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UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

Eastern Cape Education
Department

*Distance
Education Project*

*Core Education
Studies Course*
Learning in the World
5th Umthamo

'A Collective Consciousness':
Cluster development within the district

Pilot Edition − March 2001

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROJECT

CORE EDUCATION STUDIES COURSE
Learning in the World

Umthamo 5 - 'A Collective Consciousness':
Cluster development within the district
First Pilot Edition - 2001

nhlanganiso dladla

Cynthia Mpati

Xoliswa Njaba,

Liz Botha

Co-ordinated and edited by Liz Botha

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Learning in the World

Umthamo 4

'A Collective Consciousness': Cluster Development within the District

Introduction

In this, the fifth umthamo of the Learning in the World strand, you will find that the Schools as Learning Communities strand is flowing 'out into the world'! In this semester, the two strands will almost become one. Lo mthamo links with Umthamo 32, on curriculum, as well as with Umthamo 38, on policy.

Lo mthamo asks you to take whole school development further, out into the broader context of the community of schools in your district. We have spoken, in the Schools as Learning Communities strand, of 'Schools as Learning Organisations'; of 'Learning Schools'; of 'School Improvement'; 'Whole School Development' and 'Healing the System'. All these have been approaches to developing our schools into 'Self-managing schools' – schools which are independent and can take initiative in solving their own difficulties within their own context.

In the conversation which follows, two members of the writing team for lo mthamo wonder whether it is enough to be a 'Self-managing school'.

nhlanganiso: *Uyazi'ni, the more I think about how people talk about self-managing schools, the more apprehensive I become.*

Cynthia: *Chaza.*

nhlanganiso: *Well it is not that I have a problem with the concept per se; it is rather the manner in which some people approach it. There seems to be a tendency among some to want to construct an understanding of the school as an entity ezimele yodwa. So we go to School A, fix it fix it, pat ourselves on the back for a job well done, descend onto School B, do the same, move on to School C, njalo njalo. While we are keen to see schools zizimele as functional organisations, it is dangerous to push a view that isolates them from the system of which they are a part. Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, motho ke motho ka batho. Don't you think that this is relevant to all entities tse di philang, eziphilayo, including our institutions of course. We need to be very careful that we don't talk of organising schools while cutting off their lifeblood and disorienting them. Ukunceda abantu is also about encouraging a consciousness that recognises unavoidable interdependencies, and making sure that we build and strengthen communities and linkages that sustain all of us.*

Cynthia: *Ya mfowethu. It seems that, in helping schools to be self-managing, district officials nabanye might be working very hard to eventually render themselves unnecessary.*

nhlanganiso: *Working themselves out of a job, you mean. Well that may well be true in so far as it relates to things that schools should do themselves, but there will always remain a part emhlane that you can't scratch, and you need others to do it for you.*

Cynthia: *On the other hand, kuno SASA, who has made the road to "self managing" quite steep. I wonder how many schools will make it on those set standards.*

nhlanganiso; *Well, can we explore the notion of co-operative partnerships across schools, or enabling clusters?.*

Cynthia: *But who will facilitate the formation of functional self-managing clusters?*

nhlanganiso: *A number of people can be involved here, the main drivers being schools themselves. District officials would need to play an important role here too. Nathi ke singasiza singo Fort Hare nabanye.*

Cynthia: *So sithi we are we are uncomfortable with a simplistic understanding of the concept of self-managing schools, and want to rather advocate for a position that looks at "individuality and independence within a necessary whole" - a collective consciousness. A self-managing school relating to and working with other self-managing schools in the context of the district. Perhaps the idea is to develop all educators so that they are accountable to their own school community, as well as to one another. This is a tension between the self and the whole, and balance is the name of the game. You see, you cannot expect a school district to function with efficiency if the regulator is a district official, situated some two hundred kilometres away, across some river. A steering committee regulating a cluster is much more likely to be effective, especially with the support of the District Official.*

nhlanganiso: *With a few of the provinces restructuring their education departments, one wonders how they have conceptualised "self managing schools".*

Cynthia: *You are worried about regions devolving a package of power and confusion. Am I right? This could be the case, where regions were not quite functional, but one would like to believe that some informed and sound planning is currently happening. You know me - always believe in people.*
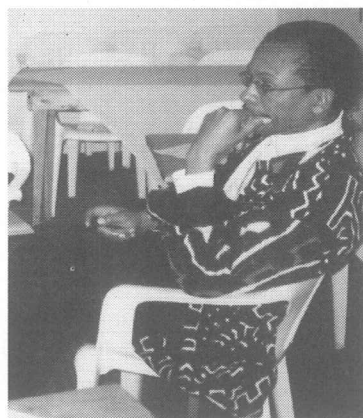
nhlanganiso dladla

Reflecting on working in a cluster of schools

Most of you will have had an experience of schools in your area working together as a cluster, or in partnership, for some purpose.

- This may have been a sharing and preparing exercise springing out of a Curriculum 2005 workshop.
- It may have been an attempt to raise funds, or organise music and sporting events.
- It may have been a clustering exercise organised by the district, or the Department, in conjunction with NGO's or universities, around a specific issue, e.g. HIV/AIDS; Inclusive education; general teacher development.

Educators speak

Here are some comments from educators we interviewed who have been involved in clusters, or partnerships:

Educator 1

We haven't really been able to establish cluster relationships, although there are sister relationships existing between pairs of schools. These are sometimes based on friendships between specific principals. Where relationships do exist, the high school often finds itself left out, because there are more primary schools, and the primary schools have common concerns.

At one time, someone tried to get closer co-operation going, starting at the level of the Principals. However, the concept became identified with a certain union, which made the idea not welcome at all. So the effort collapsed.

So, at times, it is competition and jealousy which are barriers to co-operation.

Educator 2

We were a cluster of 10 schools under the Quality Schools Project established by ITEC six or seven years ago. We were sponsored with Science Kits, for example, which we used according to a carefully worked out plan, made by the affected schools. Community members were not part of the planning, but they were involved in fundraising. There were some incentives for teachers to attend the Quality Schools workshops.

As the term of the project lapsed, EDO's were requested to sustain the cluster, but they were not available. We tried to incorporate other schools by inviting them to the workshops.

We wanted them to share in the benefits of the project. They co-operated. What we could not share, though, was the 'goodies' (Science kits, etc.), as the project did not provide for them.

What made this effort fail was the lack of support from EDO's and the DoE. We experienced new programmes pouring in, and at times confusing us, because none was giving way for the other.

Maybe the better route to go could be an integrated plan for the district where the common aims and problems for schools are discussed and planned for, the district consulted and talked to. Maybe based on this information, they can be expected to bring a skeleton plan to discuss with representatives of clusters, which will allow for flexibility in some cases.

There is some hope though – a planning committee is now being established in our district which is a very promising direction.

Educator 3

At the OBE workshops in 2000, we were asked to form clusters to work on learning programmes for the different Learning Areas. We formed a group of the schools in the Ncera villages and did some work on one of the Learning Areas. When we, as DEP teacher-learners, were introduced to the ESSO's, I invited them to come and help us at our cluster meetings. This was done twice, and seemed to be useful. But after this the cluster seemed to collapse.

One of the reasons was the review of Curriculum 2005, which made everyone feel insecure. Many people felt we had been wasting our time on something which was going to be changed.

But there are other factors. Sometimes they always expect that so-and-so should take a lead. Then other people say, "Oh, he's always in front, as if there is something that he knows better than us". In such cases you find that people who want to do things for the benefit of all the schools in our area, they tend to withdraw.

It seems to me that things go better when we are dealing with sports or music, or even fundraising. For sport, even if there are people who are negative, our school arranges a sporting activity, and we send out challenges. And then we come together, and we enjoy it, and one cannot see why anybody could have been negative.

But when we get together on OBE and learning areas planning, we have certain differences - I don't know where they come from.

In our schools we are not organised. For things like fundraising, we do come together, but there is no common planning. One school plans, and then when the time comes, they invite everyone to their fundraising event. There is also an element of competition in this – each school trying to make more money, and be the first to have their function.

Thinking about our successes, I wouldn't say that there is a clear success. But with regard to fundraising activities – those school bazaars – there was really something positive – that unity that prevails when we get together also affects our learners, they do see us coming together as teachers.

