'New teachers for new times?': a participatory evaluation of a school-university partnership to improve novice teacher education in rural South Africa in the age of AIDS

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Abstract

'New teachers for new times?': a participatory evaluation of a school-university partnership to improve novice teacher education in rural South Africa in the age of AIDS is an evaluation of the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP), a school-university partnership between University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and two rural higher secondary schools in the Vulindlela district in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This thesis attempts to explore what difference the school-university partnership can make in preparing new teachers in the troubling context of rural schools typified by HIV and AIDS, poverty, and the sense of isolation. Drawing on the participatory evaluation of the three phases of RTEP (2007-2009), my thesis investigates how student teachers as a 'Community of Practice' self-reflect upon their: professional development, identity creation, pre-conceived orientation about teaching and learning in rural schools, and teacher preparation as per their perceived challenges in rural schools. In addition, I also looked at how a school-university partnership can influence the broader education discourse in rural schools, especially teacher education. This includes investigating what spaces the partnership has provided to the schools in rural areas to reflect on their practices, include their voices in the dominant teacher education discourses and improve their capacities/ understanding to address the challenges. Given that schools are usually considered as 'weak partners' in school-university partnership discourses, the focus of the partnership in the thesis is to ascertain how the partnership is beneficial or problematic from the standpoint of the schools. The study also raises the question of how these spaces can be sustained over time and what school-university partnership with limited resources can contribute in an era of growing disparities, missed opportunities and worsening inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa. This thesis signifies the importance of a reciprocal and on-going evaluation of partnerships based upon the principles of mutual involvement. Though it concludes that participatory evaluation can improve the relationships in the partnership, it also highlights the complexity of conducting participatory evaluation in diverse settings.

Résumé

Nouveaux professeurs pour les temps nouveaux? Une évaluation participative d'un partenariat école - université afin d'améliorer la formation d'enseignants débutants en Afrique du Sud rurale dans l'ère du SIDA, qui constitue une évaluation du Projet de Formation d'Enseignants Ruraux (Rural Teacher Education Project - RTEP), un partenariat école - université entre l'Université de KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) et deux écoles secondaires rurales supérieures, au Vulindlela, dans le district de la province de KwaZulu-Natal, en Afrique du Sud. Cette thèse vise à explorer la différence qu'un partenariat école – université peut faire dans la formation de nouveaux enseignants immergés dans un environnement rural affligeant, caractérisé par la présence du VIH, du SIDA, de la pauvreté, ainsi que du sentiment d'isolation. Élaboré par le biais d'une évaluation participative des trois phases du Projet de Formation d'Enseignants Ruraux (RTEP) entre 2007 et 2009, ma thèse examine comment les étudiants professeurs en tant que 'Communauté de Pratique' se projettent : dans leur développement professionnel; dans leur création d'identité; dans leur orientation préconçue d'enseignement et d'apprentissage dans les écoles rurales; dans la préparation des enseignants selon leurs défis perçus des écoles rurales. Par surcroît, j'examine également comment un partenariat école – université peut influencer de façon plus large la portée du discours éducatif dans les écoles rurales, plus particulièrement la formation des enseignants. Ceci inclut l'analyse de la place que le partenariat a procurée aux écoles dans les régions rurales, et les répercussions sur leurs pratiques, incluant l'expression de leur voix au chapitre du discours dominant de l'enseignant ainsi que l'amélioration de leurs capacités et compréhension à relever les défis qui prévalent. Considérant que les écoles sont la plupart du temps considérées comme les 'partenaires faibles' dans le discours d'un partenariat école – université, l'emphase du partenariat dans la thèse sera de déterminer si le partenariat est bénéfique ou problématique du point de vue des écoles. L'étude soulèvera également la question à savoir comment cette place pourra être maintenue dans le temps et quel type de partenariat école – université avec des ressources limitées peut contribuer dans une ère de disparités croissantes, d'opportunités manquées et d'inégalités en voie d'aggravation, dans une Afrique du Sud post-apartheid. Cette thèse souligne l'importance de la réciprocité et de l'évaluation perpétuelle des partenariats selon les principes de l'engagement mutuel. Malgré la conclusion que l'évaluation participative peut améliorer les liens du partenariat, elle souligne également la complexité de procéder à une évaluation participative dans divers contextes.

