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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report of the Rural Education Research Team

Towards A Rural Education Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**RURAL EDUCATION DIRECTORATE
JANUARY 2017**

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Acronyms

ASIDI	Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Development Initiative
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DAFF	Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRDLR	Department of Rural Development and Land Reform
EC	Eastern Cape
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FET	Further Education and Training
FFA	Framework for Action
GET	General Education and Training
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LTSM	Learning and Teaching Support Material
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
NATU	National Teachers' Union
NDP	National Development Plan
NMF	Nelson Mandela Foundation
NSNP	National Schools Nutrition Programme
PED	Provincial Education Department
PEU	Professional Educators Union
PPN	Post Provisioning Norms
SA	South Africa
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAOU	Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie
SASA	South African Schools Act
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	School Governing Body
TRIS	Teacher Rural Incentive Scheme
UN	United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

*Towards a Rural Education Policy
Summary*

Executive

Overview

SA is a signatory to various international protocols. One of the most recent, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), addresses extreme poverty in its many dimensions and, in particular, SDG 4: Quality Education, aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (UN, 2015, p.21). The Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2015a) further prioritises inclusion and equity in and through education by improving education policies and the way they work together.

The country is committed to these principles, as addressed in the Constitution and Bill of Rights, which provide for education as a right not a privilege. In line with these principles the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has undertaken many and varied pro-poor initiatives aimed at promoting equity by improving access to basic education and the quality of education in previously disadvantaged schools, including rural schools (Department of Basic Education, Action Plan to 2019: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030). Progress towards achieving these goals is even, not only compromised by continuing high levels of poverty in the most disadvantaged communities, but also due to poor implementation. Schools in rural areas are amongst the worst affected across SA as indicated by poor performance levels and inefficiencies in the delivery of basic facilities and services. Consequently it is crucial to examine policy and programme gaps that retard performance across all phases of education in rural areas – from ECD to tertiary education.

In an effort to improve the quality of education in rural schools, the Minister of Basic Education appointed a Rural Education Research Team to develop a Rural Education Policy. The stated purpose of the new policy will be to reflect the realities in rural schools and give guidance to the development of context-specific and sustainable interventions for these schools. This would no longer adopt generalised pro-poor ‘one size fits all’ interventions included in most post-1994 school legislation but would instead consider interventions tailor made for rural schools.

The findings of the research and consultative process inform the analysis and policy recommendations made in this report. These grapple with an existing but often ignored paradox regarding rural schools: On one hand, there is a view that rural education, defined by geography (spatial distribution) and deprivation, is a signifier of poor performance in the schooling system. On the other hand, a second view highlights the assets that exist in rural communities and which can be harnessed to enrich teaching and learning in rural schools. Thus, the report recognises the role of the community and sense of belonging (both to the

community and the school) and connectedness among stakeholders. The conceptual framework developed to guide the research is based on the principle that risks and constraints, often described in deficit terminology, are balanced in a dynamic tension with opportunities arising from a confluence of particular resources within each particular place. Rural communities, teachers and learners are to participate in school affairs in partnership with national, provincial and district officials who play a vital role in initiating and facilitating policy implementation.

The recommendations also recognise that educational access and success in one phase are interlinked with similar outcomes across the system – ECD, Basic Education (GET and FET) and Higher Education and Training - and that poor educational outcomes in any one phase hinder access to and performance in the next phase. Consequently, although this report considers the GET and FET phases, it recognises that reform of rural education depends on a holistic view of transformation where education mediates development.

This overview report summarises the findings of the research processes undertaken by the Rural Education Research Team. In addition to a desktop study of rural education issues and best practice responses from international literature, the report takes account of the following:

- Inputs made by stakeholders represented on the Reference Team;
- Inputs made by stakeholders in the Rural Education Consultative Forum;
- Discussions arising from bilateral meetings with all teacher unions (NATU, NAPTOSA, PEU, SADTU and SAOU); and
- Information obtained during the provincial visits to the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Limpopo. During these visits members of the Rural Education Research Team met provincial officials, traditional and community leaders, parents, principals, teachers and learners.

Research Team Brief and Approach

The Rural Education Research Team, established in April 2016, under the leadership of the Acting Director of the Rural Education Directorate, Dr Phumzile Langa, was composed of 7 members who were appointed by the Minister:

- Prof Relibohile Moletsane (Chairperson);
- Prof Liesel Ebersohn;
- Dr Adele Gordon;
- Dr Dipane Hlalele;

- Mr Paul Kgobe;
- Dr Thomas Mabasa; and
- Dr T Nkambule.

The Reference Team was multi-sectoral and included teacher unions, DBE and PED officials, Government departments (DAFF and DRDLR) and NGOs.