When I arrived there, those people in those Ncera villages, they had their own factions about their issues that they had when they were up there in Kwelera and Mooiplaas – so they came here divided over their issues that I don't know. But when we came together as schools and had those bazaars, and used to support each other with rugby and other sports, now that enmity that used to be there was no longer there after about two years, up til today. By then people wouldn't send children to other villages – they would get attacked - but now it is no longer like that.

And we also had meetings in 1999 and 98 – we managed to bring our SGB's together because we wanted to form our own education forum. What I have seen there is that, some parents, they valued some of the things from teachers of other villages, that didn't see eye to eye.

This idea of the forum started because one of the old ladies came to me asking how long we would live with the prefab classrooms we had. So I spoke to the SGB about it, and suggested that we ask another school to host a meeting of all the SGB's. That school was easier for everyone to get to. It was in the centre of the villages. Our goal was to create that unity that would help us fight to create better schools. Because I had an idea that there were some funds that were invested by the government before 1994 for these Ncera villages so that all these villages would have their own schools. Now they didn't know where did that money go – it was one of their concerns.
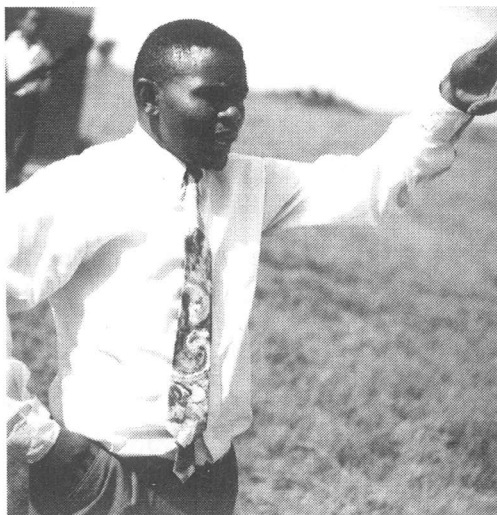
Have you had similar experiences to those you have read about? Reflect now on your own experience of clusters, and write about it in your journal.
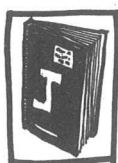
Journal write

Questions to help your reflection:

- What were the goals of the cluster exercise?

- Why was clustering used as a strategy to attain these goals?

- Did all stakeholders (i.e. all schools, educators, management, parents, SGB members, learners) participate? Did some participate more than others?

- Do you think that schools valued the cluster as a strategy for achieving the goals? Why do you think so?

- What were the successes of the exercise?

- What were the benefits of getting together and sharing?

- Did the cluster continue to meet? i.e. Was it sustained? If so, what has kept it going? If not, what were the causes of the members drifting apart?

- Was the cluster supported by the Department, or by any other outside agents? If it was, was this helpful? If not, would your cluster have benefited from this support?

- Could clusters of this kind help the District Office? How and Why?/ Why not?

Share your journal write with a colleague, or with your small group at the face-to-face session.

Later in the umthamo you will conduct a more thorough evaluation of cluster efforts in your area. Then you will work with people from other schools to strengthen the cluster movement in your area, or zone.

Intended Outcomes

Lo mthamo will lead to the following outcomes:

Knowledge Outcomes

When you have worked through lo mthamo, you will:

- understand more about the benefits of school cluster work, and barriers to effective and sustained cluster activities;
- understand more about heirarchical management and leadership structures, both traditional and flatter styles;
- understand more about what research shows about the characteristics of effective districts.

Skills Outcomes

When you have worked through lo mthamo, you will have:

- enhanced your skills of facilitating groups of adults and learners, through working with stakeholder groups from your own school and other schools in your area;
- enhanced your skills of explaining and motivating;
- enhanced your skills of conducting Action Research:

  a) analysing the situation;

  b) administering and analysing questionnaires;

  c) reporting on findings;

  d) identifying a problem, or focus area;

  e) drawing up and implementing an Action Plan;

- enhanced your reading and comprehension skills.

Attitudes Outcomes

When you have worked through lo mthamo, some of your attitudes will probably have changed towards:

- members of the stakeholder groups of your own and neighbouring school communities;
- specific education and policy issues which your cluster has selected for focus.

In Unit 1, you will continue your reflection on cluster work, looking at benefits of clustering and barriers to clustering.

Unit 1: From Individual Schools to Clusters: Benefits and Barriers

In this unit, you will continue your personal reflection. This time you will look very specifically at the benefits of working in a cluster, and also at the barriers which schools are likely to experience when embarking on a cluster project. We would encourage you to work with colleagues wherever possible, discussing and sharing ideas.

Some parents express their concerns

Read the following short case-studies. They present four parents or guardians with difficulties.

Admissions Policy

"I have decided to come and talk to you as the EDO of this area. I have a problem. My child is just over 5 years old and has just graduated from a pre-school in this community. Luphaphe School does not want to admit my child in Grade 1. I am told they do not admit 5-year-olds because you – the Department – do not allow that. This is worrying because Nontsinga School next door has admitted my sister's child, who is also the same age. I would understand if they said the school is full, but it is not. They just do not admit children who are underage. How do you explain that? Why should the schools in the same community treat us differently?"

Fund-raising

In a parents' meeting in this same area this parent is complaining about the fact that the schools in the same area do their fund-raising at the same time. This is how he speaks to the problem: "...furthermore, how do you explain the situation where this school is doing Miss Freshet, the other one a raffle – this one is doing a fund-raising concert and the pre-school is doing a fete at the same time? Are you aware of the fact that it is the same parent who is responsible for contributing to all these schools without ignoring any of them?"

Another parent in the same meeting complains about the difference in school funds. This other school requests a school fund payment of R40, and the other requests R5. Every parent wants to take her child to the school with low school fees, but the space is no longer available, and then she has no option but to take her to the school with higher school fees.

Another dimension to this is that educators in the school with high school fees are being redeployed because their numbers have dropped. This other school gets a high intake and therefore qualifies for an HOD post. How long will that last if the school with low enrolment may decide to have a school fee of R3?

Two Different Reports

"I keep getting two different reports for my kids in Grade 4. What is funny is that <u>Qiqa's</u> has got LLC1 and LLC2 and descriptions like: "attained with difficulty"; SO1; SO2 – What are these? Why are we not made to know what these teachers are doing? <u>You</u> know what? I understand Liza's report because they write: History 29; Geography 70; Xhosa 58, etc. It is even worse at <u>Qiqa's</u> school. I am requested to help with reading to improve my child's understanding of meaning! Do they expect me to be a teacher? Where are the teachers? What are they doing? <u>You</u> mean they are lazy to the extent of making us work for nothing?

What is central is the confusion they are ploughing to us and these children. Will this ever be resolved?"

Grandfather confused about punishment

"I wish I could understand why the schools in this locality operate differently. Can you believe that the Thembalabantu Primary School expects me to beat Sive when he conducts himself badly at school. I know he is very silly, but I am very old – I can no longer beat Sive now. He runs and I cannot chase him. I have asked these teachers to beat Sive because they are still energetic. They cannot expect me, old as I am, to beat this boy. They say it is against the law, because corporal punishment has been abolished at schools. What has the law to do with my grandchildren if I give teachers permission to punish?

Funny, at Simamele Primary and Mvuso Primary, the teachers there accepted my request. They beat the other two silly grandchildren of mine. They told me about the law, but I told them these are my grandchildren. If they don't want to beat them, they must be expelled.

Sive takes my pension pay by force. When I report him at school they do nothing. What are these schools for, if they are not going to help us?"
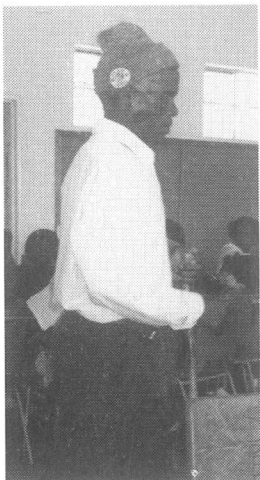
Discuss and Journal write: Why should schools form clusters?

How can schools and communities benefit by clustering?
- Think back to the comments of the educators in the introduction.
- Think back to your own reflection on your experiences of clusters.
- Think about the case studies you have just read.
- Think of other reasons for clustering.

Discuss this with colleagues, or with your group at the face-to-face session. Then write your ideas in your journal.

Discuss and Journal write: What are the barriers to successful clustering?

What are the barriers to successful clustering? What causes the disintegration of clusters? What demotivates those who have worked to form them?
- Think back to the comments of the educators in the introduction.
- Think back to your own reflection on your experiences of clusters.
- Think of other factors.

