‘See, judge, act …’

Report on the Church Consultative Workshop –
27 – 28 November, 2014

Hosted by the Carnegie3 Inquiry
Foreword

This Workshop, the first in a series being planned as part of the second stage of the Carnegie3 process, was organised in response to a request from the Churches for independent information and analysis on the state of education in South Africa. For a hundred years and more – from the Transvaal Indigency Commission of 1906-1908, through the first and second Carnegie Inquiries of the 1930’s and 1980’s, up to the current National Income Dynamic Surveys – academics and others have been analysing the nature and extent of poverty in the country. But the fundamental problems remain. The time has come to seek a new way to move forward against widespread poverty and deep inequality. Hence the third Carnegie Inquiry, which began (at the request of the National Planning Commission) with a national conference hosted by the University of Cape Town in September 2012, has been conceived as a two stage process. The first stage, completed at the end of 2013, has involved a process whereby academics, government officials and members of NGO’s shared their knowledge and experience both about poverty and about various attempts at different levels of the society to overcome it. The results of this work has been summarised as Strategies to Overcome Poverty & Inequality [Guide to Carnegie3] which can be accessed via (or downloaded from) www.carnegie3.org.za.

But it is the second stage of the Carnegie3 process which holds out the possibility of significant breakthrough. It has been designed as a twin-engined movement. The first of these is national collaborative research (which the internet now makes possible) and the building of a network of scholars to sharpen analysis, understanding and prescription with regard to different aspects or dimensions of both poverty and inequality. Results of this ongoing work can be found, as they are completed, on the web-site www.econ3X3.org. The second engine relates to the development of workshops involving some 20-25 persons – with diverse skills & experience, from universities, government & elsewhere – meeting for several days to share their knowledge as they discuss how best to deal with a common problem, be it malnutrition, housing, literacy or whatever.

It is in this context that the significance of the following report may best be understood. Two days of deep discussion in an intimate & trusting atmosphere between church leaders & theologians on the one hand and experts in education drawn through the Carnegie3 process, from the universities, NGOs and government on the other proved extremely fruitful. The consequences, in terms of mobilising the resources – especially people at the grass roots – of the faith-based communities may [we dare to hope] prove to be profound and far-reaching.

The Workshop programme is appended to this report. The organisers are deeply grateful to all those who so willingly gave their time and shared experiences in a memorable two days of discussion and shared learning.

Francis Wilson
Co-Director, Carnegie3 Inquiry
Report on the Church Consultative Workshop on Education in collaboration with the Carnegie3 process in search of effective strategies to overcome poverty and inequality in South Africa, held at the University of Cape Town, 27-28 November 2013

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Professor Murray Leibbrandt, Pro VC for Poverty and Inequality at the University of Cape Town opened the workshop with a brief history of the Carnegie3 (C3) process to date. The C3 launching conference in September 2012 was an important event, triggering a process of different groups in society coming together to define a role in the fight against poverty and inequality, and produce and provide evidence that inspires change. The idea is to generate and continue this work, culminating in a conference or big workshop in two to three years. Since the initial conference, ‘Towards Carnegie 3: Strategies to overcome poverty and inequality’, a twin stream has developed. The one is a research process [which can be followed on the website: www.econ3x3.org] and the other is a series of workshops, the first of which took place in November, 2013.

The intention of C3 is to bring together role players at all levels, so it is appropriate that this first workshop brought together church leaders to discuss appropriate action on education. The National Development Plan (NDP) touches on civil society and its role in tackling the ‘soft’ issues that are actually very hard – crime, violence, safety, families, communities and dignity. The churches are in a good position to take this work forward and make a unique contribution to tackling these burning questions.

Francis Wilson, organiser of the ‘Towards C3’ conference and co-author of the final conference report [Guide to Carnegie3], sketched the origins of this meeting in an ongoing dialogue with Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, and a response to his call issued at the launch conference, for churches to play a more active role in harnessing moral energy. Some church leaders have already prioritised education as the single focus of a year-long campaign, to commence in mid-2014, and this workshop is intended to provide evidence on which to base their theological reflections and decisions. Participants were keen to learn about the challenges in education and to identify several key possibilities for maximum impact in the shortest possible time. Francis pointed out that until the end of apartheid, churches were clear on what to do and there is need to re-harness that energy for change.

Bishop Siwa, presiding bishop of the Methodist Church of South Africa, gave an inspiring welcome and message of hope to set the tone. He underlined the history of church involvement in education in the country, and stressed the urgency of the discussion, and shared a poignant personal anecdote about a school at which no-one had yet passed matric. In conclusion, he reminded participants that the number of churches in the country is as great as the number of schools and that this network offers an opportunity to carry messages broadly throughout society.
Participants of the workshop on day 2 – University of Cape Town
OVERALL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

Statistical Analysis
Nicholas Spaull of Stellenbosch University gave a concise presentation on the education crisis in schools. His three ‘take home’ points were:

1) Poor performance (results) is a pertinent issue,
2) Little learning is taking place in the classroom (particularly a problem in primary schools laying foundations for further learning) and,
3) That there is in fact a ‘dual’ system in place, still divided almost entirely on the grounds of class and race.

