RESEARCH ON SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

A research project initiated by the Joint Education Trust

JET EDUCATION
SERVICES

Mapping school reform initiatives in South Africa: An
overview of 12 school reform projects

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Introduction

Literature on school reform shows that the field is fragmented with different groups holding opposing ideas about what school reform entails and what forms it should take. For many years school reformers were divided into opposing camps promoting notions of either school effectiveness or improvement, however the late 1990s saw an emerging consensus which began to bring these two groups together, with prominent school reform theorists agreeing on the necessity of designing programmes that took into account both process issues and a focus on learning outcomes (Reynolds & Stoll, 1996; Calhoun & Joyce, 1998). However this emerging consensus did not mean that school reformers had actually agreed on which methods to adopt in order to bring about change or which features associated with effective schools should form the main focus of these interventions. School effectiveness research has provided school developers with a mass of information on what it (potentially) takes for a school to be effective and what people believe is necessary to improve an under-performing school. However this research has not provided the magic formula for creating effective schools or transforming an under-performing school into an effective one.

The theoretical fragmentation within the school reform arena has not surprisingly led to the emergence of an array of different practical models or approaches for improving schools. In the United States a range of "branded" approaches to school reform and improvement have emerged, each proclaiming that it "has the answer". As in any social reform movement, school reform has also been characterised by the rise and fall of several development fads. Fragmentation and polarisation within research and theory on school development and the variety of practical approaches for changing schools has meant that the would-be school developer is faced with a range of possible options and solutions when wanting to implement a programme to raise the quality of schools. The last 40 years of research and practice has resulted in developers being presented a bewildering range of options that are possible triggers for school improvement, but no-one knows with certainty which buttons to push or in which combination.

The Joint Education Trust's research project, "Research on School Development" recognised the fragmentation and diversity of school reform practices in South Africa. This paper aims to map the school development landscape as it exists in South Africa, noting salient features and trends. This paper presents data gathered through case studies of the 12 school development projects which were selected to participate in this project.

The diagram below (fig. 1) shows how this mapping of school development approaches and practices is presented in this paper. The first stage of mapping the terrain is to present a very general overview of the landscape, as if taking an aerial photograph of an area. As this does not provide much detail, a series of close-up pictures are presented of salient features of the landscape, in this case the dominant models of school development. As in drawing a map, an aerial photograph and some portraits of features do not provide enough information to create a detailed map. In order to reflect the different features of projects and their activities, the paper then looks at the school development landscape from different elevations and through different lenses.

Just as the cartographer does not seek to explain why a mountain is a particular shape or compare mountains to determine which is most aesthetically pleasing, this paper does not seek to determine which project has been most successful or

provides the best model for South African school development, it simply describes patterns of practices.

Figure 1   Framework for mapping school development activities in South Africa
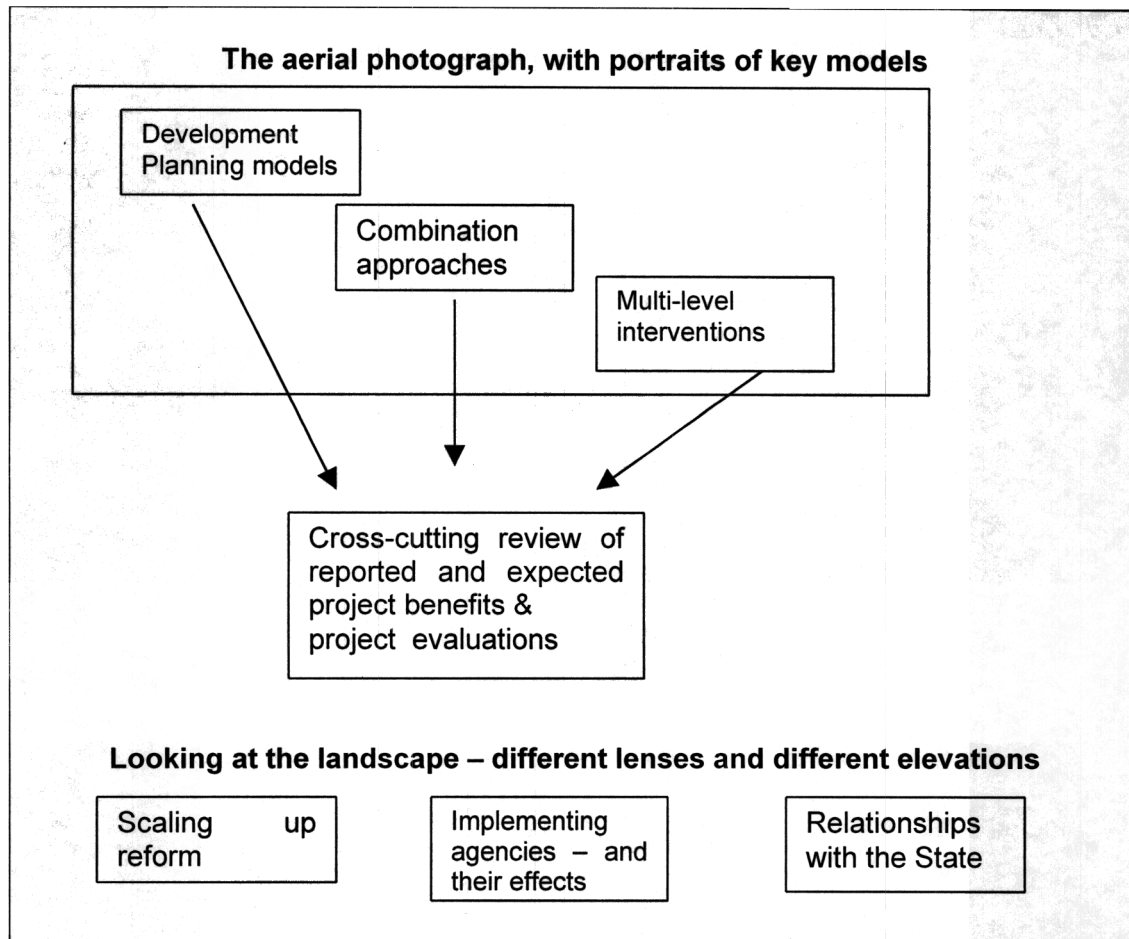
2.   Methodology

This research formed part of a larger project that had three components:
i.   a literature review of international school reform. This was presented as a paper entitled "The Sound and Fury of International School Reform" by Muller and Roberts (2000).
ii.   the compilation of a database of school development projects in South Africa. (completed in January 2001)
iii.   case studies of a selection of school development projects.

In order to better understand the forms that school development takes in South Africa, it was decided to conduct case studies of a range of different types of school development projects. The purpose of the case studies was to describe selected projects, not to evaluate their effects or relative merits.

Potential research sites were identified and approached to participate in the study. These research sites were chosen on the basis that they represented specific types of approaches to school development. All the projects studied identified themselves as "school development initiatives", as opposed to programmes that focus on

individual teachers or teachers of one particular subject. The sampling frame therefore tried to distinguish between school development projects and teacher development initiatives. The sample was constructed to include projects of different sizes and projects that were spread across a range of geographic areas and socio-economic conditions.

In total, 12 projects participated in the case studies that have informed this paper. Unfortunately not all the projects that were initially approached chose to participate. This means that some approaches may not be adequately covered by the other studies. The following methodology was used in the case studies:

i. Once a project agreed to participate, a site visit was arranged. Project managers were asked to complete short questionnaires outlining the project's focus and activities. They were also asked to supply researchers with any other documentation on the project which would provide an overview of the project's aims and activities. This allowed researchers to prepare for their visits and use the site visit more effectively to research specific aspects of the project.

ii. Site visits included interviews with key role players, including the project conceptualisers (funders were included in these interviews if they had played a significant role in conceptualising the project), project managers and implementers, project evaluators and visits to two or three sites where the project had been implemented (usually schools or district offices). During visits to implementation sites interviews were conducted with participating teachers and school managers and/or district officials. Project documents (e.g. funding proposals, progress reports, implementation schedules, materials and evaluation reports) were collected and used to substantiate interview data.

