Falling at the First Hurdle

Initial encounters with the formal system of African education in South Africa

Project Writer: Nick Taylor

JOINT EDUCATION TRUST
P.O. BOX 178
WITS 2050
TEL: (011) 403-6401-9
403-6582
FAX: (011) 339-7844
3RD FLOOR
BRAAMFONTEIN CENTRE
23 JORISSEN STREET
BRAAMFONTEIN
JOHANNESBURG

The EPU has been established to provide an academic context for considering educational alternatives for a democratic, non-racial education system in South Africa

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During the remainder of 1988 the Project was co-ordinated by Maxine Hart.

In 1989 the role of Project co-ordinator was taken over by Nick Taylor, who also wrote this Research Report.

Joe Muller and Yogesh Narsing contributed to both formative and editorial discussions.

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1. Introduction

Lower primary schooling[1] in South Africa has received surprisingly little attention, despite the enormous problems which exist at this level. Chief of these is the fact that almost one-quarter of African children who enter the first grade (SSA) do not reach the second grade (SSB) the following year. Many of these children disappear from the formal schooling system altogether at this stage.

Although this problem has existed at least since the earliest days of Bantu education, responses by all the actors in the educational terrain — parents, teachers, students, education departments and political bodies — are relatively recent and low-key phenomena. The post '76 education crisis has focussed attention on the high schools. While the seriousness of problems at this level cannot be underestimated, many problems in the high schools are to a large extent effects of causes whose roots lie deep in the primary phase.

This paper examines crucial dimensions of the low survival rates of the majority of children in the first year of primary schooling. The magnitude of the problem is described and compared across the different departments of education in South Africa. Children who leave school during or at the end of the first grade go into the world without having attained even the most elementary literacy skills: some of the consequences, for both the individual and society, are discussed in the context of the world-wide literacy debate.

Possible causes of the low first grade survival rates are examined. South African initiatives which aim to improve these rates are described and compared with intervention programmes which address the same problem in other countries.

Differences with respect to survival rates which exist across the ethnically segregated departments of education mirror the larger inequalities which permeate political, social and economic life in South Africa. This analysis seeks to inform policy towards an equitable education system for a non-racial democracy, by placing the issue of educational change within the context of the larger restructuring of South African society.

However, no attempt is made to discuss how access to schooling may be provided to greater numbers of South Africans. Nor is the debate as to whether schooling provides the skills necessary for available jobs entered into. Rather, the focus for the present investigation is on what happens to children once they enter the school system and, in particular, how these experiences may be facilitated during the first few years. In this respect, the analysis will concentrate on the home/school interface rather than on curricular matters.

2. The first grade bottleneck in African education

2.1 The constancy of first grade survival rates

Primary school survival rates for African children are very low. For example, for every 100 who entered the first grade (SSA) in 1980, 79 passed to the second grade (SSB) the following year, 75 reached STD 1 in 1982, 64 reached STD 2 in

1983, 63 reached STD 3 in 1984, 54 reached STD 4 in 1985, and only 49 passed to STD 5 within the minimum seven years.[2]

	Primary School Grade						
Year Group Entered SSA	SSA	SSB	STD 1	STD 2	STD 3	STD 4	STD 5
1960	100	75	68	55	42	32	26
1970	100	79	74	59	53	43	44
1980	100	79	75	64	63	54	49

Table 1 : Survival rates as a percentage of SSA enrolment for the groups who entered SSA in 1960, 1970 and 1980. All African children. (From Table 14A, APPENDIX A)

The transition from the first (SSA) to the second grade (SSB) exhibits by far the lowest survival rate between any two successive grades in the primary phase. (See TABLE 2).

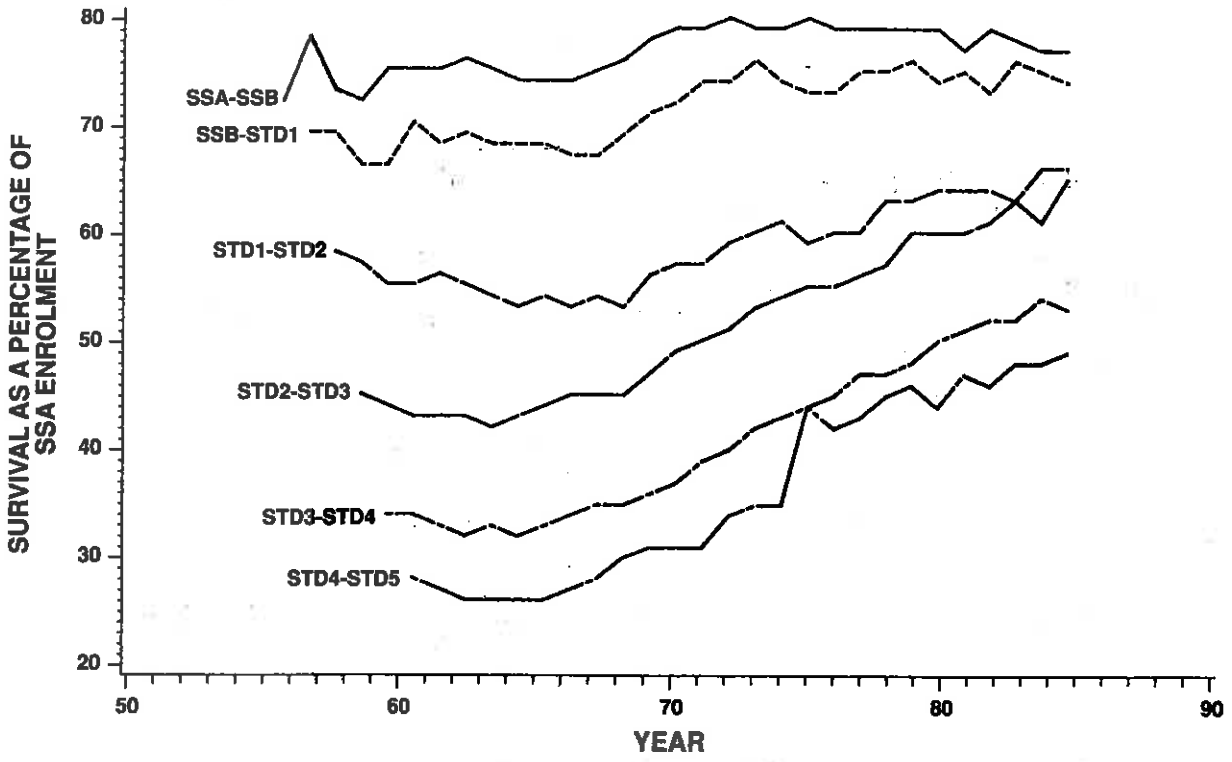
Although bottle-necks also occur at the third grade (STD 1) and fifth grade (STD 3) levels, each of these has significantly smaller effects on the flow of children through the system than the first grade stricture.

Consider, for example, the group of African children who entered SSA in 1980. 79% proceeded to SSB in 1981. Of those who reached SSB, 95% proceeded to STD 1 in 1982. Thus, a far higher percentage survived the transition from SSB to STD 1 than survived the SSA-SSB hurdle. 86% of those who reached STD 1 made it to STD 2 in 1983. The corresponding survival rates for the STD 2 – STD 3, STD 3 – STD 4 and STD 4 – STD 5 transitions are 98%, 86% and 90%, respectively.

	Primary School Grade					
Year Group Entered SSA	SSA-SSB	SSB-STD1	STD1-STD2	STD2-STD3	STD3-STD4	STD4-STD5
1960	75	91	81	76	76	83
1970	79	93	80	90	82	103
1980	79	95	86	98	86	90

TABLE 2 : Survival rates (%) between succesive grades for the groups who entered SSA in 1960, 1970 and 1980. All African children. (From TABLE 14A, Appendix A)

The most disturbing aspect of this problem is revealed on looking at the changes exhibited by the survival rates for all primary school grades over the period 1955 – 1986. GRAPH 1 shows that, except for a relatively minor improvement during the late sixties and early seventies, the SSA survival rate has remained essentially unchanged over this 32 year period. This is in sharp contrast to some of the improvements shown by the rates for all other primary grades. A particularly interesting feature of this graph is that progressively greater improvements occur for successively higher grades. These latter trends were accelerated during the late sixties and early seventies, maintained a steady rate for the next decade, but appear to be levelling off over the last few years.



GRAPH 1. Survival rates for total African children 1955-1986. (See TABLE 14A, Appendix A)

2.2 Differences across education departments

Education in South Africa is controlled by seventeen ethnically based departments of education. TABLE 3 reflects their relative sizes, according to pupil enrolment.

DEPARTMENT		PUPIL ENROLMENT SSA-STD 10	% OF TOTAL
Department of Education and Training[3]		1 885 373	21,8
'Self-governing states':	Kwazulu	1 319 874	15,3
	Lebowa	809 352	9,4
	Gazankulu	262 572	3,0
	Kangwane	174 323	2,0
	Kwandebele	154 848	1,8
	Qwaqwa	97 671	1,1
'Independent countries':	Transkei	945 293	10,9
	Bophuthatswana	535 188	6,2
	Ciskei	255 970	3,0
	Venda	204 395	2,4
Total African		6 644 859	76,8
White:	Transvaal	538 113	6,2
	Cape	232 031	2,7
	Natal	111 566	1,3
	Orange Free State	72 744	0,8
Total White		954 454	11,0
Coloured		812 889	9,4
Asian		234 476	2,7
TOTAL		8 646 678	100,0

TABLE 3: Comparison of pupil numbers in the seventeen South African departments of education, 1987. (Calculated from RIEP, 1987)

Survival rates for the various primary school grades show considerable variation across education departments. TABLE 4, compares survival rates for all African children with those for the five largest African departments, and those for white, coloured and Asian children.

	SSA-SSB	SSB-STD1	STD1-STD2	STD2-STD3	STD3-STD4	STD4-STD5
TOTAL AFRICAN	78,2	95,5	86,0	97,0	85,7	91,2
DET	79,3	94,4	81,9	97,7	83,0	91
KWAZULU	79,5	93,5	87,3	97,1	85,8	96
TRANSKEI	61,4	91,4	86,6	91,3	81,2	83,7
LEBOWA	89,3	100,6	91,6	96,0	91,7	93,4
BOPHUTHATSWANA	95,1	99,0	86,4	101,3	86,8	86
COLOURED	89,5	94,5	92,6	95,1	93,5	91,2
WHITE	95,0	98,7	99,4	98,7	97,8	95,2
ASIAN	100,0	99,7	99,5	102,0	98,2	97,4

TABLE 4: Mean survival rates (%) between successive grades, 1977 – 1987. (See Appendix A)

Two main points emerge from an analysis of these figures. Firstly, the first grade survival rate for all African children is considerably lower than that for any of the other three population groups, while survival rates for coloured children lie between those for total African children, on the one hand, and the white and Asian groups, on the other.

Since African children are predominantly from working class or peasant homes, it is natural to expect them to experience greater difficulties in coping with schooling than their white and Asian counterparts, whose parents constitute the

bulk of the professional and business classes. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that the two official languages — English and Afrikaans, both of which are compulsory school subjects from the first grade — are not spoken much in the homes of the majority of African children. The existence of a substantial coloured middle class explains the intermediate position of the first grade survival rates for coloured children.

The second point that emerges from a comparison of the figures shown in TABLE 4 revolves around the large differences exhibited by the survival rates of the five largest departments catering for African children. Of these, the DET and Kwazulu hover just above the first grade survival rate for total African children, Lebowa and Bophuthatswana are considerably better than average, while the rate for the Transkei is almost 20% lower than that for any other department.

The low rate for the Transkei may be due to the traditional practices in the region where, during the sixties, children remained at the first grade level for three years (Donaldson, 1988). At least the first two of these years were generally regarded by most parents as serving a child-minding function; consequently, children were enrolled from as early as three or four years old. It is probable, therefore, that the inflated grade one enrolment figure for Transkei is largely due to the registration of underage children. Indeed, underage enrolment is a widespread problem in African education. It is commonly accepted that this is a general practice undertaken by principals. Sometimes they enrol underage children unwittingly. However parental pressure and a desire to boost pupil numbers in order to obtain a higher school grading also influences principals.

Since the practice contravenes departmental regulations, principals deny pursuing it. Consequently, official figures for the age distribution of pupils in SSA for all black education departments, based on returns from principals, assert that all pupils are six or older, (see, for example, RIEP, 1985, 1986; DET, 1987). It is therefore difficult to establish the extent of these practices.

Nevertheless, the seriousness with which the allegations of underage enrolment are taken by the DET is reflected in the warnings issued during 1988 by the Regional Directors to primary school principals in all seven regions, that they will be charged with misconduct if found contravening the regulations governing minimum age restrictions. Underage enrolment is probably a factor contributing to the low first grade survival rates in all African departments, and this problem may be particularly acute in Transkei.

However the large differences in survival rates between Bophuthatswana and Lebowa, on the one hand, and Kwazulu and the DET, on the other, require a different kind of explanation. If the discrepancies were due to differences in the urban/rural demographic spread, then one would expect the largely urban-based DET to be different from the other three regions, whose schools lie predominantly in rural areas. However, such gross comparisons are probably quite inappropriate in view of the heterogeneity which exists within each department. In the DET, for example, around one-third of all primary school pupils are registered at farm schools (DET, 1987), where, Graaff (1987b,1989) notes, the drop-out rate is higher than for any other group, urban or rural, platteland or bantustan.[4] A great deal more fine-grained analysis needs to be done before an understanding of the differences in primary school survival rates across the various departments is

achieved.

It seems likely that much of the discrepancy may be accounted for in terms of differences in policy regarding criteria for promotions. One of the features of Bophuthatswana's Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP), for example, is the virtual automatic promotion of children up to sixth grade (STD 4), where the first examination is encountered. This would explain the higher than average survival rates for the first five grades in Bophuthatswana.

2.3 Possible causes

Those children who do not survive the transition from one grade to the next fall into one of two main categories: grade repeaters and school drop-outs. RIEP has investigated the problem of pupil outflow in nine homeland departments. These findings reveal a wide variety in the ratio repeaters/drop-outs across the departments. For example, in Kwazulu, the SSA repeater rate in 1982 was 20% and the drop-out rate only 12%, while in Transkei the corresponding figures were

DEPARTMENT	YEAR	ENROLMENT (000)	REPEAT %	DROP-OUT %	WASTAGE %
Kwazulu	1981	186	20.6	11.3	31.9
	1982	204	20.3	12.3	32.5
Transkei	1981	195	12.3	38.4	50.7
	1982	186	13.2	31.4	44.6
Lebowa	1981	90	12.1	8.5	20.6
	1982	93	11.6	9.8	21.4
Bophuthatswana	1981	72	18.8	0.3	19.1
	1982	74	14.0	8.1	22.1
Ciskei	1981	45	14.4	27.9	42.3
	1982	45	12.0	29.6	41.6
Gazankulu	1981	31	20.1	14.4	34.5
	1982	35	19.9	14.6	34.5
Venda	1981	26	12.4	10.9	23.3
	1982	20	16.7	2.9	19.6
Kangwane	1981	19	23.4	4.3	27.7
	1982	21	21.4	6.0	27.4
Qwaqwa	1981	10	7.5	4.1	11.6
	1982	10	7.5	0.0	7.5

TABLE 5: SSA enrolments, repeaters, drop-outs and total wastage (repeaters + drop-outs) in nine education departments. (Compiled from RIEP, 1983b)

13% and 31%, respectively. In Qwaqwa, on the other hand, only 7,5% of SSA pupils repeated in 1982, while none dropped out of school. (See TABLE 5)

Donaldson (op cit) has recalculated the RIEP figures, on the assumption that many

of those children generally classified as drop-outs return to the school system after a period of absence. He concludes that, of all African pupils in SSA, less than 1% leave the school without returning and over 31% repeat the grade. Clearly, there is a difference of opinion as to whether the low first grade survival rate is primarily due to failure or dropping out. The picture is further complicated by large differences between education departments.