He illustrated the issue of South Africa’s shocking performance, regionally and internationally, on literacy, maths and overall performance, including of teachers.
Spaull highlighted the decreasing proportions of matrics taking mathematics in SA.

The results are stark, showing that in large parts of the schooling system little learning is taking place in the classroom, with very high underperformance of learners (29% of children in grade 3 are illiterate still), and extreme inequality in terms of language correlating with low performance. Put simply, even though only 27% of children are not enrolled in school in grade 6, by the end of that year, 25% of the remaining 73% are still only functionally illiterate (and therefore not learning much).

The presentation continued to illustrate how this affects the labour market, and how little mobility there has been, besides very limited BEE at the top. The problem is that 33% of youngsters are not just unemployed, they are virtually unemployable. Furthermore, the problem with the intergenerational effects of poverty (underdevelopment) is that parents’ position determines access to the labour market. The multiple intersections of inequality peculiar to South Africa include race, gender, location, urban/rural, class, and too often coincide to perpetuate or worsen the situation over generations.

The best form of BEE or affirmative action to transform our society would be high-quality ECD, as even studies of the impact of Grade R are not showing positive results. Nic Spaull drew on an American’s work in the US on the economy and education to identify two key areas for intervention: support and
increased capacity of the people in education (teachers, principals, SGBs etc.) and improved accountability and performance, if necessary with economic incentives.

Systemic Analysis

Linda Vilakazi of the Wits University, School of Education provided a systemic analysis that drew on her experiences in the school environment with school leaders and others. She reminded the meeting that education is the single most important gift we can give our children, and that if we manage to align the system, how much more of a gift that would be. She was candid about the challenges – 25,000 schools, massive numbers of students (12 million), and perhaps the effects still of some previous mistakes in policy and implementation. In this regard, she cited the political dilemma posed by educational policy, amalgamating districts and restructuring from the apartheid legacy. She highlighted the need for collaboration and systemic work. The core ingredient of their work with principals hinges on how to help them plan, manage and implement more effectively. Administrators can forget that it is the child’s learning that is always at stake – and the heart of the process.

Linda reminded the meeting of the need to understand the roots of today’s inequality in education, stressing that education was the single most important lever to ameliorate the impact of poverty and promote access to economic activity thus improving the quality of life of all citizens. Drawing on research studies, she showed that while the literature is ambiguous about the relationship between educational attainment and economic growth, there is evidence “that quality adjusted education is important for economic growth”.

Linda highlighted some of the key challenges: a massive system, a history of separation, pockets of excellence but poor performance from the majority of learners, lack of coordination between tiers of the system and within departments/units, and low levels of accountability. While there are good policies and plans in place, there is weak implementation and follow through. The provision of a qualified, competent teacher per class seems a pipe dream, yet it is affordable. Moreover, there is poor supervision by school management teams, who seem to lack strategy to monitor the implementation of curriculum policy at classroom level and translate the importance of effective teaching and learning into classroom excellence. This underlines the need for the appointment and placement of appropriately qualified school management leaders, including at district level. In South Africa, undesirably poor learner performance is linked to poor teacher planning and weak instructional leadership by school management teams. There are very weak/low learner retention rates for the duration of the compulsory 12 years of schooling, and districts are misaligned to needs of schools in terms of capacity and structure.
Drawing on lessons from the past, Linda stressed the need to strengthen the system, not to substitute formal education through corporate social investment, as the expenditure from business is minute in comparison with state expenditure. She recommended that responsibility be located where it belongs and empowers those in the system to sustain what is being implemented. She urged the need to think scale and affordability for replication, to partner with government as a prerequisite, and to improve accountability in the system. She stressed that resources need not be thrown at the problem but rather to address the inefficiency and use resources (physical resources and training) more efficiently. “We need to support the enhancement of clarity on the basic role of school management teams in terms of curriculum support, and improve the planning capacity of both teachers and SMT in terms of results and time management” she said: “We need to think long term and of collective contribution and data-sharing.” In conclusion, she reiterated that the issue should always be seen in terms of learner impact, even if the immediate target is not learners.

THE EARLY YEARS – A CRITICAL TIME FOR INTERVENTION

The first ‘1000’ days: Reflections from Philani

Dr Ingrid le Roux and Nokwanele Mbewu of Philani Maternal, Child Health and Nutrition Project described their effective maternal and child health programme, which intervenes during the critical ‘first thousand days’ to support and enable family functioning. Stunting at two years of age is the strongest predictor of adult human capital, and yet there is no support for nutrition in the home, the most critical area of impact.
The national impact of early childhood health, nutrition and development.

