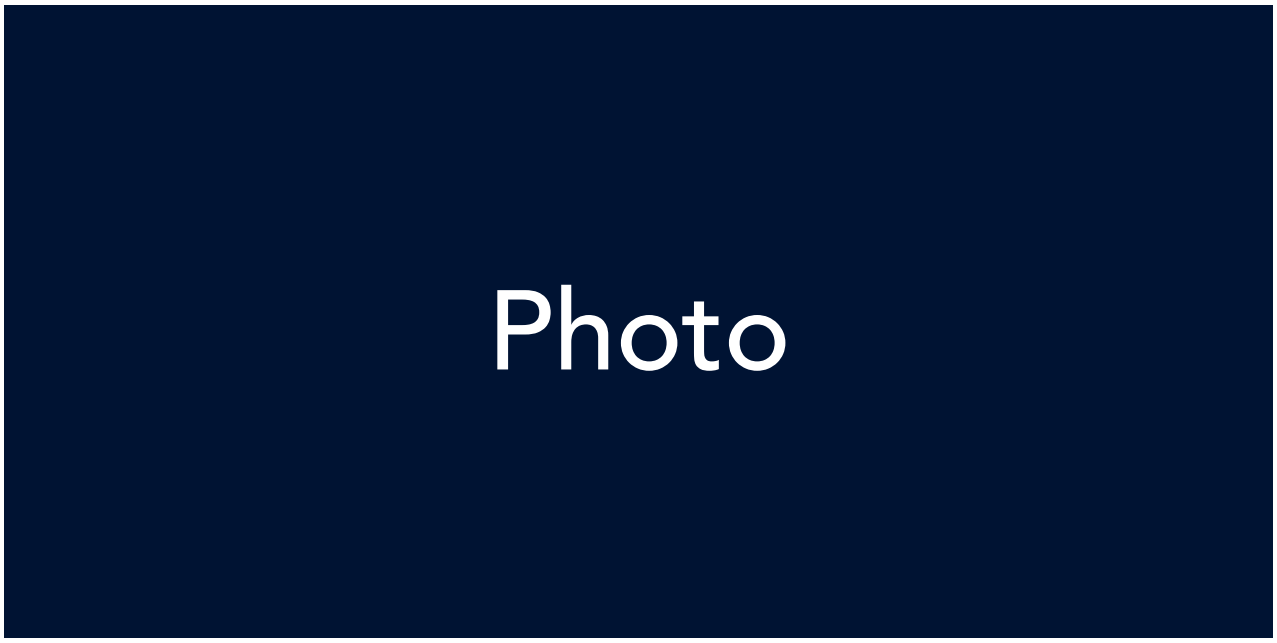
'We have a vested interest in the success of the school, and we know what works and doesn't work in our schools, and one thing we have really tightened up on is discipline. We used to have kids running amok and even leaving the school grounds during school hours and going home. Our matric passes have increased from 27% in 2014 to 46% today, which is still not good, but it is improving year on year. Morale is high among our teachers, who give their all to help our learners to pass matric and for some of them to achieve university entrance passes. The results don't yet reflect how hard they work. If you can make a difference in these children's lives, and help them to start achieving, it's priceless, you don't get that sense of purpose anywhere else.'

Keenan Smith
Grade 10 Learner who excels in maths and science

'I'm a member of the CCS's Learner Action Learning Set (LALS). It's so important as it is all about engaging with learners about the different problems we face in our schools, including bullying, peer pressure, abuse at home and gangsterism, drugs and violence in our communities.

'I try to keep out of sight in my community of Bloemendal. I stay inside a lot and work so that I am hidden from the radar of bullies and gangs. Basically I am a ghost and I would like to keep it that way as I have my whole life ahead of me, and I would like to go to university. To learners facing tough times now it doesn't matter where we are now if we can look to the future and better ourselves and our lives through education.

'I have two siblings who are doing this: my older sister has just finished college and my older brother is studying mechanical engineering. My younger sister is still in primary school but I'm also learning from her as she takes isiXhosa as a subject and she is teaching me some isiXhosa words. Our parents encourage us to study hard and I always do my best to make them proud.'