But repeating and dropping out are themselves symptoms of deeper causes and knowledge concerning these causes is almost non-existent. It would appear that school drop-outs and grade repeaters are produced by different sets of circumstances. Gordon (1987), for example argues that family financial considerations and employment conditions in the area have a greater influence on school drop-outs in some farm schools than factors such as classroom availability, teacher upgrading programmes and the supply of textbooks. Nyikana (1982), on the other hand, argues for an improvement in educational variables such as teacher in-service training in order to reduce repeater rates in the Ciskei.

Much more work needs to be done before anything like a clear picture emerges as to why so many African children make such slow progress during the first few years at school. Is this primarily due to dropping out or grade repeating? What are the causes of each of these symptoms? Why are there such large regional differences? These are some of the questions which need to be answered before appropriate intervention strategies can be formulated.

3. Consequences for literacy

> *Since we are all of us not learned and therefore illiterate, we only depend on this land of our forefathers for a living. We have nowhere to go, we can't get employment anywhere. So we can't be assisted in improving our only means of survival, the land, because some of us are unable to pay for the expenses.* (Unemployed male head of an eight-person household in Transkei. Muller and Tapscott, 1984, quoted in Wilson and Ramphele, 1989, 138)

It is generally accepted that illiteracy is a crucial element in the poverty cycle, particularly in industrial or industrialising states such as South Africa. Besides serving as the first sorting mechanism for anything but the lowest grade of manual labour, the communicative, legal, bureaucratic and educational functions of written language (Stubbs, 1980) relegate the illiterate to the most peripheral positions of powerlessness in modern society. Adult illiteracy and lower primary education are inextricably linked. The former results from the inadequate provision of primary education, the inability of poor families to send their children to school, or inefficiencies on the part of the school system in inculcating basic literacy skills.

In the wide ranging debate around literacy, there is consensus over the importance of literacy to both the individual and the nation. There is dissensus in virtually every other dimension of the question, including: the definition of literacy, how to measure it, why it is important and how it should be taught. These debates are best understood in terms of a broad two-fold classification of approaches to literacy and basic education. Discussion of these perspectives, in turn, provides a context within which to locate and understand responses to the problem of the low first grade survival rates of African children in South Africa.

3.1 Approaches to literacy and basic education

3.1.1 The instrumental approach

Instrumental definitions of literacy stress the need to read and write in the mother tongue or a national language where this is required by cultural or political realities; basic numeracy is commonly included in this definition (Bhola, 1984). Tests for literacy generally require that a person be able to read and write to a certain level. School attendance for a specified number of years is commonly taken as a measure of literacy. There is little agreement as to what either criterion means in specific practical terms (Caroll and Chall, 1975). One of the main reasons for this diversity is that different requirements, contexts, expectations and possibilities in different countries give rise to different standards (Stubbs, op cit).

The initiative in formulating instrumental policies for literacy/basic education has been dominated by donor agencies (Lungwanga, 1988/89). Under the leadership of The World Bank, this emphasis on basic education reflects a reorientation of educational policies for the developing world, which commenced around the early seventies. The impetus behind this change lay in the realisation that the economic boom of the sixties had brought little benefit to the poorest strata of the societies of the Third World, and that the concentration on secondary and tertiary education in these countries had neither led to significantly improved national economic development nor a more equitable distribution of wealth.

On the other hand, numerous studies correlated rising literacy rates with economic development (Bowman, 1980). Literacy came to be viewed as the first important unit in the "individual's social overhead capital or infrastructure" (Wharton, 1965, 203), and was linked to indices of development such as reduction in birth rates and improved health and nutrition (for example, see Colclough, 1980 and Cochrane, 1980). Instrumental perspectives assume that the poverty of an individual is due to a lack of the skills necessary to play a part in the economic life of the society. Consequently the provision of basic skills through education will be instrumental in empowering the poor. Increased individual productivity will, in turn, stimulate national economic growth. The *Education Sector Working Paper* of The World Bank stated this position as follows:

> *The Bank's interest in basic education is closely related to its efforts in promoting a broader approach to development. Basic education is conceived as a means by which the minimum learning needs of the masses will be met so as to ensure effective participation in the development process by all. Basic education can thus be instrumental in increasing the productivity as well as improving the opportunities of underprivileged groups. (1974, 52)*

While no one takes issue with the goals of the instrumental position, its premises and modus operandi have been called into question. Firstly, a body of evidence which discredits the conclusion that rising literacy rates result in improved economic development, has begun to accumulate. Thus, for example, mass literacy was achieved in Sweden and Scotland while the population remained desperately poor (Graff, 1987). Dobyns (1971) concluded that economic growth and education in a Peruvian Indian village were positively correlated, but that the relationship was actually one between two independent processes which happened to be occurring concurrently without being causally related. Fuller et al

(1986) have demonstrated that in Mexico investment in education appears to have been negatively correlated with agricultural production before the revolution, but after 1917 a positive correlation appeared.

A second line of criticism questions the instrumental assumption that the equalisation of opportunity in both education and the broader society necessarily results from merely spending more on education. Graff (op cit) notes that, despite the egalitarian ideals with which instrumental campaigns are generally invested, in the overwhelming majority of cases the social structure of literacy parallels the larger structure of inequality in the society. The distribution of both literacy and reward are tied to the facts of birth — ethnicity, social and economic origins, sex and age — and instrumental programmes tend to reinforce these divisions.

Critics generally attribute the shortcomings of instrumental approaches to the refusal of their advocates to address the issue of political economy and to acknowledge that education tends to reproduce social, political and economic relations rather than undermining inequality. In Lungwanga's words:

> *The liberal position does not address the most crucial pedagogical problem: namely that of harnessing a consensus about the role of educational institutions in developing countries in the midst of unemployment, scarce resources, increasing population growth, urbanisation, weakening traditional social structures, to mention but a few. In other words, the problems inherent in the political economies of developing nations are ignored in the donor agencies' prescriptions. Equity and efficiency can on their own not be adequate criteria for investment decisions in education.(Lungwanga, op cit, 20–21)*

Education is a fundamentally political issue. Instrumental initiatives obscure this by relegating educational questions to the realm of the scientific, where they are 'best dealt with by experts'. The recipients of instrumental programmes are thus denied participation in the most important decisions. In this way instrumental programmes disempower client communities: they follow the political and economic agendas of the donor agencies under the guise of development, philanthropy and science.

3.1.2 Transformational perspectives

Whereas instrumental approaches to literacy are uncritical about the political context of education, more radical perspectives see literacy as an integral part of a deeper understanding of socio-political process and transformation. Furthermore, while initiatives undertaken within an instrumental or functional framework tend to separate the issues of formal basic education for children and adult literacy programmes, transformational approaches subsume these questions under a general programme of social reconstruction. Thus, during the Cuban (Carnoy and Werthein, 1981) and Nicaraguan (Hirshon, 1983) literacy campaigns for example, thousands of students and teachers were sent into the countryside to teach the peasants to read and to share with them their understanding of the goals of the emerging societies. But these efforts were merely one component of the restructuring of the education system aimed at integrating education and the world of work, which in turn was part of the reordering of society along co-operative lines.

A third feature distinguishing the two approaches to literacy and basic education lies in the locus of control. While for instrumental programmes policy formulation (and often execution) is undertaken by donor agencies, all aspects of transformational campaigns lie firmly in the hands of the state. Bhola emphasises the need to secure the confidence of the people:

> *... the existence of the political will among leaders and the accompanying social energy of the people in a post-independence or revolutionary era or in a period of confidence in the future is the only absolute precondition [for the success of a literacy campaign] (op cit, 183)*

A fourth characteristic central to transformational perspectives lies in the recognition of a dialectic between education, on the one hand, and personal and national development, on the other. Thus, while

> *literacy and education are better viewed as necessary and **not** sufficient prerequisites for popular rule and democratic rights. The powers of literacy and schooling for control, the negative aspects of education, must be fully recognized. Literacy **can** and **has** been employed for social control and for political repression as well. We must be fully cognizant that education by itself is not a course for freedom, and that schooling for responsibility and social change requires much more emphasis on critical and independent thinking than public schooling has ever allowed. (Graff, op cit, 70)*

Furthermore, while education under such conditions may facilitate change, it is by no means a panacea. For example, the primary benefit of the Cuban educational revolution, besides virtually eliminating illiteracy, occurred in the spheres of social services and national cohesion (Carnoy and Werthein, op cit). Improvements in the school system did not lead to immediate economic growth, and even the long term effects of education on the economy are difficult to discern:

> *In the longer run, the concentration on education probably did contribute to economic growth, particularly in the industrial sector and in those parts of the agricultural sector, like citrus growing, where other constraints did not impede production. (ibid, 383)*

Nor did educational changes in Cuba produce more equal income distribution or lower levels of unemployment: these were achieved through direct intervention in the economic system (ibid).

The same effects have been noted in studies examining the relationship between expansion of the schooling system, economic growth and the equalisation of income distribution in Brazil, Peru and Mexico. Carnoy (1978) concludes that, while schooling and experience are correlated positively with earnings, changes in the distribution of schooling have much less influence on wage distribution than changes in the wage value of different amounts of schooling over time and changes in the wages paid to workers in different industries and regions. In other words, state policies such as wage restructuring, the control of agricultural prices and investment in urban infrastructure for industrialisation are far more important in changing income distribution than the more indirect method of investment in education.

Transformational perspectives on literacy/basic education, therefore, emphasise the need to embed educational initiatives in the totality of social, economic and political change. Improving access and the quality of education will not ensure change on either individual or social levels. At best, educational innovation can facilitate and reinforce transformations brought about in the economic and political spheres, and then only if these changes occur as part of a comprehensive plan undertaken within the framework of a broad-based national effort.

3.2 South Africa

State activities in the field of literacy and basic education in South Africa follow classic instrumental lines. Firstly, adult literacy and formal basic education are rigidly separated. Secondly, policy within each of these areas is couched in what Lungwanga has called the paradigm of "economic technical rationalization" (op cit, 12) which strictly excludes political considerations being brought to bear on educational issues. Finally, both the formulation and execution of this policy lies firmly in the hands of the ethnically segregated education departments, all of which are run on strict authoritarian lines and the majority of which are neither representative of nor accountable to their client communities.

Detailed manifestations of this policy, together with non-state alternatives, will be described in 4.2. The present section is confined to outlining the dimensions of illiteracy in South Africa and the main consequence of the low first grade survival rates for this problem.

Information on literacy rates in South Africa is sketchy to say the least, while the debate around key dimensions of the problem is confused and ill-developed (see, for example, French, 1989). This itself is an indictment of the state's attitude towards literacy and stands in sharp contrast to the high priority accorded the issue within the first year or two of popular government in countries such as Cuba and Nicaragua.

Official figures are based on self-report census data. These are unreliable, firstly, because self-assessment is generally not considered a good indication as to whether a person is literate or not (Stubbs, op cit), and secondly, because census figures themselves have been questioned as an accurate reflection of demographic data in South Africa (French, 1988). Even the most optimistic estimates of black adult (fifteen years or older) literacy — which vary between 67% (Ellis, 1980) and 36% (Wedepohl, 1984a) — are, as Wilson and Ramphele (op cit) note, staggering for a country whose industrial revolution has been underway for a full century and where more than half the population is urbanised. Furthermore, these figures exclude Transkei and Bophuthatswana, where illiteracy is likely to be higher than the national average, since these are predominently rural areas.

A second measure of literacy — the level of formal education attained — is also the subject of considerable disagreement. The debate is further complicated by the differences in quality between the various departments of education in South Africa, and even between different regions or districts within the same department (Auerbach, 1970; Wilson and Ramphele, op cit.). Nevertheless, the majority of surveys accept that children who leave school without having passed STD 3 (the fifth grade) will be illiterate (Ellis, op cit; French, 1982; Wedepohl, op cit).

A longer term relationship completes the cyclical link between the formal basic education of children and adult illiteracy: children are more likely to succeed at school if their parents are literate (Bhola, op cit). It is clear that the obvious point at which to break the illiteracy spiral is at the lower end of the primary school, firstly, by increasing the percentage of the population which enters school and, secondly, by improving the flow of students through the school system. Some indication as to the number of children who leave school without attaining functional literacy is given in TABLE 6.

These figures indicate that something in the order of 9% of African children who receive some primary schooling leave the system before attaining functional literacy. (Again, it is worth noting that the drop-out rate for SSA is virtually constant for the period indicated, while the total rate for SSA-STD 2 appears to be declining). TABLE 6 needs to be read in conjunction with the fact that schooling is not compulsory for African children: Pillay (1984) estimates that in 1980 16,9% of African children of school-going age were not attending school.

Thus, something in the order of 25% of African children are growing up to be illiterate. This is of a similar order of magnitude to the most optimistic estimate of adult illiteracy (36%), indicating that the formal schooling system is not contributing to a significant degree to the diminution of the problem of illiteracy. Within the school system, the low survival rate at first grade level is the largest single factor which both retards student flow through the system and feeds the vast pool of illiterates in South Africa.

	Number of African pupils who leave school without obtaining the grade level indicated, as a percentage of enrolment at that level						
	SSA	SSB	STD	STD2	STD3	TOTAL SSA-STD2	TOTAL SSA-STD3
1981	17,5					11,4	
1982	15,5					11,5	
1983	15,5					9,4	
1984	15,7					9,3	
1985	15,4					9,2	
1986	15,5	4,6	7,9	5,5	10,1	9,1	9,2
1987*	15,1	4,5	7,2	4,9	9,4	8,7	8,8

TABLE 6: Percentage of African pupils who leave school functionally illiterate. (Adapted from RIEP, 1981 – 1987)

4. Interventions

Instrumental perspectives tend to separate the issues of adult literacy, on the one hand, and formal basic education, on the other. Where such approaches are applied to the problem of early primary failure they generally embrace some form of the compensation model. This assumes that failure is due to cultural and/or socio-economic disadvantage on the part of the child and her family, and that it is possible to make good this deficit by means of intervention programmes. Transformational approaches, by contrast, view the problem as part of an ailment which permeates the very structure of the society.