Write your ideas in your journal, and discuss them with colleagues, or with your group at the face-to-face session.

Competition vs Co-operation

Many of you have probably identified barriers which have something to do with competition and jealousy, and feelings of inadequacy.
- People don't want someone to take the lead, because that means he is better than I am. Or "he thinks he is better".
- "I don't want to share with you because then you will be as good as I am."
- "I don't want to tell you my ideas, because they might seem foolish to you."
- "We don't want to plan fund-raising with you because then you might get more money than we do."

Husen [1979; 1985] draws attention to the fact that conflict is set up in educational institutions between "the opposing goals of competition and co-operation. The striving for co-operation is forfeited because technocratic societies insist on achievement. Consequently, competition is over-emphasised."
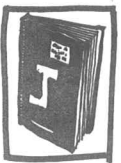
Our new curriculum and our new constitution emphasise the importance of co-operation and co-operative learning. We need to have the courage to promote and act upon the belief that *we will gain much more in the long run through sharing and co-operation*. An over-competitive attitude often leads to a fear of sharing, and thus to isolation and stagnation.

The Role of Leaders and Managers

The educators quoted in the introduction spoke about problems such as:

- lack of support from EDO's for the clusters;
- lack of co-operative planning.

Problems of this kind often spring from people's perceptions of what leadership, management and administration mean. Much of our experience in the past has made us think that managers and leaders tell other people what to do, and the people under them must obey, like it or not.

This means that when managers consult with others, they tend to feel that they are giving away their authority, or that they are showing signs of weakness. They are not used to a style of leadership where they give a strong lead by consulting and working with others.

This may mean that Principals and District Officials are reluctant to consult, or work together with others. They want to 'retain their dignity' by working alone, and telling others what to do.

This idea of leadership also means that educators and community members tend not to take the initiative in starting something. They wait for someone to tell them what to do, or to provide what is needed. In the meantime, they are capable of coming up with innovative solutions themselves.

For example, a secondary school in a certain area was experiencing classroom over-crowding. When parents were requested to come up with suggestions, they said the Department of Education must deliver extra classrooms – yet it was a very big school, newly built.

Asked to look for a workable solution in the meantime, they suggested working together with the neighbouring primary school, separated from them by a fence. They saw that they could take Grade 8 from the Secondary School, and put them in the spare rooms in the Primary School. They thought that consultations between the two school communities, including the management, could facilitate arrangements about teaching and supervising these classes.

In the book *Creating People-centred Schools [Ndhlovu et al, 1999]*, the writers explore the strengths and weaknesses of the hierarchical style of management which we are speaking of here. This style of management has dominated our society and our educational and government system for as long as we can remember.

Here is a diagram of it, taken from *Creating People-centred Schools.*:

Figure 2.1 A typical hierarchical pyramid – this is our diagrammatic representation of Thuthuka's organizational style

New government and educational policy is suggesting a 'flatter hierarchy', which encourages participation and co-operation.

"The *Changing Management to Manage Change* report is ... critical of the traditional, hierarchical management that is characteristic of so many South African schools. Instead, it favours more democratic and participative ways of organising schools. This involves changing the structures of school management, as well as changing the culture and ethos in schools. The task team argues that schools should manage themselves as far as possible, and that decision-making should involve all staff and stakeholders. In effect, they argue for 'flatter pyramids', with responsibility shared in collaborative ways by more people.
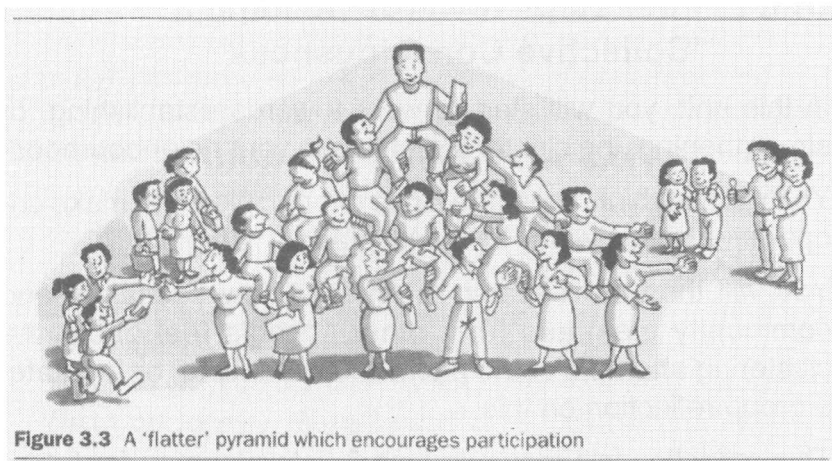
Figure 3.3 A 'flatter' pyramid which encourages participation

...note that participative organisational styles do not mean anarchy and no leadership. Instead, 'flatter, more participative' structures mean that leaders *consult* and *seek the support* of a wide range of stakeholders when making decisions. But they still mean that decisions *must* be taken!

The task team recognises that changes of this sort are difficult to achieve in that they have to do with changing cultures and not simply school structures...

*The task of **instilling the new attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding** is at the heart of the challenge we face in transforming governance and management. The task may be daunting, but it is not impossible."*

(from Ndhlovu, et al. 1999. Creating people-centred Schools. Pp 68, 69)

Leaders have fears of 'giving away their authority' by consulting and working co-operatively. Others have fears of taking initiative. It is part of our task as change agents to help dissolve these kinds of fears.

Discuss and Journal write

Discuss with colleagues, or with your group at the face-to-face session, and write in your journal:

- How can I, in my school situation, work to overcome the barriers to cluster formation and co-operation which I may encounter?
- How can I help colleagues at my school and at other schools to see and experience the benefits of working together?

Unit 2: First steps towards building a 'Collective Consciousness'

In this unit, you will start to work towards establishing, or strengthening, the cluster structures in your neighbourhood.

You will first think about the kinds of principles that make co-operative action work, by thinking about 'Umgidi'.

You will then do research to find out how educators and community members from other schools feel about the clustering attempts of the past. You will initiate, or facilitate, a group reflection on this.

This reflection will move, in Unit 3, into planning for future cluster work, around a chosen focus.

How to cluster: using 'Umgidi' as a model

Lest we start seeing ourselves as unable to co-operate, let us look at an example of co-operation that always succeeds – though there will always be hitches, of course!

Think about the process of planning and implementation for 'Umgidi'. (You will be able to supplement this description from your own experience.):

> *The people of the family sit together to talk about the need for the ceremony. They sit down with the clan to talk about the same issue. This meeting seeks to look at whether the time is suitable for everyone in the community to attend. Any clashes are talked about and considered so as to set a convenient date for all. They do this consultation because it is the same people who will be expected to attend the ceremony, so clashes have to be avoided as much as possible. The chief is informed and other people are invited. Because everybody in this locality has a role to play in this ceremony, the invitation reads thus:*
>
> **"Usapho lwakwaTyatyeka lumema usapho lwakwaNjaba kumgidi wonyana walo ngomhla wamashumi amathathu kuDisemba walo nyaka umiyo ngentsimbi yeshumi kusasa. Woqhubeka kwikhaya labo eVaalbank.**
>
> **Sicela izandla. Yeyele mawethu!!"**
>
> *The men start collecting wood. The women start working on "ukusila umqombothi". The women also do collect firewood. Women also organise water and fill tanks and drums because water will be used heavily during the two weeks of preparation. Boys also have their own share "bagawula amahlahla" at the beginning of the month. Those who want to contribute anything do contribute at this stage - for example, some sheep, or a beast to slaughter.*

Delegation of duties is carefully done as men and women sit at different meetings to discuss the role of each. Men's roles include "injoli" – the person who is responsible for dishing out fairly the eats of the day. Penalties are meted out for people who do things differently – deliberate absence, etc. Women bring their own pots and dishes to assist. Their energy is counted on. They cook marhewu, bake bread and do allocated tasks within their age groups. [Age here means: When did you get married? How many kids have you had since you got married? Do you have your own home (umzi)?] They work together throughout. Women's other task is to sing.

The contributions they bring are recorded. They range from groceries, animals to keep and for slaughter, to furniture, clothing, etc. This means that the whole ceremony does not solely depend on one person. Friends and relatives contribute as well.
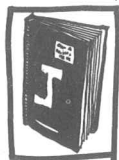
Discuss and Journal write

1. Discuss the following:

    - What are the factors in the organisation of 'Umgidi' which ensure its success? As you discuss and think about this question, make a list of these factors in your journal.