The following brief was given to the Rural Education Research Team:

The proposed Rural Education Policy will add depth to our understanding of rural schools and improve our approach to transforming these schools by:

- Giving direction in what the sector should advocate and promote in pursuit of closing the disparities between rural schools and urban schools and within rural schools;
- Giving guidance to the development of context-specific, relevant and sustainable strategies to deal with the monumental challenges in rural schools; and
- Providing a framework for improving the quality of education in rural schools that will allow for meaningful strategies and pragmatic intervention to improve the quality of education in these schools.

Why a Focus on Rural Education?

In its report, *Emerging Voices* (2005), the Nelson Mandela Foundation argued for a holistic response to the special circumstances facing rural communities. The NMF reported that community members articulated the view that social justice depends on policy and programme responses that provide a quality educational environment in all schools, including rural schools so as to assure children's wellbeing as well as the communities' social progress and political participation.

The Rural Education Research Team is of the view that advocacy and political will are essential elements of any transformative agenda. Rural voices demanding education need to be powerfully backed to support their educational needs. Education is not only a driver of economic growth but also promotes the well-being of all South African citizens and consequently builds resilience to counter the effects of impoverishment.

Policy Framework

The key issues arising from the Rural Education Research Team's research process can be summarised by the following questions:

1. How can South African rural schools be defined and classified? What principles and framework should inform such definition and classification?
2. Does the current curriculum framework work for rural schools? What possible structures and content must change or be adapted to make it work?
3. What kind of leadership and management do rural schools need to function effectively? How can this be achieved and provided for?
4. Linked to the above, how might rural schools (and communities) be resourced to optimise learning and improve learning outcomes at all levels?

This report develops and utilises a conceptual framework as well as a definition of 'rural'. These take account of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past, particularly that colonial and apartheid ideologies displaced urban and rural communities, resulting in a dynamic interplay between rural and urban lifestyles and places of abode in SA today. The framework and definition are also aimed at making sense of the realities facing rural communities, including the values and lifestyles of the communities as well as the economic, social, political issues impacting on rural lifestyles.

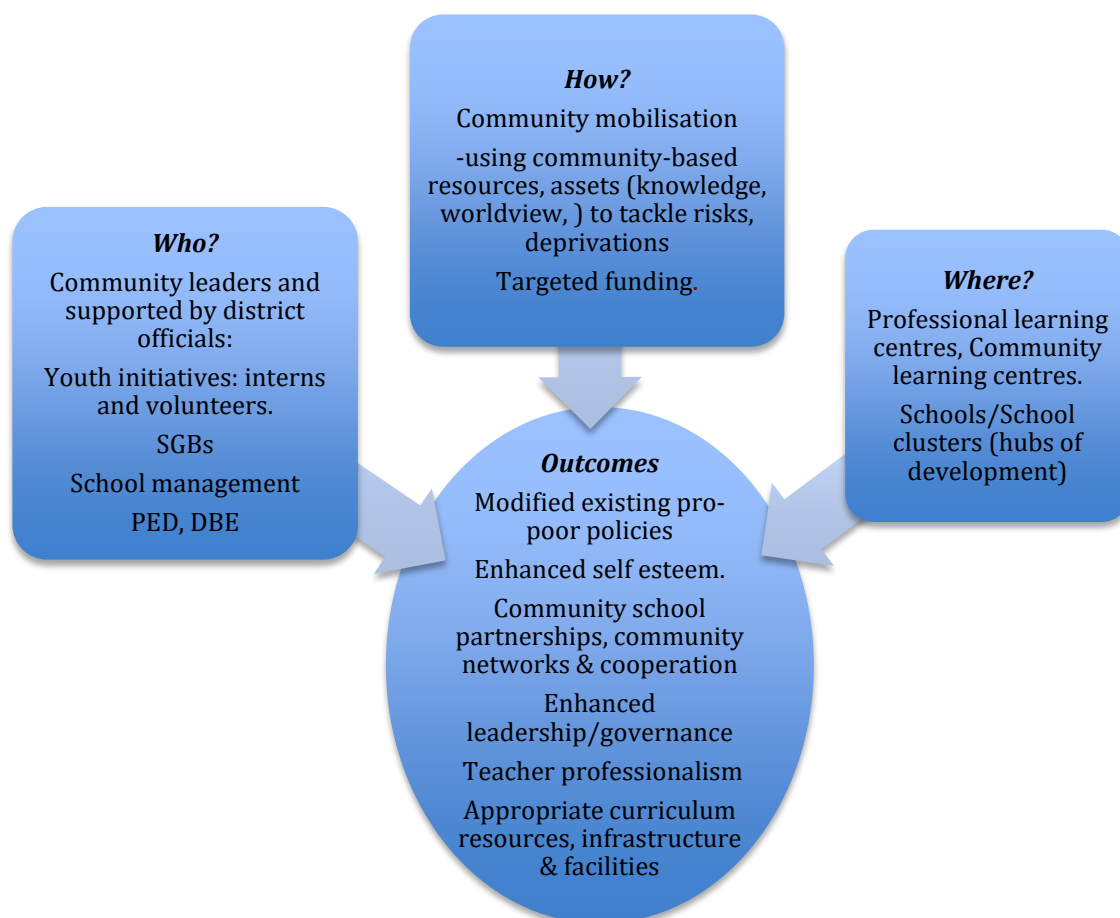
The analysis and consequent policy recommendations point to the ways in which community agency can reduce risks through networking and cooperative endeavours with other partners – within their communities, and with government and civil society. Consequently the recommendations conceive of the school as being centrally placed in its rural environment, as a hub of educational transformation, and so as a means of community development.