Zingisile Nkukwana, Alfonso Arries Primary School Principal

NARRATIVE 6

Alfonso Arries Primary School, Bethelsdorp

1655 learners:, Grade R to 7
Average class size: 45 to 50
Principal: Zingisile Nkukwana
Teacher (research associate in the CCS NRF project): Lazola Mweli

Lazola Mweli is a Rhodes University honours graduate who grew up in Beaufort West where his mother was a domestic worker and single parent. His father passed away when Mweli was three years old. 'My mother instilled the importance of education in us from a very young age,' he explains. 'She said that she didn't want us to be domestic workers, she wanted a better future for us. Today, my brother is a school principal in Fort Beaufort, and our cousin who grew up with us is a doctor in Mthatha.'

Mweli explains that he always wanted to make a difference to young learners' lives, particularly in township and working-class schools where learners are directly affected by South Africa's crisis in basic education. 'In 2009 as a third-year Rhodes student I volunteered at a Grade R after school on Fridays and I gelled so well with them that I realised my calling is to teach the younger learners'"

He started at Alfonso Arries in 2011 and teaches a class of 50 Grade 2 learners. At the same time he is pursuing his master's in education through the CCS and Nelson Mandela University.

Parent Volunteers

Head of Security at Alfonso Arries, Pumzile Mdunyelwa, started as a volunteer with a child at the school and now receives a stipend from the Department of Basic Education.

Groundsman Gladman Runeli has been at Alfonso Arries since 2011 when the school opened. He was a volunteer for several years, and today receives a stipend.

Nokuphiwo Gongxo cleaned the classrooms as a volunteer with three children at the school. She now receives a stipend.

Learner Action Learning Set (LALS)

What is the project about?
The LALS programme comprises learner representatives from the six high schools in the Northern Areas of Nelson Mandela Bay (Arcadia, Bertram, Booysen Park High, Chatty, Sanctor and Westville).

Aim of the project
To encourage and develop learner agency to deal with the challenges confronting them in school.

Stakeholders of the project
- Learner representatives from grades 8, 9, 10, 11 from each school
- Leadership team represented by one learner from each school

Focus areas of collaboration
- Bullying
- Lack of tolerance
- Judgement-free environments
- Spaces for reflection

'My research is on maths education and parents' involvement,' Mweli explains. 'When parents (irrespective of their level of education) are involved in their children's education it becomes a success. I want to use my research to challenge the old style of education where the teacher is the only one with knowledge. If you share the learning space with learners and parents then they can see what you are doing, and the parents can offer their input, learn what to do and how to get learners to focus.

'About 75% of the parents are unemployed in this community, so they have the time to participate and they are an invaluable resource when they do,' says Mweli, who is also working on helping learners to overcome 'maths anxiety'. 'They are led to believe that maths is hard and they doubt themselves. I work through the maths anxiety with the young learners and they start to enjoy it and appreciate their own intellectual ability.'

Mweli says he will definitely go on to do his doctorate and keep on teaching. 'I want to remain among my colleagues to share what I am doing and to continue making a difference to young learners' lives.'

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A SUSTAINABLE **PHYSICAL SCIENCE, LIFE SCIENCE, ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS SUPPORT PROGRAMME** FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Individual Stakeholder Report to Joint Stakeholder Engagement Group

24 April 2019

1. Introduction

The engagement with the educators, learners, principals, and SGB Chairpersons formed part of the schedule of activities, adopted during the start-up workshop on 16 May 2018. All schools participated in these individual stakeholder engagements, although some schools did not have the proper representation. The primary focus of these engagements was for participants to reflect on the strengths and challenges which emerged during the start-up workshop, especially as it related to their stakeholder grouping. Also, these engagement sessions identified projects which participants thought would be essential for the success of the Physical Science, Life Science, English and Maths (PLEM) programme.

2. Objectives

The following objectives guided the engagements:

- Review the outcome of the start-up workshop
- Develop a stakeholder perspective around:
- Strengths
- Challenges
- Themes
- Identify projects which should form part of PLEM
- How to ensure buy-in from stakeholders
- Identify missing links which might threaten success

3. Check-in

The following selected word cloud, generated from the various check-ins, provided some valuable insights on areas which should be borne in mind when developing a programme for PLEM.