Investment in early childhood development is the most powerful investment in human capital that a country can make - with compounding returns.

- Greater equality: One of the most powerful instruments for redistribution
- Better health: Tackles risk-taking behaviour & adult chronic disease at its roots
- Better education: Higher cognitive scores & better learning outcomes
- Stronger economy: The most efficient strategy for building SA's workforce
- Better society: Less crime and public violence, greater social cohesion

Independent Predictors:
- Opportunity for early learning
- Effective parenting & family support
- Health care
- Nutrition
- Social protection (e.g. Child Support Grant)

What are the big gaps in an ‘essential package’ of ECD?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Early Learning Opportunity</th>
<th>Centre-based</th>
<th>Community-based</th>
<th>Home-based</th>
<th>Facility-based</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-4 yr olds who attend any preschool or crèche (~50%)²</td>
<td>Participation in home visiting or community playgroups (0-4 yrs)²</td>
<td>No exposure to early learning opportunity outside the home (0-4 yr olds)</td>
<td>Support for pregnant women &amp; vulnerable children</td>
<td>Mainly health care for mother &amp; child</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-4 yr olds who do not attend any preschool or crèche (~50%)²</td>
<td>Vulnerable children who do not receive continuing support and follow-up</td>
<td>Missed opportunity, ↓ quality, ↓ access</td>
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<td><strong>First Thousand Days</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NUTRITION¹</strong></td>
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<td>0 – 3 yrs</td>
<td>Normal (73.6%)</td>
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<td>0 – 14 yrs</td>
<td>Normal (84.6%)</td>
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1. The South African National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (SANHANES1), HSRC 2013

So what can be done?
Philani recruits and trains mentor mothers, identified for their communication skills and commitment, empowering these women to share their skills with other women in the community. The 6-week training programme of mother tongue instruction deals with child and maternal health topics, practical skills for home visits and community work, followed by work shadowing, reflection and then a week in a community to identify resources and risks. This is complemented by continuous in-service training, regular coordinator meetings and monthly workshops to learn, celebrate and inspire. Coordinators and nursing sisters go into the field to support outreach workers every day. Mentor mothers are required to carry out a regime of daily visits, growth monitoring of all children, case documentation and assessment. These action-oriented interventions support clients in finding their own solutions. It was stressed that changing behaviour requires trust and trust requires listening and respect. Dr le Roux reported on the promising outcomes of rehabilitation of malnourished children, HIV+ mothers on PMTCT (preventing-mother-to-child-transmissions) or ARVs (anti-retrovirals), babies tested for HIV, and children receiving the
child support grant (CSG). Research conducted on 1238 mothers and babies showed that 26% were HIV+ and 2% of children were HIV+, that 25% used alcohol while 10% of children had FAS, 17% were low birth weight infants and 37% of mothers were depressed. However, the results also showed modest but statistically significant improvements among beneficiaries of the project.

Ingrid pointed out that the project works because they provide supervision and support, different from government initiatives. They expect people to deliver and recognise that relationships are key to success, with volunteers earning a small stipend.

**Early Childhood Development – a human right**

In her presentation, ‘A Strong Foundation: The Right to Early Childhood Development’, Linda Biersteker from ELRU presented a powerful case for ECD as a constitutional right for every child to develop to their full potential. She highlighted the importance of the first 1000 days as a unique window of opportunity, based on evidence from neuroscience and the long-term economic returns on early intervention.

![Benefits of ECD Investments](image)

Linda pointed out that there a range of laws and policies in place relating to various aspects of ECD, including: free health care for children under 5 and pregnant & breastfeeding women; the child support grant (CSG); poverty targeted subsidies for children in registered non-profit ECD centres; the Children’s Act; the Integrated Plan for ECD 2013 – 2018; National Early Learning Development Standards; the Draft Curriculum Framework 0 – 4 years; norms and standards for Grade R funding; and the Draft Policy Framework for Universal Grade R.

Linda provided a brief snapshot of the different strands to ECD, stressing the issues of quality and parent education from a younger age.

Linda identified the following key areas where support is needed:

- **Infrastructure**: improving the resources that centres have access to
- **Parent support** – connecting to services, companionship
- **Improving access and quality** of ECD (at home, in community, in centres)
- **Raising awareness** to promote child development, growth, health, safety and learning
- **Support for parents/caregivers** through:
  - Addressing maternal mental health needs (screening + appropriate referral)
  - Extending the reach of home-visiting programmes to support vulnerable caregivers
Improving capacity of health + social service staff to recognise the signs of caregiver burden
- Implementing effective parenting programmes
  - **Social services:**
    - Improving access to the CSG from birth
    - Providing a responsive child protection service
    - Providing psycho-social support to children affected by grief, loss and trauma
  - **Early learning:**
    - Extending access to children not yet reached
    - Strengthening home- and community-based programmes for children and youth in rural areas
    - Ensuring regular programme monitoring, staff training and supervision to improve quality.