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Glossary of Terms

AR	Action Research
CAPRISA	Centre for the AIDS Programme Research in South Africa
CASS	Continuous Assessment
CCM	Constant Comparison Method
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CoP	Communities of Practice
CHESP	Community Higher Education Service Partnership
CSL	Community Service Learning
CSP	Community Service Partnership
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ESRA	Education Sector Reforms
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSE	Norms and Standard for Educators
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PDS	Professional Development School
PE	Participatory Evaluation
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RTEP	Rural Teacher Education Project
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
RTEP	Rural Teacher Education Project
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement
SASA	South African School Act
USAID	United States Agency of International Development
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
SGB	School Governing Body

Chapter 1   Introduction

1.0   Introducing the study

The first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994 marked the end of the oppressive apartheid era. Since then, the county has undergone a major transformation, including the replacement of a racist and apartheid system with one in which all are equal before the law and the government is elected by the majority of South Africans irrespective of their race, color and gender. In 1997, a new negotiated and democratic constitution was put into effect, which guarantees social, economic, and political rights to all of its citizens. Chapter 2 of the constitution, known as the 'Bill of Rights,' exclusively confers the right to basic education to all South Africans (DoE, 2008; Motala, Dieltiens, Carrim, Kgobe, Moyo, & Rembe, 2007). Despite all these developments, post-apartheid South Africa has been facing many challenges in the field of education, especially to meet the needs and expectations of poor and disadvantaged communities (DoE, 2005b, 2008). The education system inherited from apartheid was based upon racial separateness and inequalities, created systematically over a period of years. This not only depleted resources for the black majority, it also broke the culture of teaching and learning and contributed to the disintegration of the social fabric of black South Africans, especially in rural communities (DoE, 2005a; Kallaway, 2002; Kallaway, Kruss, Donn, & Fattar, 1997).

Teacher development has been regarded as central to transforming the South African educational system inherited from apartheid. However, it has encountered many difficulties, including a shortage of qualified teaching staff, especially in rural areas. Teaching and learning in rural schools are both challenging and are confronted with the issue of a lack of necessary equipment and infrastructure (DoE, 2005b). Further, the HIV and AIDS pandemic has exacerbated the situation. HIV and AIDS in particular has affected both the demand and supply of education. Approximately 5.4% of the child population aged 2-18 is HIV-positive (Motala, et al., 2007). In 2003, 17.4% of children had lost one parent and 3.4% had lost both parents (DoE, 2008). The immediate impact of HIV and AIDS and other diseases on children includes an increase in illness and absenteeism, loss of interest in education, increase in drop-outs, and increased pressures

on schools and teachers to provide emotional and psychosocial support to affected children (DoE, 2008). HIV and AIDS also affects the supply side of education; 12.7% of the teachers in 2004 were HIV-positive, with the highest rate among the population that was between 25-34 years old, especially in the predominantly rural provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. More than I8.3% of HIV-infected educators died as a result of AIDS in 2004; a significant number of them were between the ages of 25-49 years (HSRC/ELRC, 2005). In addition, the schools in rural areas are also confronted with the issues of gender violence, sexism, bullying and corporal punishment, with many of the issues being direct consequences of the apartheid legacy. All of these factors have contributed significantly toward the quality of education and a lack of interest in education and teaching in rural schools (Motala, et al., 2007).

Simultaneously, the state of teachers' capabilities to deal with the situation and to organize systemic learning in schools is also severely limited. When the post-apartheid government took power in 1994, the quantity as well as quality of teachers was a major challenge. Approximately 36% of the total teaching force in South Africa was either unqualified or under-qualified in 1994 (DoE, 2005c). According to the School Education Survey, the overall percentage of unqualified or under-qualified educators has been substantially reduced (DoE, 2005b). However, this does not tell the whole story as a large number of teachers lack training in relation to new standards initiated during the post-apartheid era, and even those who have received training often criticize its low quality (DoE, 2005b). According to new standards set by the qualification framework of the National Norms and Standards for Educators published in 2000, all new teachers must have a post-matriculate four-year professional degree level instead of a three-year post-school diploma[1], as regulated in the apartheid era for the black population. Though present educators are still considered fit for the job, about 77% of them do not qualify as per the new standards (DoE, 2005c). Similarly, in the absence of any empirical research on the state of qualifications and training of teachers in rural areas in accordance with the new requirements, it is believed that a large number of teachers in rural schools are either unqualified or under-qualified, as reflected in the declaration adopted by the recent Teacher Development Summit held in Johannesburg in 2009 (Teacher Development

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[1] REQV 14 instead of REQV 13

Summit, 2009).