The first set of recommendations relate to post-1994 pro-poor policies that have been found wanting, and whether and how they might be modified to suit the needs of rural schools. Examples are; the PPN, particularly as it relates to small schools; the use of financial incentives to improve motivation levels amongst rural teachers as a means of lowering teacher absenteeism and stimulating redeployment to rural schools, especially of teachers of scarce subjects; ways of increasing benefits of the NSNP; SGB representation and training to meet rural community needs, and school transport.

A second set of proposals examine the domains of education that influence quality of education, namely: leadership and governance; the curriculum; and resourcing schools (human, infrastructure, and the curriculum).

Figure 1 below illustrates the key components stemming from the policy recommendations that are elaborated in the remainder of this section of the report.

Figure 1: Community-led rural school transformation



Conceptual Framework

The policy recommendations in this report are premised on the notion that civic agency through community actions can address rural challenges and reduce risks by using existing rural resources - environmental, traditional processes and relationships - together with targeted financial investments. Many 'unfreedoms', (Sen, 1999) are embedded in the circumstances facing rural communities including, among others, their isolation, lack of jobs, and limited access to basic services, particularly transport. These must be overcome if schools are to offer quality education. Figure 2 below depicts the dimensions of the proposed framework.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework: three interrelated dimensions of “place” influencing rural development.

