



Contact:

Director: Finton Cassidy

Tel: 015 304-3441

Cell: 083-375-8971

email:thelordsabode@gmail.com

Donations are tax deductible

Reference number: 18/11/13/3291

Needs Analysis for a Pre-school project at Bolobedu South, Limpopo.

The Author

Finton Cassidy has been involved in The Lords Abode for about 30 years. He has worked extensively in the IT industry ending up working for Liberty Life in their IT Consultancy department. He is presently managing the Tzaneen farm and overseeing the school project.



Apr 2013.

1. Introduction.

Although the shortfalls in the educational system within the country are glaringly obvious we conducted some research education in general both in the province and nationally, before upgrading and developing the school premises on our property. We also looked at Early childhood development as we felt that this was where we could be most effective. This would be able to give the children a solid grounding in English which is not widely spoken in the area. This document assists the reader to understand the problem and see that we have addressed a great need within the community.

2. Needs Analysis

There are many reports and an abundance of information available documenting and researching the state of the educational system in South Africa. Our experience on the ground has been in line with research. It is interesting to note that there is consensus on the fact that the rural schools (as opposed to the urban schools) are the most lacking, and that the Limpopo region again is the area in most need of attention as seen in the quote below.

“The poorest and least-developed rural communities are those that were located in the former homelands, particularly in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. The legacy of poverty and neglect in these places is far from being eliminated, partly because of the emphasis in South Africa on urban development.

This booklet shows that conditions in rural areas still have many shortcomings despite their potential, and that the conditions of poverty and under-development are reflected in the quality of education available there. It argues that the achievement of real quality in education in rural areas will only come about when there is significant social and economic development in those areas. Until then, the education provided in rural areas will limit people’s opportunities to lead long, healthy and creative lives, or to acquire knowledge and enjoy freedom, dignity and self-respect.” [1].

Many other issues are identified in rural populations which have an adverse effect on the learners’ ability to take advantage of a quality education, mainly related to factors in the home.

“Villages and rural communities are difficult to reach, the physical conditions in schools are inadequate, and learner performance in comparison to schools elsewhere is weak. Although there have been significant infrastructural improvements since 1994, according to the National Education Infrastructure Management System: National Assessment Report published by the Department of Education in 2007, many rural schools still lack clean running water, electricity, libraries, laboratories and computers.

More than one-quarter of the schools in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo have more than 45 learners per classroom. These are not easy conditions in which to provide a sound education for young people.

The Department of Education conducts nationwide evaluations of learners, especially in the learning areas of Language, Mathematics and Natural Sciences. Table 1 shows some figures from 2005” [1]

Table 1. Pass rates from the Grade 6 systemic evaluation, 2005

Type of School	Language	Mathematics	Natural Sciences
	Pass Rate (%)		
Urban	64	46	58
Township	40	26	42
Rural	29	22	35
Remote rural	23	19	30
Farm	34	24	37

We see from the above passage and also the Table 1 that Michael Gardiner has clearly illustrated the disadvantage that rural schools have even with a low urban base. He also goes on to say:

“We can use these comparative figures to think about how to put together policy to bring the performance of learners in different kinds of schools up to an equivalent standard. However, we also need to reflect on the performance of South African learners compared to those in other countries. The achievements of urban South African learners should not be the benchmark at which rural education aims, because those achievements are actually also at a very low level. For example, in 2006 the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study analyzed reading literacy in 40 countries. The results showed that South African Grade 5 learners achieved by far the lowest scores of all when compared to Grade 4 learners in the other countries in the study.

This result indicates that there is a crisis in the whole of the South African education system, and that this crisis is most serious amongst learners in rural schools. Policy that intends to provide South Africans with education of suitable quality has to address the situation in the whole country, as well as the particular needs of schools in rural areas. It will be no favor to rural schools to assist them only to achieve parity with their urban counterparts.