A critical entry point to improving the quality of education is through newly qualified teachers; it is considered that since this new breed of teachers was produced after apartheid, they have the skills and capabilities to implement the post-apartheid policies and to play the diverse roles of educator, as prescribed in different policy statements (DoE, 2005b). However, acute shortages have been observed between the rate at which the teachers are leaving the profession and the rates at which new teachers are entering the system. The estimated annual teacher attrition rate, as observed in 2005, is approximately 5.5%, which means about 20,000 teachers are leaving the system annually (DoE, 2008; HSRC/ELRC, 2005). At the same time, the system is producing only 5000 to 7000 new teachers annually (DoE, 2008; HSRC/ELRC, 2005). Several factors, many of them indicated above, for example HIV and AIDS, poor pay, increased workload and dissatisfaction with the workplace policies and low morale are the main reasons for teachers leaving the teaching profession (Shindler, 2008). The high teacher turnover is also evident in a study, which reveals that 54% of mid-career in-service teachers reported that they had thought about leaving the teaching profession at least once during their career, followed by 29% of the surveyed teachers who reported that they had quite often thought of leaving the profession. Similarly, one-fourth of the respondents mentioned that they had considered several times leaving the teaching profession during their careers (HSRC/ELRC, 2005). Not only are existing teachers in South Africa leaving the system in large numbers, but the new South African generation is observed to be least interested in choosing teaching as a professional career. A study in 2003 reports that 1.5% of the surveyed students opted for teaching and training compared with aspirations towards a career in Business, Commerce and Management (26.6%), Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology (16.2%), and Health Sciences and Social Services (14.6%) (DoE, 2005c). Similarly, the existing profile of newly qualified educators is not promising; a young, white female with a background in social sciences is most likely to go for teaching compared to other groups (DoE, 2005c). This is not to deny their importance but only to note the need for a diversity that matches the learner population. A much more alarming situation is observed in another study, which discloses that only 64.7% of the surveyed newly qualified teachers across 11 South African Higher Education Institutions

wanted to teach in South Africa. About one-third of final year student teachers surveyed mentioned that they would like to teach abroad, though most of the surveyed students were white, and 7.4% observed that they did not want to teach at all (Bertram, Appleton, Muthukrishna, & Wedekind, 2006).

Making teaching jobs attractive to existing and new teachers and persuading the younger generation to go into teaching is one of the challenges that the post-apartheid education sector is facing. The Report of the Ministerial Review Committee on Rural Education recognized it as a major challenge in the schools and made 80 recommendations to improve education in rural areas (DoE, 2005b). The report emphasizes the need to provide more resources and improve the infrastructure of schools in rural areas. Indeed, one key recommendation of the report is to make rural teaching attractive for newly qualified educators. On the basis of the report, a new education directorate, *Directorate of Rural Education*, was established to address the shortages and reform the state of education in the rural areas in 2006. Though it is too early to predict how these new measures will affect the schools and teachers in the rural areas, one thing is clear: to make teaching in rural areas attractive, more is needed than just providing resources to rural schools. The devastating legacy of racial separateness, entrenched inequities and the slow progress of the developmental process in the aftermath of apartheid in the rural areas have given them a sense of loneliness and a 'loss of hope'. Thus, it is critical that all relevant sectors of society and all communities, especially those who have a direct involvement in the schools come forward to help break their sense of mental and physical isolation. Also, the Ministerial Review Committee pointed out that the schools in rural areas are largely seen in deficit terms, often seeing themselves as 'powerless victims' rather than looking at how they can direct their capacities and skills to the available opportunities. There is a need to look at the rural schools beyond the deficit framework, especially in terms of what can be learnt from them and what they can offer to the broader development of education. The potential of the rural communities as a strong transformative signifier, influencing the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, health professional and social workers, as noted by Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008), is largely under-researched within the South African context. In this regard, much responsibility is on agencies and sectors which are directly related to education in the

schools - for example, teacher training institutions - to play their role in providing opportunities to the younger generation to teach and work in the rural areas in a way that can influence their perception about the schools in the rural areas as well as to grow them professionally.