Interviews were conducted using structured interview schedules and a standard reporting format was used for all case study reports.

iii. A report on each case study was written and sent to each project for review. Comments were received by the researchers, which were then incorporated into the final project report.

It was agreed with projects that in the writing of the final report, no project would be identified by name. For this reason, the descriptions of projects that follow are composite descriptions and are used to illustrate general trends.

3. Large-scale aerial view of school development projects surveyed

JET conducted case studies of 12 school development projects. The tables which follow indicate the size of the projects, geographic locations and their areas of focus, presenting a generalised overview of types of school development projects. The numbers in the tables refer to the number of projects exhibiting a feature.

Table 1: Project location

E Cape	W Cape	N Cape	Northern Province	North-West Prov	Kwa-Zulu Natal	Gauteng	National
3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1

Four of the projects studied operate nationally, however the case studies focussed on a particular provincial programme. In one instance, the case study focused on the

design of the national programme as full-scale implementation had not commenced at the time of the study.

Table 2: **Project history**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Planning	1	3	3	2	1	2	
Implementation		1	2	4	2	0	3

Table 3: **Project size (by number of participating schools)**

20 schools or less	21 – 50 schools	51 – 100 schools	101 – 499 schools	500 or more schools
3	2	4	0	3

Table 4: **Profile of participating schools**

Primary schools	Secondary schools	Mix of primary and secondary schools
6	2	4

Table 5: **Location of schools**

Urban	6
Rural	6

Table 6: **Project type**

School development planning	Combination of management and curriculum-focused training	Multi-level projects offering training for schools and for district/ provincial officials
4	5	3

Table 7: **Focus of projects' activities**

District Development	School Management	Governance	Organisational development	Curric. 2005 training	Curriculum – general (not C2005)	Developing school-community relations	Building relationships with other organisations
6	12	3	5	5	2	2	2

4.   The challenge of categorising projects

In order to analyse and report data from the case studies it was necessary to group projects and create analytical categories. One of the challenges of doing this was to develop a classification framework.   Most school reform literature utilises polar distinctions between projects: inside-out vs outside in; privileging process over outcomes; project designs shaped by the individual needs of teachers in a particular school versus reform needs mandated by policy determined at a systemic level. Unfortunately none of the traditional distinctions differentiated sufficiently between the projects studied.

It was therefore decided that for the purposes of analysis, projects would be classified according to their dominant activities. This is unfortunately a somewhat crude method of classification, as projects sometimes straddle or slip between categories. Despite such limitations, this method of classification allows the greatest differentiation between cases.   The 12 projects studied took one of the following forms:

> *school development planning* (where there is a singular focus on organisational development and no engagement with curriculum-related matters)

ii.   *"combination"* approaches (where there is a simultaneous focus on management- and curriculum-related matters)

iii.   *multi-level* interventions (where projects simultaneously work with institutions at different levels of the education system – e.g. schools and district offices; district and provincial structures).

The sections of the paper which follow present detailed pictures of each type of school reform project. The three types of school reform project emerged roughly chronologically and are presented in that order. Most school development projects were initiated in 1996 and 1997. The combination projects studied were developed and implemented in 1998 and 1999.

The way in which project planners understand the problems of South African education influences the form of the projects and the type of inputs delivered. Each section therefore includes an overview of how different project planners understood the purpose of school reform and a summary of the projects' objectives. The inputs delivered by projects are also described. Short vignettes provide descriptions of the typical forms that projects take.

Portraits of projects

5.   School development planning

Vignette 1

> Schools begin by joining or contracting to the project, pledging their support and willingness to attend its training programmes. Introductory sessions allow the school to reflect on itself, looking at it strengths and weaknesses and identifying for itself a vision which spells out how it would like to operate in future. The school staff and stakeholders are then assisted to identify key individuals who can drive the development process in their school. This group forms the Development Team and is responsible for implementing and managing development projects. The project then offers the Development Team additional training in leadership skills, planning and personal development (including such topics as stress management, creating personal visions and motivating people). The school's vision and goals form the basis for a development plan which the school and Development Team draw up.
>
> The project offers additional support to the Development Team, helping them to implement their plans and providing assistance where necessary, including helping the Team to make contact with and establish relationships with local private sector donors.

Four of the 12 project studied were classified as having adopted a "school development planning" framework for improving schools. A typical project of this type focuses solely on organisational dimensions within schools and does not provide direct classroom-related support.

Conceptualisation of school development and project objectives
Projects that adopted the school development planning model largely cast the problem facing schools in terms of organisational dysfunction. Projects explained that improvement in classroom practice is contingent on having sound governance, management and administrative procedures in place. Several projects mentioned the desire to use school development planning as a means to foster greater self-reliance within schools and promote stakeholder involvement.

This model draws heavily on organisational development theory, focusing on the acquisition of the leadership and management skills required by successful organisations - often basing this on knowledge generated by private sector organisations. All projects placed a strong emphasis on the role and potential of human agency in changing conditions within schools, with the assumption that attitudinal change and skills development would bring about a qualitative improvement in schools as people harness their abilities to bring about change. In all projects there was an assumption that improved organisational effectiveness would have a knock-on effect and lead to, or at least, facilitate an improvement in teaching and learning.

Projects often described their objectives as being to enhance "organisational capacity", "improve effectiveness" and "functionality". In most cases, this was to be done through "systems change" and organisational development.

In addition to changing in the internal organisational dimensions of schools, two of the four projects focused on enhancing relationships between the schools and other organisations, usually private sector businesses. This was done in order to encourage private sector involvement in the improvement of local education institutions. This element of the projects did not seek to encourage dependent relationships between schools and businesses, but rather to foster a change in attitude and an internal shift to forming interdependent relationships.

<u>Inputs</u>
The vignette above outlines the core training programme offered to schools by development planning projects (reflection, needs analysis, developing a vision, mission and development plan, implementing development projects). The projects studied differed in terms of the tools used to assist schools to identify their needs and reflect on current practices – some make use of standardised checklists and others allowed free reflection; some guided schools in the identification of problem areas while others allowed schools full control of the process. In all four projects, the schools produced development plans which were usually structured around specific projects that would assist the school to achieve its developmental goals. Some projects specified that some or all school-based projects must focus on improving instructional goals.

In addition to training on development planning, all projects offered additional skills training aimed at leadership development and the acquisition of specific managerial skills. Additional modules included:
- Leadership development – for a range of staff members, not just the development team
- Management skills
- Administrative skills training, including computer literacy
- Training for Governing Bodies and Representative Councils of Learners

When compared with other projects offering management training, development planning projects placed greater emphasis on personal mastery and personal change as a pre-requisite for organisational change. Management-related training focused predominantly on the acquisition of "soft skills" including constituency alignment, conflict management, team building, management styles. This type of training builds general management competence, but does not necessarily focus on the particular skills required by a <u>school</u> manager.

Two projects offered training in school administration, both included training on the development of school timetables. One of these projects provided schools with computers, printers and software. Teachers and administrative staff were offered the opportunity to develop basic computer literacy skills and selected staff members attended more advanced training on school administration software.

Two projects offered schools small development grants to "kick-start" their development projects. The development projects are a means to enabling schools to effect change in their institutions and to manage and drive that process. It also provides participants with the opportunity to put skills into practice.