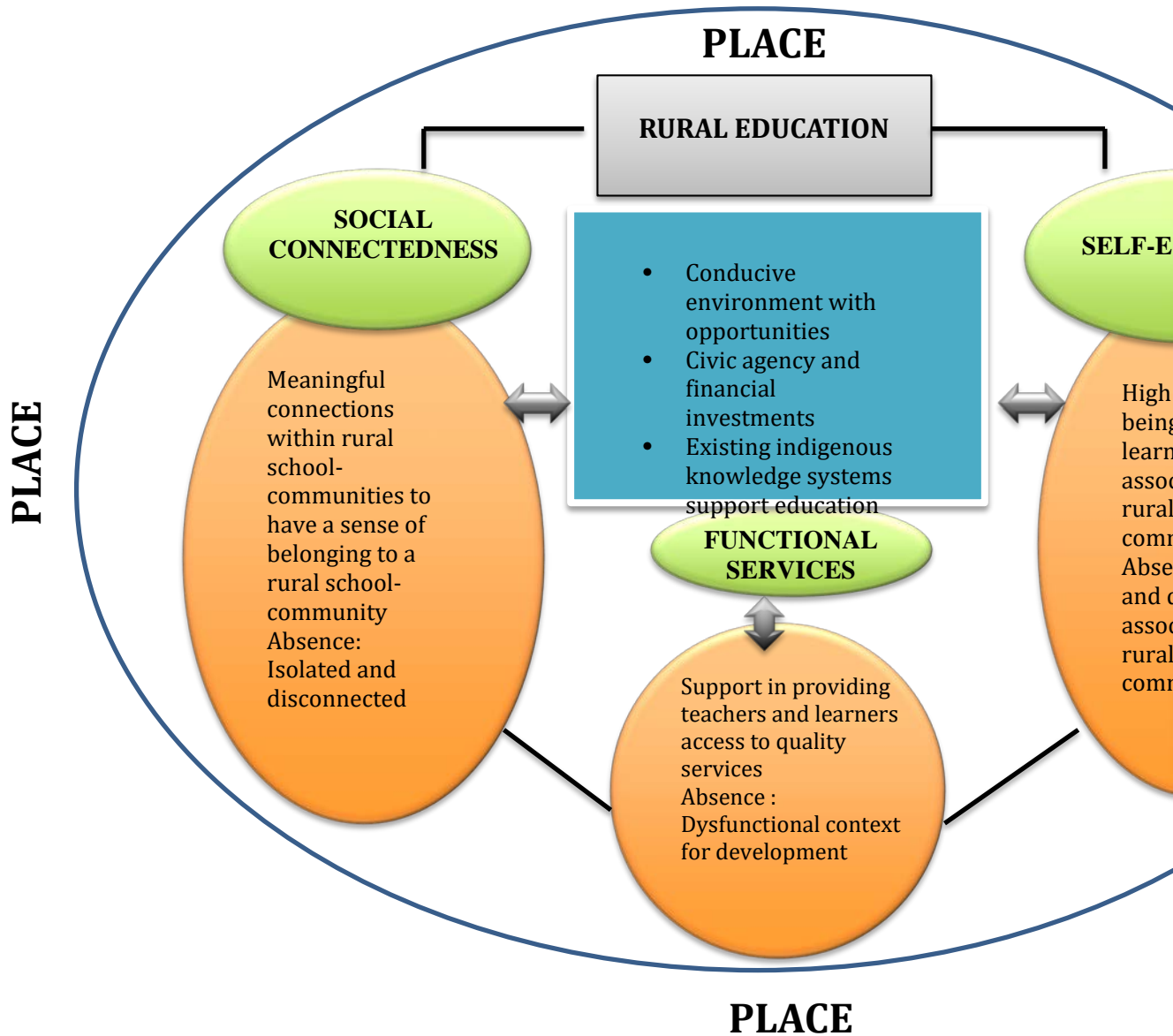


Figure 2 above suggests that educational interventions are rooted in the context and habitat of schools and take cognisance of risks challenging broader school community wellbeing on the one hand, and their strengths on the other. In the case of South African rural communities, the disruption of historical patterns of development arising from colonialism and apartheid, and more recently, from the lack of a coherent rural development policy, has led to their marginalisation from mainstream developments and high levels of impoverishment. In turn, these factors embroil school affairs, weakening efforts to upgrade schools.

A starting point of the analysis is to reject exclusive deficit perspectives on rural education and development. In fact education, from the perspective proposed here, can mediate the effects of on-going inequality by capitalising on the resources (indigenous knowledge systems) available in rural community contexts. Specifically, civic action, through the cooperative use of local knowledge and practices buffers risks, and so increases the self-esteem of all parties, with the effect of mobilising communities to participate in development activities. This, together with targeted fiscal investment, must take place at all levels - individual, school, household, school, community - and run concurrently with targeted government initiatives to strengthen schooling. From this perspective, developmental outcomes (learning, health and wellbeing) *are less aligned with economic riches, and more aligned with:*

- a) self-esteem (children's and teachers' *high estimation of themselves*);
- b) being connected to meaningful others and belonging to a group (school communities function as *units of care and support*); as well as
- c) living in a functional context. (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010; Ebersöhn, 2010; 2012).

Enver Motala describes this alternative use of local power in the following way:
... these alternatives can only be resourced from the very conditions of life and past knowledge that exists in the communities bound to such rurally excluding lives.....Women and men in these communities are 'helping themselves' and not waiting for the 'gifts' of a democratic state because they already recognize the effects of its failed promises. They are active and developing the alternatives even now – fitfully and in small places, but with determination no less. In these nascent forms - some more nascent than others [local and global], are the beginnings of a new challenge to the hegemony of global corporate capitalist relations and power (Motala, 2014, p.9)

Nature and agriculture are core resources intrinsic to the lived experience of rural communities. Used judiciously they not only support and sustain each of

the above developmental outcomes but are also major foci in global development for climate and environment management, as well as food security and wellbeing. Consequently curricula must include these rural-based learning areas that offer learners the scientific knowledge required for future career- and livelihood opportunities across rural and urban domains. In this way, rurality becomes a driver of educational reform, not a follower of urban transformations and desires.

Policy recommendations emanating from the conceptual framework consider actions that support community agency and participation in school affairs to build self-esteem and well-being on the one hand, and to increase resilience to risks (arising from impoverishment, isolation and the history of poor service delivery in rural areas) on the other. Schools are envisioned as hubs of community development, buttressed by active community agency on the one hand, and efficient, well-resourced governance, leadership and management teams at school and district levels on the other. Carefully targeted and managed financial stimuli are integral to the successful implementation of initiatives.

Teaching and learning programmes can be augmented by the establishment of Teacher Centres and Community Learning Centres, located on a school site or within a cluster of schools. Providing a place of collegiality, they can offer formal, informal and non-formal educational programmes to the community and teachers, enhancing the role of the school as a hub of development.

Towards Defining Rurality and Rural Schools

A difficulty in formulating policies and developing programmes for teachers, learners and schools in rural areas stems from the confusion over a definition of the term 'rural'. This hampers efforts to intervene meaningfully in improving teaching and learning in rural areas. Definitions used in other countries and particularly in those in Africa, while useful, do not address our history of colonialism and apartheid that characterises rural areas in SA as having a skewed demography, vulnerable political economy, and inequitable access to facilities and services, including education.

Thus, the Rural Education Research Team recommends that the DBE and Stats SA develop a new definition of 'rural' and a classification of rural schools based on the unique characteristics of South Africa's rural school landscape and the context in which they are situated. The purpose of this process will be to establish a valid and reliable method of identifying, continuously monitoring, and evaluating the policies and programmes serving rural schools, including gauging the accountability of all responsible for its implementation. Like

Moriarty et al. (2003), we propose using a flexible definition of 'rural' that recognises the fluidity of lifestyles and possibilities of promoting wellbeing in place of a fixed and unchanging definition usually adopted by decision-makers.