Fatigue; Curriculum change; Realistic time-lines; Hope; Interesting and fun; Make new friends; Knowing one another; Happy moments; Challenges beyond our control; Commitment

4. Strengths

Stakeholders discussed and identified strengths which they thought would ensure the success of the PLEM programme, guided by the strengths identified in the start-up workshop. Each stakeholder grouping then identified what they thought the five greatest strengths were:

Learners	Educators	Principals/SGB
Extra classes	Extra classes	Focus on discipline
Peer motivation	***Commitment***	Teacher and learner attendance
Resources	Resources	Effective management of teachers and learning
Freedom of speech between learners	Improvement of results	Willingness to learn (teachers/ learners)
Commitment	ICT	***Commitment***

5. Challenges

Stakeholders then discussed and identified what they thought the greatest challenges to the PLEM programme were, using the challenges identified in the start-up workshop as a guide. Each stakeholder grouping then identified what they thought the five greatest challenges were:

Learners	Educators	Principals/SGB
Teenage pregnancy	***Content gap***	Lack of PLEM educators
Scarcity of PLEM teachers	Progressed learners	***Content gap***
Content gap	Teenage pregnancy	Resources
Lack of teaching patience in teachers	Lack of commitment	Waste of teaching time
Lack of commitment	Lack of basic skills	No submissions & late submissions

6. Themes requiring support

Using the information from the previous two activities, each stakeholder grouping nominated five projects which they thought should form part of the PLEM programme. The projects were then located under specific themes identified during the start-up workshop.

Themes	Learners	Educators	Principals/SGB
Risk Factors	Counselling project Bi-psycho-social support; Programme around teenage pregnancy; Project on teenage pregnancy (Sexuality and self)	*Bio-psycho-social-support (learners and teacher)*	*Bio-psycho-social support (learners and teachers)*
Interpersonal Relationships		*Peer motivation: Internal/ external (learners and teachers)*	*Respect time(1)* (Operational management to meet context); *Motivation for learners and teachers*; Parental support for teachers
Subject/ Content Knowledge	Tutors project – Practical focus to meet theory; Teachers project (Help schools find teachers)	*Programme to deal with content gap (learners and teachers); Support programme for progressed learners*	*Empowering staff (SMT-Staff to link phases); Workshop for teachers (Creative ways of overcoming content gap*
Resources		*Mobilise resources for schools (look for funding/sharing)*	

7. Sustainability

Stakeholders flagged the following as important to keep all stakeholders accountable:

- Accountability
- Monitoring support and evaluation
- Effective communication
- Clear identification of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders
- 3 C's
  - Communication
  - Commitment
  - Consistency
- Advocacy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: FACULTY OF EDUCATION **COLLOQUIUM (LETSEMA)**

19–20 July 2018: Nelson Mandela University Celebrating 100 Years of Mandela

'On the first day of school, my teacher, Miss Mdingane, gave each of us an English name and said that from thenceforth that was the name we would answer to in school. This was the custom among Africans in those days and was undoubtedly due to the British bias of our education. ***The education I received was a British education, in which British ideas, British culture, British institutions, were automatically assumed to be superior. There was no such thing as African culture.*** *Africans of my generation—and even today—generally have both an English and an African name. Whites were either unable or unwilling to pronounce an African name, and considered it uncivilised to have one. That day, Miss Mdingane told me that my new name was Nelson.' (Long walk to freedom, Nelson Mandela)*

Mrs Sameerah Frost and Miss Nombulelo Sume from the formal education category emphasised the need for stronger collaboration among the three categories as we engage with our hearts, hands and minds in the pursuit of an equitable education system that can serve all the citizens of our country.

A Colloquium convened on 19 and 20 July 2018, by the Faculty of Education (FoE), at the Missionvale Campus of the Nelson Mandela University, explored the relevance of Nelson Mandela's statement that 'Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world', within the inherent present-day contradictions of the 21st Century. A steering committee comprising staff from the FoE conceptualised the colloquium in consultation with Professor Anderson J. Franklin, Director of Boston College Nelson Chair Roundtable in the Lynch School of Education, in the United States. More than 200 participants, including ECD practitioners; university staff and students; school teachers and principals; TVET lecturers and students; NGOs, CBOs' and NPOs involved in educational support; and community members took part in the colloquium. The event also officially launched the University's Mandela Centenary celebrations.

Professor Puleng Segalo from the University of South Africa facilitated the event, and Dr Muki Moeng (Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education) welcomed participants from across the three categories of education; formal, informal, and non-formal. Prof Sibongile Muthwa (Vice-Chancellor of the Nelson Mandela University) outlined the meaning and significance of the Nelson Mandela Centenary in today's context, followed by the first keynote address, delivered by Dr Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, the Chancellor of the Nelson Mandela University. A panel comprising of speakers from the various categories of education followed the opening addresses.