Specific challenges and evolutions
The four school development projects which participated in this study had all been operating for three or more years. All of these projects had conducted some form of programme evaluation, either using internal researchers or external consultants. Two of the four projects substantially revised their approaches based on the evaluators' findings. In all of the four projects it was noted that little classroom level change had taken place and it was not possible to measure the impact of the project in terms of gains in learner performance.

One evaluation noted that the project had not focused on improving instruction, despite the fact that it was one of their professed objectives. The evaluation also showed that the project had had minimal effects on raising learner performance levels. Based on these findings, and their own observations of the project's impact, the project began to move away from a development planning model and introduced activities which focused on teachers' classroom practices. In this project, staff initiated classroom visits and provided teachers with feedback on their lessons. Curriculum-focused training workshops were also introduced.

A second project was redesigned and reformulated as a "multi-level" intervention, which would build capacity in the district office, the school and the classroom. This new model has yet to be implemented. In both cases, these shifts were prompted by the realisation that the development planning model had not led to significant changes in the quality of education offered in these institutions.

Only one of these projects maintained its original focus on improving governance, management and school administration and did not introduce a curriculum-focused component. After an evaluation of the first implementation cycle, the project realised that it needed to tailor its training programmes to be more responsive to the developmental needs and organisational states of participating schools. It then set about developing an implementation strategy and training curriculum that met the needs of schools with different development potentials.

6.   Combined focus on management and curriculum – "combination" projects

Recent literature indicates that school reform theorists have moved towards a synthesis of management/ classroom-focused models of school development, bringing together the previously separate camps of those who subscribed to effectiveness and improvement paradigms (Stoll et al, 1996; Reynolds and Stoll 1996; Scheerens, 1998). South African school reform projects have undergone a similar shift, adopting an approach which allows them to carry out classroom or teacher-focused training and school management development simultaneously. The majority of projects studied have attempted a fusion of management- and classroom-

focused input. Seven of the projects studies adopted this model. In two multi-level projects, the school-focused elements of these projects have also adopted this approach; data on their school-based inputs has been included in this section. The term "whole school development" has deliberately not been used as both development planning and combination approaches used it to describe their work.

Vignette 2

> Once schools have been selected to participate, the project is introduced to them and training sessions begin.
>
> The initial training sessions focus on building enthusiasm for the project and ensuring "buy-in" from all stakeholders. During the first sessions the school reflects on its current activities, problems and develops a new vision for itself. The importance of people taking charge of their own destiny and having the capacity to change their schools is stressed.
>
> Management and curriculum-focused training run concurrently, with members of the management team attending management workshops and a selection of teachers attending curriculum workshops. As it is too disruptive for the school for all teachers of a subject to attend training, selected teachers attend workshops and then report back to their colleagues on what took place during the workshops.
>
> The management training focuses on development planning and the acquisition of specific leadership skills needed by school managers. Curriculum training is offered in key subjects, focusing on grades where C2005 is scheduled to be implemented. Teachers attend workshops where they receive teaching materials and have the key concepts and methods associated with the new curriculum explained to them. Thereafter trainers visit each school and observe teachers teaching and provide them with feedback and assistance.

Conceptualisation of school development

Following the realisation that projects focusing only on development planning and management training were not bringing about expected or desired changes in teaching practice, the initiation of combination-style projects was a natural evolution as they built on older teacher development models that aimed to develop the skills of subject teachers and at the same time aimed to bring about changes in management practices using strategies similar to those used by advocates school development planning and organisational development practitioners. One of the project managers interviewed explained that it was not desirable to focus on a single aspect of a school's operation. She continued, saying that school management needed to be improved, in order that management practices support curriculum implementation. Management training was therefore not seen as not an end in itself.

Although projects differed slightly in their conceptualisation of school development, they share a common belief in its transformative potential. Some saw school development as a vehicle for personal and social transformation, while others saw it as a process of teacher empowerment and capacity development, which would lead to the transformation of classroom practices.

One project described their assumptions about the nature of change as follows:

"Individual change is a pre-requisite for institutional change. Attitudinal change will lead to transformation within schools and this in turn will "ripple-outwards" and effect change within communities."

This approach illustrates how school development was assumed to be a catalyst for community development. The emphasis on using these projects to effect wide-reaching change is illustrated by another project which specifically structured one of its objectives as being the creation of "an army of change agents", who would be responsible for changing their own and other schools.

A common theme running throughout "combination" projects is the emphasis placed on human agency and the role of the individual as change agent. The majority of projects studied espoused notions of empowerment, democratisation and stakeholder participation in schools.

When projects explained their objectives, they placed a far greater emphasis on the intention to change teachers' practices and introduce new classroom methodologies (e.g. "the introduction of learner-centered methodologies", "ensuring a good understanding of curriculum", "the professional development of teachers"). Projects focussed less on organisation development and more on classroom-level change. However, no projects made direct reference to the improvement of learner performance as a primary objective. In all projects there was an implicit assumption that developing teachers' content and pedagogic knowledge would automatically result in improved learner performance.

Project input

Within the "combination" projects there is considerable diversity with respect to the way in which they conceptualise school reform, the number of participating schools (which ranged from fewer than 10 to over 500) and the theoretical underpinnings of management and curriculum-related training. Five projects worked only with primary schools, while two offered curriculum interventions for secondary schools with one focussing solely on improving performance in the Grade 12 examinations.

While all of these projects offer both management and curriculum-focused training, none of them sequenced the training so that management training was completed before classroom-focused training (or vice-versa). This indicates that there is not an explicit assumption that sound management practices and organisational stability must precede change at the level of the classroom.

- Management training

The type of management training offered by these projects was often similar to the management-focused training carried out by development planning projects. Schools were assisted in the creation of development plans and vision statements, and to articulate their goals. Organisational development featured prominently in training programmes and in explanations of the rationale for including management training. In addition to this type of training, school managers also received training in discrete skills including change management, planning and administrative skills. While some of the training modules continued to present general management training (e.g. team building, human resource management, communication, employee induction and financial management), some modules focused more explicitly on the management of the curriculum and managing the instructional work of teachers. On the whole, management training focused on the acquisition of general managerial skills, rather than on the management of the curriculum, which

includes instituting planning and monitoring mechanisms, monitoring and quality assuring the delivery of the curriculum and the procurement and management of teaching and learning resources.

Two projects offered training in school administration. These modules focused on the development of timetables and duty rosters.

Curriculum-focused components

All "combination" projects[1] were established between 1997 and 2000, after the promulgation of the South African Schools Act and the implementation of Curriculum 2005. Four of these projects were implemented in primary schools, and in each instance the curriculum-related intervention focused heavily on the interpretation and implementation of Curriculum 2005 (C2005).

Despite the fact that no projects made specific mention of C2005 in their project objectives, they often became synonymous with its implementation in the eyes of participating schools. Several projects noted that while C2005 had not been their primary focus when designing the project, the final focus of the project was influenced by national policies and the needs of teachers who were struggling to implement the new curriculum. Only one project made specific mention of the type of curriculum training to be offered, noting that it wished to introduce "learner-centred" methods in schools and implement "tested learning programmes".

The content and style of curriculum-focused training varied. Of the seven projects conducting curriculum-focused training, five were implemented in primary schools. Most curriculum-related training focused on "scarce subjects" (Mathematics, Science and Language – usually English). Projects implemented in primary schools focused their interventions on improving curriculum implementation in the Foundation and Intermediate phases in the primary school, none of these projects reported working with Senior Phase (Grade 7) teachers. Of the two projects implemented in secondary schools one aimed to improve learner performance in Grades 9 and 11, while the other focused on improving learner performance in Grade 12 and focused its intervention only on this grade.