4.1 The international experience

4.1.1. Compensation programmes in the USA

The Head Start Project was part of the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty. By the early sixties it had been well established that ...

> *lower-class children in general, and minority group children — Negro, Mexican-American, and American-Indian — in particular were educationally handicapped when they entered elementary school. These handicaps persisted throughout the children's schooling; minority children were, on the average, six months behind national norms in the first grade, and two years behind in the fifth grade in school achievement. Furthermore, by sixth grade these same children manifested non-cognitive "deficits". They had substantially lower self-concept scores, they thought they had less control over their environment, and they had less "need achievement" than their middle class and majority counterparts. (Smith and Bissell, 1970, 55)*

It was these problems which Head Start sought to rectify. The Project received massive state funding through the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO). The priority accorded the initiative is indicated by the speed with which it was implemented. Although formal planning only commenced in November 1964, during the summer of 1965, 561 000 children were enrolled in Head Start programmes in 2 400 communities across the US. Two years later over two million children had participated (ibid).

Much was left to local initiative in both design and implementation. Thus there was enormous variation across a number of variables such as student selection, programme length, teacher qualifications, whether or not they taught parents in their homes, whether they provided feeding schemes and medical care and whether they merely provided daycare for infants or highly structured pre-school programmes. However, two elements were common to all Head Start programmes: they were founded on the belief that parental involvement is integral to the child's success in school, and they were directed toward helping children of pre-school age to develop school competence and positive attitudes towards school (Stallings and Stipek, 1986).

Although by far the largest effort in the field of pre-primary education in the US, Head Start was only one of a number of similar projects undertaken during the sixties. A particularly noteworthy example is the Perry Pre-school Programme, which is still in operation in over 1 000 classrooms in the US, South America and Europe (ibid).

These early learning projects have been subjected to numerous evaluations: both short term and longitudinal effects have been investigated on both the local and national levels. The best conclusion that can be drawn from these studies is that, while individual programmes often produce encouraging results, the overall picture is one of weak or inconclusive effects and, in some areas, of contradictions and even pessimism. For example, while the Westinghouse evaluation (1969) could find very little benefit to Head Start children in either the cognitive or effective domains, a re-analysis of the same data by Smith and Bissell (op cit) produced a more optimistic diagnosis.

One finding common to a large number of early learning interventions is that, although cognitively-oriented programmes do have significant positive effects on the IQ test performance of children, these tend to diminish by about the age of ten. Thus, after three or four years of schooling, any IQ advantage gained by children exposed to pre-school programmes, compared with that of a control group, has disappeared (ibid).

It was primarily these findings which led to the establishing of Project Follow Through, under which special programmes were extended into the third grade in order to maintain the momentum of any positive effects in the cognitive and other spheres established by Head Start. Two conclusions from an evaluation done by Becker and Gersten (1982) on one of these initiatives, the Direct Instruction Follow Through programme, are worth noting. Firstly, children who participated in the programme did benefit in certain cognitive domains when compared with a control group.

Secondly,

> *... without effective instruction which continues to build on these skills in the intermediate grades, the children are likely to lose ground against their middle-income peers. They are failing to master new computational skills (such as long division and complex multiplication), and are failing to develop their vocabularies and reading comprehension abilities at the rate of middle- and higher-income students. Limited English-speaking students appear to lose the most. In order for these students to become fully literate adults, it appears that they need high quality instructional programs in the intermediate grades (and probably beyond). Key areas for program development are instruction in reading comprehension ...; vocabulary development ...; independent study skills ...; arithmetical problem solving ...; expressive writing ...; and independent reading for information and pleasure. (ibid, 89)*

In other words, one-off intervention initiatives may assist children to a limited extent while the programmes are in operation. In order to sustain any positive effects, high quality instruction must be maintained throughout the school system. Even under these conditions, children from disempowered groups have difficulty in keeping up with the progress made by their more privileged peers.

The Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (Lazar et al, 1982) pooled the results from eleven early learning projects, including the Perry Pre-school Programme, one Head Start programme and one Follow Through programme, in order to investigate the long term effects across three sets of elements common to the programmes. Firstly, children's competence in adapting to the situation demands of the school was measured by means of the rate at which they were assigned to special education classes and by the rate at which they repeated a grade. It was found that children who had participated in early education programmes were approximately half as likely as control children to be assigned to special education classes. They were also somewhat less likely to repeat any grade. The second set of measures focussed on developed abilities: here both intelligence tests and achievement tests were utilised. Although early education improved children's performance on both types of test relative to children who had not benefitted from such programmes, this improvement on intelligence tests was not permanent.

Finally, the Consortium examined the attitudes of both children and their parents toward achievement and school. Results in this area were varied, but early education was found to produce some positive effects. Parents of children who had participated in the programmes were more satisfied with the progress of their children's success in school, and had higher aspirations for their children than control parents. Similarly, participating children answered questions about school in a more positive manner.

It should be noted that the study of the Consortium followed the educational progress of 2 008 children, from eleven selected programmes. This is an extremely small sample of the total number of children involved in early learning programmes from the mid-sixties to the early seventies (a total in the order of twenty million). In addition, the projects included in the Consortium study by no means represent a random sample. It could be argued that the criteria used to select these programmes to some extent ensured the nature of the findings of the study. Nevertheless, that the Consortium reported positive long term effects on such a broad range of measures across a spectrum of diverse programmes is encouraging.

The Consortium study also speculates on the financial benefits of early learning. Since special education is more costly than regular classes, the economic significance of reducing the need for remedial education is obvious. In addition, participants in pre-school programmes increase their earning potential by attaining higher educational levels. The earning power of parents is also increased through the release time afforded by children attending formal programmes.

Parental involvement was included as an essential component of Head Start and the majority of other early learning programmes, and almost all evaluation studies which look at this aspect conclude that parents play a vital role in mediating the success of such initiatives.

The success rate appears to be only weakly related to the presence of the father and the number of children in the family, and correlates more strongly with higher educational levels of the mother (ibid) and with higher socio-economic status (SES) of the family (Bronson et al, 1984). This last finding means that the lower the SES of the family, the greater the effort required on the part of the programme to achieve results comparable to those for children from higher SES families. Parental involvement was a focus of the evaluation of both the Perry Pre-school Programme and the Parent Education Follow Through Programme. In both cases parents were visited weekly by school personnel: they were taught to conduct school-type learning activities with their children and encouraged to participate in school programmes (Stallings and Stipek, op cit). Evaluation findings indicate that family involvement schemes foster positive attitudes toward school, provide support and encouragement for children and contribute to the improved success rates of the participating children. These effects benefit younger children in the family but do not diffuse upward to older siblings.

Very little information is available as to whether parents and other adult members of the community were drawn into planning, running and evaluating the Head Start programmes. This is itself indicative that the issue was not considered important by the programme initiators. One notable exception occurred in the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM), which initiated 128 pre-school Head

Start centres in the state during the mid-sixties (Smith and Bissell, op cit). The CDGM attracted many civil rights workers, who used the group to direct a community-based social upliftment movement. During its first year more than half the budget was spent on employing some 2 000 poor Negroes in teaching, feeding and transporting the 9 000 children involved in the project.

> *To many this project was one of OEO's greatest accomplishments. It was one of the few places where OEO had achieved "maximum feasible participation" of the people in programs intended to lift them out of poverty. It was heralded because "impoverished, uneducated Negroes ran a huge state-wide school system. They got money, useful jobs, and prerogatives of hiring and firing. Their lives have changed, they have new importance, they are treated with respect" (Greenberg, 1969, quoted in Smith & Bissell, op cit, 56).*

Because of the enormous variation between the large number of compensatory early learning programmes initiated in the US during the mid-sixties, it is difficult to draw general conclusions concerning how best to structure such interventions. While the decentralised manner in which the national initiative was organised did allow flexibility in catering for local needs, this policy was not carried through to the point where the client communities were given access at the decision-making level. By and large, these were instrumental, expert-driven initiatives. Head Start thus provides strong evidence for the view that education on its own, while improving the lot of a few individual children, cannot alter the relations between disempowered communities and the broader society.

> *Probably the most important conclusion is that no one programme, certainly not a programme for young children, can cure all the social problems facing poor communities. Substantive changes require concomitant changes, in the macro-systems of the society: economic development, resource distribution, education, etc. Those of us in early childhood education have learnt not to let people expect too much from us. We cannot cure unemployment, crime in the streets, or school failure (Bowman, 1987, 7).*

In view of the paucity of positive effects of these early learning programmes on both the educational success of children and the SES of the target communities, it is not surprising that federal funding for Head Start was drastically reduced in the late seventies. On a more optimistic note, however, two encouraging lessons can be drawn from these experiences.

In the political domain, the CDGM experience indicates what can be achieved if the initiative is seized and the necessary organisational groundwork prepared and maintained. The fact that community participation was achieved in only this one instance in a project in which budget allocations were left to local discretion, indicates just how difficult it is to effect such initiatives in a scheme which operates within an instrumental framework.

In the educational sphere, certain successes are also instructive. Certain pre-school programmes did go some way in preparing children from disempowered communities to cope with school. Three important points stand out as central to this success. Firstly, although the child/teacher ratios in successful early learning programmes are variable, they are all extremely low. The mean for

all Head Start programmes in 1966 was 14,3 (Smith and Bissell, op cit), while those programmes covered by the Consortium study averaged at 8 (Lazar et al). A second crucial factor is the necessary involvement of parents. Thirdly, although a single short term intervention does impact on the cognitive and effective abilities of children, the main thrust of these effects falls off within two or three years if the intervention is not sustained.

4.1.2 Transformation programmes in the Third World

Post-revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua provide archetypal examples of educational restructuring which occurred within changes in the entire political, economic and social systems. The Nicaraguan case is discussed first, as the more coherent and consequent of the two programmes. This is then compared with the Cuban project, on the one hand, and with certain aspects of the education systems of El Salvador and Honduras, on the other. In many respects, the two latter cases resemble conditions in pre-revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua.

Nicaragua

Under the Samozan dictatorship the majority of the people in Nicaragua were excluded from exercising political rights, owning land or attending school. During 1976-77, for example, although 68% of children entered primary school, half of these dropped out during the first year, while secondary school was accessible to only 18% of the children of school-going age (Black and Bevan, 1980; Anonymous, no date; see TABLES 7 and 8). Over 50% of the population was illiterate (Hirshon, op cit).

Education of the masses in the form of both political conscientisation and the teaching of literacy was a major component of the FSLN (Sandinista National Liberation Front) programme which prepared the ground for the overthrow of Samoza in 1979.

Academics, teachers and students at all levels participated in this educational work. Academics were to some extent protected from persecution by an international campaign around the National Autonomous University, while teachers found it more difficult to organise in the face of state repression. Nevertheless, starting with strikes amongst primary school teachers for better service conditions, teacher organisations sympathetic to the revolution began forming during the late sixties and early seventies (Anonymous, op cit; NUT-WUS, 1988). The youth were particularly persistent in their opposition to Samoza, and many youth were executed for their involvement in the liberation struggle.

Education in both the formal school system and informally — particularly amongst the rural peasants — played a vital role in conscientisation and in pointing the way to mass participation in a better way of life. In addition, through their pre-revolutionary struggles, educationists at all levels were preparing for their role in building the new society.

The assumption of power in 1979 was considered by the Sandinista government to be only the starting point for the liberation of the Nicaraguan people. As early as 1969 the FSLN had proposed a National Literacy Crusade as the launching pad for the next step (Hirshon, op cit).

> *Literacy was one more tool of liberation and the Crusade was considered a "second war of liberation" to "conquer ignorance". By initiating it so early, the new leaders were able to grab the historical moment and to channel the tremendous energy unleashed by the insurrection into the reconstruction of the new society... (Anonymous, op cit, 8-9).*

It prepared the ground for all other reconstruction projects, and became the midwife for all other popular educational programs to follow.

The NLC, initiated early in 1980, lasted five months and reduced the illiteracy rate from 50,35% to 12,96% (Hirshon, op cit). Teachers', workers', women's and other community and state bodies co-ordinated the organisational effort, while the teaching was undertaken by some 60 000 high school students, the *brigadistas* (ibid; Anonymous, op cit).

The first and most obvious achievement of the NLC was to provide access to literacy to nearly half the population, thus laying the foundation for the acquisition of the technical skills required for the new economic model and for the fuller participation in the political, social and cultural life of those fomerly relegated to the lower positions of exploitation. However, the NLC achieved far more than this. The meeting of the educated urban youth and the poorest and least educated sections of the population from all parts of the country provided for communication, understanding and the forging of common ideals essential to nation-building. Organisational, administrative and logistical skills were developed, and improvisation in the face of economic constraints was effected. A literacy text also assisted in working toward national unity by emphasising the history of the country and the political ideals of the revolution. Participatory teaching/learning methods gave practical effect to this latter goal.

In all these activities the NLC not only provided invaluable experience for the formulation of new educational policies but provided the foundation for their implementation. The re-organisation of education was characterised by four principles: consultation, expansion, improvement and integration.

The National Education Consultation was held early in 1981. The new education policy arose out of intense discussion, structured around 55 questions involving over 50 000 participants at municipal, regional and national levels.

The education budget quadrupled during the first four years of the Sandinista government, representing an increase from 1,4% to 5% of the gross national product (Anonymous, op cit). In the face of a war-ravaged economy and infrastucture, military destabilisation and an economic blockade, these figures reflect the political will and commitment of the new government to education as social investment.

Details of increases in enrolment during the first five years of the revolution are given in TABLE 7. Over the same period, the number of teachers more than trebled, from 12 975 to 41 422. Approximately half of the latter figure is comprised of 'popular teachers': these were the best students on literacy and other adult education programmes, elected by the community to continue on these programmes as teachers (ibid).

In 1977 only 68% of children of primary school age were at school (ibid). In 1987 Julian Corrales, Vice-minister of education claimed that 85% of the 6-18 age cohort were at school (NUT-WUS, op cit). Apart from the adult sector, it was pre-school education which experienced the fastest rate of expansion under the new regime, increasing nearly sixfold in five years.

	NUMBER		
	1978	1983	% INCREASE
PRE-SCHOOL	9 000	61 495	583
PRIMARY SCHOOL	369 640	579 261	57
SECONDARY SCHOOL	98 874	161 680	64
HIGHER EDUCATION	23 791	39 765	67
SPECIAL EDUCATION	-	1 800	
TOTAL SCHOOL POPULATION	501 305	844 001	68
ADULT EDUCATION	-	161 317	
TOTAL	501 305	1 005 318	101

TABLE 7: Changes in enrolment in the Nicaraguan education system, 1978–1983. (Anonymous, op cit)

While in 1977 the survival rate during the first grade was estimated to be 50% (Anonymous op cit), ten years later the survival rate for the entire school population was 92% (NUT-WUS, op cit) (See TABLE 8). It is most likely that the improvement in pre-basic provision had a profound effect on the survival rate, but this factor cannot be separated from the other sweeping changes which occurred throughout Nicaraguan society during this period.