Post-apartheid legislation has provided opportunities for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and schools to work together. The training for teachers has been relocated to the HEIs from the teachers' colleges, and the South African School Act (SASA) 1996 emphasized decentralization and an increase in the role of local community in school functions.

1.2   The study: A participatory evaluation of the Rural Teacher Education project

Set against this backdrop, my thesis examines a school-university partnership project, the *Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP),* involving the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and two rural schools in the Vulindlela District of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. RTEP aimed at providing the opportunity to the cohorts of 3rd and 4th year B.Ed student teachers to experience rurality in the context of their teaching practicum in the rural schools under the mentorship of in-service teachers. RTEP was first piloted in 2007 in three schools, and was then replicated in 2008 (RTEP 2008) and 2009 (RTEP 2009) in two of the three schools.

This thesis, which is an evaluation of the three phases of RTEP from 2007 to 2009 (RTEP 2007, RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009), documents a teaching practicum organized around preparing student teachers to engage in work in schools in rural areas, to understand their various roles, to develop a sense of their professional identities, and improve their skills through self-reflexivity and learning. The project draws on the idea of 'communities of practice'. Furthermore, the thesis explores the challenges of a partnership project and how it operated over time in relation to the low resource, isolated rural schools.

Although I offer a more detailed account of my own positioning in the study later in the thesis (Chapter Five), it is important to say something about my own role in the study. While I am not from South Africa and was not part of the main research team, my Indo-Pak heritage helped me, I believe, to build rapport with the RTEP team, the schools

and the student teachers given that the Indian community has strong historical roots in South Africa. I used a participatory evaluation to evaluate RTEP. The evaluation was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, the student teachers, while doing their practicum, provided data mainly related to their experience. In the second stage, I, as an external facilitator, broadened the base of evaluation by involving schools and the RTEP team in the evaluation process. My own role, then, in carrying out this study was as both an outsider and insider. As an outsider, I was the person who worked somewhat at a distance from the actual team of researchers at UKZN who were working with the beginning teachers and schools to implement the project. At the same time, I was also the insider when it came to conducting the evaluation. The researchers were busy implementing the project; the student teachers in each of the 3 years were deeply engaged in their practicum, and of course the schools were doing what they do. My role was to work alongside, but independently of, all other parties to try to get an understanding of what partnerships actually mean and how communities of practice operate. This thesis is the story that comes out of that insider-outsider gaze.

1.3   Research questions and framing the key terms

The study explores the following sets of questions with respect to the schools-university partnership in RTEP:

1) How does a 'Community of Practice' (CoP) of teachers, especially pre-service teachers supported by the school-university partnership, contribute to making teaching in rural schools desirable and effective? What does a CoP contribute to teachers' professional development and identity formation, especially for novice teachers in a rural context?

2) How does Participatory Evaluation (PE) of the school-university partnership, especially in the formative stage, help to improve the partnership over time? How does it allow the key partners (i.e. schools and the higher education institution) reflect upon their experiences to improve their practices/ capacities/ mandates? How can the partnership be negotiated in favor of schools through participatory evaluation?

Since some of the key terms in my research questions have been used differently in many settings, I would like to briefly conceptualize them within the context of my

research. My understanding of 'Community of Practice' is that it originated from the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), who first coined the term CoP. It was later developed further by Wenger (1998). A 'Community of Practice' is a group of individuals participating in communal activity, and experiencing/continuously creating their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities (Wenger, 2006). The CoP framework, as developed by Wenger (1998), emphasizes that learning is a social process, constantly shaped, re-shaped and mediated by the community members, participating in the social space.

The second key term in my thesis is "school-university partnership". The term 'partnership' has been used in many different ways to describe different types of organizational relationship, including bi-lateral and multi-sectoral development projects, especially in an international setting. My focus on the term school-university partnership is related to deepening an understanding of the type of learning/knowledge that can be created with respect to teacher education (Tsui, Edward, & Lopez-Real, 2009). This is relevant to teacher education institutions and schools within the broader context of education development in South Africa.