She acknowledged the role that faith-based organisations can and do play in ECD, and urged those present to scale up and increase their efforts. She stressed that the church could play a key role in raising awareness among parents and in communities about ECD services and how to access them, support for child development at home, appropriate discipline, safety and protection and what to expect of a good preschool or Grade R class. On a map of one province, she showed the extent of ECD centres, clinics and schools, and suggested that the addition of churches, with their reach into rural areas and across cities and townships, could play a major role in this regard.

**The Foundations for Literacy**

Dr Shelley O’Carroll of Wordworks gave a fascinating presentation on early language and literacy. She showed how learning to read and write is part of a process that begins at birth, and thus how inequality begins way before a child even reaches school. In the light of South Africa’s appalling literacy results we need to:

- Strengthen teaching in Grades 1, 2 and 3,
- Provide support for children who are struggling to read and write,
- Empower families to build early language and literacy from birth, and
- Support preschool teachers and Grade R teachers to provide optimal language and literacy learning.

Wordworks was established in 2005 to support and improve early language and literacy learning among children from historically disadvantaged communities in South Africa. The organisation is founded on the belief that education is the key to transforming the life chances of children in South Africa, and that to succeed at school, all children must have the right foundations in place to read and write. By working alongside and sharing their
materials, know-how and enthusiasm with teachers, parents, volunteer tutors and home visitors in a respectful and inclusive way, they seek to give all children a better chance of learning to read and write successfully.

Wordworks programmes transfer valuable knowledge and skills to those who are at the heart of their communities and best-placed to ensure that education solutions are mainstreamed and self-sustaining. Their methodology and resources are evidence-based and reflect the extensive body of research around what works in supporting the acquisition of early language and literacy skills.

Wordworks runs four main programmes, in partnership with preschools, schools, libraries and community organisations:

- training volunteers to assist young children as they learn to read and write through the Early Literacy Programme
- empowering parents to support learning in the home through the Home-School Partnership Programme
- providing training and resources for teachers to strengthen literacy teaching in Grade R (STELLAR)
- equipping Home Visitors to support early language and literacy learning in the years between birth and four

Each of the programmes includes some or all of the following elements:

- high-quality training
- ongoing mentoring and support
- user-friendly materials and resources

O’Carroll stressed the need to support parents and their efforts in literacy at home – and shared the practical work that her organisation is doing through their Home-School Partnership Programme in this regard. They also work with home visitors to share resources and training for building early language and literacy. Their Early Literacy Programme is a volunteer-based intervention for Grade R- and Grade One-children using high quality materials. In addition Wordworks has also developed an in-service teacher training programme and resources to support quality teaching of language and literacy in Grade R (Stellar Programme).

At a systemic level there is need to invest further in ECD, to build our knowledge of what is meant by early language and literacy, to include language and literacy in discussions of quality ECD and to ensure that the Department of Basic Education includes ECD in understanding literacy outcomes at school. She concluded by stressing that the quality of ECD is critical in addressing language and literacy.
Numeracy

Wally Thiele of Mikimaths shared the method and tools he has developed to encourage numeracy. In a fun-filled exercise, participants used these tools to examine numbers in a simple, clever, colourful, and most importantly, concrete way. Wally concluded with a clear message: we can do simple things that can make a huge difference, but it is urgent that we do so now. Often things can get too complicated but Thiele countered that this was a simple set of tools that can be used to illustrate, teach and explain basic numeracy, to give children the building blocks of functional numeracy before they go to school. Wally suggested that informal ways through existing structures can be used. Mikimaths involves two days of training for trainers or teachers, who are then issued with the tool kit as a teaching aid. This tool kit, with its many building blocks of different colours, looked very exciting but there was little time in the workshop for participants to play and learn. Hopefully some parishes will be able to encourage their schools to experiment with this method of encouraging numeracy.

ADOLESCENCE

Reasons for drop out

Nicola Branson from the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town presented on school dropout in South Africa and the implications, given the proven strong impact of education on earnings and employment. South Africa’s success in expanding education and reducing educational inequality is vital in any discussion of poverty and inequality. Although educational attainment has increased and the racial gap in education has declined over the past few decades, performance since 1994 is in many respects disappointing. Nicola drew on the NIDS data, Wave 1, for 25 to 29 year-olds, to show that the convergence in educational attainment between race groups has slowed in the last 20 years. What is observable is that Africans are staying in school longer, but with high rates of grade repetition. She explored some of the determinants of school dropout, pointing out that much South African research on this topic is qualitative or based on asking questions retrospectively about the reasons for dropping out. The choice to leave school is complex and multidimensional, and the reason given may only reflect the event or constraint that prompted the decision rather than its root cause. Interestingly, poor grades and being behind were not a common reason given for dropping out in the research conducted. Multiple factors are suggested as precursors to dropout, which is often the result of a long cumulative process.