New materials, course contents and teaching methods reflected the ideals of co-operative participation and a socialist economy. Recognition that the key to successful innovation lay in the hands of the teachers focussed attention on teacher training. This proved to be a long-term and difficult process: their commitment to the goals of the new society notwithstanding, older teachers did not find it easy to change years of authoritarian classroom practices, while new teachers also had difficulty in breaking with the habits acquired during their own schooling (Anonymous, op cit).

Before the brigadistas left the communities at the end of the NLC, they set up Popular Education Collectives (CEP's) which were run by 'popular teachers'. The CEP's served as centres for continuing literacy programmes, agricultural education, health care programmes and forums for daily discussions on the plans and problems of the revolution in general and the local community in particular. In this way, adult education served to unite various sectors of the community and to integrate education with the world of work and the problems of everyday life.

By 1983 there were 17 377 CEP's and 19 661 popular teachers, 2 790 of whom served as 'promoters' whose responsibility it was to set up and co-ordinate CEP's on a regional basis. 82% of these collectives were situated in rural areas. Of the 161 317 students, one-quarter were under fourteen years of age (ibid).

Other examples from Spanish America

The Cuban revolution occurring as it did twenty years before the Sandinista takeover, provided an example which proved invaluable in restructuring the

Nicaraguan education system. Thus, while Castro's experiment proceeded by a process of trial and error, the Sandinista's could plan their programme in the light of the Cuban results.

A good example of these differences is afforded by the respective literacy campaigns of the two countries. Although the Nicaraguan NLC proceeded along very similar lines to its Cuban prototype, its relationship to changes in formal and informal education were quite different to those which occurred in Cuba. In the latter case, the literacy programme was preceded by efforts to expand the school system, but these priorities were reversed when it was realised that a national literacy campaign would provide an excellent foundation from which to mobilise other educational changes (Carnoy, 1984). The NLC of Nicaragua, on the other hand, was conceived of as a necessary precursor to the transformation of the entire education system.

A second major difference between the two countries revolves around the role of teachers. Along with other sectors of the middle classes, Cuban teachers had fallen under the patronage of the Baptista dictatorship and felt threatened by Castro. Large numbers emigrated to the US, leaving a massive shortage of skilled educational person-power (ibid). In contrast, many Nicaraguan teachers suffered death, imprisonment, harassment or professional discrimination under Samoza. The Nicaraguan Teachers' Federation (FSNM) was smashed in the early seventies and the Nicaraguan Teachers' Association (ANDEN), formed in 1977, operated clandestinely until the revolution. Since then ANDEN has played a prominent role in the transformation of Nicaraguan society (NUT-WUS, op cit).

		ENROLMENT	DROP-OUT RATE
NICARAGUA	1977	68% of primary age cohort	50% in first year of school
	1987	85% of 6-18 age cohort	8% of total school population
HONDURAS	1987	75% of 7-13 age cohort	67% of population of grades 1-6
EL SALVADOR	1987	48% of 7-19 age cohort	6.6% of primary 8.7% of secondary population

TABLE 8: Comparison of enrolment and drop-out rates between present-day Honduras and El Salvador, and pre- and post-revolutionary Nicaragua. (1977 figures from Anon, op cit; remainder from NUT-WUS, op cit)

Taking these and other differences into account, it is not surprising that Castro's educational achievements have been neither as spectacular nor as immediate as those of the Sandinistas. The school drop-out rate, particularly at the lower end of the primary school and in the rural areas, continued to be a problem for at least ten or fifteen years after the Castro takeover (Carnoy and Wertheim, op cit). However, through further experimentation and perseverance, this problem was eliminated and within two decades of the revolution, virtually every child in Cuba was graduating from primary school, compared with a 50% enrolment in 1956-57 (Carnoy, op cit).

Comparisons between Nicaragua and her neighbours Honduras and El Salvador are also instructive. Both Honduras and El Salvador are ruled by unpopular military dictatorships. They are also closer to pre-revolutionary Nicaragua in socio-economic structure in general and the educational sphere in particular, than to present conditions in that country. TABLE 8 illustrates these similarities and differences, although the nature of the available figures frustrates close comparison. The low enrolment and high drop-out rates of pre-revolutionary Nicaragua are comparable with those of present-day Honduras and El Salvador, and well below those which characterise the present Nicaraguan school system.

Data on survival rates are generally not available for Central America. However, the one set of published statistics is extremely interesting (See TABLE 9). These primary school survival rates for Honduras show a very similar pattern to those of African children in South Africa. Particularly noteworthy is the large drop-off between the first two grades.

	GRADE					
YEAR	1	2	3	4	5	6
1980	100					
1981		60,1				
1982			90,6			
1983				90,2		
1984					93,4	
1985						95,1

TABLE 9: Grade-by-grade survival rates for the group of pupils who entered grade 1 in 1980, Honduras. (Adapted from NUT-WUS, op cit, 18)

The similarities between Samoza's Nicaragua, on the one hand, and present-day Honduras and El Salvador, on the other, are also reflected in the sphere of teacher organisation. Relations between teacher unions and the state in the latter two countries are characterised by resistance and repression. This tension is emphasised by the dramatic change which occurred in neighbouring Nicaragua after the Sandinista takeover. The NUT-WUS delegation to the three countries commented on the Nicaraguan situation as follows:

> *It was gratifying to see for once evidence of co-operation at all levels and a unity of purpose shared by teachers, their union and government (ibid, 50).*

The accession of popular regimes in Cuba and Nicaragua and the integration of education into a programme of social, political and economic transformation, has produced enormous improvements in both the quantity and quality of schooling in these countries.

Later stages of transformation models

However, it would be misleading to assume that the transformational model provides a panacea for all educational ills. While the NLC dramatically reduced illiteracy in Nicaragua, the illiteracy rate has begun to climb steadily in recent years (ibid).

This setback is undoubtedly at least partly attributable to the Contra war and general US hostility, and the need to divert resources away from social programmes and economic development toward the war effort. It is therefore difficult to determine whether part of the increase in illiteracy is due to other causes, such as the loss of momentum in adult education due to a waning of revolutionary fervour, the unsuitability of the system to maintaining progress, etc. In addition, the paucity of published information makes the long term assessment of progress in the formal school system impossible. However, the improvement in the first-grade survival rate (see TABLE 8) during the first eight years of the Sandinista regime stands out as a major achievement relevant to the present study.

The Cuban revolution, on the other hand, has had an additional twenty years to submit its achievements to the wisdom of historical hindsight. Achievements in the educational sphere are most impressive: Cuban youth enjoy the highest levels of education of any society in Latin America, illiteracy is virtually unknown, while mass schooling has brought both the rural population and the urban poor into the mainstream of Cuban development. Included amongst these achievements is the fact that:

> *Less than 20 years after the Revolution, essentially every child in Cuba was graduating from primary school, whereas in 1956-57, only 50 per cent were enrolled. (Carnoy, 1984, 13)*

But, the primary school drop-out problem was not entirely solved by making schooling accessible to all, integrating the educational goals of parents and their children, and mobilising the society towards a co-operative future. Drop-outs continued, resulting in the establishment of special schools to deal with the problem.

One of the main forces motivating for modification of Castro's revolutionary educational programme was the tension between Cuba's socialist innovations and the material wealth of the US, and particularly of the large expatriate Cuban community living there.

> *Cuba was made to defend the Revolution against critiques of its economic "failures". The ideological successes of the educational system, both in raising Cubans' view of their own capabilities and in raising their revolutionary consciousness were confronted by the ideological costs of long food lines, poor housing, and lack of those consumer durables associated with US capitalist culture. (ibid, 4)*

In addition, the equalisation of income and almost complete elimination of unemployment seemed to have led to a reduction in productivity in the rural areas. These strains within the emerging socialist society resulted in modifications in both economic and education practice. In the economic sector more emphasis was placed on capital accummulation and efficiency. Educational changes included the establishment of elite vocational schools and a move away from expensive boarding schools in the country toward cheaper day schools closer to the pupils' homes. However, the principle of combining manual and mental labour in the schooling system was not lost, nor was the practice of having the urban youth work side by side with rural peasants in order to reduce class consciousness and integrate national ideals, eliminated.

4.1.3 Africa

Mozambique

Political and socio-economic developments in Mozambique immediately preceding and following the FRELIMO takeover in September 1974, followed the same principles as those adopted by the Nicaraguan revolution five years later (Marshall, 1985). Socialist goals permeated all aspects of this transformation.

Education was an essential part of both the training and work of the guerilla fighters. Schools were established in Tanzania. Students from these schools visited the liberated northern provinces of Mozambique to share their knowledge with the people. A ten day educational conference for primary and secondary teachers and FRELIMO cadres experienced in education, held at Beira in January 1975, was one of the first organisational tasks of the new transitional government. The subsequent restructuring of the education system was initiated by adult literacy programmes, and the rapid expansion of the primary school system. A major focus of education was to free the people from the mental slavery imposed by colonialism, rediscover their cultural heritage and to re-orient individual and national efforts toward social modes of production.

Significant successes were achieved in broadening the base of the schooling system, changing the political consciousness of the people and empowering adults through literacy programmes, technical courses for workers and health care education.

However, ten years after the revolution the tasks ahead seemed almost insurmountable in relation to the rate of progress to date. Marshall observes:

> *I, like many others, found myself in constant debate over the difficulties I observed. Could they have been avoided with existing resources or were they an unavoidable part of the reality of that phase and resolvable only in the future, when the proportion of literate to illiterate, trained to untrained, had altered significantly? The reality of the phrase "shortage of trained people" has to be lived to be understood, but in a society where 85 per cent of the population is unable to read and write, where a mere six years of not very solid basic education ensures one of innumerable job possibilities, where a ninth-grade education places one in the upper echelons of leadership in workplace and community — in such a society, clearly, there are very few people to carry out the many tasks of development, all urgent, all complex. (ibid, 207)*

Comparisons between this depressing scenario and the progress in Latin America inevitably arise. What were the crucial differences which, on the one hand, facilitated the success of the Cuban and Nicaraguan educational transformations within socialist revolutions, while, on the other hand, failed to enable the same process to reach 'critical mass' in Mozambique? The skills shortage to which Marshall refers above was in large measure due to the mass exodus of Portuguese-Mozambicans at independence. Yet Cuba had faced a problem of similar proportions and had managed to train the needed teachers, doctors, engineers and other skilled personnel within a few years. While the terrorist war waged on the Mozambican people by the MNR, initiated by Rhodesia and later

intensified by South Africa has laid waste large areas of the country, American-sponsored destabilisation found little purchase in Cuba and is being held at bay in Nicaragua.

Perhaps the crucial differences are, firstly, the scale of Mozambique's problems compared with those of Cuba and Nicaragua and, secondly, the combination of circumstances which have conspired to prevent the economy from recovering from a series of crushing blows suffered at independence. For example, while the Nicaraguan illiteracy rate in 1979 was 50%, that of Mozambique was of the order of 90% at independence (Wedepohl, 1984b); while the supply lines of the Contra rebels include an ocean and several foreign countries, the MNR rebels have direct access to their sponsors. Mozambique's economic problems include a disastrous series of droughts and floods during the mid-seventies, difficulties in securing foreign aid (in contrast, for example, to the massive annual assistance Cuba receives from the USSR), economic sabotage by the departing Portuguese, and a strong dependence on South Africa (Saul, 1985).

Central to this disastrous combination of circumstances, however, are the policies of the FRELIMO government itself. It is becoming increasingly apparent that, while the transition to independence was successfully negotiated, the subsequent attempts at transformation to socialism were both underplanned and badly executed (Saul, op cit; Hermele, 1988). In the political sphere, the transition from vanguardism to mass action was insufficiently accomplished (Saul, op cit; Hermele, op cit; Roesch, 1988). Consequently, not only were rural Mozambicans not prepared for the transformation of agriculture from subsistence farming to socialist co-operatives, but these efforts ran counter to their wishes for access to land and a better share in the economy (Hermele, op cit). Similarly, in the industrial sector, the Great Leap Forward of 1980 was not based on sound material or social foundations (ibid; Roesch, op cit). Under such circumstances, the proposed educational transformation had no chance of success.

Zimbabwe

A quite different scenario is unfolding across Mozambique's western border, where the rapid expansion of Zimbabwe's educational system since independence in 1980 has occurred within a political and economic framework which can at best be described as tentatively transformational.

Education played a central role in the struggle against the minority regime well before the onset of the *Chimurenga,* or war of liberation, in the early seventies. In 1964, for example, nationalist groups organised boycotts of the state schools, attacks on school property, the mobilisation of teachers, and the establishment of their own secondary schools in opposition to the state system (Harber, 1985). During the *Chimurenga*, political education was used to complement the armed struggle. The importance of this strategy is underlined by Zvobogo:

> *The Smith regime lost this war because they did not have a political argument. Militarily, they were far superior to us, but they just did not conjure up effective political arguments ... Yes political education played a very important part in winning the war. (Eddison Zvobogo, Deputy Secretary, ZANU Publicity and Information Dept, quoted in Harber, op cit, 166)*

Schools inside the country acted as nodal points during the struggle for Zimbabwe, from which students were recruited for guerilla training and for the dissemination of the message of the liberation movements. In addition, new schools established in Mozambique not only provided education for some 24 000 refugee children, but also acted as experimental grounds for the development of new curricula and methods of school management aimed at recapturing the Zimbabwean cultural heritage and orienting students towards a democratic future.

Under Smith the state provided 89% and 86% of the primary and secondary schools, respectively, for white, coloured and Asian children (ibid). The corresponding figure for African children was 3% and 17%. It is surprising under these circumstances that as much as 75% of African children attended school. However, survival rates were extremely low. For every 1 000 African children, only 750 attended school, 337 completed primary school, 60 enrolled at high school and 37 reached form IV (the eleventh grade) (ibid).

Dramatic improvements in the provision of education occurred during the first two years of independence. Primary enrolment increased from 850 000 to 1.82 million, a growth rate of 114%. Secondary enrolment increased by 92% from 74 000 to 142 000 (ibid). Not surprisingly, this expansion has adversely affected the quality of high school education (Atkinson, 1989), and placed an enormous strain on financial, human and physical resources (Zvobogo, 1986a; 1986b). First grade survival rates prior to independence are not available, but the rates for all primary grades since 1980 are in the order of 95% (calculated from ibid, 339). Thus, despite the shortage of qualified teachers and rising pupil/teacher ratios as a result of the increased provision of primary education, survival rates are encouragingly high.

The Zimbabwean liberation movement has been described as radical nationalist, rather than socialist (Mandaza, 1986). The transfer and subsequent consolidation of power involved the Africanisation and continuation of existing state structures, rather than their transformation as part of an effort to bring about a new economic order. Thus, an emerging black petty bourgeois class secured power without fundamentally altering the relations of power between the state and the popular classes.