A starting point is to include in a definition specific factors that typify rural schools:

- Rural schools as characterised by various forms of distance (from the centre: e.g., in terms of resources; infrastructure; knowledge and epistemologies)
- Rural schools as characterised by challenges on one hand (poor resources, distance from services and infrastructure) and as spaces surrounded by local assets (resources and knowledge), on the other.

Such criteria can form the basis of a classification index. A model and methodology has been developed by Stats SA to create Material and Learning Deprivation Indices for South African schools and these possibly can be modified for use in the rural school sector (Stats SA, 2014; 2014a; 2016).

Amendments to Existing Policies

South African policy processes with reference to rural education

Post-apartheid education reforms in South Africa are informed by the principles of equity and redress as enshrined in the Constitution of SA (1996) and including the Bill of Rights that ensures the right to education. The National Development Plan (NDP, 2013) and the DBE's Action Plan (DBE, 2015) offer long-term perspectives on education and development in SA; the NDP refers specifically to the transformation of the rural economy and provides an education vision for SA for 2030.

Post 1994 policy on rural education was spelled out in the 1994 'Yellow book' (ANC, 1994) where schools in rural areas were identified as a sector requiring urgent attention due to limited access to schooling by rural learners especially those in secondary schools, appallingly low levels of services and infrastructure, unqualified teachers and poor conditions of service. This situation had arisen because of massive apartheid funding inequities where rural schools for black learners were the most deprived.

The first legislation impacting on rural schools was South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996). This rid SA of its 19 Departments of Education so that all schools became part of one integrated and coordinated system of education. One exception was the special case of public schools on private land (mainly the

schools on farms, on church land, and a few in hospitals, and on mines). SASA provided for an agreement to be signed between the land owner(s) and province with the aim of wresting control of the schools from private owners, and especially from the farmers (Section 14 of SASA). More than 20 years later few property owners have signed agreements and consequently this issue remains a contentious one that remains a barrier to education reform in these schools.

The 2005 report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (MCRE) made recommendations on the policy environment relating to rural schools. Rural education was to be re-visioned away from a focus on deficits to one that examined opportunities for transformation within rural communities to promote a participatory and democratic governance and management process. At a systemic level, the MCRE report, recommended a special focus on rural education that would recognise the uniqueness of the rural landscape. An outcome was the establishment of a rural education directorate at the DBE having provincial counterparts. Its task was to consider policy formulation to address the special needs of rural schools and to oversee implementation.

In addition, both the MCRE and a report from a study on rural schools commissioned by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF), *Emerging Voices* (2005), recommended that state provision of rural schooling should be resourced and organised differently from urban schools as a necessary measure to meet the needs of rural learners.

Since 2005, legislation targeted rural schools specifically, such as the merger and closures of small (non-viable) schools. Some provinces have built hostels to cater for learners living far from schools (RE, 2016). In addition, various pro-poor policies included the provision of services, infrastructure and learning materials to all disadvantaged schools. Despite these initiatives, access to schools and teaching conditions in many rural schools lag behind those in urban areas and teacher deployment to rural areas remains a problem. Provinces with large rural populations are the worst off across many indicators (infrastructure and LTSMs) and performance outcomes (ANAs, NSC results).

An underlying reason for these challenges is that new policies and programmes tend to take their cues from urban environments and ignore the realities embracing rural lifestyles and infrastructure.

Post-1994 Pro-poor Policies

The Rural Education Research Team examined major policies impacting on rural education, including a raft of pro-poor policies and policies aimed at regulating and supporting school and classroom operations in disadvantaged schools. The analysis revealed that most policies require some degree of tweaking if they are to achieve their goals in rural schools. Suggested policy amendments cover:

- SASA (1996) and School governance – consideration should be given to including traditional leadership (in those areas under the jurisdiction of traditional leadership) in cases where their participation will ensure/mobilise broader parental/ community participation in supporting the school.
- Education White Paper 6 (Inclusion) – Special measures need to be introduced for learners in rural schools to ensure that they receive the necessary support and services that are proposed in the policy.
- Scholar transport policy – Clear guidelines should be developed that take account of different provincial and local contexts.
- Language policy – As the school language policy is the responsibility of school governing bodies, more training is required for these structures to develop the policy in line with the provisions of the policy.
- National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) – Basic infrastructure needed to ensure that it functions efficiently, especially in rural areas that already lack adequate and proper classrooms for learning and teaching. Provincial departments of Education should develop plans and monitor implementation of the scheme. (Where possible, feeding schemes to be allied with small-scale agricultural projects.
- Teacher Incentives – The weaknesses exposed in the attempts to implement the Teacher Rural Incentive Scheme (TRIS) indicated the need for a clear classification of schools for the purposes of implementing the norms to ensure equitable distribution across provinces. Stakeholders maintained that incentives should be extended to consider material rewards (such as housing and transport), professional rewards (CPD, career progression) in addition to financial rewards. (See section on teacher incentives in this report.)
- Post-provisioning norms (PPN) – Special measures should be introduced (in addition to what is currently in the policy) for small schools. The Minister may declare such schools as schools under special circumstances and allow for some deviation from the current norms. Recommendations made

by Deloitte in a commissioned review of the PPN (2013) are presented below.