A key conclusion to emerge from this research and analysis is that grade repetition is ineffective in addressing underachievement and is usually a prelude to school dropout. Analysis of the NIDS data show distinct characteristics of those who end up dropping out:

- They are older, have slower progression rates and attend poorer schools with lower matric pass rates
- Less proficient in English reading and writing and are marginally less likely to expect to complete matric
Less likely to live with both parents, live in poorer households and their parents have less education.

The results suggest that repetition is not remedial, which is especially troubling if repetition is not targeted to the weakest learners (Lam et al., 2011). Better quality schools can partially protect struggling learners from dropping out, and improvement in supply-side school factors can play a role in reducing dropout, particularly among learners who have repeated grades. A more disheartening interpretation is that the majority of learners who are behind in school are in schools ill-equipped to help them negotiate a pathway to school completion.

**Improving the System – the example of Penreach**

Penreach is a Section 21 Non profit whole school development programme with donations routed through Penryn Trust (Section 18A). It shares facilities with Penryn College, Mbombela, and reaches out to schools in the Lowveld. The Penreach Pipeline reaches 2,400 teachers, 900 schools, and 400,000 learners annually. **David Wyld** shared the lessons of Penreach’s whole school development programme over 21 years, working in the community to promote educational excellence, with some astounding results (a boy who improved from failure to 100% maths/science and is now studying astrophysics at UCT). His message was to work in rural areas and to go ‘deep’ – focus on one community and a pipeline of interventions spanning from conception to
career. He shared some of the problems in rural areas – the lack of confidence among many teachers and managers, and the need for mentoring and team teaching in schools.

The seeds of success (or failure) lie in early learning – each year approximately 1.5 million learners start Grade R, but only around 350,000 of these children will pass Grade 12. The school drop-out rate is a defining place to start in understanding the magnitude of the task of ensuring that all South Africans receive a good education. But Wylde stressed that it is not too late to work with those in the school system. The challenges of education in South Africa are comprehensive. In rural communities children are in desperate need of help to access quality education. They need innovation/thinking skills, tutorials and psychosocial support and repair, and teachers need professional development and training in leadership and management.

Penreach has learnt that it is essential to conduct baseline studies in communities to identify the real needs and make a sustainable difference. Teachers’ needs must be addressed, and practical learning is the most effective method. Teachers create sustainability. It is essential that teachers be asked what they do not know and then work from their needs. A holistic approach to whole communities is central to achieving change, and creating ‘Communities of Learning’. Communities are vital in terms of sustainability, ownership, maintenance and safety and security. The underlying values on which the Penreach model are based are: changing attitudes, encouraging professionalism in teachers, motivation for improvement and building hope.

**Lessons from the grassroots – the example of Ikamva Youth**

Thobela Bixa presented the basics of the Ikamva Youth programme and its impact. Thobela was a beneficiary of the programme as a high school learner, and is now studying a Masters in Science at UCT. He has also returned to Ikamva as a teacher and leader. Ikamva Youth began in Khayelitsha over ten years ago, and has reached around 3,000 high school students to date, with impressive improvement on their matric results and retention. They plan to double their reach in 2 years, moving from a branch structure to a ‘hub’ structure linked to schools, with plans also to scale up through community collaboration.

The programme influences how learners engage with their own learning, shifting responsibility to the learner. The key features are:

- 3 x a week tutor sessions by volunteers (students, retired professionals)
- Tutoring for Grade 8 – 12 high school learners
- Low tutor: pupil ratios (1:5)
- Admission not based on marks, but application/motivation & compulsory 75% attendance
- Peer accountability and responsibility (e.g., branch committees decided on 75% attendance requirement & all learners must bring school reports)
- Future orientation – career guidance workshops, especially in Grades 11 and 12
- Mentors assist / support with tertiary applications etc. (aim at 1:1 ratio but 1:3 in most branches)
- Low-cost (around R5,000 a year per learner)
- Sustainable – 70% of Ikamvalites (alumni) return as volunteer tutors
- English as a language of instruction.
An initial evaluation of the programme between 2005 and 2011 was conducted by Prof Servaas van der Bergh. Findings included that more learners are choosing physical science and maths over maths literacy and that the career guidance support is showing promising results. An alumni study between 2005 – 2012 showed a significantly lower drop-out rate among ‘Ikamvalites’ at tertiary institutions (14% compared with the national average rate of 46%). A ten-year Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) has been initiated to track progress over ten years.

The programme illustrates the power of ownership and peer influence, of creating ‘circles of belonging’, of more autonomous individuals and a shift in attitude from ‘What do I get?’ to ‘What can I do?’ The organisation is exploring ways to scale up and share the model without affecting cost ratios and diluting its core principles. Using university students as tutors means location counts (not more than 20km radius from such an institution), and the programme also draws on retired people and professionals. One of the most profound anecdotal evidence offered was of an individual Ikamvalite who returned to start a branch in Makaza, which now has a waiting list of 300 applicants.