A review of the content of the training offered by the projects implemented in primary schools shows the following:[2]

- Most (4) projects include some teacher training on the teaching of reading
- Three projects offered training on lesson planning
- Three projects offered training on the use of resources in the classroom (including the use of resources provided by the project and the development of resources by teachers).
- Other curriculum-related training focused on the teaching of specific sections of work and assessment (2)
- Only two of the nine projects offering curriculum-related training made mention of the development of teachers' content knowledge as a specific element of their intervention programme.

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[1] Four combination projects focused exclusively on primary schools. One of the multi-level projects also had an exclusive focus on primary schools.
[2] At the time when the studies were conducted one of the secondary school interventions had not yet been implemented in schools. The other intervention is described in more detail later in this paper.

- Although many projects did not provide a detailed breakdown of what was covered in each component of their curriculum training, it would be fair to say that inputs privileged training in new methodologies rather than the development of teachers' content knowledge. One of the project managers commented that this promoted the adoption of the "rhetoric of curriculum" change, with deep change being somewhat limited.

All but one of the projects which adopted this model are implemented through consortia of NGO service providers, with each service provider having expertise in a particular area. Some of the challenges of implementing projects through NGO consortia are discussed later in this report.

A variation on a theme - a more prescriptive approach

One of the projects studied stands out as being very different to the other school reform initiatives, both in its underlying orientation and the manner in which it was implemented. While it can be broadly described as a "combination"-style project in that it focused simultaneously on improving management systems and curriculum delivery, in all other ways it is a very different type of project.

Eleven of the twelve projects studied shared two key characteristics – they were all implemented by non-governmental organisations and all espoused the rhetoric of empowerment, development and participation when describing their objectives and implementation methods. A common problem experienced by these projects was that they lacked the mechanisms to compel schools to change or institute the reforms which they promoted.

A project implemented by one of the provincial Departments of Education marked a sharp move away from empowerment rhetoric and adopted an approach that capitalised on the authority of the education bureaucracy to mandate change and compel school managers and teachers to change.

The project was initiated by the Provincial Department of Education in response to the poor performance of some secondary schools in the Grade 12 examinations. The project's objective was simply to "raise the performance of participating schools so that they achieved a higher than a 20% pass rate in the Matric examination". This was one of the few projects to clearly articulate performance standards in the formulation of its objectives.

The project was implemented through the Department of Education and staffed by specially constituted teams of officials who were given special powers including the power to fast-track disciplinary procedures. While other projects focused almost exclusively on providing support to schools, this project employed a combination of both pressure and support. Some teacher unions went as far as to describe the tactics employed by the project as "bullying".

The project approach emphasised monitoring and accountability, with officials visiting schools to monitor activities and institute internal monitoring and accountability mechanisms. The project placed far less emphasis on stakeholder involvement than other similar projects. Management inputs centred on the maintenance of order in schools and instituting effective record keeping and monitoring mechanisms. Classroom support included the observation of lessons by officials, supplying schools with "pace-setters" (documents charting syllabus coverage) to ensure that the syllabus was completed, and learning support materials for Grade 12 learners. A

tutoring programme using successful Grade 12s was instituted. In addition to this type of support, teachers were expected to teach on Saturday mornings – despite initial protests from teacher unions, Saturday classes took place. Weekend workshops were held for schools on various development-related topics.

After a year's intensive interaction with schools, 90% of participating schools were reported to have met the performance standards set by the project. No formal evaluation of the project was conducted, which makes it hard to attribute change to the project without empirical data on other factors which might have contributed to this change.

7. Multi-level approaches

Three projects have been classified as multi-level projects, as the unit of intervention is both the school and an element of the educational bureaucracy, usually the district office. The projects usually include a school reform component modelled on the combined approach described above. What differentiates these projects from "combined" projects is the support that is provided to district and other officials and the explicit connections which are drawn between improving schools and improving the functioning of the educational bureaucracy. The form and intended outcomes of district support vary between projects. All the multi-level projects studied were designed and implemented in 1999 or later.

Approach to school development
The two models described above have employed a "school-by-school" approach to educational reform. The projects aim to improve the functioning of groups of schools. In the development of multi-level projects, designers recognised that these types of projects ignore the fact that schools operate within a far larger educational network and system. The enabling, and constraining, roles that the educational bureaucracy can play in school reform were acknowledged by these project designers. They also recognised that in order for development initiatives to impact on larger numbers of schools, it was necessary to transfer responsibility for school improvement and support from NGOs to the educational bureaucracy. Development practices needed to be institutionalised within the formal structures of the Department of Education, rather than being conducted, and perceived by schools, as "add-on" activities. These project designs recognise that the power of human agency to transform institutions is tempered by the system in which they operate.

One project described its work as being both "whole school and whole district development". Two more recently conceptualised and implemented projects described their approach as *educational* development, as opposed to school development. One of the project conceptualisers of such a project remarked that "school development cannot be divorced from system development".

Educational development, as explained by the projects, entails enhancing the state bureaucracy's capacity to support schools and monitor the delivery of the curriculum. The development of schools entails ensuring greater school functionality, *with the intention of enhancing learner performance*. Two of the three multi-level projects made specific reference to their intentions to raise levels of learner performance in particular subjects.

Types of input
Two projects operated fairly similarly, offering capacity development for district officials and conducting parallel school improvement activities, modelled on the

"combination" approach. However there are significant differences which warrant attention. The first difference is in the conceptualisation of district development. The first (and slightly older project) did not articulate a clear explanation of what (whole) district development entailed, but did indicate that planning and communication within the district office had to improve and that training was offered in order to achieve this. This project design includes an experimental dimension as it allows service providers to develop different approaches to district development in different provinces, with the desire that workable models for district improvement will emerge. The second project (initiated after the one described above) indicated that it wished to introduce systems and procedures in district offices for the management of human and financial resources so that officials could better support schools. Finally, the third project focused less on changing systems and focused more on changing the organisational culture of the entire provincial department of education – from senior management, through district offices to schools. Emphasis was placed on "reculturing" as opposed to restructuring or instituting new operational systems.

Projects also differed in terms of the type of training and support offered to officials. Two projects offered officials specialised training that focused on the acquisition of general managerial skills (e.g. team building, communication, stress management, assertiveness training) and operational systems (planning, internal communication strategies and developing 'district plans'). The third project offered training in change management and supported district offices in creating new structures and methods of supporting schools. This formed part of a larger programme of organisational restructuring and reconceptualising the nature of support offered by the Department of Education to schools.

The two projects which offered curriculum-focused training in schools differed from all other school-directed projects in that they articulated their objectives in terms of bringing about measurable changes in learner performance. The newer programme indicated that it will use baseline data on learner performance to set improvement targets for individual schools and that teacher training will focus on the teaching of specific subjects (Mathematics and English) with the intention of improving both teachers' content and pedagogic knowledge. Interviewees also indicated that a strong emphasis would be placed on the development of annual workplans and use of textbooks.

Changing the system

The third project differed from the other two in that it worked with all levels of a provincial department of education – offering support to the provincial head office, district-level structures and schools. The intention of the project was to transform the manner of operation of the entire provincial education bureaucracy and instil new ways of supporting schools and facilitating their development. The project also included an experimental component whereby three area / district offices were offered training and support, with the intention that they would develop new models of school support. Some of the innovations introduced included the creation of cross-functional teams that offered integrated support, and new types of internal organisation. Senior management within the Department of Education was supported through the facilitation of strategic thinking sessions and the participation of project representatives in high-level change management fora. Schools were also trained in change management, with training focusing on matters pertaining to organisational development.

In addition to programmes directed at specific strata of the education system, change management programmes were offered to participants drawn from a cross section of

the system - from school managers to the head of the provincial department where participants could share ideas and visions of how the system needed to change.