In 2006 the Department of Education published the Monitoring and Evaluation Report on the Impact and Outcomes of the Education System on the South African Population. Figures from that study indicate the following:

- A higher proportion of people between the ages of 25 and 34 in urban areas had completed matriculation than their rural counterparts.
- More than double the number of urban people have achieved a post- school qualification in comparison to their rural peers.
- Rural learners are more likely to leave school before completion in comparison to their urban counterparts.

These findings, dangerous as they are in comparing rural with urban, give force to the following statement in Emerging Voices:

Our study has shown that children [in rural areas] do not have their constitutional right to education realized, and their rights within education or through education are also limited (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 205:138). [1]”

Hansani Pius Risimati wrote his Doctoral Thesis under the direction of Professor J N Van Wyk which focused on Primary schools in the Limpopo region and he said:

“Schools in the Limpopo Province generally compare poorly to schools in the other provinces. The School Register of Needs Survey (SRNS 2000:47-69) indicates the following situation in Limpopo Province: 37,6% of schools have telecommunication facilities, 63% of schools in the province have water, only 51% have electricity, at least 8,9% schools have no toilets, 3131 schools use pit-toilets, 49,4% of school buildings are in need of repair and an acute shortage of classrooms exist. Clearly, this situation has a negative influence on the effectiveness of the school in the province. This is reflected in the poor matric results of the province.

Limpopo has an acute shortage of classrooms and this results in learners having to sit on rocks, under trees and without tables for their lessons. City Pres (2005:19) concurs that there were 55 080 learners who were receiving tuition under the tree – with a classroom backlog of 3500 classrooms. However, for some learners this does not seem to be a problem as Amukelani Ngobeni, a learner interviewed in City Pres (2005:19) states: “I enjoy learning under a tree because I get a chance to play. In classes, it’s like being in a cage.” “This situation will not improve the performance of learners in Limpopo Province.”[2]

It is also prudent to mention that what has been referred to as the “Limpopo text book saga” relates to the Dept of Education failing to deliver text books to the schools even 6 months into the academic year. This fact only surfaced after truckloads of books were found in a dry river bed. [3]

We can see that the research which has dealt with both South Africa as a whole and that which has focused on the Limpopo region has been consistent. A needs analysis has been conducted on a school which is about 8 kms from us and is run by Tshega Christian Missions. This report was commissioned by the educAIDed, a funding organization, and has resulted in them supporting the construction of a school. They mentioned:

“1.2 Tshega project as sponsored by EducAIDed

1.2.1 Background

South Africa unfortunately struggles with their educational system and some classes have up to 80 children in one class in public rural schools. Therefore children mostly do not receive good education since teachers do not have proper resources, have to deal with overcrowded classes and poverty. “[5]

Again the author goes on to say:

- Traditional believes

One of the major problems in the community is traditional believes like witchcraft. Especially in Limpopo province the traditional believes are still powerful. These beliefs include practices which are harmful to women and children. South Africa has the largest number of recorded child-rapes in the world. This often is due to a widespread belief throughout Southern Africa among traditional healers as they claim that raping a virginal child 'cleanses a man of HIV-AIDS.'

Occasions of murder and mutilation associated with some traditional cultural practices in Southern Africa are also termed Muti killings. Muti killings, more

correctly known as medicine murder are not human sacrifice in a religious sense, but rather involve the murder of someone in order to excise body parts for incorporation as ingredients into medicine and concoctions used in witchcraft. In 2010 Muti killings were on the rise in South Africa. Some South Africans, especially in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces, believe that the harvested body parts of children or old people will assist in them becoming rich and powerful (source; Wikipedia).

Education is the best way to try and change the harmful aspects of the traditional beliefs.”[5]

I think an important point is made here as these beliefs are entrenched in the local society and therefore play a large role in their behavior. It is also very difficult to engage in a discussion with people as a lot of this culture is secret and anyone talking of such things is frowned upon.