REFLECTIONS
In the final session of the day, Graeme Bloch of the university of Witswatersrand and Palesa Tyobeka of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) shared their reflections. Graeme began by making some simple points about education, and stressed the need to acknowledge the long-term impact of Bantu Education. While there is no magic bullet, the statistics are going up. While the situation is getting worse, the DBE cannot fix everything. For example, South Africa does not have enough jobs. In Spain youth unemployment is as bad as within the country but are stakeholders creating the right skills for work among the youth?

He stressed the need to focus and scale up what we are good at. Inequalities are complex. There are 26 000 principals from multiple communities, but only a minority of white professionals publicly addressing the problem. Because education is a fundamental issue of democracy, urged Bloch, representative participation will always be crucial - this is a long-haul process. We need infrastructure in all schools. Education requires lots of resources and more accountability. Last, but not least, improving the current state of education is about working the power of mobilising parents – and the church has a critical role to play herein.

Palesa Tyobeka drew on her 35-year long experience in the field as a teacher and one of the first appointments in the post-apartheid era. She described her own experiences of Bantu Education, growing up in the Eastern Cape, and reminded participants of the achievements that have been made. There are around 12 million children at 26,000 schools, 85% of which are no-fee paying, and over 70% of children at school are fed. She was encouraged by the spirit in the room, but reminded us that 20 years was far too short to have reversed the ravages of Bantu education. She agreed that there are still two systems of education, and that too many children’s futures are still determined by where they are born, especially in former [There is a] need to acknowledge the long-term impact of Bantu Education. While there is no magic bullet, the statistics are going up.
homelands. She pointed to the fact that all children from grades 1 to 9 have access to a maths or language book, and from grade 9, access to physical science and maths books. Books are free and can be downloaded. She echoed David Wylde’s call to go rural and go deep. The DBE is looking at some schools which are doing well, in unlikely circumstances, to see what can be learned.

Palesa stressed the need to define what we mean by quality. She agreed that the churches could play a role in collaborating with government, but there is need for a critical mass and working models. She raised the Education Collaboration Framework which aims to share ideas and to profile each school and identify their needs. She encouraged the church leaders present to play a national leadership role, guiding churches and their members to get involved – sharing the example of an Eastern Cape rural project that has seen a 20% improvement after the community and the school began working together. The importance of parent involvement and education could be key to changing schools. The DBE is also running a programme aimed at getting over 5 million adults to read and write, supplying free materials. In terms of teacher education, there is a partnership also with the Catholic Institute for Education which mentors matric pupils and assists them in procuring funding for further tertiary education. There is a great need for mentorship, including of principals. She ended by saying that Bantu Education was the single worst thing that apartheid did and the country is still dealing with its legacy.

**DISCUSSION**

*Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana* thanked the presenters for sharing their experiences. He stressed that the churches were exploring how to tap into all of the energies working for change, and that it was a pity that it was such a small grouping of church people present. The idea is to prepare for a church leaders’ consultation in 2014, where Bishop Siwa will report back to his peers for roll out in society from June. There is need to guide people’s energies for the common good.

The Methodist Church has decided to open churches as aftercare centres in communities, and is keen to consult with DBE and Social Development about the registration and upgrading of informal ECD centres.

In another contribution, a participant highlighted the divisions in our society – and flagged the core issues as employment, unemployment and unemployability. He traced the key skills needed: task-related (taught by parents, especially mothers), generic basic (numeracy/literacy – need to be learned properly only once), basic attitudes (learned by 6 years) and personal/interpersonal skills (learnt very early on in families – often deep problems). Furthermore, Apartheid and HIV have had massive disruptive effects and these need to be addressed at all levels, including structural.
PART 2

Where is God in the midst of the Education Crisis in South Africa?

This document (part 2 of a broader report) serves as part of a report to the Church Leaders Consultation as it considers further joint church action on the education crisis in our country. This theological reflection builds on the education conference that was held in Bloemfontein in February 2013.

Part 1 of this document spells out the urgency, the reality and also the immorality of the crisis in education as given to us by a range of experts in the field of education in South Africa while this section (Part 2) serves as the beginning of a theological reflection process on this crisis and immorality in education (using the ‘see, judge, act’ method) and makes suggestions for short-, medium- and long-term actions. Part 1 is therefore the ‘see’ section and Part 2 focus on the ‘judge’ and ‘act’ section.

JUDGE

The education crisis is grave and is described as a sin, since it deals with the stunting of creativity in the majority of children in South Africa – in other words, the opposite of what God our creator intends for human beings. And it is not only a sin that we have done, but especially what we have left undone.

When more than 50% of those who registered in Grade 1 do not complete Grade 12 and the majority of those who do, do so at a level which increases the systemic inequality and the level of “unemployability” in our current economy, then we have very little to celebrate as South Africans.