<u>Specific challenges</u>
This model is the most recent model of school reform in South Africa and one which appears to be gaining popularity with other projects. Each of the models described here has evolved, building on the weaknesses of earlier models. While this model appears to hold great potential for changing schooling, none of the projects studied have operated for long enough to demonstrate any significant impact.

Despite the growing acceptance of the model, its implementation has not been without its difficulties, with all three projects noting similar problems. These problems included the lack of a clear policy on the status and powers of districts, the fact that district officials do not have job descriptions and the organisational instability resulting from districts undergoing successive waves of restructuring. Two projects reported that they had to delay implementation until restructuring processes had been completed, which meant that implementation had concentrated on school-focused components of the project. Interviewees, both from the projects and participating district officials, noted that the officials are currently overstretched and district offices have few financial or material resources to support their participation in the project's activities. District development activities are often perceived as "add-on" activities, with interviewees in one project commenting that the project has simply resulted in them having more to do.

In addition to these environmental problems it was noted that problems arise when different levels of the system are no longer operating 'in-synch' with one another. District-focused training sometimes causes the district to undergo operational and cultural shifts, which do not permeate throughout the educational bureaucracy. Effective change is hampered by the larger organisational context within which districts operate.

Projects also reported that officials do not always share the project's vision of the institutionalisation of reform. In one of the projects studied, district officials and project staff understood the roles of officials in the project very differently. The project staff felt that district officials needed to develop the skills currently held by NGOs and develop the capacity to carry out similar support activities in all schools. They therefore promoted the attendance of officials at training programmes for schools and took officials to schools when they conducted in-school support. In contrast, the officials indicated that they felt their role was to provide official endorsement for the project and that it was sufficient for a single official to be present at a training programme. Officials also indicated that they perceived their role differently to that promoted by those implementing district development – they felt that they should monitor and control schools rather than provide support (which was the message promoted by the project).

Another challenge for projects of this nature is to integrate their intervention into the normal operation of the district office. If development activities are not integrated into the normal functioning of the office and if the organisational culture does not support new ways of operating, it is likely that outside-led inputs will not have the desired impact.

New lenses – cross-cutting themes

The following sections consider issues germane to all the models outlined above. When the data from case studies was analysed, it became clear that some aspects of school development can be described according to project type. However, the trends evident in other aspects of project implementation were not determined by project type.

8. Training models utilised by projects

All projects studied used a combination of workshops and in-school support in delivering their skills development programmes. All projects used face-to-face methods of training and none made use of distance education methods, including resource- or technology-based methods. The following training methods were used by projects:

Workshops for groups of schools	Individual school workshops	In-school support (management)	In-school support (curriculum)
9	4	7	8

Two distinct models of workshop-based training emerged:
i. Workshops offered to a group of schools, with individualised in-school support
ii. Workshops and in-school support offered to individual schools
There is no relationship between the model of school development and the approach used, nor is there a relationship between the size of project and the model of training delivery.

8.1 Workshop-based training

Workshop-based training remains the most popular method of training, with all projects reporting that they offer a range of workshops to schools.

In some cases workshops were offered to targeted groups within the school community (e.g. development teams, groups of teachers teaching a particular subject of grade or school managers). Several projects adopted a "lead teacher" model in their training programmes, where a designated teacher will attend training workshops and then impart this knowledge to his or her colleagues. The weaknesses noted by trainers using this model are discussed later when the challenges of scaling up reform are considered.

Projects were asked to indicate when training took place; their responses are summarised in the following table:

Table 9:   Breakdown of when projects reported conducting workshop-based training

During school hours	7
Afternoons (after schools close)	5
Weekends	6
Evenings	1

Only one project which conducted training during school hours indicated that it insists that schools put in place strategies for making up time lost while teachers attend

workshops. The erosion of the school day has long been serious cause for concern in South Africa where there has been little respect for the time-related boundaries of the school day. A recent study conducted by JET found that schools reported that the most common event which disrupted their teaching programme was teachers' attendance at school improvement workshops – very few schools reported that they ever made an effort to make up this lost time. Afternoon workshops often start before the end of the school day or require that teachers leave school early to travel to the training venue, also resulting in the loss of teaching time.

Although workshop-based training remains very popular, a number of criticisms have been made of this mode of training delivery. Typically workshops are seen as sporadic, too short, not sufficiently connected to teachers' sites of practice and that they are delivered in an unco-ordinated manner. Some have criticised workshop-based training saying that the sessions are used to provide educators with information and that they tend not to focus on the development of skills or subject content.

8.2   In-school support

All projects reported offering some form of in-school support. In School Development Planning projects, this support typically took the form of schools being assisted in the creation and implementation of their development plans. Where projects offered both management and curriculum-focused training, in-school support usually focused more on curriculum-related matters, with some projects offering limited support to school managers.

Most projects reported that their in-school support takes similar forms with specialised trainers conducting demonstration lessons in schools (2 projects) or conducting classroom observations and providing teachers with feedback on their teaching (5 projects). Feedback sessions are held either with individual teachers or with groups of teachers. Projects reported that these sessions usually focussed on the application of particular skills or techniques that had been the focus of workshops. Trainers reported that the support visits helped teachers to contextualise new practices within their classrooms and also provided trainers with feedback on difficulties experienced when applying new skills and knowledge. In-school support was reported to also provide trainers with the opportunity to interact with teachers who had not attended workshops.

The provision of in-school support is in line with the view that professional development must be contextualised within teachers' sites of practices and that the types of desired behaviour must be modelled for teachers in context. However, this mode of support is labour intensive, which raises its cost. It also requires that the trainers are highly skilled and able to respond to teachers' needs and to different situations as they arise.

9.   The relationship between desired and reported effects

During the course of each case study, interviewees were asked to reflect on the project's intended benefits (what the planners and implementers hoped it would achieve) and actual benefits as reported by participants. Interviewees in schools and district offices (where district officials had also been the recipients of training interventions) were asked to describe changes in their institutions which had taken place after they had participated in the project. Due to the methodology, these reported benefits could not be verified though direct observation or systematic

investigation. Where possible, reported benefits were correlated with evidence presented in evaluation reports. It is therefore not possible to draw any conclusions on the relative success of projects.

The match between reported and intended benefits was investigated. Project benefits, both intended and actual, were analysed according to project type and across all 12 sites.

Most projects articulated intended benefits in fairly general terms, as is illustrated by the following quotes:

"[create] effective, interdependent schools"
" greater involvement of stakeholders and improved relationships
"creating an army of change agents"
"managers have the necessary knowledge and skills to run schools more effectively"
"the implementation of curriculum 2005".

In contrast, participants and project staff described actual benefits in terms of very specific skills acquired (e.g. financial management skills) or behavioural changes (e.g. the introduction of a more participative management style).

There was a fairly weak relationship between benefits as reported and intended benefits. The lack of synergy between reported and intended benefits does not imply that schools did not benefit from the projects' inputs, as in all cases schools were able to cite a range of beneficial changes that had taken place. However, the benefits reported did not match those desired by project implementers. The weak relationship could be due in part to the vague specification of intended benefits by several projects. The relationship between intended and reported benefits is illustrated below, using data from each project type.