    - What kinds of factors can disrupt the smooth running of 'Umgidi'? As you discuss and think about this question, make a list of these factors in your journal.

2. Look carefully at your lists, and decide how you would classify these factors. Which of the following do they fall under?

    - Values?

    - Attitudes?

    - Skills?

    - Knowledge?

    - Organisational culture?

    - Other?

3. Are these what we may call PRINCIPLES? What do you think?

4. Are they principles upon which we could base our cluster work? Discuss this thoroughly with colleagues, or with your group at the face-to-face session.

Key Activity, Part 1

The Key Activity of lo mthamo involves establishing, or strengthening, a cluster grouping in your area, so that you can work together on matters which are of common concern. It may be useful to do this activity as part of the work of your *School Development Team*. You will find that it will help the development of your school community if you can work co-operatively with other school communities on certain issues, e.g. curriculum and policy.

In the first part of the Key Activity of lo mthamo,

- You will make contact with educators and other stakeholders from other schools in your locality, and introduce them to the benefits of working as a cluster.

- You will arrange a cluster meeting, involving stakeholders from all the schools in the cluster.

- At this meeting, you will ask the participants to fill in a questionnaire, as part of an exercise in which they evaluate past cluster efforts.

- Those at the meeting will then discuss their questionnaires, looking for common trends and perceptions.

- On the basis of this, the group will establish a way forward, and set a date for a planning meeting.

Before we go into detail about how to do this, we will spend some time thinking about the importance of planning.

The Importance of Planning

Successful people speak of planning as a vital regulator and compass in our daily existence. These people advise that it would not be a wise idea to even start without a plan. It would be like expecting an 'Umgidi' to work without any preliminary meetings or discussions. It would be like setting out on a long journey through Africa, without a plan and with no map.

Journal write

Reflect on a journey with neither a plan nor map, a journey from eNgqushwa to Egypt in the Northern tip of Africa. Jot down some of the questions that rush into your mind, as you think of this blind trip from Ngqushwa to Egypt.

Planning at different levels

In Unit 3 of Umthamo 22, you spent some time thinking and working on a *School Development Plan*.

Your school should also have other kinds of plans, e.g. plans for a particular grade, drawn up by all the teachers of that grade. This could include what is going to be dealt with in that grade; the approaches that are going to be used; the assessment procedures and intervals; reporting procedures; and how monitoring will be done by Heads of Department and Management. This kind of plan can also be laid out like an Action Plan, giving dates, responsibilities and deadlines.

At every level, planning needs to be done. This will lead to an integrated school plan, and will help with planning at a cluster and district level.

In Umthamo 22, you looked at the features of an effective plan. Pause here and remind yourself of these features (Umthamo 22, pages 30 – 39).

In lo mthamo, you move from your school to other schools in the district. We are still planning, but not for an individual school. You will now be doing Cluster planning. You could change the questions from page 30 of Umthamo 22, replacing the word 'school' with the word 'cluster':

Four questions for Cluster Planning

1. **Where is the cluster now?**

2. **Where do we want the cluster to be?**

3. **How do we get there?**

4. **How do we know when we have got there?**

Now that you know about Action Research, you will see that this is very similar to the steps of the Action Research cycle.

Plan

Problem

Plan

Act

Describe & Explain

Evaluate
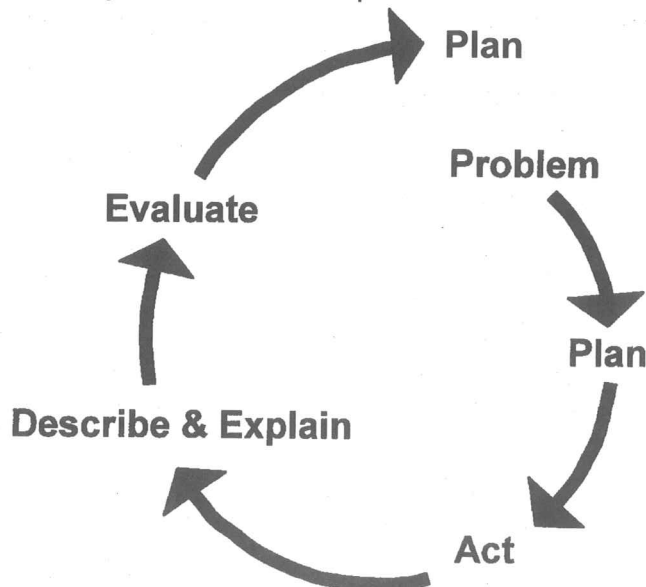
You will be involved, once again, with other schools in your area, in an Action Research cycle.

Key Activity, Part 1 (continued)

In this first part of the Key Activity, you will be working on question 1 (**Where is the cluster now?**). Your school and its brother and sister schools will look together at facts and opinions on partnerships or clusters that exist at present or have existed in the past between schools. You will look at successes and barriers to success.

The initial approach: 'Imbeko yeresearch'

1. Your first step is to talk to your own school community about the possibility of working with neighbouring schools. This is one of the projects of your SDT. Share with your SDT some of the examples in earlier units. Get their feelings about possible benefits of working in a cluster. Make sure that you also discuss their concerns. Make plans for approaching other schools. Keep a careful record of the decisions taken at this meeting.

2. Once you have decided which schools in your area would form a natural 'cluster', you will need to approach them. From your previous Imithamo, you know that there is something called "research ethics" or "imbeko yeresearch". It is important to go through the relevant authorities in order to visit schools. "Relevant authorities " may differ from district to district, so you and your SDT will need to decide on the best protocol or strategy here.

We suggest a cluster of 3 to 5 schools, but this will vary according to the area.

3. We then take this "imbeko" a step further and inform the authorities **why** we wish to approach the other schools, and in what way participants stand to benefit. You have already reflected, with colleagues and your face-to-face group, and now with your SDT, on the benefits of working in a cluster (Unit 1). Think carefully of how you will convey some of this to the authorities.

4. Once you are talking to the school stakeholders themselves*, think of a way – active and experiential, rather than 'chalk and talk' – of helping them become aware for themselves of the potential benefits of clustering.

   Make sure that they feel free to join the cluster, or to stay independent. Even though you are convinced of the benefits of clustering, you cannot 'force' other schools to join you.

5. Once the other schools have agreed to join you in your plan to develop or strengthen the cluster, you will need to set a date for another meeting. Planning with participants is another important principle of research ethics. All potential cluster members must be involved in planning the time, venue and duration of the meeting. Make sure you know who to contact, in case there is a change.

Meeting 1: Reflecting as a group on the present (and past) situation

Before the Action Research cycle begins, and a problem is identified, it is usual to do a *Situational Analysis*. In other words, we need to find out **'where we are now'.**

Here is a suggested procedure for the first cluster meeting:

1. Suggest to the participants that we start the new venture by looking at where we have come from and where we are now. This will help us identify:

   • our successes,

   • the areas in which we need to improve, and

   • the next step we need to take as a cluster.

   Present them with the questionnaire as a way of looking at 'where we are now'. Explain that the questionnaire* is something which can start our thinking. We will discuss it once we have filled it in.

2. Let each person fill in a questionnaire*. If there are participants who do not understand English, let them work in a pair with someone who can explain the questionnaire, and help them fill it in. No-one need write their name on the questionnaire.

3. In small groups (make sure each group has a scribe)*:

   a) Share and compare your answers to Section 1 of the questionnaire, and to numbers 7, 8 and 9 of Section 2. What are the answers which you agree on?

   b) Discuss the possible benefits of establishing or strengthening a 'cluster' relationship in your area. What can you gain or lose by working more closely on certain issues?

   c) Discuss the role of the District Office in your area. What is it at the moment? What would you like it to be?

   d) Talk about the changes you would like to see:

      • in the relationship between schools in your area,

      • in the relationship between schools and the District Office.

      Summarise by thinking of 3 changes and listing them in order of priority.

4. Let the small groups report back. Make a group priority list. Brainstorm ways in which these changes can happen.

A copy of the questionnaire is in Appendix 1, page 37. You have been given 12 copies of the questionnaire, for your meeting. You may need to make more copies, or let people fill them in as a group from the start.

This set of questions is also printed at the end of the questionnaire.

5. Before the participants disperse, it would be useful to elect a Steering Committee for the cluster grouping, and decide on a date for the next meeting.