One of the things that the church has left undone is in-depth critical social analysis: “The church stopped being effective when it stopped to think,” said Francis Wilson at the workshop. Thus, there is a latent capacity of the churches that needs to be unlocked.

Our analysis of the crisis has to go beyond the facts and figures, and beyond blame.

More than 80% of schools in South Africa are now no-fee schools and more than 70% of children are on a nutrition programme in government schools. Furthermore, the biggest part of our national budget is spent on education.

But this still does not translate into an effective education system and we have to ask why:

There is a latent capacity of the churches that needs to be unlocked.
- Has it to do with the current social conditions in poor communities?
- Has it to do with elitism, where the needs of the have-nots are not taken as serious as the needs of the haves?
- Has it to do with burdensome administration?
- Has it to do with lack of parental involvement in education?
- Has it to do with lack of certain resources in certain schools?
- Has it to do with the kind of society we find ourselves in?
- Has it to do with bad leadership at schools?
- Has it to do with a lack of an overall compelling vision and moral value that will guide each school into the future?

From the input and reflections, it is clear that the crisis probably has to do with all of the above, compounded and revealed especially in the poorest schools in South Africa. The poorest children, who are also in the majority, are in the worst and unregistered ECD centres and are then sent to the worst schools. What do we then expect?

But even before the child reaches school-going age, Shelley O’Carroll pointed out during the first day of presentations that inequality begins way before a child even reaches school. “[Hence] we need to empower families to build early language and literacy from birth” said Dr O’Carroll.

Ingrid Le Roux made it clear that it is important to focus on the first 1000 days of the child’s life since “Stunting at two years of age is the strongest predictor of adult human capital, and yet there is no support for nutrition in the home, the most critical area of impact.”

The answers to solve the crisis are there, but we are not able to translate this on the kind of scale necessary into practical implementable solutions that have a positive impact in classrooms and in the lives of the majority of learners. What are the factors that prevent us, particularly the church, from collaborating to finding the best solutions and the best implementation mechanisms?

VISION

Engaging in conversation about, analysing and reflecting on an extreme crisis can leave the church even more paralysed to act, or considering only what can be done to assist our own in the shortest space of time. The purpose of this education reflection session was to determine “what will have the greatest impact on the most children in the shortest space of time,” as suggested by Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana.

The vision of the person whose creativity and dignity has been fully nurtured and restored and who lives the most dignified and joyful life possible, is the calling of the church. It is also the calling of every teacher where pedagogy is not only defined as filling an empty brain with facts, but as restoring the human being to wholeness. In that sense, we can begin to speak about “Education as Salvation”.

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CONFESSION:

The education crisis can be described as the sin of neglect; our failure to take responsibility, and our failure by abandoning the child in South Africa. Moreover, the sexual violence faced by many young girls and boys in our schools is one of the outcomes of this neglect and failure to take responsibility.

“We have been separated,” said Reverend Frank Chikane, “separated from God, (and) separated from the child.”

Thoko Mbense agreed: “The crisis is often seen as too big for us to worry about the next person… Many people think only of themselves and their immediate family (as opposed to the greater whole).”

How do we interject in this crisis-narrative? How do we bring our faith, hope and love, not to lessen the crisis, but to give us hope and strategies and tactics and even joy to move forward collectively towards turning this into a significant collective victory for South Africa?

We have done it before and we can do it again. This is the South African “way”.

A child’s best interest is of paramount importance

The Church taking the Constitution of South Africa seriously:

As part of our reflection, we believe that certain sections of the constitution and the Bill of Rights, particularly those focusing on the rights of the child, need to be read, fully understood and used to better effect by the Churches so that we are able to advocate for those rights that are enshrined in the Constitution.

As examples, we will highlight Sec 21:2 “A child’s best interest is of paramount importance” and Section 28 b “Free the potential of each person”

VISION

Where there is no vision, the people perish

Education is not simply about “crowd-control” or “schooling”:

Our vision for education in South Africa is one where the dignity, the potential and the creativity of each child is held in highest regard. All obstacles to the attainment of this vision, whatever causes the “little ones” to stumble and be stunted, whatever obstacles causes the children not to come to the realisation of their full humanity in Christ, must be removed or else those causing it should hear the words of Christ (to be flung into the sea).
HOPE:

In South Africa there are 26000 public schools and 56000 church buildings

The dream we once had of a quality education for all South Africa’s children, especially the poorest children, has become a nightmare, particularly in places such as the Eastern Cape or Soweto. But we can change it back into a dream.

Hope is what will release latent energy to ensure a different narrative on education in South Africa. While it is important to know the extent of the crisis, it is also important to remind ourselves of the many good things happening and the potential for good that exists in small do-able actions.

If there is no serious intervention in education similar to a “war-cabinet”, there will be an increase in the amount of children whose potential for creativity and enhanced dignity will have been stunted.

The mere fact that we have begun to consider this matter from a Christian theological perspective, implies that we have hope. We already see many signs of hope, of people doing things that we need to support and upscale.