Project	Intended – management	Intended ethos	Intended – classroom	Reported – management	Reported – ethos	Reported – classroom	Reported – Learner Performance
School Dev. Plan.	Better planning, sense of purpose	Greater involvement, improved relationships, awareness of the effects of attitudes on behaviour, personal development, teamwork	More effective teaching	More participative decision making. SMT structure changed, institution of a school development team. School vision and mission.	More parental involvement. Teachers more motivated and committed. Teacher morale improved.	Little specific evidence offered. More participation of learners. Improved classroom control. Less loitering. Skills to deal with LSEN. Improved transition to C2005. No real data on learner performance.	No data offered.
Comb.	functional structures, implementation of new policies, internal and external	Participation in the change process, interaction with other schools, problem solving, self	structured lessons, better assessment practices, group work, more effective implementation	Increased teamwork; learnt to delegate, SMT and SGB work together to draw up	Teachers more open to deal with SMT; greater co-operation; more professional	Develop own materials; most keep learner portfolios; more prepared;	little observable impact on L performance. Learners more motivated

Project	Intended – management	Intended ethos	Intended – classroom	Reported – management	Reported – ethos	Reported – classroom	Reported – Learner Performance
	relationships improve, parental involvement.	reliance	of C2005	policies. Shared responsibility.	behaviour; better relationships with learners.	more activities; rhetoric of curriculum change.	and more attentive.
Multi-level	effective SGBs, managers have necessary knowledge and skills to run schools more effectively.	Organisationally effective; self-reliant; manage own affairs; conduct internal INSET; sustain gains.	Improved learner performance; better throughput rates; better curriculum implementation;	Better understanding of what's expected of them. Attitude change.	Awareness of ethos.	Reported changes in teacher attitude and behaviour – non-specific. Implement specific techniques. Reading and communication improved.	No evidence as yet.

Reported benefits were classified in terms of changes to management structures and practices, changes in school ethos and general behaviour, and changes in classroom practice and learner performance.

Across all projects, schools cited positive changes in management structures and in school ethos that they attributed to the projects. The most commonly reported changes were the introduction of participatory management styles, that management staff were more approachable and the establishment of management and governance structures (including development teams).

Similar types of changes in school ethos were reported across different project types. Typically these involved improved morale, improved internal and external relationships, greater team work, personal development (including increased assertiveness and improved levels of personal confidence), greater parental involvement and the creation of a more stable school environment (with greater discipline and accountability, and lower teacher absenteeism).

In projects that had provided extensive curriculum-related training and support, teachers were often reticent to discuss classroom level changes[3]. In one particular study teachers (in three different sites) consistently avoided questions about changes in classroom practice. In the four "combination" projects, teachers reported general changes associated with the introduction of Curriculum 2005 (e.g. "less passive learners", increased group work, classroom methodology more similar to that of C2005, "learners show more problem solving ability"). In only one instance did teachers mention that classroom changes were directly related to the project, when they indicated that the LSM received from the project had influenced their practice.

Despite the fact that all school development planning projects indicated that their projects should bring about positive changes with respect to learner performance and the quality of teaching and learning, none of the project beneficiaries reported any changes related to classroom practice or learner performance[4]. In those SDP

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[3] In the two multi-level projects which offered curriculum-focused training, it was not possible to gather data on actual benefits perceived by schools.

[4] When conducting interviews, interviewers were requested to prompt interviewees to provide specific examples of change. Interviewers specifically asked if any changes in learner performance had been noted.

projects which had included some curriculum-related training, teachers indicated that they felt a little more prepared to "handle Curriculum 2005".

Only two projects made specific mention of improving learner performance as one of their expected or intended benefits. Both of these projects were initiated in the last three years. Unfortunately it was not possible to gather data from project "beneficiaries" as to whether they had noticed changes in performance since participating in the project. During each case study interviewees in schools were asked whether they had noticed changes in learner performance since participating in the project. None of those interviewed could provide any evidence that they had noticed positive changes in learner performance which they could attribute to their involvement with the project. Teachers could not provide any evidence for changes in performance, saying that they had not monitored change. This meant that at best their observations of change were anecdotal. In two projects teachers reported an impression that learners were reading better and in one that they were communicating better. It was more common for teachers to comment on changes in learner *behaviour* such as learners being less passive in class and being more willing to communicate with the teacher and each other. The measurement of change in learner performance will be discussed further in the section dealing with project evaluations.

10. Project evaluations

10.1 Form of evaluations and methodologies used

Most (83%) of the projects surveyed had conducted some form of evaluation, most (66% - n=8) contracting external evaluators to assess their implementation processes and the impact of their projects. Only two projects had not conducted any formal evaluations. In both cases some additional research is being conducted which aims to document the projects and review internal implementation processes. These are descriptive and analytical studies, not impact evaluations.

Table 11:   Summary of project evaluations conducted

No project evaluations	Internal evaluation	External evaluation
2	3	8

Explanatory note - One of the projects included in the above table conducted both an internal evaluation and external evaluation.

In the projects reviewed, only five had conducted baseline evaluations (one of these was a reconstructed baseline). Most (8) had conducted mid-term evaluations and only two had completed a full evaluation cycle with a baseline, mid-term and end-of-project study. This can be explained by the fact that many of the projects studied were still in progress.

The majority of evaluation studies were designed using qualitative research methods, with the following being the most common methods:

Table 12:   Summary of research methods used in project evaluations

Interviews	9
Learner performance tests	6
Lesson observation	5
Questionnaires	4
Documentary review	3
Observation of training	3

Interviews are the most common form of data collection, however the data which they yield may be somewhat unreliable as interviews often solicit perspectival data which needs to be corroborated

Three studies made mention of using document reviews as part of their research methodologies, which included the analysis of school policy documents, lesson plans, project reports etc. Five studies conducted lesson observations, however not all evaluation reports provided detail on the nature of the observation tools used. One report did make mention of the fact that the researcher had not used a structured schedule, preferring to make a global or "holistic" assessment of a teacher's practice. The report also indicated that the researcher had not observed a full lesson in each instance.

An increasing number of educational improvement projects are incorporating learner performance assessment into their evaluation designs. Since 1998 there has been a increase in the number of projects using learner performance as an indication of programme impact (see table below). Of the projects reviewed, only one had completed three cycles of performance testing. Two projects had conducted baseline assessments of learner performance and intend conducting annual assessment of performance so as to measure change over the project lifespan. Both of these projects had been initiated recently. One of these projects intends using learner performance data from the evaluation to set improvement targets for individual schools. The construction of high quality, valid, reliable, standardised learner performance tests is a complex and sometimes costly task. The projects which conducted learner performance assessment did not develop six project-specific tests, instead between them only three different tests were used.

Table 13:   Learner testing as part of project evaluation

No. of projects where learner testing conducted	Learner testing conducted as part of a baseline study only	Learner testing conducted as part of impact assessment – baseline studies and follow-up studies
6	3	3
50%	25%	25%

Table 14:   Years when learner testing commenced as part of project evaluations

1998	1999	2000
1	2	3

10.2   Utilisation of evaluation findings

Projects were asked to report on the ways in which they had made use of evaluation reports and their findings[5]. The most common responses are summarised below.

Table 15: Reported uses of evaluation data

	Number
Re-design of project activities	3
Planning of future activities	2
Diagnostic (areas for training / at-risk schools)	2
Reflection (on activities and to allow schools to reflect on themselves)	2
Feedback to schools on progress	2
Benchmarking of performance levels	2

Three projects indicated that they had not made much use of the evaluation findings; they advanced the following reasons for this:

- The study was conducted recently and there has not been sufficient time to act on the information.
- Some action was taken where the data suggested it. However, methodological and theoretical differences between the evaluator and key project personnel influenced low up-take of recommendations.
- Project staff were unaware of the findings of the evaluation. Several reported not having read the evaluation report.

11   The challenge of scaling up reform

The majority of projects described above adopted a "school-by-school" approach to educational reform, concentrating their efforts on improving individual schools and then moving on to another set of schools during a subsequent project cycle. Even in the multi-level projects studied, the project implementers worked with schools in a similar manner utilised by "combination" projects - aiming to develop skills and capacity in a sample of schools in a district. In a country where so many schools and teachers are in need of capacity-building projects, the school-by-school approach can be likened to the lighting of candles in a dark field – light is provided in the candle's immediate surrounding, but the field as a whole remains dark. The challenge of scaling up reform affected all of the projects surveyed, and projects had grappled with the challenge in different ways.