Make sure that, after the meeting, you collect
- all the forms,
- all the notes from the small group discussions,
- notes from the report back and
- notes from the brainstorm.

You will use these to write your report. (This is a hand-in assignment.)

Analysing the data and writing your report

At he end of the third face-to-face session for lo mthamo, *you will hand in a report, and a plan.* You should present your report under the following headings:

Report on Situational Analysis

1. The Process

Here you need to describe what you did in order to get the participants together for the first meeting. You also need to describe how the meeting was conducted.

NB: If your whole attempt has failed, that is also worth reporting on. Report carefully on what happened, and attempt to give reasons for the failure of your attempt, and some ideas about how success might be achieved in the future.

2. Group Reflection on Current Situation

Here you need to present a well-structured account of the findings of the questionnaires and the discussions.

You have now had some experience of analysing questionnaires.

a) For Section 1, you will need to count the numbers of 'Always'; 'Sometimes' and 'Never/Don't know' for each item. (Create your own data analysis sheet, and hand it in as an Appendix to your report.) Then you will need to make a report on the common trends that come out of this section of the questionnaire. The small groups reported on common trends (Question a), so their report back notes will also help you with this.

b) Section 2 will have a greater variety of answers, but you will still need to find a way of categorising them, and reporting on the general trends – the most common responses. Again, small groups reported on common trends for some of the questions, so their report back notes will help you with this.

c) You will also need to report on what the small groups saw as the benefits of strengthening, or establishing a cluster, and how they see the present role of the District Office. (Questions b and c)

d) Finally, you will need to summarise the changes the group would like to see in relationships between schools, and in relationships with the District Office (Question d). Most important will be the final common priorities which came out of the plenary discussion at the end.

You should present this part of your report to the second meeting of the cluster, if at all possible. It is an important part of participative research to report back to stakeholders, and ask for their feedback on what you have said. It needs to be an accurate report.

3. **The Plan** (This will come out of your second meeting – see page 28.)

Unit 3: Planning co-operative action
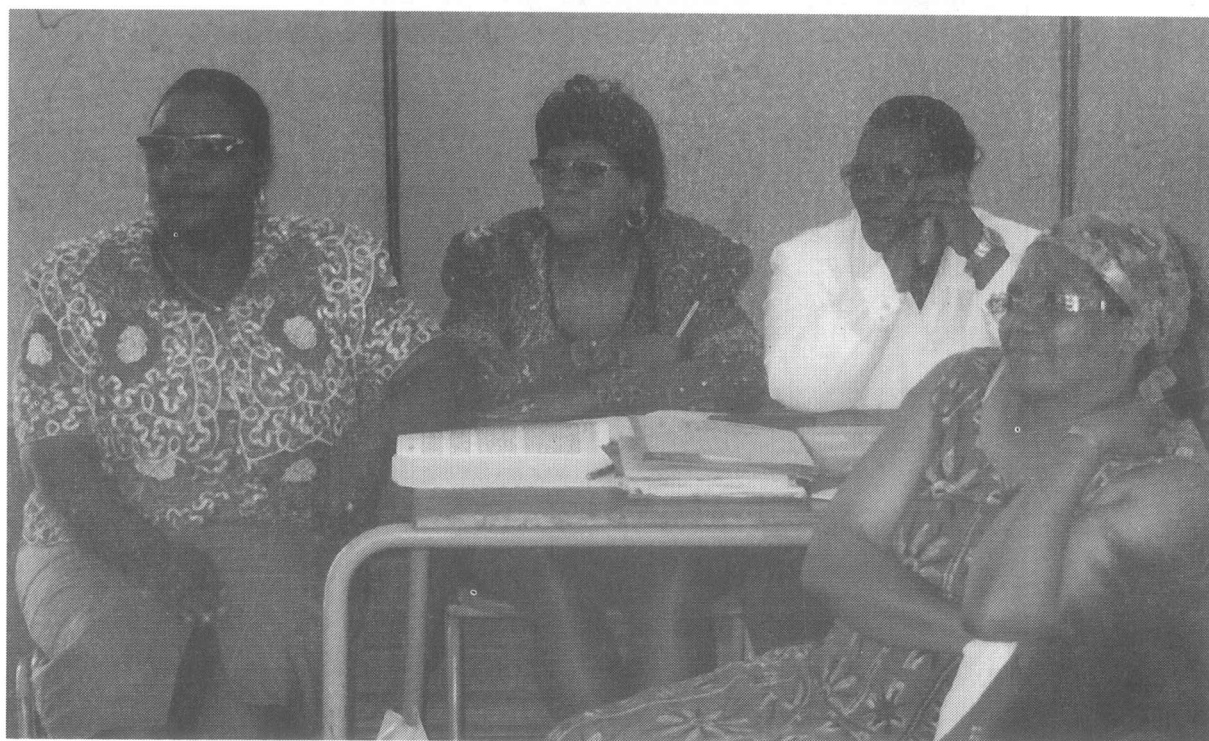
From your first cluster meeting, you will have found out what the participating school communities think about the present situation. You will also have some idea of how they would like relationships to change – among schools, and between schools and the District Office.

You now need to meet again, to establish a focus for your cluster work. You need to ask yourselves, **"What is it that we need to work on together?"** (This is part of question 2 of the four questions: **Where do we want the cluster to be?** It is also the stage of the Action Research cycle where we **identify the problem**.)

This focus could be anything from building new classrooms to Curriculum and educator development work. Two focus areas that you might be interested in are those which have occupied your attention in the last *Learning in the World* and *Schools as Learning Communities* imithamo: *curriculum change*, and *school policy.*

Curriculum Change

In Umthamo 32 (Lahla, bumba), you looked at curriculum change in South Africa. You analysed curriculum in terms of its roots, its trunk, its leaves and branches, and its fruits. You looked at our new curriculum and some of the reasons why South Africa chose 'OBE'. You saw that OBE and Curriculum 2005 are not quite the same thing.

You also examined some critiques of the new curriculum, and tried to work out what was being criticised, and what was being praised:

- Is it the roots (the principles on which the curriculum is based)?

- Is it the trunk (the policy documents and curriculum statements)?

- Is it the leaves and the branches (the way the curriculum is 'done' in the classroom and school)?

- Is it the fruits (the results in the lives of the learners, in terms of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that they learn)?

Educator 3, in the Introduction, said that their cluster was disillusioned after the Curriculum Review, and collapsed thereafter. Many of you may have experienced something similar.

It may now be the time to start again, having recovered from that disillusionment.

We have now looked at the critiques of the Curriculum. Some of us have also seen some of the things the Review Committee said. We know that the principles on which the new curriculum is based are not under criticism. Our education system will continue to favour important Curriculum 2005 principles such as:

- learner-centredness;
- active learning;
- integration of learning areas;
- the teacher as facilitator and mediator;
- continuous assessment.

Some details and terminologies may change, but if you stick to the principles you will be able to accommodate those changes.

Your cluster may decide to work together on planning learning programmes for different grades.

Or your cluster may wish to work on methods of continuous assessment, and reporting to parents. This would clear up the kind of confusion experienced by parents such as the one on page 11. You may also find that teachers of different grades and phases have had different inputs on Continuous Assessment at the OBE training workshops. They can help to enrich one another's understandings.

School Policy

You have seen, in Unit 1, that confusion is caused when schools are unclear about their policies, and when different schools in the same community have different policies. It could be very useful to work together, as a cluster, on your school policies, making sure that they do not contradict one another. You could focus in on one at a time: admissions; assessment; educator development; code of conduct; etc.

In addition to this, it could be very useful to work with community members on ways of implementing policies. Certain policies and their implementation could be workshopped with parents and community members.

An example of this could be the policy of 'Inclusion', which emphasises that every learner should participate fully in the learning process, and that schools should try to minimise 'barriers to learning'. These could be physical barriers, or they could be in the form of the attitudes of learners, teachers, or the community. They could also be in the form of difficulties which the learners themselves have, e.g. shyness; abuse; a disfunctional family; learning difficulties. The policy of 'Inclusion' also emphasises that the doors of the school

should be open to all: people who are disabled, poor, epileptic, HIV positive, etc. Your cluster could work on ways to make all your schools more inclusive, and to empower educators to deal with this. You could enlist assistance from outside sources with this.

Your cluster might also wish to work with the community on the implementation of 'Code of Conduct' policies. It is clear that there is a lot of resistance to the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. Many teachers and parents do not see alternatives. The discussion and creation of alternatives could also become a focus of the work of the cluster*.