Although the reports do not specifically mention pre-schooling, it has been the general experience that this area also suffers severe neglect. In fact quality pre-schooling is the key to affecting change in the whole educational system. This finding has been documented in the Research Report Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project where it is stated:

“Key findings over the pre-school period

- Impact of attending a pre-school
 - Pre-school experience, compared to none, enhances al-round development in children.
 - Duration of attendance (in months) is important; an earlier start (under age 3 years) is related to better intellectual development.
 - Full time attendance led to no better gains for children than part-time provision.
 - Disadvantaged children benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences, especially where they are with a mixture of children from different social backgrounds.
 - Overall disadvantaged children tend to attend pre-school for shorter periods of time than those from more advantaged groups (around 4-6 months less).
- Does type of pre-school matter?
 - There are significant differences between individual pre-school settings and their impact on children; some settings are more effective than others in promoting positive child outcomes.
 - Good quality can be found across all types of early year’s settings; however quality was higher overall in settings integrating care and education and in nursery schools.
- Effects of quality and specific ‘practices’ in pre-school
 - High quality pre-schooling is related to better intellectual and social/behavioral development for children.
 - Settings that have staff with higher qualifications have higher quality scores and their children make more progress.
 - Quality indicators include warm interactive relationships with children, having a trained teacher as manager and a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff.
 - Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all-round progress.
 - Effective pedagogy includes interaction traditionally associated with the term “teaching”, the provision of instructive learning environments and ‘sustained shared thinking’ to extend children’s learning.
- The importance of home learning

-For all children, the quality of the home learning environment is more important for intellectual and social development than parental occupation, education or income. What parents do is more important than who parents are. “[4]

It is our plan to not only use the traditional methods but rather to embrace the electronic age. This is possible by the number of our members that have spent years in the IT sector. The Joan Ganz Cooney Centre at Sesame Workshop and Stanford University has, among other reports published a document “Giant step: A blueprint for teaching young children in a digital age” is which it is stated:

Given the growing ubiquity of digital media in most children's lives, thoughtful integration of technology in learning environments can benefit children as young as ages 3 to 8. Enhanced, modernized early will improve their long term prospects for school success. Technology is most productive in young children's lives when it enhances their engagement in the rich activities of childhood - talking, interacting manipulating, pretending, reading, constructing, exploring - as well as in children's reflections on their actions and experiences. Digital media that can contribute in these ways and that also expose children to new knowledge and enriching vocabulary are emerging, as evident in the examples offered in this report. Teachers in the early grades and beyond can make use of such strategies to improve learning for young children and better meet the individual needs [6]

Again in another report “Families matter: Designing media for the digital age” it is stated:

“We believe that new forms of digital media are well positioned to play a constructive role in advancing powerful solutions to national education challenges” [7]

These reports bring a compelling argument for the use of technology and digital media into the school environment even in the early years.

3. Bibliography.

- [1] Michael Gardiner, Education in Rural Areas, Issues in Education Policy Number 4, CEPD-Center for Education Policy Development.
- [2] Hansani Pius Risimati, “Whole school evaluation in rural Primary schools in Limpopo Province” for Doctoral Thesis under Professor JN Van Wyk,
- [3] Mail and Guardian Newspaper, <http://mg.co.za/article/2012-08-03-00-limpopo-textbook-saga-musical-chairs-is-a-distraction-not-a-solution>
- [4] The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project, Authors Prof. Kathy Sylva(Uni. of Oxford), Prof. Edward Melhuish (Uni. of London), Prof. Pam Sammons(Uni. of London), Prof. Imram Siraj-Blatchford(Uni. of London), and Research coordinator Brenda Taggart(Uni. of London).
- [5] Trieneke Hijma of “educAIDed”, Research report evaluation and needs-assessment Tshega project.
- [6] giant step: A blueprint for teaching young children in a digital age, by Brigid Barron, G Cayton-Hodges, L Bofferding, C Copple, L Darling-Hammond and M H. Levine of The Joan Ganz Cooney Centre at Sesame Workshop and Stanford University.
- [7] “Families matter: Designing media for the digital age”, by Lori M. Takeuchi of the Joan Ganz Cooney Centre at Sesame Workshop and Stanford University.
- [8] <http://www.politicalanalysis.co.za/2012/09/18/why-corruption-in-south-africas-public-sector-is-at-an-all-time-high/>