Several approaches to scaling up reform were being piloted by the projects that were studied. The first challenge faced by projects was to spread reform efforts to all teachers within a school and ensure that capacity development was not limited to the few who attended workshops. The next challenge was to spread the positive effects of a project to larger numbers of schools. The two dominant scale-up methods are (i.) cascade models and (ii.) the institutionalisation of reform methods.

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[5] In two studies no data was gathered on reported uses. It is not possible to identify trends in data usage across project types as the sample size is too small – only 8 projects report having made use of evaluation data.

Internal scale-up

Five projects adopted an "internal cascade" training model which makes use of selected teachers to train their colleagues on material covered in workshops offered by service providers. This model is also known as the "lead or key teacher" model. This model of training was particularly common amongst projects offering curriculum-related training. Its obvious appeal lies in the fact that not all teachers from a school or from a department can be released to attend workshops simultaneously. No project reported that this model had worked particularly well and advanced the following reasons for its limited success:

- High turn-over in the teachers who attend workshops
- Designated teachers attending workshops do not have sufficient seniority to call meetings to impart training content.
- Teachers attending the workshops are often the newer and younger members of staff. This impacts on their effectiveness when delivering workshop content to older, more senior and more experienced members of staff.
- Training content which was presented over several hours is condensed into a one or two hour presentation.
- Content training is often not supported by materials which can be given to teachers who did not attend the original workshop.
- Teachers are not trained as trainers who deliver experiential and activity-based workshops to adults.

External scale-up methods

i. Cascade models

Two projects incorporated a cascade model to scale up reforms in their original project designs. According to this model, once a school has acquired sufficient skills and expertise it then becomes a delivery agent for developing the capacity of neighbouring schools. In general, the cascade model of training delivery has been strongly criticised with respect to the delivery of C2005-related training. At the time that the study was conducted, only one project was implementing this model (the other project was intending to introduce it shortly after the case study was completed). A more detailed description of the approach being implemented by one of the projects will allow for an examination of the challenges and opportunities inherent in this model.

The project initially worked intensively with a small number of schools. It was their intention that in time these schools would become local centres of excellence and be able to train and implement a development programme in clusters of neighbouring schools. After three years of intensive workshop-based training and in-support support, the project introduced its expansion activities, which it referred to as "clustering". In each project school a development facilitator was identified who would be responsible for managing, co-ordinating and implementing an integrated development programme in five or six nearby schools. The development co-ordinators received additional training in project management and workshop facilitation. They also received the necessary materials and equipment (including a computer, printer, fax and overhead projector) to conduct workshops and manage projects. The project provided funds to enable schools to second a teacher who would take on the teaching load of the development co-ordinator, as they could not take on these additional responsibilities and discharge their teaching duties. These schools (using the co-ordinator and those teachers who had attended the first round of workshops) began designing and conducting capacity building training for teachers in nearby schools which had subsequently been contracted into the project.

The general weaknesses of the cascade model are well documented, particularly the high potential for the dilution of training content. In order to reduce the likelihood of this happening, project staff worked with the development co-ordinators supporting them and assisting them with workshop planning and facilitation. The project also developed materials which could be used by school-based trainers.

The approach to scaling-up reform described above is clearly both time consuming and labour intensive, which limits its potential application. At the time of the case study, this method appeared to be working fairly successfully, based on the fact that schools were conducting workshops as planned and the cluster schools were satisfied with the training delivered. However, it should be noted that the "scaled up" project was only reaching 36 schools. Some in-school facilitators and trainers noted that they were afraid that their work with other schools would negatively affect their teaching commitments and ultimately the quality of their own school.

ii. Institutionalisation of reform

All three multi-level projects focused on improving the nature and type of support which district officials provide to schools. The most common approach to institutionalising reform has been the intention to develop the capacity of state officials so that they will be able to take over the developmental services currently delivered by NGO and private providers. The rationale for doing this is that it is the formal responsibility of the state to see to the developmental needs of all schools. This expansion model relies on the assumption that skilling officials will result in the extension of service provision to a much larger number of schools, through official channels.

The two multi-level projects which had been operating for some time when the research was conducted had adopted quite different strategies for realising similar goals. The first project conducted a skills training programme for officials responsible for providing support to school managers and teachers. The project assumed that in time the officials would increasingly take over the role played by NGOs. One of the weaknesses of this approach was that training was not integrated into a systematic programme to enhance service delivery by district offices. The project did not directly address the organisational ethos or internal systems and practices in the participating districts.

The second project focused specifically on changing the manner in which districts support schools and their development. The project experimented with different forms of internal organisation so that the support given to schools would be more systematic, co-ordinated, holistic and meaningful. This meant that the officials and project worked together to find new ways of organising the district's work and new organisational structures were created. The emphasis was both on providing officials with some additional skills, but at the same time addressing issues of organisational culture and structure.

At this stage neither project has been operating for long enough to determine whether either model has actually been successful in scaling up project-led reforms.

Several projects indicated that they were "pilot" projects or experimental designs which they hoped would grow into sustainable models for school reform. Some projects were testing out new models of State-NGO partnerships for maximising reform, while others were trying to create models of school reform which in future could be scaled-up by other organisations or the State. One project documented its

work with the intention that its experiences could guide other school reformers, informing them of successful strategies and warning about problems experienced.

12. The implementation of school reform in South Africa

All but one of the projects studied were implemented by non-State agencies (either non-governmental organisations or similar organisations established by schools)[6]. NGOs have a long history of providing education-related services to schools. During apartheid years many NGOs assumed the role of providing services to schools which were neglected by the state. These NGOs also became channels for directing international funds into educational improvement, bypassing an illegitimate state. Changes in the political environment, particularly the establishment of a democratic and recognised state and changed funding patterns have contributed to significant changes in the NGO sector. Relationships between NGOs have changed, as have NGO's relationships with the State.

This section of the paper considers a few of the changes which have taken place with respect to NGO's role in school reform.

> The emergence of "branded approaches"
> Branded approaches to school development are popular and well-established in the United States of America. Over the last few years, several NGOs have produced school intervention programmes which they have developed and marked as branded products. NGOs producing these products usually have specialist expertise in a particular facet of educational development (e.g. management training, reading instruction etc) and develop a full suite of workshops, materials and methods which form their 'product'. Several of the projects studied were making use of 'branded' materials in their work.

> The emergence of NGO consortia managing and implementing school development projects

In eight of the twelve projects studied, the projects were either managed or implemented by consortia of NGOs. It was common to find several NGOs collaborating, offering specialised training in management (or aspects of management) and different curriculum areas under a single umbrella project. The formation of these consortia is motivated through practical considerations as combined and multi-level projects require that service providers have expertise in a range of areas.

In most cases the design of projects requires that a consortium of service providers be established. However in one case study, the funder of a range of organisations promoted the formation of a consortium, in order to promote greater co-operation and synergy between some of the educational NGOs that it funded. The NGOs then pooled their expertise and experiences in working with schools and designed an intervention utilising their various skills.

The NGO sector has traditionally been a competitive sector with organisations vying for donor funds and aiming to position themselves to dominate a particular niche in the service provision market. The formation of NGO consortia often means that NGOs which were (and often remain) competitors must work together. It could be argued that these consortia are simply driven by organisations' self interests, as they

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[6] Efforts to include more State-run projects in the study were unsuccessful

realise that co-operation is necessary in order to secure large-scale lucrative contracts.