Another burning policy issue is school fees. Parents are not clear on what current policy is with regard to school fees. They take their children out of school because they cannot pay school fees. Workshops on school fees policy need to be held with the parent component of the school community. It is ideal if this can be done by a cluster of schools which serve the same parents.

Umthamo 44 will deal with 'the inclusive classroom'.
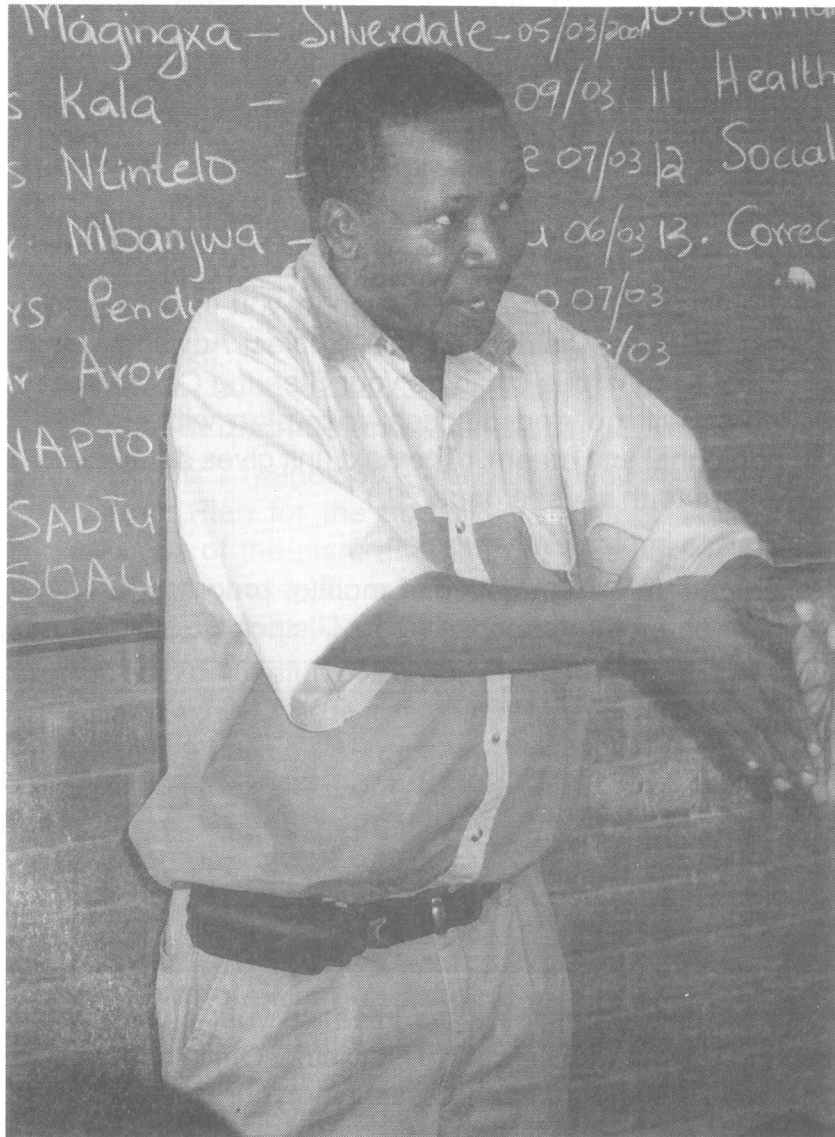
The photographs in lo mthamo show parents and educators in the Needs Camp area meeting, as a cluster, around 'Inclusion'. This was a cluster project imposed rather suddenly on these schools by the Department of Education. It is part of a broader pilot project, operating in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province. The DEP is involved in the Consortium which is running the project together with the DoE. This project, funded by DANIDA, is piloting ways of introducing schools and educators to the concept of 'Inclusive Education'. The schools did not choose to be involved in this cluster project. However, it is a wonderful chance for the school communities to learn and grow. These are the kinds of projects which need to be accommodated by schools. Ideally, they should be incorporated into a common school and district plan.

Umthamo 46 will ask you to work with parents on this issue.

Key Activity, Part 2

The second meeting of your cluster group should be focused on action. Your aim will be to choose a priority area for the cluster to work on, and to put together an Action Plan to tackle this area.

- Decide on a burning issue in your schools, e.g. continuous assessment; discipline; admissions policy, etc. Draw up a programme for tackling this burning issue.

- Draw up an Action Plan (see examples in Umthamo 22, page 36, and Umthamo 38, page 36).

- Identify people who could support you in your plan, e.g. ESSO's, District Officials, Subject Advisors, etc. Elect a team (this could be your Steering Committee) which will go and discuss your plan with District personnel and others. (The next unit gives details with regard to this – see page 29.)

- Start to implement your plan.

- Set a date for a meeting to monitor progress, and to hear about the response of the District, ESSO's, etc.

The Action Plan

Remember that *your Action Plan should be brought to the last face-to-face session, together with your report on the Situational Analysis*. They will be assessed by yourself and your peers, and then handed in for Abakhwezeli Assessment.

The next unit discusses ways in which your cluster could help the District with its work. The District Office should also be of help in supporting and sustaining your cluster.

However, it is important that your cluster should not see itself as dependent on District support. We suggest that you start implementing your Action Plan immediately.
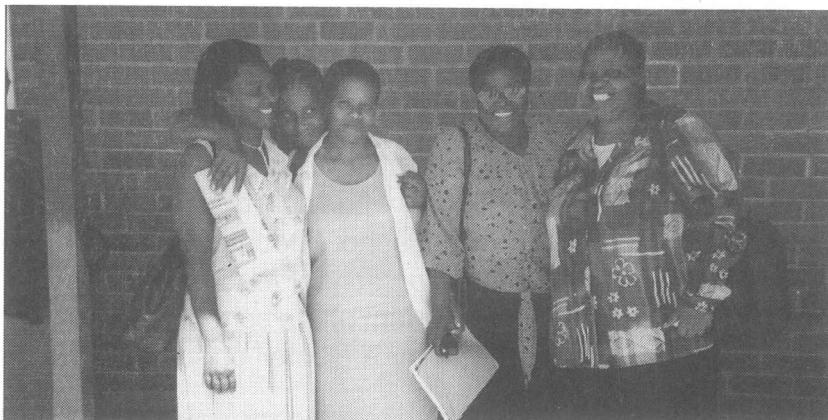
Unit 4: District Co-operation for your Cluster Work

As you know, our country, and our province, are in the throes of massive restructuring programmes. Regions have been disestablished, and Districts are becoming larger. All this is part of an attempt to create a 'flatter heirarchy'. It is an attempt to bring the Officials and the services of the District closer to the schools and the educators.

At present, all this is still in process. It is likely to take time before a more desirable situation is achieved. In the meantime, it will be very helpful if schools become pro-active, organising themselves into clusters. Perhaps the plans of the clusters can be integrated into the plans of the District, and vice versa.

Read about districts and their plans

1. Appendix 2 (pages 38 – 40) gives sections of a draft District Plan for the Lady Frere district. Read the sections of the plan, and find out whether the focus you have chosen fits in to the 'commission themes' of this District (see page 39).

   It would be useful to find out whether your district has such a plan. If so, you could find areas where your plans could fit in with those of the District, and speak to the District Officials specifically about this.

2. The article below sums up certain research papers on the features of effective school districts. Read it with the following question in mind:

Are there ways in which the activities of our cluster could help to make our district more effective?

   You will see that there are questions in the margin of the article, to help you answer the above main question. Make notes of your answers, in preparation for filling in the table on page 33. That table will form a summary of the main things you have learned about the benefits of clusters, as you have worked through lo mthamo.

   When you read the parts of the article which have no questions in the margin, make up your own questions, in order to answer the main question above.

Features of Effective School Districts

1. Facilitating or supporting conditions

Murphy and Hallinger found that district effectiveness was promoted when there was labour peace between teacher unions and employers, support from the school board and community acceptance of the district's activities (1988:176). Creating community support is one of the six key activities identified by Coleman and LaRocque (1991) in developing a positive district ethos.

2. Ethos and focus on instructional issues

Organisational ethos and culture has been the subject of extensive enquiry in effective schools research and has been the focus of a number of school improvement projects. Ethos or culture refers to shared values and beliefs which influence the way in which an organisation operates. Vision, focus, commitment and work ethic are all included in the term ethos.