In the agricultural sector, agrarian reform has produced a substantial redistribution of land and a large increase in the number of subsistence farmers (Moyo, 1986). Subsequent to this, however, the state has largely confined itself to playing a mediating role between the large scale (predominantly white) farming interests, on the one hand, and the emergent subsistence farming class, on the other; the socialisation of agriculture has hardly featured on the agenda (Mubengegwi, 1986). Similar conclusions have been drawn from analyses of economic (Kadhani, 1986) and labour (Sachikonwe, 1986) relations. In both spheres, the difficulties of effecting a socialist transformation are complicated by the fact that the economy is to a large extent controlled by foreign capital (Sachikonwe, op cit; Raftopoulos, 1986).

It has been noted (Saxby, 1989) that ZANU-PF mobilised the people very effectively for the achievement of independence, but not for the economic struggle to follow. In this sense Zimbabwe found herself in a position very similar to that faced by Mozambique at independence. While Mozambique plunged into an

incompletely planned and incoherently led attempt at socialist transformation, Zimbabwe has adopted a far more cautious and pragmatic approach. Although this has been accompanied by economic prosperity and a minimum of tension within Zimbabwean society, the possibility of transforming the economic and social systems becomes increasingly remote as the middle class bureaucracy becomes increasingly entrenched. Thus, universal schooling will produce an educated generation which faces that prospect of mass unemployment under the present economic system (Zvobogo, op cit). Saxby (op cit) points out that, faced with a similar situation, Zambia attempted sweeping reforms during the mid-seventies, but these efforts failed because of the opposition of the petty bourgeois class.

4.1.4 Lessons from the international experience

Educational and other social innovations cannot be divorced from the politico-economic framework within which they occur. Several important lessons emerge from an analysis of the relations between education, on the one hand, and state economic and political policies, and both regional and global economic currents, on the other.

Seen from this perspective, documented examples of educational innovation conceived within transformation and compensation models, respectively, are not strictly comparable. The former record the sweeping restructuring of education in post-revolutionary societies characterised by largely peasant populations and labour-intensive agricultural economies. In contrast, the latter describe attempts to facilitate the passage of minority children through the existing system in the US. For transformationists the locus of the problem of early primary failure lies in the unsuitability of an education system developed by an elitist regime to the needs of the majority. Compensationists locate the problem in the socio-economic and cultural situation of small groups of children, which are perceived to be deprived relative to the majority.

While compensation programmes are at most modestly successful in ameliorating the school experiences of some children, they are singularly unsuccessful at undermining the relations of marginalisation within the society. Transformation programmes in Cuba and Nicaragua have been successful in improving both access to and the flow through the school system. Beside the differences in the macro-political systems within which the two models occur, the differences in their respective achievements are attributable to two main factors. Firstly, the mobilisation and focus of energy in a post-revolutionary phase, and the concomitant forging of national ideals, provided the impetus for the rapid changes achieved by transformationist programmes. In this respect it is important to note that, while education is crucial to preparing for revolutionary change in a society and for providing the skills needed to effect such innovation, direct intervention in the political and economic spheres is necessary to initiate the changes and maintain their momentum. Secondly, such programmes are better able to integrate the educational goals and activities of parents and their children, thus providing the interest and support amongst parents necessary to the school success of children.

However, as the revolutionary enthusiasm wanes and the new regime and its people begin to get to grips with the hard work of consolidating their gains in the face of economic problems, opposition from hostile forces and the failure of some

of the ideals of the new society to materialise, so the differences between transformation and compensation programmes begin to diminish. Thus, special programmes or even schools for those children who still experience difficulties in coping with school have become a feature of the Cuban education system. It is significant that, whether these occur within a compensation perspective — such as Project Follow Through — or a transformation framework — such as the special schools in Cuba — the problem of early primary failure is best addressed by efforts which are sustained at least throughout the primary phase. One-off programmes of short duration have, at best, transitory effects.

Experiences closer to home underline some of the lessons learnt during the early stages of the South American revolutions. The activities of teachers and students in existing schools inside the country and the political education carried out by the liberation movements, together with the experiments in special schools in neighbouring countries, assisted in creating the conditions necessary for a change in government. The virtual collapse of the Mozambican socio-economic system, and the difficulties being experienced in transforming Zimbabwe at a fundamental level, both point to the need for long term strategic planning well in advance of takeover. Such planning needs to place transformational ideals within the context of the conditions of possibility at local, national and regional levels.

4.2 South Africa

4.2.1 Orientation

South African conditions cut across those of the USA, where compensation programmes were piloted, and those which spawned transformational approaches in Spanish America. This is revealed through an analysis of the economy, the dispossession of the majority of South Africans, the way in which education is controlled and the ways in which teachers and students have responded to these conditions.

In terms of economic relations, South Africa is closer to conditions which exist in the industrialised countries, than those in pre-revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua. The economy is dominated by large-scale sophisticated mining operations, increasingly mechanised modes of farming and a well developed manufacturing sector, in contrast to the Baptista and Samoza economies which were largely dependent on labour intensive agricultural enterprises. On the other hand, South Africa does have large populations of subsistence farmers, armies of urban squatters with little means of support, and an unemployment rate around 30% (SAIRR, 1985, 293).

The overwhelming majority of South Africans are deprived of land ownership by the 1913 Land Act and prevented from organising politically by a host of state apparatuses. Their family and community bases are under constant threat by the migrant labour system and mass forced removals. In this way black South Africans are in a similar position to the landless peasantry of pre-revolutionary Cuba and Nicaragua, and of pre-independent Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

The system of Bantu Education, under which both the provision and quality of schooling for blacks was extremely limited, is also comparable to the situation which existed in Cuba, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Zimbabwe prior to majority

rule. However, these Verwoerdian policies have given way to a rapid expansion of black education over the last two to three decades. Thus, between 1955 and 1987 primary enrolments grew more than fivefold, while the number of secondary pupils increased by over 4 000% (see TABLE 10).

	PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
	NO. (000)	% Mean Annual Increase	NO. (000)	% Mean Annual Increase
1955	970		35	
1960	1 452	8.4	48	6.5
1965	1 833	4.8	66	6.6
1970	2 615	7.4	123	13.3
1975	3 379	5.3	319	21.0
1980	4 064	3.8	774	19.4
1985	4 820	3.5	1 193	9.0
1987	5 170	3.6	1 474	11.2
Total % growth 1955 - 1987		433		4 111

TABLE 10: Enrolment of African pupils 1955 - 1987. (Adapted from RESA, 1988; RIEP, 1987)

This expansion has been attributed to two principle factors (RESA, op cit). Firstly, the demand for more highly skilled labour by both the developing bantustan system and the industrialising corporate sector provided the impetus for the expansion of the schooling system during the sixties and early seventies. Since 1976, however, with the economy exhibiting mixed fortunes and the tide of black resistance rising, the need to win the hearts and minds of at least a black middle class has increasingly become a factor in motivating the allocation of resources to education. A transition from the denial of education to the masses — based on the fear that schooling would lead to the spread of discontent — to the liberal strategy of control through education, noted by Graff (op cit) as having occurred in Europe during the first half of the nineteenth century, has begun to manifest itself in South Africa. In this important sense, South African reformism differs substantially from the dictatorships which existed in Cuba, Nicaragua, Mozambique and Zimbabwe before popular rule.

In terms of the top-down system of control and the highly secretive nature of policy formulation, the South African education system is also significantly different from that of the liberal democracies. Despite the decentralisation of control of African education into eleven autonomous departments (see TABLE 3), in many respects it is the minister responsible for the DET — the minister of Education and Development Aid, Dr Gerrit Viljoen — who is king of the African education castle. Lines of influence are maintained through the system of patronage which permeates all aspects of South African political life and which is responsible for rule in many of the self-governing and independent states being both more repressive and less cognizant of the rule of law and public opinion than that executed by Pretoria.

The DET directly administers all African schools within the 'white' areas, which include the majority of major and intermediate urban areas. It also exerts a strong indirect influence on the other ten African departments, all of these having been

established by the DET or one of its predecessors before being granted 'independence'. Not only were the structures and systems of these departments inherited from Pretoria, but the genealogy of their staffing policies derive from the same origin. The DET also plays a leading role in the drawing up of syllabuses and work programmes, the setting and marking of exams, and the approval of textbooks and other materials. The majority of African departments adopt these curricular policies and materials directly; any changes which may be effected are of a minor quantitative nature.

The recent move by the education department of Gazankulu, requesting the University of the Witwatersrand to assist in setting up the new teachers' training college at Giyani, signals a determined effort to move away from the influence of the DET. This reveals the kinds of spaces which the decentralisation of African education has created. But the Giyani initiative remains a glaring exception. In addition, the task of weaning educationists in Gazankulu from the authoritarian, instrumental conception of education inculcated by decades of Bantu education and fundamental pedagogics, presents an enormous task.

Within the DET, officials up to and including the rank of inspector are, with few exceptions, African. The number of black personnel above this rank probably do not enter double figures. The fact that many inspectors carry guns and walkie-talkies tuned to police frequencies, and frequently request armed escorts before venturing near schools, indicates the extent to which they have become the executors of policies which are alien to their communities. Minister Viljoen has publicly stated his intention to promote and appoint increasing numbers of qualified and experienced black educationists to the top echelons of the DET; he envisages a black person taking responsibility for his own ministerial portfolio in the near future, as a result of negotiated constitutional reform aimed at powersharing[5]. While these intentions are laudable, they will amount to nothing more than window-dressing if these black office bearers are not representative of and answerable to the communities they purport to serve.

In sharp contrast to the inspectors, school students have taken a strong stand against the system of Apartheid education, and it is from student anger that the inspectors need to protect themselves when visiting schools. For example, official figures for unrest-related arrests during 1985 and 1986 show that over half of those arrested were twenty years old or younger, while almost one third were under eighteen[6]. Estimates by the Detainees Parents Support Committee indicate that susbstantial numbers of children from as young as thirteen are regularly detained (See TABLE 11).

AGE	13	14	15	16	17	18	TOTAL
NUMBER	29	86	134	217	201	192	859

TABLE 11: Detention without trial of persons under the age of 18, 1 January – 12 June, 1986. (SAIRR, 1986)

And, despite almost three years of the most repressive emergency measures yet mobilised in South Africa, student resistance remains the most difficult to eradicate. During the first quarter of 1989, for example, four high schools in Soweto were badly damaged by arson attacks, while the number of lesser incidents are too numerous and widespread to tabulate with any accuracy. Black inspectors

are the primary implementers of state educational policy, while students vigorously oppose segregated schooling.

Principals and teachers maintain a precarious balance between these positions. The state has made a determined effort to co-opt African teachers. Following the schools crisis of the late seventies, up to which time African teachers received substantially lower benefits and salaries than their white counterparts, it was announced that the state was working towards parity in these matters. By 1981 this had been achieved in the areas of salary, home loans, a subsidised bond repayment scheme, pension and medical aid. The reaction of the African Teachers' Association (ATASA), seen as conservative in many quarters, and whose membership represents 42% of all African teachers, is interesting. Following the crisis of 1984/85, ATASA president R. Peteni announced in March 1986 that the Association was withdrawing its participation from all official DET committees (ATASA, 1986). It is likely that this position was influenced by strong criticism voiced by students and the smaller progressive teachers' organisations in response to ATASA's reluctance to commit itself on political issues (Moll, 1989). This stand has been confirmed at every subsequent annual national conference.

The mainstream teaching profession, therefore, maintains one foot firmly in the camp of state patronage, while making gestures toward progressive opinion with the other. In this sense, the situation more closely resembles that in Cuba under Baptista than pre-revolutionary Nicaragua or pre-independence Zimbabwe. It is this situation which makes the mobilisation of teachers behind progressive initiatives so difficult.

State attempts to obtain the co-operation of parents have met with even less success. In 1987 the DET began to call for greater parental involvement in education (DET, 1987, 5). In 1988 a plan for upgrading the status of school committees to that of management councils was announced[7]. The powers of such councils include matters such as consultation on the appointment, promotion and dismissal of staff, care of school buildings, the administration of school funds and the admission of pupils. The school management councils feed into a national body, the Council for Education and Training (inaugurated on May 16, 1989). This plan has been treated with suspicion by organised parent bodies. Following a meeting of the regional chairmen of school management councils in the Johannesburg region, it was decided to petition the minister to reconsider the structure of these bodies[8]. Spokesperson David Maepha expressed the problem as follows:

> *We decided to reject the whole thing because of the lack of voting power given to parents when choosing members of the management council...*
>
> *Parents are allowed to elect one parent to sit on the National Council for Education and Training, while the DET nominates seven representatives. This means these people have control over all issues submitted to the council for the Ministers' attention*[9].

It is feared that the unrepresentative structure of the National Council will result in school councils being reduced to bodies with little power other than the implementation of unpopular measures such as those contained in the recently gazetted regulations which lay down conditions for the admission of students[10].

Mr Maepha continues:

> *The gazette assumes the pupil is inherently errant. It also gives the Minister absolute power to close or suspend a school, but it does not address the cause of the whole crisis*[11].

At present, a stalemate exists between state reformist moves, on the one hand, and the resistance of the black majority, on the other. Neither side appears capable of making a decisive move. Education is one of the focal points of this struggle. From the perspective of the state, the smooth functioning of black education is central to the strategy of covert control of the population. While the mass democratic movement seeks to thwart these goals, the schools provide nodes from which to organise resistance. Neither side can afford a lowering in the quality of education. Yet, the schools crisis lurches on without resolution. It is against this background that the problem of early primary failure needs to be examined.

4.2.2 The context of early education in South Africa

Van den Berg and Vergnani (1986) estimate that in 1985 only some 2,5% of South African children in the 0-6 age cohort received pre-school education. The number of children registered at state-run institutions constituted 11,4% of the total pre-primary population; with the exception of one school, these catered exclusively for white children. A further 56% of children attending pre-school classes received some form of state subsidy. It is estimated (ibid) that, on average, these subsidies covered less then 20% of the total costs. The remaining schools received no state subsidy. Although white children only constituted an estimated 8,4% of the total 0-6 age cohort, 68,9% of the children receiving pre-primary education in 1985 were white. The corresponding figures for Africans were 81,9% and 19,5%, respectively[12]. Thus, for these two groups, the provision of pre-primary education was inversely proportional to both the population distribution and the need for such education, as reflected in the SSA survival rates.

State repression of the People's Education movement (Muller, 1986) has effectively removed the transformational voice from the South African education scene. Consequently, all initiatives directed towards the problem of early primary failure — whether they are located in the state, state-supported or private sectors — fall, to a greater or lesser extent, into the instrumental category. However, instrumentalism is not a sufficient reason for dismissing any programme. Although a complete transformation of education within a democratic society is the long term goal of those seeking an equitable schooling system, exploiting opportunities within Apartheid education remains a short term priority. This is important for three reasons. Firstly, inefficiencies within the school system have their greatest impact on those children most at risk. Any improvements in the present system, therefore, will lead to fewer drop-outs and smoother flow rates through the school. As a result, fewer will fall into the group who are marginalised and exploited because they lack the most basic literacy skills. Secondly, any changes within the present system which move in the direction of greater democratisation will prepare the ground for and facilitate more fundamental change. And finally, pockets of democratic practices operating within existing structures will provide models from which lessons for the future may be drawn.