KEY FOCUS AREAS AND VALUES:

1. Education is everybody’s business
2. We must focus on putting the learner first
3. All that we do must be collaborative and value-based

ACT

4 Areas of intervention:

A call has already been made that each year during the first week of February, from Sunday to Sunday, the whole of the faith community should focus on Education in various ways:
- Affirming teachers
- Affirming those parents who are actively involved in the education of their children and urging/empowering others to do the same
- Affirming the centrality of the child and teenager in education
- Educate congregations about education in South Africa e.g. ways in which citizens can be active in public schools, what the constitution says, etc.

This consultation calls on the churches in South Africa to focus on the following four actions:

These INTERVENTIONS are both proactive and reactive:

1. **ECD** (Early Childhood development): It is clear to us that the first 1000 days is critical to the development of the child and that this is one area where the church can play a significant role. There can and must be significant intervention in the home where children are nourished and educated before they even start formal schooling. Bishop Peter Lee is in the process of engaging the Department of Basic Education to ensure that a process is started where the quality and registration of ECD schools are uplifted and expedited.

2. **Capacity and accountability where the community interfaces the school system (proactive citizenship):** We need to consider the involvement of people with skills and passion in every school and if legislation or community custom prevents this, ways must be found to intervene so that schools are made more effective as places of learning.

3. **Systemic intervention (advocate at different levels):** The word “corruption” was used to describe several aspects of the crisis in our education, from teachers who no longer see teaching as a calling to those who provide false statistics in order to avoid being downgraded. We see the interventions at 1 and 2 above as beginning to intervene systemically, but we also need to consider other interventions that will lead to systemic change in the educational system.

4. **Teenagers:** The millions of young people who are not in education, training or employment is an area that requires immediate intervention by the church and all other roleplayers.
Conclusion

Through these reflections it is anticipated that the collective and coordinated action of the church will make a difference in education in South Africa. In discussion participants stressed how much can be done, at so many different levels, to provide support, mentoring and sharing of skills, resources and expertise. It was felt that there is enormous potential for collaboration, for scaling up effective programmes, for empowering individuals and communities, in and out of schools and ECD centres, to increase basic literacy and numeracy, along with the other skills required for functioning of society and acquisition of learning. It was stressed how important it is to empower parents and others to play an active role in oversight and management of local schools. SGBs can include upstanding community members, and churches could play a role in identifying such people to help monitor and improve conditions.

An interesting point made at a subsequent C3 think tank concerned the impact of the nuclear family in black townships, which have become more uni-class – the underclass, with less disposable income for education in the broader family, as people pay bonds and move out of the townships, or at least send their children to schools outside townships. This robs these areas of capacity. Perhaps the church, with ideas such as opening the doors of church halls as after care centres, could draw on locals and others as volunteers to staff these centres, or feed children.

The reflections led by the church members present on the second day of the workshop thus led to concrete recommendations on how the faith-based community can best focus its energies and take action to tackle inequality urgently and effectively.
Appendix: Workshop Programme

Church Consultative Workshop on Education, in collaboration with the Carnegie3 process in search of effective strategies to overcome poverty and inequality in South Africa.

Wednesday 27th. November, 2013
VENUE: Room 1C, Ground Floor, New Economics Building, Middle Campus, UCT, Rondebosch

AGENDA

09.30   Coffee

10.00   Welcome & Introduction [10 minutes each]
        o Pro Murray Leibbrandt [UCT, Pro Vice Chancellor, Poverty & Inequality]
        o Bishop Zippo Siwa
        o Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana
        o Prof Francis Wilson [Co-Director of Carnegie3 Process]

10.40   Overall Perspectives
        o Statistical Analysis: Nicholas Spaull [Univ. of Stellenbosch]
        o Systemic Analysis: Linda Vilakazi [Wits School of Education]

11.40   Those Early Years
        o The 1st 1000 days. Reflections from Philani: Ingrid le Roux & Nokwanele Mbewu
        o Early Childhood Development
          ▪ Overview. Linda Biersteker [Elru]
          ▪ Literacy. Shelley O’Carroll [Wordworks]
          ▪ Numeracy. Wally Tiro [Mickeymaths]

13.30   LUNCH

14.15   Teenagers
        o Reasons for Drop Out. Nicola Branson [Saldru]
        o Improving the System. David Wylde [Penreach]
        o Lessons from the grass-roots. Thobela Bixa [Ikamva Youth]
        o Discussion

16.15   TEA.

16.45   Reflections
        o Graeme Bloch
Palesa Tyobeka

17.45. Plenary Discussion & Preliminary Theological Reflections
18.30. Break for Drinks & Dinner @ The Wild Fig

THURSDAY, 28th.
09.00. Theological Reflections Continued.
10.45 Tea
11.15 Focus for 2015
12.30 Wrap Up
13.00 Lunch & Departure.