Mr Siyabulela Jonas and Miss Somila Mjekula from the non-formal education category highlighted the complementary role their category could play not only in supporting the formal category but in providing alternative educational experiences. Mrs Sameerah Frost and Miss Nombulelo Sume from the formal education category emphasised the need

for stronger collaboration among the three categories as we engage with our hearts, hands and minds in the pursuit of an equitable education system that can serve all the citizens of our country. Mrs Sharlene Steyn and Mr Jeffrey Masangwanye from the informal category reminded participants of the societal inequalities and impact of colonial ways of thinking which has contributed to the present challenges we face in education. They emphasised the need to redress this through developing an education system that will be responsive to the political, socio-economic contextual realities of our country and our continent.

The panel discussion was followed by the second keynote address, delivered by Professor AJ Franklin, and a walk around to stalls showcasing work done across the three categories of education. These multiple forms of presentation stimulated debates which ensued in the roundtable discussions.

The following objectives, formulated at the start of the colloquium, guided the roundtable discussions:

1. *To redefine the concept of 'education' in relation to where it takes place;*
2. *To deconstruct the banking model of education (teaching and learning);*
3. *To understand the purpose of education in a decolonised context;*
4. *To clarify/identify/establish who the primary beneficiaries of education are;*
5. *To address the problem of (racial) segregation in education;*
6. *To establish a multi-stakeholder community of practice in order to understand the significance/importance/purpose of education at large, be it formal, non-formal or informal;*
7. *To understand how we can best integrate/incorporate people's backgrounds and experiences into education;*
8. *To understand how we can best integrate/bring together all forms of education;*
9. *To create ways to empower young people to be agents of change;*
10. *To find ways to bring about racial integration in education (see also objective 5);*

Colloquium Photo

11. *To find ways to make it possible for primary schools to address issues of literacy and numeracy from a young age;*
12. *To use this colloquium to address the problem of learning from a very young age;*
13. *To find ways to encourage and promote innovation, inventions and creativity from a very young age;*
14. *To establish trustworthy methods for identifying barriers to learning faced by learners;*
15. *To use education as a weapon to reduce inequality, to educate our students for entrepreneurship, to start businesses, not to be just employees;*
16. *To bridge the gap between TVET and Industry;*
17. *To learn about- and be able to assist people living with disabilities to access education;*
18. *To help parents who cannot afford expensive education for their children to offer them the same quality of education through other means.*

From the ensuing engagements, it is apparent that the 'weapon' of education can protect, defend and create a career path but the weapon can also harm, injure, remove, incapacitate, or mutilate. The way in which the participants engaged with the idea of education as a weapon highlighted possibilities around what works, what could or would work, and what needs to be in place for things to work. This work includes exploring ways in which there can be a stronger collaboration among the various education categories to foster a move towards a stronger collective and holistic approach to teaching and learning. Achieving collectivism is possible if we maximise the value of community assets, acknowledge the knowledge systems and wisdom residing in our communities and create a pathway for the worlds to respectfully intersect.

The facilitation of intersection must recognise the importance of going back to the basics – to the households in particular and our communities more broadly. Going back to basics would require us to move away from functioning independently and instead to draw from each other's strengths, which includes the need to learn or regain knowledge of ourselves through the centring of indigenous knowledge on this journey. This centring of indigenous knowledge was advanced because education, power and consciousness are all intertwined. We need, therefore, to embrace this interconnectivity. The repositioning of the weapon should be guided by a people-centred education in which we acknowledge and 'see' the other. It is in seeing the other that we see the importance of collaboration and the power that lies therein. From that we can move to an education system that acknowledges the complex makeup of human beings and the importance of centring and prioritising indigenous languages and ways of knowing.

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The colloquium achieved its primary purpose of coalition building with the intent of having a collective impact through a shared mission among our stakeholders. The coalition building is founded on a commitment from all stakeholders to work collectively to achieve the goals identified during the colloquium. The commitment to move forward as a collective led to the establishment of a steering committee comprising representatives of all the stakeholders present. It was tasked with looking at formalising a collective programme of action around the following five themes, informed by the objectives identified by colloquium participants:

- multi-stakeholder collaboration;
- holistic development of a child;
- African centred learning;
- the language of teaching and learning; and
- education as a catalyst of transformation.