One of the key factors influencing district effectiveness appears to be the extent to which it prioritises teaching and learning-related issues – the core business of any educational institution or system. Effective districts made the improvement of teaching and learning a top priority and paid attention to issues relating to curriculum and instruction (discussed below). There was also a strong commitment to improving student performance, as evidenced by systematic improvement efforts and district operations which would support this goal.

Davids (1989) found that goals, vision and attitude played a large part in shaping effectiveness. Effective districts also appeared to share a vision related to instructional performance – even if it were as simple as "putting children first". Instructional and curricular goals drove the operations of the entire district, these goals may be set in collaboration with school principals. Rosenholtz (1989) notes that although goal setting took place in both 'stuck' and 'moving' districts, in 'stuck' districts it took place in an unfocussed way while in 'moving' districts goals centred on continuous improvement (Fullan, 1992)

Commitment is a common theme in research on effective districts (Coleman and La Rocque, 1991; Rosenholtz, 1989). Rosenholtz (1989) found that in 'moving' districts there was a high degree of teacher commitment, while Colemen and LaRocque list "eliciting commitment" as one of the key factors which promote a positive district ethos (1991:4). They write that commitment requires the internalisation of organisational values and goals and a willingness to contribute efforts to organisational goal development and attainment (1991: 92).

Murphy and Hallinger (1988) note that in districts which they studied, all viewed problems as issues to be solved and not as obstacles or barriers to action. District superintendents adopted a

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How can our cluster make learning a priority, even in activities such as sport, music, school policy, etc.?

How can our cluster help improve student performance, and make this a priority?

What can we do to be 'moving schools' instead of 'stuck schools'?

How can our cluster make sure that continuous improvement takes place in our schools and district?

How can we raise the general levels of teacher commitment?

How can clusters view problems as issues to be solved rather than barriers to action?

---

range of problem solving behaviours – no particular approach or style was dominant.

3. Dominant functions of effective districts

As noted above, effective districts prioritise activities that are related to learner instruction. One of the recurrent features of effective districts was the emphasis placed on accountability. Districts were accountable for their own performance and instituted self-monitoring machanisms to assess internal operations. Districts studied by Murphy and Hallinger (1988) were described as having an "internal focus", with a significant proportion of their time being devoted to examining internal operations. At the same time districts are also accountable for the quality of schools under their authority.

> How can we, as a cluster within the district, monitor ourselves and what we do?

All researchers comment on the role which effective districts play in monitoring school performance. Murphy and Hallinger note that districts devoted more time to monitoring technical core activities and inspecting outcomes than was expected. District staff reported that at least 10% of their time was spent monitoring school sites. School performance ought to be assessed with reference to some general norm or standard, such as the districts instructional goals which may refer to a common standard to be attained or improvement targets. This ensures that all schools are assessed according to a common framework, related to learning outcomes (Coleman and LaRocque, 1991: 34). Typical measures to ensure accountability include classroom observation, on-site support and the public ranking of schools according to learner achievement. Murphy and Hallinger (1988) report that district superintendents were involved in supervising and evaluating school principals. The use of accountability systems as a means to effect school improvement is discussed later in this paper.

> How can our cluster help to create common frameworks for assessment and learning?

Both Coleman (1991) and Murphy (1988) comment on the use of quantitative data in decision making in effective districts. School performance on standardised tests is used as a means to review schools' performance. It is recommended that district officials discuss the results with school principals and staff and together devise strategies for improving performance. Districts also require accurate data about the schools which they serve, student populations and particular problems experienced in different areas. This implies that a sound data collection, analysis and review process be in place.

> Can clusters work on a system of discussing results with parents? – just as Districts will discuss results with Principals and staff.

4. Curriculum and instructional focus of districts

Murphy and Hallinger (1988) found that in "instructionally effective districts" the district set curriculum and learning goals which drove their development activities. Within a particular district, there was a high degree of curricular standardisation – schools shared similar curricula, there was a preferred approach to instruction which was clearly evident and there was a common core of key textbooks.

> How can clusters help develop a common understanding of the new curriculum and the approaches that go with it?

This may be less relevant to South Africa where districts and provinces do not have the authority to set curricular standards as happens in the United States. However, of interest is the fact that beginning teachers and teachers new to the district were offered in-service training in the preferred method of instruction.

5. District Leadership

One of the characteristics of an effective district was that it offered instructional leadership to the principals and teachers in its schools. The head of the district played an important part in setting the tone for the district through influencing the norms and practices of subordinatoes, setting vision and devoting the time to key activities. Effective superintendents modelled the type of behaviour demanded of schools, whether it related to methods of collaboration with colleagues or standards of accountability (Coleman and LaRocque, 1991:150). Murphy and Hallinger (1988) also note the importance of strong instructional leadership by superintendents, particularly in matters related to the curriculum and instruction, "setting school system goals, selecting district-wide staff development activities and in pressing for district-school goal co-ordination and in supervising and evaluating principals" (1988: 178).

6. Staff relations and human resource development

In all three studies of effective districts, teacher and principal professional development was a common feature. Rosenholtz found that "moving districts specifically cultivate and select principals whose foremost concern is student learning and who are skilled at the instructional leadership necessary for attending to continuous improvement (1989: 185). Principals were also provided with in-service training opportunities and were expected to be continuous learners (Fullan, 1992: 208). Teacher selection was guided by the district's instructional goals and did not simply rely on local availability – as was done in "stuck" districts. "Moving" and "stuck" districts also differed in the ways in which they dealt with problems relating to staff – "stuck" districts tended to transfer problem teachers, rather than address the issue. Moving districts tried to help teachers improve and only considered termination of employment as a last resort. Rosenholtz writes that successful superintendents "seek out and satisfy teachers' professional needs while stuck superintendents conspicuously ignore them." (1989: 204).

7. Organisational dynamics

Murphy and Hallinger (1988) describe the districts studied as "rational systems" with little evidence of bureaucratic rigidity. Despite the trend towards school-based management and greater school autonomy, they found a high degree of district co-ordination and control over school-level activities (1988: 178). They write that the greatest control was exerted over issues relating to the attainment and inspection of educational outcomes. However schools were granted greater autonomy over the way in which they implemented decisions and decided how to allocate inputs.

(From Chinsamy, B. November 1999. Internal DDSP Publication.)

Activity: Summarising the benefits of clusters

In your journal, draw a table similar to the one below. Summarise what you have learned in lo mthamo about the benefits of clusters – firstly to the schools and to the clusters themselves, and secondly, to the district and its development. One example has been given for each.

Benefits of clusters	
Towards school and cluster development	**Towards district development**
Clusters can develop common policies on admissions.	*Clusters can help create community support for district plans.*

At the face-to-face session, share your tables with the members of your small group. Then report back to the other groups.

"Puttin g children first"

Conclusion: Completing and continuing the Action Research spiral

You should now be busy with implementation of your Action Plan. In other words, you are in the 'Act' stage of the Action Research cycle.

Your cluster should aim to continue going round the cycle, learning more every time, from how the 'acting' or implementation went.

After 'Act', come 'Describe and Explain' and 'Evaluate' (or reflect).

Once you have done what you planned to do, you will need to report back somehow on how things went. Then you can evaluate the situation, maybe using the same process that you used in Unit 1 (Questionnaire and discussion).

Then a new focus for action ('Problem') can be chosen, and you start the cycle again – continuous improvement!

Good luck with the development of your cluster! It's a long road, but a worthwhile one.

Plan
Problem
Plan
Act
Describe & Explain
Evaluate
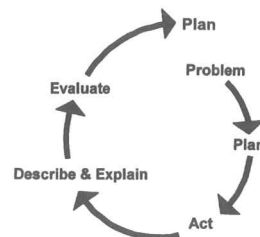
Appendix 1: Questionnaire on working relations with our neighbouring schools

Section 1 (Tick the appropriate block.)	Always	Some-times	Never/ Don't know
1. Schools working together			
• The schools around me are very welcoming.			
• We share new information and ideas.			
• We work/ plan together on sporting/ music matters.			
• We plan together and have common understandings on the new curriculum.			
• We work/ plan together for fundraising.			
• We are willing to learn from one another.			
• When NGO's and other outside 'experts' (on curriculum, music, sports, etc.) visit us, we invite other schools to join us.			
2. Schools and the District Office			
• Together with neighbouring schools we take matters of common concern to the District Office.			
• We are informed by the DoE, via the District Office, what to do in the schools.			
• Schools sit down together to solve difficulties, and take suggestions collectively to the District Office.			
• Schools share and discuss their policies, and take them to the DO for ratification.			
• The District Office gives us support when we work together in partnerships and clusters.			
• Our group has done co-operative planning with District Officials.			
3. The schools and the community			
• School and district programmes are informed by the needs of the community.			
• Community members are involved in joint activities of the school cluster.			
• Community members approach the school when they need help.			
• Community members are called to the schools to share in problem solving and to celebrate and share in good things.			
• Schools invite parents into the classrooms to see what is happening there.			
• Schools work together with parents on homework supervision.			