- District post provisioning norms. The gazetting of the norms and standards for districts (2013) provides the PEDs with flexible options regarding the determination of the number of districts and circuit offices serving schools in order to support districts located in rural areas. Progress with implementation should be monitored to determine alignment of rural district offices with regulations.
- Norms and standards for infrastructure to recognise the special context of rural schools. The Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Development Initiative (ASIDI) has targeted many rural schools, improving their infrastructure to meet norms and standards requirements. But it is apparent that some of these become 'white elephants' due to families migrating to urban areas. It is recommended that officials exercise due diligence when planning schools to investigate whether changing settlement patterns affect school provision.
- Norms and standards for school funding – Additional weighting should be applied to rural schools to ensure that they receive additional funding to meet particular needs. The proposed index of need for rural schools should determine priorities.
- Integrated Strategy for Small Schools (Draft, 2016) provides details of the numbers of small schools per province per educator (1-5 per school) and recommendations regarding;
 - the processes to be taken by the PEDs regarding the merger and closure of small schools;
 - The refusal by many landowners to sign S14 agreements (SASA, 1996) hindering the improvement of school environments;¹
 - Strengthening pedagogy in small primary schools with multi-grade classes and in small secondary schools (RE, 2016).
- Strengthening school governance by considering including other community leaders in SGBs, such as traditional authorities; retired professionals and the business community.

¹ The pro forma agreement in SASA 1996 stipulated that agreements should be signed giving PEDs/MECs a usufruct over private schools on public properties in perpetuity. It appears that in at least the Western Cape agreements signed are for short- and medium- term periods only. Thus it appears that such pro forma agreements are acting against the principles of SASA, that is, that the PEDs are not able to provide affected schools' security of tenure and importantly, with the resources required to offer quality education.

The NDP and the DBE's Action Plan emphasize that development is an integrated process requiring the participation of many parties – government, civil society and individuals – and consequently success of implementing certain of the above policies depends on the DBE engaging with other Ministries.

Leadership, Management and Governance

Informed by the notion of schools as hubs for community development, human resources must also include members of the broader school community as agents of development. Thus, a framework for rural schools must involve:

Enhancing community school partnerships

- Participatory actions to build self-esteem through strengthening ties within communities and between communities and schools; and
- Employing unemployed youths from the community and farms as volunteers/interns to aide school development initiatives.

Appropriately trained and supported school management team, as well as school governance

This takes into consideration the realities of rural contexts and requires:

- SGB training programmes that are context responsive;
- The possible involvement of traditional leaders or their representatives in school governance; and
- The training of school principals on delegated/distributed/ shared/servant leadership within the Ubuntu framework.

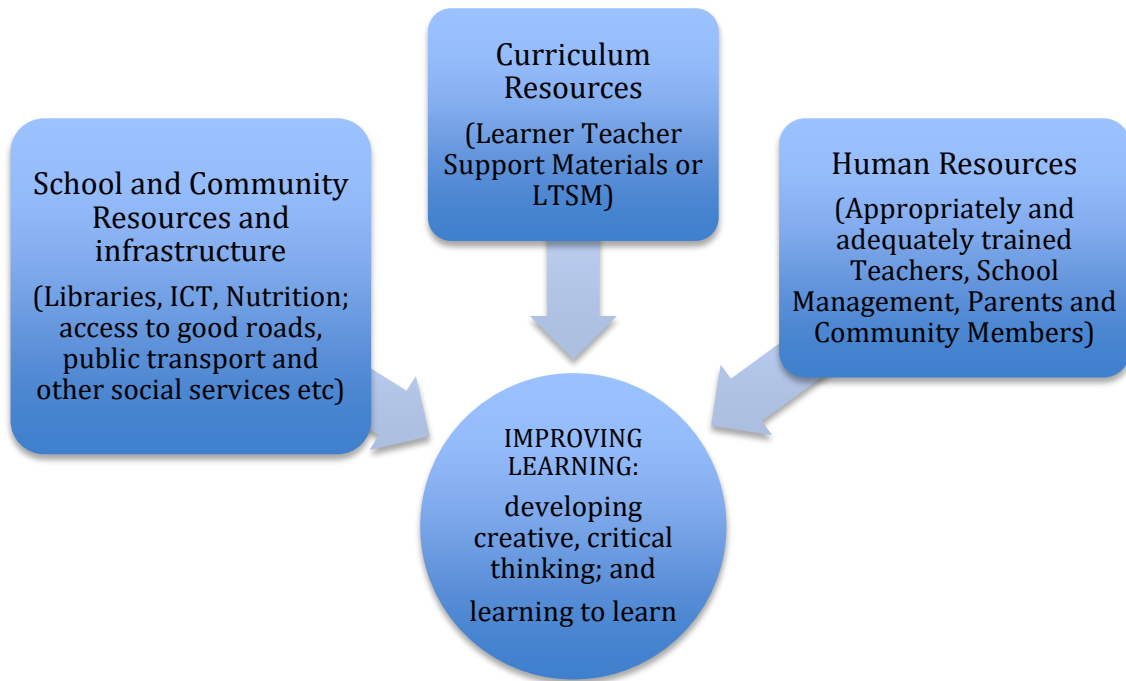
Adequate and continuous support from District offices

Human resources residing in district offices must be adequate and focused on supporting schools and teachers in rural communities. To achieve this, norms and standards for district offices may need to be amended so that there are sufficient district offices to visit remote rural schools regularly.