In conclusion, Professor Segalo stated that the colloquium epitomised the definition of 'Letsema': a group of people working together, building and nurturing one another towards one objective.

CO-CONSTRUCTION OF A SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (CALA, EASTERN CAPE)

Workshop facilitated by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and iKamvelihle Development Trust (iKDT), 23–25 May 2017, Cala, Chris Hani District, Eastern Cape, SA

1. Introduction

This project forms part of a collaboration in a partnership agreement between the NMMU and the iKDT. It is focused on co-construction of a school development programme and a community of practice. The initiative involves three pilot schools in Cala, a rural area located within the Chris Hani District Municipality of the Eastern Cape. A start-up workshop held on 20 February 2017 discussed building blocks needed to build 'ideal schools' that would be beacons of hope to the local communities.

This report is an account of a second workshop held from 23 to 25 May 2017 using the identified building blocks as a guiding framework. The objective was to engage with local stakeholders (parents, teachers and the school management teams) and delve deeper into a shared understanding of the context within which the schools function, the challenges, proposed building blocks for success and respective roles of stakeholders in constructing a credible school development plan.

Guata Primary School	Batandwa Ndondo Senior Secondary School	Mnxe Primary School
253 learners	446 learners	228
Grades R to 7	Grades 8 to 12	Grades R to 7
9 Educators	20 Educators	9 Educators

2. The context

These schools, as highlighted in the start-up workshop of 20 February 2017, have to confront serious socio-economic, infrastructural, academic (teaching and learning) and human resource challenges. At an early stage of the workshop, one parent cautioned: 'We are excited by the preparation and harvest we are preparing for with the programme, but we must not forget to kill the rat.' He was reminding all participants that as the expected programme of support takes shape and while we keep our eyes on the vision, all those who are involved in the project should simultaneously be dealing with the challenges, 'killing the rat' as we embark on the journey.

Whilst noting these challenges, there is a great sense of optimism that with the necessary support from various external stakeholders (government, private sector, universities, non-governmental organisations) the local schooling community can address some of the challenges that prevent the schools from providing the best to their learners within their particular context. Key to the engagement is the ability of both internal and external stakeholders to work together to affect a turnaround in the schools.

3. 3. The key local stakeholders

One of the key objectives of this engagement was to allow the stakeholders to identify what each of their strengths are or should be and some of the challenges that each of them faces. Each participant group was engaged with to describe how they perceived the typical Cala parent, teacher and principal.

The table below highlights the ***positive*** description, whilst the bold italics refer to the ***negative*** elements they thought were present in each stakeholder group.

Parents	Teachers	Principals and Management (HODs)
Forgiving people (especially as it relates to mistakes made by children)	Motivator	Vision
Responsible	Respected	Good listener
Ambition to see children educated	Saviour	Transparent
Visionary	Dedicated	Cooperative
Supportive	Represents the parents	Dedicated
Caring and supportive of learners and teachers	Jack of all trades	Skilled
Aware	Honest	Accept criticism
Understanding	Obey instructions	Tolerance
A social worker (willing to take care of people's children as well)	Perseveres	Committed
	Lifelong learner	Motivated
	Comforter/Consoler	
	Servant	
Not supportive	**Losing respect**	**Demotivated**
Do not care for the future of their children	**Complains**	**Not supported**
Caught in cycle of poverty	**No job satisfaction**	**Lack of skills**
Substance abusers	**No self confidence**	**Not fully equipped**
Lack of opportunities	**Not committed**	**Autocratic**
	Late comer	**Do not encourage**
	Bad person	**Not committed**
	Dependent	**Not taking initiative**
	Slave	**Not trusted**
	Overloaded	**Lack of capacity**

Teachers, principals and management members were prompted to express what they regarded as moments of success during their teaching careers. **An opportunity was missed to conduct this activity with the parents.** The following emerged from the engagement.

Teachers	Principals and Management (HODs)
Learners achieving good results	High matric pass rate
Learners achieving something in life	Good results in a subject
Making a difference in a struggling learner's life	Assist children with domestic challenges
A thank you call from a learner	SMS from a previous learner at university acknowledging contribution of leader
Learner motivated to study further because of teacher encouragement	Work done with special needs learners
Parental recognition for the role played by teacher in the child's life	Launching of school as a Health Promoting School; School Safety project and other schools benefited from this
Learner achieving in a subject	Part of a process to have a properly structured school built

Teachers	Principals and Management (HODs)
Success in extramural programmes	
Learner achieving success in external exams	
Touching a life without even knowing it	
Being recognised by learners long after they left school	
Opportunities created for learners	
100% sustained results	
Being part of painful journey of success	
Collectively celebrating succes	

It was then from understanding who the stakeholders are and what they regarded as key moments of success in their careers that we proceeded to explore how the building blocks will be the catalyst for projects to move towards the ideal school for the context.