The issue of community involvement in education provides the most promising focus for such strategic considerations.

All perspectives on early learning converge on the conclusion that parental involvement is central to the education of children. Thus, under the age of 3, children generally learn more at home than they do in group care centres, provided that their mothers or grannies are at home (Short, 1984). Between the ages of 3 and 6 the group experiences provided by centre-based activities (such as nursery schools, daycare centres, etc) ensure that such centres are more effective in preparing children for school than home experiences on their own. However, it would appear that the benefits of centre-based pre-school programmes are likely to last longer if parents are actively involved (Ibid; see section 4.1.1.). The role of parental support in bringing out the full potential of the child continues throughout her school career (Short, 1987).

Ideally, such parental involvement should be geared toward empowering individuals and communities to gain control over their lives. For programme organisers this means working with people rather than for them :

> *...the ultimate purpose of community and parent-based programmes is to promote self-reliance and self- functioning, while strengthening the capacity of family and community to foster the optimal development of the child. This can only be achieved if parents and the community assume direct responsibility for the planning and implementation of programmes from their initiation. (Govender,1987, 146)*

However, the process of linking community and school remains one of the most problematic areas in primary education. One reason for this difficulty lies in the fact that parent communities do not constitute a monolithic group. In the cities, for example, unemployed and illiterate shack dwellers live side-by-side with well educated white collar workers occupying newly built housing estates. Rural communities, in turn, differ in many respects from their urban counterparts (Graaff, 1989), and from each other (Graaff, 1987a). For example, very different patterns of school enrolment are evident in otherwise very similar villages in rural Bophuthatswana; Graaff (ibid) attributes this to the different ways in which tribal authorities relate to parents and teachers.

One of the ways in which communities differ is in their attitudes towards education. In the main, education in South Africa — whether directed by missionary societies or the colonial or Apartheid states — has always been dispensed by a central authority within a strictly hierarchical system. This is the only kind of education known to the majority of South Africans. While some communities may be working towards progressive alternatives, others will be resistant to any changes in the kind of educational practices they have come to respect and value (Dube, 1976; Fourie, 1980).

4.2.3 The Bridging Period Programme of the DET

The various reports of the De Lange Commission, the most extensive educational investigation since the Eiselen Commission laid the foundation for Bantu Education in 1951, give clear expression to the instrumental trajectory of state educational strategies. De Lange motivates the need to broaden the base and

improve the efficiency of educational services in terms of servicing the economy, socialising the individual more effectively (De Lange, 1981 a), and equalising opportunity (De Lange, 1981b).

The Report of the Main Committee (ibid) stresses the need for basic education — the teaching of reading, writing and calculating — as a foundation for the independent learning of abstract material, and for vocational and professional training. The high drop-out and failure rates of African, and to a lesser extent coloured pupils, is noted, and attributed to the lack of school readiness, owing largely to "environmental deprivation" (ibid, 27). The need for pre-basic education as a solution to this problem is accorded a high priority in the modular system proposed by the Commission. This consists of three phases: a pre-basic bridging phase, which focusses on school-readiness training, would precede the basic and post-basic phases (see note 1). Entry into the bridging programme would be optional at the age of 5 and compulsory at 6, with entry into the basic phase being optional at 6 and compulsory at 7, depending on school readiness. The pre-basic bridging phase would not only be compulsory, but would also be provided free of charge.

In its official response to the De Lange proposals (Republic of South Africa, 1983) the government declined to commit itself on the details of the three-phase model, on the grounds that such a decision could only be taken after advice had been obtained from bodies such as the South African Council for Education (SACE), and the envisaged committee of heads of executive education departments. The government did, however, consider it necessary to adopt policy positions with respect to certain principles, according to which the above-mentioned bodies should base their decisions. Of particular interest to the present study:

> *The government accepts the recommendations regarding pre-basic education and in particular regarding a bridging period of one to two years aimed at promoting school readiness in as many children as possible before basic education is started. The government accepts that financing a bridging period of this kind should be given high priority because this fundamentally affects the efficiency of all further education (ibid, 2).*

Yet the DET began implementing the De Lange recommendations before they were published and some two years prior to the rather cautious approval expressed in the White Paper. In 1980 the DET assumed responsibility for pre-primary or 'nursery' education, in accordance with the Education and Training Act, Act 90 of 1979. The following year the first courses were held for pre-primary teachers on an in-service basis. At the same time a school readiness programme was instituted covering the first 12-15 weeks of SSA in certain schools. Some 400 000 pupils were affected and, according to the DET, reduced the SSA failure rate from 21 % to 3 % in some schools (DET, 1981). This finding is corroborated by Gordon (1986), who examined the first grade intake of one lower primary school in Soweto. She found that children who had received no pre-school training were almost twice as likely to repeat a grade at least once during the first three years, than those who had attended a pre-grade class. These results indicate that, in the South African context, pre-school programmes carried out within the strongly authoritarian instrumental framework of the DET do mediate the school experiences of African children.

In 1982 the subsidisation of non-state pre-primary schools commenced, and a three-year diploma course for pre-primary teachers was instituted at the Soweto College of Education. The in-service training programme for teachers was expanded, and a research project on school readiness was initiated in conjunction with the HSRC. The next year a Principal Subject Adviser: Pre-Primary Education was appointed to co-ordinate pre-primary schooling. The research project on school readiness was completed and the testing of children commenced. The diploma course for pre-primary teachers was instituted at the Cape College of Education.

The self-governing states began following the lead of the DET in establishing pre-primary schools, subsidising private initiatives, setting up pre-primary classes at some of the primary schools, and training teachers at the pre-primary level. By 1987 over 31 000 pupils in six African education departments were enrolled in state-subsidised or state-initiated pre-primary programmes (See TABLE 12).

	DET	QQ	LEB	GAZ	KWAZ	KANG	TOTAL
No. of pre-primary schools	137	2	100	7	8	1	255
No. of primary schools with pre-primary classes	11	22	-	-	-	-	133
No. of teachers	666	47	186	44	13	3	959
No. of pupils	18 445	1 284	10 430	979	497	51	31 686
No. of teachers registered for pre-primary diploma	193	142	-	60	100	16	511

TABLE 12: Pre-primary education in 1987, DET and self-governing states. (DET, 1987)

However, it is clear that at this stage the decision had been taken within the DET not to proceed with pre-primary education, but to focus instead on the school readiness programme covering the first twelve weeks of SSA, which had been running parallel to the above-mentioned developments in pre-primary education since 1981. This decision is reflected in the sudden discontinuance of the pre-primary teachers' diploma. The latter policy change only became public when the Minister was questioned in parliament, following a great deal of disturbance at the Soweto College of Education when the students realised that no first year candidates had been registered for the course in 1988. The minister replied that:

> *In view of rationalization the Primary Teachers' Diploma (Junior Primary) is presently being restructured to provide for pre-primary teacher education as an integral part of the course. The present Primary Teachers' Diploma (Pre-primary) is being phased out as from January 1988 and consequently no first year students were enrolled. The restructured course will be implemented in 1990*[13].

When asked if he would make a statement on the policy of his ministry regarding pre-primary education, the deputy minister declined[14]:

Not only is there no structural link through which the minister can be held accountable to his black clientele but he considers it unnecessary even to inform his own power base — the white elected parliament — exactly how he is catering for the 'special needs' of black children[15].

The deputy minister's monosyllabic dismissal of a seemingly innocuous question saved him the embarrassment of admitting that, after vascillating betwen various options, he had both rejected the recommendations of the De Lange Commission and reneged on his own White Paper acceptance of those recommendations concerning the urgent need for a pre-basic bridging period of one to two years.

The impetus for this abrupt re-orientation of policy was provided by financial considerations. The task focus investigating the feasibility of implementing a pre-primary programme in the DET estimates that the provision of such pre-basic education would cost R350 million annually, an increase of nearly 50% on the present total DET budget. Mr Theron, Assistant Director, Primary Education, estimates that the bridging period programme currently being piloted in the DET would cost a little over R2 million[16]. Besides these cost differences, the South African National Education Policy (SANEP) subsidy formula, which became operational on 1 April 1987, makes no provision for the financing of pre-primary education at state schools[17]. The SANEP regulations, therefore, establish an absolute structural restriction on the type of school readiness training which the DET is able to provide. It effectively privatises all pre-primary education in South Africa.

The state has decided to include school readiness training as part of the first grade curriculum, rather than provide a separate pre-primary phase. In the DET, this initiative is known as the bridging period programme. This is explicitly modeled on the compensation programmes of the US:

> *... the bridging period project, a "head start" approach, aimed amongst other things at compensating for environmental deprivation on entering school. (DET, 1986, 4)*

The bridging period programme commences with a four month period of school readiness training. All children are then tested and those who are ready for SSA separated from the remainder. The latter receive further pre-basic training and are again tested in June. Those found to be ready for school at this stage join the first group in SSA, while the remainder continue with the pre-basic programme. The sorting process is repeated in September: those children who are still not ready for school at this stage will rejoin the bridging period programme the following year, while the remainder proceed to SSB, providing they pass the final examination. According to Sam de Beer, the programme will be operating throughout the DET, including farm schools, by 1990[18].

The bridging period programme offers considerably reduced school readiness training, when compared with the pre-basic option recommended by De Lange. On the basis of its own research, the DET concluded that:

> *It has been established that an extended school readiness programme is not only of great value in preparatory education, but also has a more permanent effect that the shorter programme. Pupils who complete an extended programme perform more actively and with more initiative than those who are subjected to the shorter programme. (DET, 1987, 49)*

The decision by the DET to opt for the bridging period programme was necessitated by the SANEP legislation, which itself represents a prioritisation of

the allocation of funds at the highest political level. It is certainly true that hard political decisions concerning the allocation of a finite pool of funds have to be taken. But the authoritarian and secretive manner in which such priorities are accorded at present is quite contrary to the stated intention of the Government of moving toward negotiated power sharing. All indications are that the Bridging Period Programme will improve survival rates at the lower end of the primary school. This will provide the state with another statistic with which to defend its reformist strategy. It is unlikely, however, that this will win many hearts and minds amongst the black majority. The DET's modus operandi is too overtly manipulative and arrogantly authoritarian to promote anything but cynicism amongst parents and half-hearted commitment amongst teachers.

4.2.4 Bophuthatswana's Primary Education Upgrading Programme (PEUP)

In 1978 Bophuthatswana became the second of the TBVC countries to be launched to 'full independence'. With its well developed mining industry and proximity to the industrial heartland, the territory was in many ways the flagship of the homeland dream. Bophuthatswana's poor financial performance and chronic political problems — underlined by the debacle of the 1988 coup — have, therefore, probably made a significant contribution to the shift which is beginning to emerge in Pretoria's thinking regarding the position of the homelands in a future dispensation. Furthermore, while Bophuthatswana provides a re-affirmation as to how the system of Apartheid patronage has established fiefdoms which essentially reproduce the Pretoria model, at the same time it illustrates ways in which opportunities provided by the decentralisation of education can be exploited to achieve some sort of transformation within the overall constraints of the system. This is particularly true of the PEUP initiative.

While the DET's bridging period programme is entirely state initiated, PEUP was started by a single individual (albeit employed by the Bophuthatswana department of education at the time). It has subsequently been incorporated into departmental policy, but has retained strong links with outside individuals and organisations, such as the university of Bophuthatswana (Holderness, 1984, 1986), and the Human Sciences Research Council (Macdonald, forthcoming). PEUP is, therefore, a state-supported programme rather then being entirely state controlled, or completely in the hands of private initiatives.

Certain advantages inhere in this intermediate position. Firstly, as an integral part of departmental policy and practice, the programme can be effected in all primary schools in Bophuthatswana, using the state infrastructure. It goes without saying that mounting a private initiative of this magnitude would require enormous resources in terms of finance and person power. Secondly, because of its scale, a project of this nature is able to change the profile of public schooling in the region, which is something a smaller, privately run programme would be unable to do on the same scale.

The third advantage of a programme such as PEUP lies in its links with semi-autonomous individuals and organisations. While the bridging period programme will be directed and evaluated entirely by DET officials, in the case of PEUP many of these functions are performed by people such as Holderness and Macdonald, who are not directly connected with the Bophuthatswana department of education. As a consequence, the instrumentalism of PEUP has a more benign

face and effect than that of the DET. Attempts to involve parents, for example, are not structured within an overt strategy of political control, such as the system of management councils set up by the DET.

Goals

The project was initiated to facilitate the adoption of child-centred teaching approaches in classrooms dominated by teacher-talk, child passivity and chorussing (Macdonald, op cit). This goal was embedded within a 'total approach' (Holderness, op cit), which included:

- improving the learning environment by, for example, encouraging the painting of classrooms, and the supply of adequate water and toilet facilities at schools;
- motivating schools to overcome shortages in classroom accommodation;
- increasing community — and particularly parent — involvement in school matters;
- introducing appropriate learning materials;
- organising follow-up classroom visits.

It is to this systemic all-encompassing nature of the innovation that the success of PEUP has been attributed (Macdonald, op cit).

Structure

The first steps in this programme were taken toward the end of 1979, when Mrs C.Bodenstein began conducting in-service training courses for teachers at a small number of schools (Holderness, 1986). In 1980 the first seven primary schools were taken into the project and upgrading commenced at the GRADE 1 (SSA) level. The following year, upgrading in these seven schools moved up to GRADE 2 (SSB), while a further 114 schools were drawn in at the first grade. With each subsequent year, new schools were taken at the GRADE 1 level, while upgrading in the existing project schools moved up to the next grade. By 1988 virtually all 840 primary schools in Bophuthatswana were part of PEUP.

Schools were required to fulfill five conditions for entry into the programme (ibid):

- have single sessions only;
- limit their class sizes to 50;
- admit pupils only if they were five and half years old on entry;
- commit themselves to carrying out certain classroom improvements, such as constructing shelves, at their own expense;
- contribute on a rand-for-rand basis to the purchase of the project furniture, at a total cost of R800 per class.

In 1983 and 1984 the total GRADE 1 enrolment in Bophuthatswana fell sharply, by 9 644 (13 %) and 3 368 (5 %) respectively (See TABLE 14F, Appendix A). This contrasts with growth rates of 6,5 % in 1980, 8,3 % in 1981 and 3,1 % in 1982. It seems probable that the first three conditions listed above were responsible for

this fall-off in enrolments. While the minimum age restriction is easily defensible on educational grounds, the first two conditions give some cause for concern. It would appear that the PEUP programme has favoured qualitative improvement at the expense of quantitative access. Also, there are suspicions that access may have been differentially denied to non-Tswana pupils in areas such as the Winterveld (see the discussion following Holderness, 1984) and to pupils from poorer homes. The last of the two preconditions for entry into the project listed above certainly have placed a severe financial burden on parents. It is estimated that the upgrading of each classroom costs R2 000.