Resourcing Schools

Schools must be adequately and appropriately resourced to attain quality learning. Figure 3 below summarises the three resource pillars of quality rural education: Human resources; Providing infrastructure, services and facilities; Resourcing the curriculum.

Figure 3: The three resource pillars of quality rural education.



Resourcing the Curriculum

Informed by the recently adopted United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which SA is signatory, the focus in education must be on providing quality education, and fostering quality teaching and learning at all levels of the education system. From this perspective, rural education must consider three aspects of the curriculum in order to deliver quality education.

- What is offered: A relevant curriculum promotes learner mobility as well as a sense of place and belonging.
- How teaching takes place: a Teaching Practice/Pedagogy that reflects the values of the community but also prepares learners for life outside. Classroom practices should encourage learners' creative responses rather than cement traditional hierarchical relationships.
- Who teaches: Teachers trained for rural school teaching and supported by positive school-community partnerships. The section on incentives discusses the supply and demand of well-trained teachers and especially maths and science teachers

These elements of a curriculum must be supported by the provision of adequate and appropriate teaching and learning resources (LTMs), on a par with those provided in urban schools, so that rural learners are not disadvantaged compared to their urban counterparts, many of whom have easy access to these technologies. Thus, resourcing the curriculum in rural schools must involve:

- A move from deficit paradigms to strength-based paradigms, capitalising on resources and knowledge that exist in rural communities and schools that can benefit education;
- Establishing participatory decision making structures and processes desirable for the development and implementation of a rural responsive curriculum based on the values and priorities of the community regarding the learning areas to be covered in schools;
- Linking the communities' economic activities and primary resources with school activities, either in the formal curriculum or as informal community driven programmes. A case in point is Agriculture education and after school programmes linked to the NSNP and led by community members skilled in agriculture.
- Providing adequate and appropriate LTSMs, in the context of resource scarcity, including financial, material and human resources, and the need to optimise teaching and learning, basic resources such as print materials (books and other texts), supplemented, where possible, by ICTs and internet connectivity, and where there is no connectivity, community radio and audio resources.

Providing Human Resources Trained to Work in and with Rural Schools

The provision of quality teaching requires adequate and appropriately trained human resources. For rural schools, this requires recruiting and retaining such teachers, including supporting them by adapting conditions of service to meet their professional and lifestyle needs. It also requires improving teachers' pedagogical capacity and content knowledge:

- Teacher professionalization by extending incentives offered to rural teachers;
- Promoting teacher collegiality through establishing and resourcing Professional Learning Centres;
- Adapting the Post provisioning norms (PPN): Special measures should be introduced (in addition to what is currently in the policy) for small schools. The Minister may declare such schools as 'schools under special circumstances' and allow for some deviation from the current norms in order to ensure that teachers do not have to teach multi-grade classes covering many grades;
- Providing on-site specialised educators (science, maths, technology, agriculture, Learners with Special Educational Needs - LSEN) who are mobile and resourced per specialisation (e.g. science laboratory equipment). They (and their mobile equipment) spend certain days a week (or certain weeks a month) in particular remote schools;

- Developing, with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and NGOs, initial teacher training and continuing teacher development programmes that prepare teachers for diverse contexts with an emphasis on rural education; and
- Providing safe educator on-site accommodation or collective educator villages to service/house educators of a collection/cluster of remote schools, taking into consideration distance between schools. These could include space for housing, training and leisure (educator housing, meeting and relaxation venue).

Building School and Community Infrastructure

To provide quality education in rural schools, infrastructure must be built at two levels. First, at the school level, the following requires attention:

- School infrastructure development, including adequate classrooms, library and laboratory facilities; adequate and appropriate water and sanitation facilities.
- Provision by ASIDI to meet current norms and standards requirements to be monitored. Backlogs to meet norms and standards requirements indicate that additional plans must be put in place as a matter of urgency to hasten delivery.
- Until all schools can be given the required resources, an interim measure may be the establishment of a cluster centre / a professional learning centre where transport is provided between the constituent schools and the central facility. This will allow school clusters rather than individual schools become the management entity to ensure more effective and efficient provisioning to each school through a cluster. Each cluster centre must be adequately provisioned with internet access and appropriate LTSMs.
- Access to recreational facilities to be included in the norms and standards for rural schools owing to the scarcity of these in the proximity of schools.
- The Integrated Strategy for Small Schools (draft, 2016) provides a multi-disciplinary approach in supporting small schools to provide quality education through addressing human resource and infrastructure challenges.