Section 2

If your schools have been working as a cluster/ partnership, please answer these questions, writing short answers on the lines provided:

1.   Who leads the cluster/ partnership, and how was the leader/s chosen?

        _____

        _____

2.   Is power balanced so that no person or school dominates? How is this done?

        _____

        _____

3.   How are meetings and activities planned and managed?

        _____

        _____

4.   Have district officials made use of/ participated in your group or cluster in any way?

        _____

        _____

5.   The focus of our cluster activities was (tick the appropriate block, or fill in your own answer):

OBE Learning Area planning (give the Learning Area)	
Continuous Assessment	
School management and governance	
School policy (give the policy area)	
Learning / teaching resources	
HIV/AIDS	
Other (please state)	

6. Why and how did you choose this focus?

_____

_____

7. What successes have you experienced, as a cluster?

_____

_____

8. In what ways have you benefited from the activities of the cluster? (as a person; as a school; as a community)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. ␣at difficulties/ challenges did the schools and the cluster encounter? How did ␣y deal with them?

_____

_____

_____

_____

In small groups (make sure each group has a scribe):

a) Share and compare your answers to Section 1 of the questionnaire, and to numbers 7, 8 and 9 of Section 2. What are the answers which you agree on?

b) Discuss the possible benefits of establishing or strengthening a 'cluster' relationship in your area. What can you gain or lose by working more closely on certain issues?

c) Discuss the role of the District Office in your area. What is it at the moment? What would you like it to be?

d) Talk about the changes you would like to see:
   • in the relationship between schools in your area, and
   • in the relationship between schools and the District Office?

   Summarise by thinking of 3 changes and listing them in order of priority.

LADY FRERE DISTRICT EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1. TOWARDS PRODUCING A DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE DEPARTMENT:

- The core business of the department is quality teaching and learning. It is for this reason that the department has declared year 2001 as a year of "quality learning and teaching".
- In terms of its Co-operate Plans the department has committed itself to make our institutions that is both districts and schools self-managed institutions.
- It also has committed itself to make schools to be centres of community life.
- The department has also undertaken to provide districts and schools with adequate resources.
- The foregoing objectives place a challenge to both the district office and schools.
- The challenge is that the district office has to improve and ensure that there is efficiency and effectiveness in performance of the district.
- The schools have to ensure that their performance as well is improved.
- To perk up performance of schools there must be sound management and governance and as well as educators capacity and learners capacity to learn.

1.1.2. PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

- To be able to deliver on the stated above objectives, both the district office and schools should develop comprehensive plans that reflect strategies of how development and improvement will be effected.
- Both the district and schools are required to have these plans.

1.2. VISION AND MISSION OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE

1.2.1. VISION

TO PROVIDE AND EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION SERVICE DRIVES BY A STAFF THAT IS COMMITTED TO VALUES AND ACCOUNTABILITY HARD WORK AND DEMOCRACY.

1.2.2. MISSION

- To provide quality education responsive to the needs of the communities.
- To collaborate with stakeholders and departments in the area for uniform delivery and co-operation.
- To provide opportunities for learners of all ages to acquire life-long learning skills.
- To provide adequate facilities and resources, human and physical, where possible.
- Encourage a participatory decision-making process.
- To empower communities, educators and personnel within the district for effective curriculum delivery.

(There follows a section describing the state of the district, and a workshop programme.)

2.1. COMMISSION THEMES

2.1.1. COMMISSION No. 1:
"Promoting and enhancing effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of support services."

2.1.2. COMMISSION No. 2:
"Improved efficiency and effectiveness of school performance will lead to better-managed schools."

2.1.3. COMMISSION No. 3:
"Improving the quality of teaching and learning, school management and governance."

2.1.4. COMMISSION No. 4:
"Forming partnerships with stakeholders and ensuring the quality of the involvement of parents in the provision of education."

2.1.5. COMMISSION No. 5:
"Developing a comprehensive strategy to improve results both internal and grade 12 results."

2.1.6. COMMISSION No. 6:
Integrated approach in planning curricular needs of all schools in the district."

2.1.7. COMMISSION No. 7:
"H.I.V. & AIDS campaign."

2.1.8. COMMISSION No. 8:
"Inadequate infrastructure and backlog in school building."

2.1.9. COMMISSION No. 9:
"Integrated approach to amalgamate small schools and ELSEN."

(There follows a schedule, giving workshop facilitators for each workshop and commission, as well as a table of the number of delegates from each stakeholder group to attend the workshops.)

4.2. ESTABLISHING THE DISTRICT EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

NB: On the day of the workshop, the District Development Committee will be established.

- It is envisaged that other committees will also be formed on this day.

- Therefore delegates to the workshop must come with names of persons who will serve in the committees to be stated hereunder.

- Members of the District Education Development Committee mentioned in bullet number 1 will be drawn from the delegates listed in 4.1 above.

- Therefore each stakeholder listed in 4.1 is required to earmark from its delegates THREE delegates who will serve in the (DEDC) District Education Development Committee.

- We want members of the District Education Development Committee to be drawn from those who will participate in the workshop.

4.3. SETTING UP OTHER COMMITTEES

4.3.1. District Education Improvement Committee/ Education Forum.

4.3.2. Small School Amalgamation Committee.

4.3.3. Extension of Curriculum Committee.

4.3.4. District School Building Committee.

4.3.5. Matric Intervention Committee.

4.3.6. Subject or Learning Area Committee.

(The plan ends with a notice of a launch for the members of the new committees.)

> **"LET US JOIN HANDS AND BEGIN THIS LONG WALK TO THE BETTER FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN OUR DISTRICT."**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Gultig, John, et al. 1999. *Creating People-centred Schools.* SAIDE/ OUP.

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Husen, T. 1985. *The school in the achievement-oriented society: crisis and reform.* Phi Delta Kappen 66 (no. 6).

Suggested Assessment Criteria

In a very good report:

- The process of initiating, organising and conducting the first meeting is described clearly.

- Difficulties and successes experienced are described and reflected upon: Why did they occur? What should have been done differently?

- The data gathered through the questionnaires has been carefully analysed. A data analysis sheet is attached.

- Common trends have been accurately identifeid. Evidence has been given to support the selection of these common trends.

- The report presents clearly the benefits of clustering, as seen by the group.

- It also reports on the changes the group would most like to see in relationships between schools, and between schools and the district.

- A detailed Action Plan is presented, showing dates, accountable people, and resources needed.

A cloud masses, the sky darkens, leaves twist upward, and we know that it will rain. We also know that after the storm, the runoff will feed into groundwater miles away, and the sky will grow clear by tomorrow. *And these events are distant in time and space, and yet they are all connected within the same pattern.* Each has an influence on the rest, and influence that is usually hidden from view. *You can only understand the system of a rainstorm by contemplating the whole,* not any individual part of the pattern.

Business and other human endeavours are also systems. They, too, are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other. Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern to chage. Instead, we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never get solved.

(from *The Fifth Discipline,* by Peter M. Senge, 1990. Doubleday. Printed in *Creating People-centred Schools: Reader*, Gultig et al. 1999. SAIDE/ OUP.)

The old authoritarian view of the world maintained that the whole equals the sum of its parts, and each part is a separate, discrete fragment of the whole. While we made progress under the directive styles of the past, we know that reality is hardly fragmented, mechanistic or predictable. Rather, the new world view asserts that the whole is reflected by and contained within each of its parts, and each part is a microcosm of the whole. These world views are about as mutually exclusive as one can imagine. And the contract has dramatic implications for the design of organizational structures.

(from McLagan, P. and Nel, C. 1995. *The Age of Participation*. Randburg: Knowledge Resources. Printed in *Creating People-centred Schools: Reader*, Gultig et al. 1999. SAIDE/ OUP)