These reservations notwithstanding, PEUP has infused primary education in Bophuthatswana with a new spirit and orientation. Tangible improvements in many of the formal aspects of the programme, such as the limitation of class sizes, the supply of furniture and the use of approved materials, is irrefutable. Less progress has been made, however, with some of the infrastructural problems, such as the supply of water and even the most basic toilet facilities to some schools. Qualitative changes in the areas of teacher attitudes and practices, pupil behaviour and parent involvement have been uneven. These mixed results have been the product of the interaction between a new, child-centred vision of classroom practice and community involvement, and a traditionally authoritarian view of education, which privileged the school, the teacher and the curriculum as the only sources of knowledge (Macdonald, op cit).

Teachers, pupils and classroom practices

Macdonald notes that "survival teaching" — intensely teacher-dominated practices which focus on rote reception learning — have to a large extent been eliminated. This has involved a change in attitude as well as behaviour:

> *The teachers have a sense of communal enterprise, of which they are fully-fledged and fully participating members. There has been a fundamental change in learning activities, with children pacing themselves on independent tasks, and not continuously monitored by the teacher (ibid, 77).*

However, Macdonald goes on to observe, this effect decreases along a continuum from the first grade. Thus, teaching methods are more progressive in the grades and almost wholly traditional in STD 3 (the fifth grade). It would appear that classroom practices are closely linked to the system of testing and examining. One of the most revolutionary curricular innovations introduced by PEUP was the elimination of end-of-year examinations up to and including STD 3. Promotion was virtually automatic. According to the Popagano Report (Republic of Bophuthatswana, 1978 a), STD 4 was regarded as the end of the first phase of formal education, after which many pupils would leave school. As a result, an external, circuit-based examination is conducted at this stage. Released from the constraints of formal testing and the consequent 'cramming', teachers are free to institute child-centred methods at the lower end of the primary school. As the STD 4 examination begins to loom larger, however, traditional concerns begin to re-establish themselves, and classroom practices revert to the teacher-centred model.

Even where child-centred methods are applied, Macdonald notes that these are infused with aspects of traditional practices. This is particularly true in the area of

classroom communication. Although teacher lecturing and class chorussing have been drastically reduced, teacher questions are almost wholly confined to those requiring a straightforward recall of information. 'Why' questions are practically non-existent. Equally rare are unsolicited pupil contributions of any kind. These and other factors contribute to the gross underdevelopment of the ability of the children to deal with complex concepts and problem-solving tasks.

Community involvement

Traditionally, parents in Boputhatswana, particularly in the rural areas, have tended to treat schooling as the sacred domain of the teacher. An expert-centred, authoritarian view of knowledge is largely responsible for this attitude. This is a vicious circle perpetuated by each successive generation. Craig quotes a principal describing the problem:

> *Principal: You see, because the parents and the teacher have grown up like these children, they are themselves in need of training — it is a recurring decimal, it is carrying on and on, generation after generation. The next parents and teachers are going to be worse. (Quoted in Macdonald, op cit, 62)*

It is not surprising, therefore, that the PEUP organisers have encountered particular difficulties in attempting to alter parental attitudes and relationships between schools and communities. Teachers generally see no more than a handful of parents every year.

Nevertheless, the successful fundraising activities undertaken by parent communities, together with the financial sacrifices made by many individual parents in order to further PEUP, are indicative of the high regard for education on the part of the community. Perhaps the curricular innovations undertaken by PEUP will result in a shift toward community involvement in more participatory, proactive and interactive ways.

Survival rates

The virtual automatic promotion of pupils up to and including the fifth grade, has already been noted. This policy resulted in a marked shift in first grade survival rates. Up to 1983, when 75 % of primary schools were involved in PEUP and resistance to automatic promotion was still relatively high, the first grade survival rates hovered in the high eighties or low to mid-nineties. In 1984, with 83% of schools involved and the PEUP philosophy beginning to take a greater hold on both communities and educational authorities, the first grade survival rate reached 100 % (see TABLE 14F, Appendix A). The high first grade survival rates in Bophuthatswana, compared with other African education departments, prior to the advent of PEUP, remain to be explained.

Conclusion

PEUP's primary focus on school variables such as furniture, curricular materials and teaching methods, without placing these in a larger, political context, is a feature of instrumentalism. Futhermore, Walkerdine (1984, 1988) argues, the Piagetian child-centred pedagogy is one of the central mechanisms of covert

population control practised by the instrumental state. Yet, these classroom practices are preferable to the rote methods which predominate in African schools. The kinds of problem-solving skills which PEUP are attempting to inculcate are a pre-requisite for participation in an industrial society. At the same time, the participatory classroom practices and community/school relationships towards which PEUP is moving are pre-requisite building blocks for a democratic system of government.

4.2.5 Private initiatives

The SANEP regulations, which prohibit state funding for pre-school programmes, reveal a decision on the part if the state to place all responsibility for pre-primary education in the hands of the private sector. Thus, faced with the kind of inequities in provision described in 4.2.2, the state has decided to wash its hands of pre-school education, rather than committing itself to the equalisation of services. This has left the DET no option but to incorporate school readiness training into the first grade curriculum. Bophuthatswana is pursuing a similar course. If previous form is anything to go by, it seems probable that the other homelands will follow suit. At the present time, for example, a PEUP-type programme is being piloted in Venda. Within this context, private initiatives in the field of pre-primary education can provide services for only a small fraction of South African children. Perhaps the greatest contribution of such programmes, therefore, lies in the provision of models which may be taken up by a future state in which pre-primary schooling is accorded a higher priority.

Literally scores of programmes in the non-state sector provide services at the pre-school level. These have been well documented elsewhere (Vergnani et al, 1987), and efforts are being made to co-ordinate such initiatives (van den Berg and Vergnani, 1986, 1987 and SAAECE, 1987). In this field the Early Learning Resource Unit (ELRU) has taken an influential lead in developing programmes, researching their effects and providing training services for both teachers and parents. The development and evaluation of child-centred pedagogical practices has been one of the main points of focus of the ELRU work (Short, 1983). In this sense it is similar to compensatory initiatives, such as Head Start, the Bridging Period Programme and PEUP.

However, the ELRU approach has attempted to come to terms with the criticism that the compensatory paradigm, by placing the blame for school failure on families and individuals, is fundamentally disempowering. This has led to the formulation of the notion of supplementary education (ibid), based on the idea that pre-school experiences should supplement the education received at home in preparing children for school. The Athlone Early Learning Centre (ELC), one of the earliest and most extensively researched ELRU initiatives, is an example of such a supplementary programme.

The ELC provided pre-school programmes for low-income coloured children aged from three to six years, between 1972 and 1974. The progress of these children was followed up to the age of fifteen to seventeen (Short, 1987). Perhaps the most significant findings of this longitudinal research programme relate to the discovery of differential socio-economic status (SES) effects. The low-income ELC families were divided into three groups according to income per family member, occupation of family head, mother's and father's education, and person-to-room ratio

(overcrowding). The ELC research came to the following conclusions regarding the highest SES group:

> *With regard to the length of the programme, our findings indicate that one year of quality pre-school education — which probably means a teacher:child ratio of at least 1:15 — can give five-year old children from small stable low-income families a good start to their schooling that greatly enhances their ability to make use of later scholastic opportunies, provided that their homes are educationally supportive. This means that parents have at least a secondary level of education themselves; the family income is sufficient for all basic needs (shelter, clothing, food, transport, etc.) and for some educative materials in the home; the adults have high aspirations and encourage their children, and the home has sufficient space for study. (ibid, 75-76)*

Not only should children from the middle SES group be exposed to pre-school programmes for a longer period, but these children require supplementary support until at least the commencement of high school. The requirements for mediating the school experiences of children from the lowest group are even greater:

> *Once children in the lowest SES group get to school, they seem to need continued support and supplementary education, because their homes are so impoverished. These children are not only likely to underachieve at school, but they are also at risk for delinquency, a serious problem in the large low-income housing estates of the industrial complexes. (ibid, 76)*

As can be expected, difficulties in involving parents in the schooling of their children are also tied to their SES:

> *Parents in the first category of families are likely to be responsive to programmes aimed at involving them in their children's education at all levels. In the second category, parents may lack confidence in themselves as educational agents and find it difficult to participate in certain programmes because of stresses in the home. These are the parents who just manage to cope in very stressful living conditions, and who may need much encouragement to join parent meetings and sympathetic understanding of their needs and difficulties. Nevertheless their involvement in their children's development and education is likely to be very beneficial in the long run, by increasing the degree of educational support in the home ...*
>
> *Parents of children in the most disadvantaged group, however, are likely to be very difficult to reach because they have so many problems. Our infant studies indicated that the development of children in this socio-economic group is already at risk by age 15 months, and [it] has [been] suggested that what many of these families need is "ecological" intervention. This means first ensuring that the family can function as a child-rearing system by providing adequate housing, food, health care, clothing etc. (ibid, 76)*

The ELC experience indicates that obtaining even the most token participation of those parents whose children most need home support, is extremely difficult. At least two important sets of questions are raised by this problem. Firstly, how does an organisation stimulate parental initiative, interest and commitment? In an

authoritarian society such as South Africa, given the apathy and oppressive circumstances of the very poor, it is all too easy for the experts to dominate all stages of the agenda. Under such circumstances, parents are likely, at best, to fall into a secondary role of following instructions or, at worst, to lapse into apathy or suspicion. Neither alternative escapes the grip of instrumentalism.

Cases in which parental initiative and leadership are not dominated by the experience of the experts are few and far between. But they do exist. One example is afforded by the Woz'obona pre-school at Lotana in the Transkei. The school was initiated by a group of illiterate rural mothers, who felt the need for a day-care centre while they attended literacy classes. Negotiation between the mothers and their literacy teachers led to the establishment of the school, the direction of which has remained in the hands of the poorest and least educated members of the village.[19]

The second set of questions which arise out of the problem of facilitating community involvement in schooling relates to the shortage of trained personpower. Is it reasonable to expect teachers to take on the additional tasks of meeting parents after school hours, of visiting them in their homes and encouraging them to take a closer interest in the schoolwork of their children? Project Early Start (PES) has experimented with a novel solution to questions of this type.

PES represents an initiative by social workers to facilitate home-school interaction in four townships on the outskirts of Johannesburg: Eldorado Park, Western, Soweto and Alexandra (Livingstone, forthcoming). The project was run by the Centre for Social Development, the service arm of the School of Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, from 1982 to 1987. The work was carried out by students at the centre and formed part of the practical field-work required for their course. Leadership was provided by qualified social workers from the Centre. The aims of PES included:

- developing the self concept of children and their families;
- improving the scholastic development of children;
- improving home organisation;
- encouraging parents to play a meaningful role in their children's education.

The starting point for this work was the community. The social worker consulted the leadership recognised by the community itself, in order to understand their educational goals and needs. This was followed by discussions with parents and teachers to establish their perspectives on the same issues. The initial phase was completed by establishing home contact with people in the community.

Students were then placed in the schools where, in consultation with the teachers, they identified first-grade children in danger of failing the April tests. The families of these children were visited. A mentor was chosen from within the family, who undertook to work with the child on a daily basis, and to meet with the worker and the child every week for twelve weeks. The student also gave guidance on study arrangements within the home, and facilitated meetings between the mentor and the teacher.

Livingstone assesses the success of PES as follows:

> *The improved relationship between child and parents led to a marked improvement in scholastic results in many cases. Another important facet of the project was improvement of communication and liaison between parents and schools. Many parents feel that there are not enough opportunities for them to talk at reasonable length and in privacy with the head or class teacher; that the occasions that are provided are often inconvenient for parents (especially fathers); and that, in many cases, they do not have enough basic information even to ask the right questions. (ibid, 11)*

The use of students in mediating between overworked teachers, on the one hand, and disempowered parents, on the other, seems a particularly appropriate solution to the shortage of suitably skilled personpower. The principle could be extended to include students at teacher training colleges, and the senior high school level. Depending on the level of community involvement, such an enterprise could provide the starting point for people to take charge of their own educational future.

5. Conclusion

One of the principle aims of this paper is to draw attention to what is probably the largest single problem at any level in the South African school system. Gerrit Viljoen (1989) is correct when he says that the retaining power of African primary schools as a whole has improved since the early seventies. But this is entirely due to an improvement in survival rates in the higher grades.

Almost one in four African children does not reach grade two, after one year of schooling. This figure has remained virtually constant for more than three decades. The low survival rates of African children at the lower end of the primary school is a major factor contributing to illiteracy. Indications are that the ranks of the illiterate are increased by more than 250 000 annually. The failure of the school system to retain African children during the first year rivals the lack of compulsory education as the largest single factor contributing to illiteracy.

The present study makes no attempt to investigate in detail the origins of this problem. However, it is safe to say that poverty is the root cause. Experiences in both South Africa and other countries indicate that school readiness training in the form of pre-primary programmes of two years or longer, together with continued support throughout the primary school, are needed to mediate the school experiences of children from poor and otherwise oppressed communities. The effects of such programmes are optimised if carried out in conjuction with efforts to engage the participation of parents in the formal educational activities of their children.

The majority of intervention programmes aimed at improving early primary survival rates in South Africa focus on curricular matters. Although all of these efforts recognise the importance of parental involvement, few have succeeded in mobilising the parents of those children most at risk. Ideally, educational innovations are best located within a mass mobilisation behind new national social, political and economic goals, and accompanied by popular adult education programmes. At present, such a goal seems a long way off. In the interim,

concerned communities need to strategise methods for optimising parental involvement under the present dispensation, while working for the establishment of conditions which will enable the transformation of education within a non-racial, democratic society.

More empirical research is needed into the differences in early primary school survival rates between different education departments, between urban and rural areas, and between different schools within the same area. School drop-outs need to be distinguished from repeaters, and reasons for poor survival rates need to be identified.

In addition, future research into the problem identified in this paper needs to move beyond the limits delineated by the present descriptive study. At the theoretical level, the problem needs to be analysed in a way which does not reduce to instrumental solutions which separate curricular matters and parental involvement from socio-political ideals and conditions of possibility. And finally, perhaps the most difficult problem for policy makers revolves around the need to formulate educational strategies which fit the constraints imposed by a shrinking fiscus and expanding demands in both the social and economic sectors.

6. Notes

1. The first four school grades comprise the lower primary phase.

   These are generally labelled as follows:

   Sub-standard A (SSA)
   Sub-standard B (SSB)
   Standard 1 (STD 1)
   Standard 2 (STD 2)

   The term pre-primary refers to formal school-readiness training prior to entry into SSA. This coincides with De Lange's (1981 b) use of the term pre-basic. The phase of basic education, as envisaged by De Lange, would cover the first six years of primary schooling (See 4.2.3).

2. This is a simplification of the actual state of affairs. The number of children enrolled in any grade in a particular year is the sum of those promoted from the previous grade, and those repeating the present grade (together with a few immigrants). The actual survival rates of any particular cohorts, therefore, are lower than those indicated in TABLES 1 and 2.

3. The Department of Education and Training (DET) is responsible for the provision of education of all African children who live in the 'white designated areas'.