Second, at the community service level, the following, located within an integrated approach to rural development and service delivery must be provided:

- Transport (for both teachers and learners) could cover school buses that cater for a cluster of schools;

- Good roads to make access to schools and other social services must be built;
- Other services, which impact on quality of schooling in rural communities, include housing, health care, water and sanitation;
- Agricultural schools: An initiative led by the DBE and partnered by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform and the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, could prioritise the expansion of agricultural schools working in tandem with community-led agricultural initiatives; and
- The NSNP could be expanded to cover the nutritional needs and health of learners, especially in rural areas hard hit by drought through partnership programmes between the DBE and the Departments of Health and Social Development.

Monitoring and Evaluating Rural Education

Informed by past reports and international best practice, the Rural Education Research Team recommends that the DBE implements a rural monitoring and evaluation programme to assess if and in what ways pro-poor policy and programme changes impact on rural education. DBE's Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit and the RE Directorate, the programme will engage community stakeholders and broader school communities in quantitative and qualitative analyses of change.

This process is in line with the National Education Policy Act (Act no. 27 of 1996) that assigns a key responsibility to the Minister for monitoring the implementation of national policies and evaluating education provision and performance.

One area of engagement relates to the potential disruption of school functions due to closures and mergers of schools and the transfer of learners to hostels. In this regard, issues of relevance include:

- Teachers' conditions of service,
- Access to new schools by teachers and learners,
- Learner performance,
- Governance, and
- Parental attitudes.

Further, the DBE should engage with key education research institutes that are already engaged in community and education research programmes. This will create a broader, integrated research front that is actively engaged in rural education studies.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The conceptual framework adopted by the Rural Education Research Team, that of creating policies to empower communities to mobilise educational transformation, complies with the democratic principles of the Constitution. The rationale is to address the marginalisation of rural communities so that they have the autonomy to act in their own interests. But the manifold accompanying activities and South Africa's diverse rural landscape attest to the probability of varied responses to policies, which therefore need to be carefully facilitated, adequately resourced and continually monitored.

Consequently the next step in this policy process is to use the recommendations to develop a Rural Education Policy, followed by a detailed implementation programme that includes a carefully constructed financial plan. For most recommendations the DBE and the RE directorate together with their counterparts in the PEDs will spearhead the implementation process, coordinating activities at provincial and local levels of management and governance. Some amended policies, such as teachers' conditions of service, require what will probably be a complex negotiating process between labour and government and teachers.

However the goodwill shown to the team at all stages of the research process and the willingness of all stakeholders to share experiences and offer inputs to the Team's suggested policy changes auger well for this historically neglected sector.

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PolicyBrief8.pdf

Appendix A: Summary of proposed activities: Implementation, responsibility and time frames

This provides a summary of key issues to be addressed and requires discussions with various DBE directorates before detailed activities are described.

<i>Pillar</i>	<i>Strategy/process</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Time frames²</i>
<i>Conceptual framework</i>	Engage with research studies that have built school community partnerships Pilot project in rural provinces	RE Directorate DBE PEDs NGOs/ researchers	
<i>Definition of rurality and classification of rural schools</i>	Explore current options used in SA	DBE Stats SA	
<i>Policy Alignment: Aligning existing policies with rural community and school realities</i>	Re-align existing policies to the needs of rural schools and communities	RE DBE PEDs Bargaining Council	
	-Assessing compliance with policies and legislation relating to Public schools on private land - SASA S 14 agreements, and S 58 (expropriation) of Mergers and closures of non-viable schools)	DBE PEDs	
<i>Leadership, governance and management</i>	Consider resource and training needs of district officials, school management and SGBs.	DBE PEDs COGTA	

² No timeframes can be provided until detailed activities and costs established.

	Examine potential role of traditional councils in school governance.		
Curriculum	Resource/ establish agricultural schools, Sustainable community agricultural activities relating to the NSNP; Community participation regarding subject areas.	DBE PEDs DAFF DRDLR	
Resourcing schools	ASIDI	DBE and other Ministries	
-Infrastructure and services	Coordinating work of relevant Ministries such as: - Transport - Health - Social Development. Infrastructure for recreational activities and arts and crafts.		
Curriculum	- LTSM - Explore other technologies /modes of learning for remote schools - Support for schools with multi-grade classes	DBE PEDs	
Human resources	ITE and CPD course on rural education Teachers' conditions of service especially TRIS, PPN, peripatetic teachers CPD and professional support	DHET and HEIs RE DBE PED Bargaining Council	

	Community service and internships for rural youths	DBE, Professional Learning Centres, NGOs DBE	
Monitoring and evaluation Strategy	Develop an M & E Strategy and Time frames (milestones)	Rural Education Directorate, Research Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation Unit;	