4. The building blocks of success

Participants were presented with the nine key focus areas of Whole School Evaluation (WSE), as identified by the Department of Basic Education. Participants were encouraged to see how their building blocks aligned with what was expected by the DBE. The idea was not to introduce projects that fell outside the basic scope of what was legally required by the DBE. In addition, all participants were mindful of introducing projects that would add to the already heavy workload of participants. In the ensuing debates, the following emerged:

- The building blocks were perhaps too broad and some overlapped (external stakeholders were requested to develop the broad themes and match the building blocks to the themes)
- Most of the building blocks fell into one of the key performance areas
- Parents in particular felt that the nine key focus areas of the WSE framework did not address all the building blocks recommended in the start-up workshop
- Based on the request of the participants we therefore recommend the following five themes and suggest the alignment of the building blocks under each theme.

1. Teaching and learning support	2. Psycho-social support	3. Infrastructure	4. Capacity building	5. Community and stakeholder support
Advanced methods of teaching e.g. use of ICT, e-learning	Integrated focus on teaching and learning with health, social services, guidance, youth, community development. It was noted that there are no school psychologist services that are offered in any of the previously disadvantaged schools in the district	Infrastructure conducive to learning and teaching	Disciplined parents; teachers, learners,	Community engagement
Restore culture of teaching and learning	Social awareness campaigns in school e.g. drugs, teenage pregnancy etc.		Good management and leadership	Participation and involvement of parents
	Involvement from different stakeholders e.g. Departments of Social Development, Health, Home Affairs, Transport SAPS and CPFs, ,	Infrastructure conducive to learning and teaching	Well informed School Governing Body	Alumni support
Use of languages in teaching across the curriculum			Human resources competent e.g. educators	
Encourage extra-co curricular activities			Cooperation between learner, teacher, parents	
Recognition of learners doing well			Non Discrimination at school, and DBE monitoring	
Recognition of teachers			Ethos +values should guide our operation	
All subjects are important			Monitoring and support	
			Policies around operation	
			Obey school rules	
			Support good relationships	
			No affairs with learners	
			Spiritual development	

In order to understand how these building blocks translated into actual projects the stakeholders were requested to identify projects which they thought would address the building blocks in the medium to long-term.

6. Projects to support the building blocks

Each stakeholder group then advanced the following suggested projects that they thought could address the needs of the building blocks.

Parents	Teachers	Principals and Management (HODs)
TEACHING AND LEARNING	**TEACHING AND LEARNING**	**TEACHING AND LEARNING**
• Awards for good performing learners	• Developing internal academic monitoring systems	• Developing a learner's love of literacy, languages and numeracy – the basics
	• Projects which continuously recognise excellence and learning achievements across various grades	• Expanding maths, science and languages focusing on teacher capacity and support for learners. Filling the teaching and learning gaps and exam preparation
		• Learner participation in subject competitions, Olympiads, Science Week, etc.
PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT	**PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**	**PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT**
• Regular social awareness road shows	• Social campaigns in schools	• Interdisciplinary support for psychosocial problems
• Invite police, social workers and nurses to educate learners about dangers of substance abuse and teenage pregnancy	• Encouraging spiritual development	• Boy and girl talks
• Community food gardens with links to the feeding scheme		
• Youth Clubs		
CAPACITY BUILDING	**CAPACITY BUILDING**	**COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**
• Capacity building programmes on governance for School Governing Bodies	• Capacity building programmes for SGB	• Use local media e.g. radio stations, to publicise the *Sakhingomso* programme, which is about building a better tomorrow
COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT	**COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**	
• Identification of organisations and agencies who can support the schools	• Data base of alumni	
• Socials/fundraisers that include all stakeholders (parents, teachers and learners)		
• Establish alumni database and link these alumni to specific projects		
• Community volunteers to assist with general school maintenance		
• Community volunteers to assist learners in teaching subjects like maths and physics		
• Parents to monitor and support teachers in attending schools and punctuality'		

In the final activity, teachers and management members were encouraged to explore possible missing links, which we would have to be mindful of when implementing any support plan.