Many of the NGOs entering into these consortia did so on the basis of their previous work and the branded products which they have developed. One of the challenges faced by projects is integrating the use of high quality products (which have been successfully used in a range of contexts) into a project which has its own unique identity. One of the projects studied tried to overcome this by developing its own materials, which were then delivered by a limited number of NGO service providers. When contracted to the project, NGOs had to agree to adopt and adhere to the project's philosophy of school change and curriculum implementation.

In another project, the project managers initially described the project as a whole as being "atheoretical" as it did not subscribe to a single theory of school change or pedagogical change. Each of the NGO service providers had however rooted its practices in theories of change and of learning that had informed their previous practice. Over time a shared theoretical understanding of school development emerged.

13. Changing relationships with the State

Following the establishment of a legitimate State, international donor funds were increasingly directed to the State through bilateral agreements, rather than NGOs being funded directly (Development Update 1996/7: 105). In a study of NGOs in 1999, Kihato and Rapoo report that it was common for NGOs to deny having links with the State, even when they existed (1999: 14). In JET's research it became evident that school reform projects are increasingly being designed and implemented as partnerships between NGOs and the State.

Of the 12 projects studied, only three reported that they work 'relatively independently' of the State, meaning that the Department of Education was not directly involved in the delivery of the project. The projects however operated with the sanction of the DoE and included them in project planning and in the selection of participating schools. Two projects reported having 'moderate' linkages with the Department and included officials in their management structures. DoE officials did not play a role in school support or service delivery. The remaining six projects were implemented as formal NGO-State projects and were presented and publicised as joint projects. In these projects district officials played a role in service provision and played a more central role in the project's implementation.

Shortly after the election of the new government in 1994 there were concerns amongst civil society organisations that they would be co-opted into the State (Kihato and Rapoo, 1999). They also reported that the legacy of the past tainted State-NGO relations with a climate of "mutual suspicion and lack of co-operation" (Kihato and Rapoo, 1999: 15). During the mid-1990s many organisations held the view that the State was to be the primary delivery agency for social services (Development Update 96/97: 93), however as time passed the lack of the State's capacity to deliver became increasingly evident and it became increasingly common for the State to "farm out service delivery to voluntary sector organisations" (D.U 96/97: 94). These trends are clearly evident in South African school development activities.

Older generation projects typically had weaker links with the State and saw their role as being to complement State provision. Projects initiated in the late 1990s show clearer links with the provincial Departments of Education (PED). At least two

"combination projects" were implemented by NGOs, but marketed as being projects of the PEDs. As the capacity gaps in the State bureaucracy became increasingly evident, more attention was given to the need to strengthen elements of the bureaucracy, which in turn promoted the rise of "multi-level" projects which aim to develop the capacity of these institutions so that they can fulfil their service delivery mandate.

Whether by design or default, in several projects, NGOs were perceived as the primary implementing agents for State policy. Several school-based respondents perceived the projects, with their NGO trainers, as being primarily responsible for providing training on Curriculum 2005.

Despite the fact that several projects were conceptualised as partnerships between the State and NGOs, neither the strength of the relationship nor its purpose were always understood by people outside of the projects' core management structures. In one project, school participants and district officials both commented that they felt that the project had assumed the district's role in supporting schools. Responses from schools and officials indicated that they actually saw this in a positive light, with district officials saying that they had been "freed" to work more intensively with other schools. The project managers, however, felt that these comments reflected a distortion of the intended complementary relationship. They also felt that the perceptions of these individuals were at odds with how they conceptualised and had conducted the partnership. In this and another project, schools felt that they were better supported by the projects than by the Department and indicated that they preferred to work with NGOs (despite the fact that the projects were close partnerships between the PED and NGOs).

Several projects intimated at the fact that creating and sustaining relationships between projects and the PEDs was not always easy. Lack of clarity on the respective roles of parties appears to have been a common cause of conflict. This is likely to have been exacerbated by the internal re-organisation of Departments of Education and the lack of job descriptions for district officials.

14. Reflections on the South African school development landscape

What has this mapping of the terrain of school development told us about the nature of school development in South Africa?

Despite the fact that three main models of school development have been identified, there is also a high degree of homogeneity. Most projects adopt an "inside-out" approach (see Muller and Roberts, 2000), are empowerment focussed, privilege the self-identification of development needs, promote high levels of stakeholder participation in various dimensions of the projects and have a strong process orientation.

However, the last two years have seen significant changes in the way in which school development is conceptualised. Of the projects studied that were conceptualised and designed after 1999 there has been far more overt emphasis placed on the centrality of improving learner performance and using measures of learner performance to judge the effectiveness of an intervention. More recently designed projects have also tended to focus on improving the functionality of various layers of the education system. Project models have noted the importance both of what takes place in the classroom and management and see these two levels of functioning as operating in a synergistic manner.

The study also revealed that several earlier projects were also adopting elements of the multi-level approach, promoting a further coalescence of approaches.

The emergence, and rise and fall, of the different models of school development could be somewhat cynically explained with reference to the faddism which has plagued school development. Although the emergence of these South African models do mirror international trends, it is also worthwhile to view them in their historic contexts. The dominance of particular approaches coincides with the promulgation and implementation of certain government policies – when the Department of Education identified the primary problem besetting schools as one of poor management and at the same time introduced the Schools Act (84 of 1996), in response development projects focussed primarily on promoting an understanding of the Act and addressing management problems. When Curriculum 2005 was introduced many development agencies began to direct their attention to assisting teachers to implement the new policy, at the same time schools were struggling to implement the management practices associated with the schools Act. In 1999 the Department of Education utilised Policy Reserve Funds for raising awareness about district development and promoting the centrality of the district in education.

The nature of school development has also been shaped by the types of agencies which have implemented these (and similar) projects. The focus and orientation of development activities have been influenced by the ideas promoted by NGOs prior to 1994, when they were a voice of alternate policy and opposition to the State. Much of their work focussed on stakeholder involvement, giving voice to the voiceless and promoting empowerment. These agencies adopted models consonant with their general ideological orientation, which in most commonly has been dominated by empancipatory discourse, progressivism and participatory process.

The review of twelve school reform projects has demonstrated that considerable time, effort and financial resources have been committed to improving schools. However the results and "return on investment" has been disappointing. Few projects were able to demonstrate significant impacts on learning and learner performance. The following are possible explanations for this:

- School development or reform has typically been seen as an adjunct activity and participation in these programmes has often been voluntary.
- A Maslowian hierarchy of needs exists in schools. Where schools lack the most basic physical resources, it is difficult to introduce abstract development notions or promote changes in classroom behaviour not supported by the necessary physical resources.
- Delivery methods used by projects have not always encouraged sustained, on-going support to teachers in the environments in which they work. Much training has been focussed on information giving and not on actual skills development.
- The theories of action adopted by many projects are being challenged by alternative theories; for example some argue that beliefs are changed through new actions, rather than the other way round. It could also be that theories of action are not appropriate for the context of implementation.
- Projects have tended to focus on process-related issues and not on outcomes and demonstrable changes.
- The length of engagement with schools and teachers is too short to bring about meaningful, long-term change.
- Project implementation is largely devolved to NGOs (in provincially run projects) or projects are initiated by NGOs, which do not have sufficient authority to extet a "pull" on schools and compel them to change.

On the positive side, these projects have demonstrated:
- There is considerable will to bring about an improvement in schools.
- It is easier to change school management practices than teaching and learning practices.
- The emphasis on improving leaner performance is becoming more prominent.
- On-site, contextualised training has become more popular, countering the criticisms of generic training.

While project design, training delivery and programme implementation do play a role in the success of development projects, one cannot ignore issues of relative power, capacity and authority. While the dedication of project implementers and their commitment to change has been evident throughout this research, the scale of the problem which they try to address is enormous.

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