4. Graaff compares the respective fractions of children enrolled in each grade within the same year. Such a comparison is only valid if there has been a zero growth rate in enrolments over the six years it has taken the present STD 5 class to progress from Grade 1. Total African enrolment at the Grade 1 level has grown by 15% between 1979 and 1985. The 1985 Grade 1 group

would, therefore, be 15% larger than the 1985 STD 5 group were when they entered Grade 1 in 1979. Thus, much of the difference between the 1985 Grade 1 enrolment and the 1985 STD 5 enrolment will be accounted for by the difference in size of the initial groups. It is only the residual difference which is due to the sum of school drop-outs and grade repeaters which have depleted the 1985 STD 5 group over the six years since entering Grade 1. The four groups of children which Graaff compares — black farm, black urban, coloured farm and coloured urban — probably experienced different enrolment growth rates over this period. His analysis, therefore, is further undermined by this factor.

5. Speaking in Parliament on his budget vote, 24 April 1989.

6. Figures given in parliament by the Minister of Law and Order, as quoted in SAIRR, 1985, 516, and SAIRR, 1986, 822-3.

7. Report in *Focus on Education*, April 1989.

8. Report in *The Star*, 20 March 1989.

9. Ibid

10. *Government Gazette,* Vol. 285, No. 11788, 31 March 1989.

11. Report in *The Star*, op cit.

12. The inequities in the allocation of resources between the four ethnically-based education sectors is reflected in the provision of pre-primary education.

	WHITE	COLOURED	ASIAN	AFRICAN
No. of children receiving pre-primary education (only registered institutions).	108 600	15 845	2 418	30 763
No. of children receiving pre-primary education by population group as a percentage of total pre-primary population	68,9 %	10,1 %	1,5 %	19,5 %
0-6 Age cohorts	537 986	477 548	143 264	5 248 000
0-6 Age cohort by population group as % of total 0-6 cohort	8,4 %	7,5 %	2,2 %	81,9 %

TABLE 13: Number of children receiving pre-primary education by population group, compared with 0-6 age cohort, in 1985. (Adapted from van den Berg and Vergnani, 1986, 42 and 55)

13. Deputy minister of Education and Developement Aid, Sam de Beer, quoted in *Hansard,* 28 June 1988, 1955.

14. Ibid, 1954/5.

15. A recurrent theme in the DET annual reports is the claim that the Department is working in the best interests of the community and serving their needs.

16. Interview, 18 November 1988.

17. The SANEP guidelines are formulated in terms of the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act, 1984 (Act 76 of 1984).

18. Report in *The Citizen,* 24 November 1988.

19. Interview with Norma Rudolph, 5 June 1989.

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Appendix A

Collecting statistics of the type contained in this appendix is a time-consuming and frustrating task. These difficulties are largely attributable to the fact that a comprehensive picture is dependent on the consultation of a multiplicity of sources. The TABLES which follow were compiled from the following sources:

Central Statistical Service 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1988.
DET, 1979-1987.
Republic of Bophuthatswana, 1978-1983.
Republic of South Africa, 1979.
Republic of Transkei, 1977-1980, 1983.
RIEP, 1981-1987.
SAIRR, 1982-1987.

The primary sources of data are publications of the various own affairs departments, which collect statistics only for the schools under their own immediate jurisdiction. Exceptions to this rule are provided by the DET Annual Reports, which publish figures for the self-governing states, but religiously omit those for the independent countries. Central Statistical Service (1988) collates the statisitcs for all four population groups, but also omits those for the independent countries; particularly frustrating for the present study is the fact that this source combines enrolment figures for the first two grades.

The RIEP and SAIRR reports do provide collations from all seventeen education departments. However, these reports exhibit occasional inconsistencies between one year and the next, resulting in data gaps. In such instances the combination of different sets of collations, is hampered by the incomparability of their respective data sets. Such incongruencies, in turn, arise from the fact that the various publications source their enrolment figures at different times of the year, and the fact that a significant attrition rate through the year occurs in the African and coloured departments. In addition, most education departments publish estimates for the coming year, and some of the publications incorporate these into their data sets, sometimes combining them with actual enrolment figures.

Nevertheless, all responsibility for the following figures rests with the author.

DEPARTMENT	YEAR	ENROLMENT (000)							SURVIVAL RATE AS PERCENTAGE OF SSA ENROLMENT						PERCENTAGE SURVIVAL BETWEEN SUCCESSIVE GRADES				
		SSA (A)	SSB (B)	STD 1 (1)	STD 2 (2)	STD 3 (3)	STD 4 (4)	STD 5 (5)	B/A	1/A	2/A	3/A	4/A	5/A	1/B	2/1	3/2	4/3	5/4
A. Total African	55	283	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	56	315	203	.	.	.	.	.	72	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	57	341	246	196	.	.	.	.	78	69	.	.	.	.	97	.	.	.	.
	58	361	248	218	164	.	.	.	73	69	58	.	.	.	89	84	.	.	.
	59	365	261	225	179	127	.	.	72	66	57	45	.	.	91	82	77	.	.
	60	394	272	238	189	138	97	.	75	66	55	44	34	.	91	84	77	76	.
	61	409	295	254	200	147	108	79	75	70	55	43	34	28	93	84	78	78	81
	62	427	306	268	204	154	112	85	75	68	56	43	33	27	91	80	77	76	79
	63	443	324	281	218	158	117	90	76	69	55	43	32	26	92	81	77	76	80
	64	477	334	289	222	165	120	93	75	68	54	42	33	26	89	79	76	76	79
	65	515	355	301	228	177	125	96	74	68	53	43	32	26	90	79	80	76	80
	66	561	383	324	239	188	137	104	74	68	54	44	33	26	91	79	82	77	83
	67	579	415	346	255	198	144	112	74	67	53	45	34	27	90	79	83	77	82
	68	607	435	375	276	214	154	121	75	67	54	45	35	28	90	80	84	78	84
	69	625	461	397	299	234	168	132	76	69	53	45	35	30	91	80	85	79	86
	70	645	486	430	324	261	187	147	78	71	56	47	36	31	93	82	87	80	88
	71	676	511	452	343	283	205	160	79	72	57	49	37	31	93	80	87	79	86
	72	688	537	476	359	301	223	176	79	74	57	50	39	31	93	79	88	79	86
	73	729	551	503	383	321	243	195	80	74	59	51	40	34	94	80	89	81	87
	74	761	577	520	405	343	260	211	79	76	60	53	42	35	94	81	90	81	87
	75	808	598	540	419	366	280	221	79	74	61	54	43	35	94	81	90	82	85
	76	815	646	558	432	378	300	287	80	73	59	55	44	44	93	80	90	82	103
	77	861	643	592	459	403	313	282	79	73	60	55	45	42	92	82	93	83	94
	78	872	677	608	488	425	339	295	79	75	60	56	47	43	95	82	93	84	94
	79	905	693	642	510	462	361	330	79	75	63	57	47	45	95	84	95	85	97
	80	924	715	659	541	488	390	349	79	76	63	60	48	46	95	84	96	84	97
	81	1003	726	673	556	515	408	353	79	74	64	60	50	44	94	84	95	84	91
	82	1009	768	690	575	526	441	381	77	75	64	60	51	47	95	85	95	86	93
	83	1025	795	735	592	554	450	396	79	73	64	61	52	46	96	86	96	86	90
	84	1030	803	763	633	582	473	415	78	76	63	63	52	48	96	86	98	85	92
	85	1042	798	771	662	615	500	433	77	75	66	61	54	48	96	87	97	86	92
	86	1068	805	767	677	651	528	449	77	74	66	65	53	49	96	88	98	86	90
B. DET	77	310	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	292	229	.	.	.	.	.	74	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	308	237	215	.	.	.	.	81	69	.	.	.	.	94	.	.	.	.
	80	303	238	216	168	.	.	.	77	74	54	.	.	.	91	78	.	.	.
	81	314	245	225	175	161	.	.	81	73	60	52	.	.	95	81	96	.	.
	82	309	249	225	180	161	134	.	79	74	58	55	43	.	92	80	92	83	.
	83	305	250	236	184	172	137	122	81	75	61	56	47	39	95	82	96	85	91
	84	294	245	239	195	179	143	127	80	77	62	59	46	43	96	83	97	83	93
	85	296	237	234	198	188	149	131	81	77	64	60	49	43	96	83	96	83	92
	86	312	236	226	195	200	154	133	80	77	64	65	49	44	95	83	101	82	89

DEPARTMENT	YEAR	ENROLMENT (000)							SURVIVAL RATE AS PERCENTAGE OF SSA ENROLMENT						PERCENTAGE SURVIVAL BETWEEN SUCCESSIVE GRADES				
		SSA (A)	SSB (B)	STD 1 (1)	STD 2 (2)	STD 3 (3)	STD 4 (4)	STD 5 (5)	B/A	1/A	2/A	3/A	4/A	5/A	1/B	2/1	3/2	4/3	5/4
C. KwaZulu	77	142	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	153	118	.	.	.	.	.	83	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	161	124	111	.	.	.	.	81	78	.	.	.	.	94	.	.	.	.
	80	163	132	115	95	.	.	.	82	75	67	.	.	.	93	86	.	.	.
	81	186	134	121	98	91	.	.	82	75	64	64	.	.	92	85	96	.	.
	82	204	148	126	105	95	77	.	80	77	65	62	54	.	94	87	97	85	.
	83	209	159	137	109	101	80	73	78	74	67	63	52	51	93	87	96	84	95
	84	212	164	149	119	106	86	79	78	73	64	65	53	52	94	87	97	85	99
	85	221	164	154	128	115	91	83	77	74	63	62	56	52	94	86	97	86	97
	86	219	168	154	135	125	100	88	76	73	65	61	54	54	94	88	98	87	97
D. Transkei	77	159	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	168	103	.	.	.	.	.	65	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	171	106	94	.	.	.	.	63	59	.	.	.	.	91	.	.	.	.
	80	172	107	97	81	.	.	.	63	58	51	.	.	.	92	86	.	.	.
	81	195	103	95	81	73	.	.	60	56	48	46	.	.	89	84	90	.	.
	82	186	109	97	85	74	58	.	56	56	50	44	36	.	94	89	91	79	.
	83	202	117	100	83	76	60	.	63	51	48	44	36	.	92	86	89	81	.
	84	212	125	106	85	79	61	49	62	57	44	46	36	29	91	85	95	80	82
	85	214	127	112	92	79	65	53	60	55	49	41	38	31	90	87	93	82	87
E. Lebowa	77	89	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	85	80	.	.	.	.	.	90	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	89	77	80	.	.	.	.	91	90	.	.	.	.	100	.	.	.	.
	80	90	80	79	70	.	.	.	90	93	79	.	.	.	103	88	.	.	.
	81	90	76	76	67	62	.	.	84	85	79	70	.	.	95	85	89	.	.
	82	93	80	77	69	64	55	.	89	86	78	75	62	.	101	91	96	89	.
	83	91	82	80	71	66	58	50	88	89	79	74	68	56	100	92	96	91	91
	84	95	83	83	75	70	60	54	91	89	83	78	67	64	101	94	99	91	93
	85	90	85	86	78	72	64	56	89	95	84	80	71	63	104	94	96	91	93
	86	95	83	88	81	76	67	60	92	93	89	82	74	67	104	94	97	93	94
F. Bophuthatswana	77	68	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	65	60	.	.	.	.	.	88	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	62	60	59	.	.	.	.	92	87	.	.	.	.	98	.	.	.	.
	80	66	59	59	49	.	.	.	95	91	72	.	.	.	98	83	.	.	.
	81	72	64	59	51	50	.	.	97	95	78	74	.	.	100	86	102	.	.
	82	74	69	64	53	52	43	.	96	97	85	80	63	.	100	90	102	86	.
	83	64	69	68	53	52	43	39	93	94	80	84	66	57	99	83	98	83	91
	84	61	64	68	57	55	46	38	100	92	79	83	74	58	99	84	104	88	88
	85	62	60	64	60	58	49	40	98	100	81	81	74	65	100	88	102	89	87

DEPARTMENT	YEAR	ENROLMENT (000)							SURVIVAL RATE AS PERCENTAGE OF SSA ENROLMENT						PERCENTAGE SURVIVAL BETWEEN SUCCESSIVE GRADES				
		SSA (A)	SSB (B)	STD 1 (1)	STD 2 (2)	STD 3 (3)	STD 4 (4)	STD 5 (5)	B/A	1/A	2/A	3/A	4/A	5/A	1/B	2/1	3/2	4/3	5/4
G. White	77	95	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	94	90	.	.	.	.	.	95	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	91	90	89	.	.	.	.	96	94	.	.	.	.	99	.	.	.	.
	80	88	87	89	88	.	.	.	96	95	93	.	.	.	99	99	.	.	.
	81	88	84	87	89	88	.	.	95	96	95	93	.	.	100	100	100	.	.
	82	85	84	85	88	90	88	.	95	97	97	96	93	.	101	101	101	100	.
	83	84	82	84	86	88	90	87	96	95	98	97	96	92	100	101	100	100	99
	84	81	81	82	85	85	87	89	96	96	97	97	96	95	100	101	99	99	99
	85	80	78	79	82	84	84	85	96	94	96	95	95	93	98	100	99	99	98
	86	75	71	72	74	76	77	77	89	89	88	89	88	88	92	94	93	92	92
H. Coloured	77	116	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	116	102	.	.	.	.	.	88	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	114	103	96	.	.	.	.	89	83	.	.	.	.	94	.	.	.	.
	80	113	103	98	87	.	.	.	90	84	75	.	.	.	95	91	.	.	.
	81	110	100	97	88	81	.	.	88	85	76	70	.	.	94	90	93	.	.
	82	106	99	95	89	83	75	.	90	84	78	72	65	.	95	92	94	93	.
	83	103	95	94	89	84	77	67	90	85	79	74	66	58	95	94	94	93	89
	84	102	94	91	88	85	79	70	91	86	80	75	69	60	96	94	96	94	91
	85	100	91	88	85	85	79	71	89	85	80	77	70	62	94	93	97	93	90
	86	101	89	84	81	79	76	70	89	82	79	75	69	62	92	92	93	89	89
I. Asian	77	23	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	78	23	23	.	.	.	.	.	100	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	79	23	24	21	.	.	.	.	104	91	.	.	.	.	91	.	.	.	.
	80	22	23	23	21	.	.	.	100	100	91	.	.	.	96	100	.	.	.
	81	22	22	23	22	22	.	.	100	100	96	96	.	.	100	96	105	.	.
	82	21	22	22	23	23	21	.	100	100	100	100	91	.	100	100	105	95	.
	83	20	21	22	22	24	22	20	100	100	100	104	96	87	100	100	104	96	95
	84	20	20	22	22	22	23	21	100	105	100	100	100	91	105	100	100	96	95
	85	20	20	21	22	22	22	22	100	105	105	100	100	96	105	100	100	100	96
	86	20	20	20	21	22	22	21	100	100	105	105	100	95	100	100	100	100	95

Table 14 A-I: Primary grade enrolments and survival rates for total African children (1955-1986) and eight individual education departments (1977-1986).