7. The missing links

After internal reflection by each individual participant and the respective stakeholder group, missing links were identified and the following commitments were made for successful implementation of this support initiative:

After considering all the information above, a programme of action was then suggested by the stakeholders.

Teachers	Principals and Management (HODs)
Returning to basics of the culture of learning and teaching (being in school, on time, on task)	Love (for education and what we are doing)
Patience	Hard work (teachers /SMT)
Creating a dream in learners	Support (DBE)
Teamwork beyond the fence / two minds are better than one	More effort (learners and educators)
Support for learners who are not coping	Discipline (learners, teachers and workers)
Active participation and change of attitude	Support from (SGB, Educators, Home Affairs)
	Leader (empowerment by circuit office manager)
	Enough human resources for various learning areas
	Self-introspection
	Appreciation of people's efforts (SMT/ educators)
	Understanding behaviours
	Good working relationships between school and community
	Continuity of projects (do not stop successful programmes and systems, build on them and upscale)

8. Programme of Action

The metaphor of a funnel *(from broad societal challenges to the specifics that can be addressed at Cala)*, a potjiekos pot and a fire *(to unleash latent potential, we will light the fire for a better tomorrow, working as a collective)* were used to contextualise the participants' aim to help build a better tomorrow : *Sakhingomso.*

The funnel is representative of broader macro society that feeds into the school. The macro level is characterised by various challenges at a number of levels, including policy, implementation and support. These challenges flow down and have a direct influence on the schools and the communities in which the schools are located. However, communities and schools are encouraged to become positive agents of change at the micro school level and in turn influence the macro level. We have to start putting on the light (stoking the fire). The collective agency celebrates and welcomes in all voices wanting to create communities of change by creating schools as beacons of hope. *Sakhingomso* is one such community of practice seeking to do this by embarking on immediate action that will be linked to a medium- to long-term programme:

Immediate action, roles and responsibilities

- **The schools in the pilot project will establish a co-ordinating structure, which will have a supporting secretariat**
  - Composition of the Co-ordinating Structure
    - The principal of the three pilot schools
    - 1 teacher from each school
    - 1 parent of each school
    - Secretariat
      - Mr Sakhisizwe Ntwana – Teacher at Bathandwa Ndondo SSS Mr KK Mfundisi – Retired Principal of A.M Zantsi SSS
      - Mrs Nompakamo Danso – Cala Circuit Manager, Department of Education
  - Mandate of the Coordinating Structure (CS)
    - Mrs. Danso will convene the first meeting of the CS
    - The CS will be responsible for providing feedback to all stakeholders of the various schools around Sakhingomso
    - Schools will start working together to share best practices
    - The CS will be a sounding board for schools who might be experiencing challenges
    - The CS will be the official link between pilot schools and NMMU and iKDT
- **NMMU and iKDT:**
  - Compile the workshop report and have it ready for submission to schools by 7 June 2017
  - Consider engagement with learners in June (date selection to be informed by school diaries and after 23 June)
  - Draw up a project plan based on the report and identify partners to approach for support
  - Facilitate the preparation and presentation of the final co-constructed Schools Development Plan (IDP) to all constituencies in July (possibly on 26 -27 July, date selection to be informed by school diaries)
  - Finalise the last two activities in Cycle 1 of the programme plan.

9. Workshop Check out

The final checkout session identified the following issues to be noted and taken forward in future plans:

- *'I have learnt a lot as a parent, I am not a teacher, promise to go back and plough back to school.' Concerned that we (facilitators) have not actually visited the school. Ashamed to look at school because the physical condition of school. Things are going to start changing already. Things will happen.*
- *'We have large grounds to do the vegetable garden'.*
- *'We are presently struggling as SGB, we are not working well together'. Concern about some negative labels given to SGB by community because they not clear what we do. Struggle with relationships among the various stakeholders of the SGB, making us feel powerless. This leads to demotivation. We need support immediately.*
- *If we can start working together as stakeholders, something will emerge from these engagements that will allow us to come up with one solution.*
- *We are thankful that you are coming with some solutions to some of our challenges, we have challenges, I will be happy when we can all meet together to solve some of our 'big' problems.*
- No one is a failure – all have talents "everyone has tasted success"
- Success is when you touch the lives of others current reality
- Where there is a will there is a way
- Put GOD forward: HE gives us strength when we are weak
- When we commit to do our part nothing is impossible
- We are more than teachers, we need to motivate, even if it is later that we receive recognition
- With perseverance you gain rewards / results

We concluded the session by recognising that perhaps we should be exploring how to deal with some of the present challenges confronting the schools (such as dilapidated toilets and school infrastructure), while working on the ideal schools. Parents were encouraged to remain motivated and ensure that they take progress reports back to their constituency.

APPENDIX 1:
PROPOSED PROJECTS TO CONSIDER FOR THE MEDIUM TO LONG TERM

Themes	Suggested projects			Possible collaboration NMMU and relevant Faculty/ Centre	Govt. Agencies	iKDT and Local Co-ordinating Structure (CS)
Teaching and Learning Support (Academic/Co-curricular)	Award recognition for learners/ subject competitions	Tool for internal academic monitoring	***Advanced methods of teaching e.g. e-learning***	Faculty of Education (FOE) – tool for academic monitoring; Centre for Community Technology ***(CCT): ICT, e-learning, improved digital access and science communication***	***DBE-educator content refresher***	Award recognition for learners; ***ICT projects -***
	Maths, science and language	Love of literacy	***Educator content refresher***	FOE; Faculty of Science; Govan Mbeki Mathematics Unit; Other relevant units		Build capacity for co-ordination and field work Facilitate approaches to potential partners for programme implementation
	Development of contextual extra-curricular programme	University Orientation		Admissions	Department of Arts and Culture	***Alumni support of co-curricular programme***
Psycho-social support	Social road shows and programmes to deal with social challenges e.g. drugs, teenage pregnancies, parenting, child headed households; safety and security, HIV/AIDS, Nutrition, immunisation			Social development; community psychology	Depts of Social Development, Health, SAPS and CPFs, Home Affairs, Transport Department	Build capacity for co-ordination and field work Facilitate approaches to potential partners for action
Infrastructure	Community gardens on school	***Infrastructure audits***		Environmental, Agricultural and Health Sciences; ***Engineering***	Department of Agriculture; ***Public Works***	***Alumni fundraising for infrastructure***

Themes	Suggested projects			Possible collaboration NMMU and relevant Faculty/ Centre	Govt. Agencies	iKDT and Local Co-ordinating Structure (CS)
Capacity building / relationships	Develop a directory of services available from GOV and NGO for schools	SGB capacity building.	Youth Clubs	Students to support in developing and designing of directory. FOE – SGB training Youth Clubs (*Unako*, a youth organisation based at NMMU)	DBE – SGB training	Assist in the development of directory of GOV, NGO
	Establish alumni database and linking these alumni to specific projects	Spiritual Development	Connecting media for advocacy	Marketing students to assist with marketing strategy for the project		Assist schools develop Alumni data base and projects the can support CS identify faith based organisations spiritual development Assist with media and marketing strategy for *Sakhingomso*
	Contextual policy development	Teacher and parent recognition programmes		***NMMU marketing-parent and teacher recognition***	***DBE – contextual policy development***	***iKDT and CS marketing-parent and teacher recognition***
Community stakeholder support	Social/ Fundraiser that includes all stakeholders (parents, teachers and learners)	Integrate community volunteer in school	***Discipline of all stakeholders***	CCS – integrating community volunteer in school	***DBE programmes on discipline/ NGO***	Co-ordinating structure support of Alumni
	SMT Leadership development	***Developing ethos and culture of learning and teaching***		FOE- leadership development	DBE-leadership development; DBE - Developing culture of learning and teaching	Alumni leadership symposiums

THE CCS **TEAM**

Bruce Damons – Director

PhD, Nelson Mandela University
Personal Quote: 'If it needs to change it has to start with me!'

Nkosinathi Mzuzu – Interim Manager – 2020

(Former school principal)
Bachelor of Education – Rhodes University
Current studies – MA Development Studies, Nelson Mandela University
Personal Quote: African Proverb – 'Where there are experts there will be no lack of learners.'

Jabu Bam – Programme Coordinator

BCom Accounting, Nelson Mandela University
Personal Quote: 'Shut up, listen, engage and work with passion.'

Zikhona Tube – Administrator

BA Psychology, Nelson Mandela University
Personal Quote: 'Don't aim for success if you want it; just do what you love and believe in, and it will come naturally.'

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