The third key term used in my thesis is participatory evaluation. Like the other two terms, participatory evaluation has also been used in a variety of ways. The various ways include its use as a methodology for emancipation and empowerment, a tool for organizational learning, and a vehicle for improving the practices of the participants. My work related to PE in this research focuses on how participants 'make sense of their work' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and how their active involvement in the evaluation process can make the partnership mutually beneficial (Jackson & Kassam, 1998b). The center of attention of PE in this thesis is to ascertain the significance of the partnership from the standpoint of historically disadvantaged schools in the rural areas of South Africa.

1.4   Why a study of rural teacher education?

There is a need for work that examines teacher education in rural contexts for a number of reasons. First, in an environment where teaching in rural schools is unattractive and the rural areas lack quality teachers, this study explores what schools-university collaboration can contribute in making teacher education attractive and persuasive for new teachers. Unlike the dominant discourse - that schools in rural areas are deficient in term of resources and capabilities - this thesis attempts to unravel how school-university collaboration can help the student teachers and in-service teachers to emerge as a community of practice (CoP), which can influence the perceptions, attitudes and professional development of the new stream of educators.

Second, the issues in South African teacher education clearly point out to the need to make teacher education relevant to schools and communities, self-reflective, and broaden the focus of learning from a 'mentors/mentees' relationship to the overall wider environment. This study attempts to explore what difference it makes to teacher education when learning in a professional development program is linked to the broader social environment of the school/community through school-university collaborations.

Third, school-university partnerships are generally criticized as a conduit of pushing a 'dominant' partner's agenda with a focus on the university's perspectives in the partnership. In this thesis, I attempt to look at the partnership through the lens of the schools with a key focus to ascertain how schools regard their experience of the partnership through RTEP. Given the apartheid history of oppression and marginalization of the schools in rural areas, the active involvement of the schools in the partnership and in subsequent evaluations has given them the opportunity to present their perspective in relation to the broader educational discourses in the post-apartheid era.

Fourth, within the discourse of school-university partnership, there is no shortage of research about the ideal characteristics of effective partnerships. However, there is a continuing struggle to strengthen the research and evaluation component in the partnership with evidence of continuously improving relationships and articulating eachother's expectations in the partnership (Holland, 2003). My study intends to contribute in this regard by providing evidence of success/failures in improving the

relationships between the key partners in RTEP over time and addressing/ignoring the expectations of each other in the partnership.

Overview of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. In this first chapter, I have provided an overview of key challenges in the post-apartheid education system, including teacher education.

Chapter Two provides a context of the current issues as well as trends in the education system, including teacher education with respect to the apartheid legacy and subsequent post-apartheid policy transformation and restructuring of the education system. The chapter starts by providing a historical overview related to how oppressive policies of apartheid have affected the educational opportunities for black South Africans and what those issues and challenges are, which are still very much present in South African schools. The second section deals with policy and structural reforms in the South African education sector. The third section critically reviews the reform process and the fourth section describes the omissions and gaps in teacher education discourses and the possibilities of partnerships to address some of the challenges.

Chapter Three deals with the school-university partnership discourse. The chapter starts by introducing the broader partnership scholarship, especially in the field of education. In the absence of an agreement on the definition, the chapter discusses the various typologies of the partnerships. In addition to the benefits of the partnerships, the chapter also elaborates the challenges, tensions and inter-organizational dynamics within the partnership discourse. In view of the different partnership dynamics and environment in the international development, the chapter also discusses the potential and the limitations of the partnerships in the international contexts. The second section of the chapter explores the concept of a school-university partnership as a means for teacher preparation and improving the education system. The section starts with a discussion on the gaps/ omissions in the existing practices of teacher education and a potential role of school-university partnerships to address them. While doing so, the section also discusses several existing models of university-based partnerships, outlining the distinct features as well as providing critiques with respect to each model and broader reforms within the

broader discourse of globalization. The final part of this section discusses school/ university-based partnerships in international development, including in South Africa.

Chapter Four informs on the methodology and methods used for conducting the study. The chapter starts by explaining the rationale for using participatory evaluation to investigate an activity, which involves a school-university partnership to prepare novice teachers for the schools in rural South Africa. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first two sections, I provide an overview of the participatory research more broadly to contextualize participatory evaluation (PE). In section three, I address PE more specifically, outlining what is PE, why it is used, and what are its key features. In section four, I attend to a critique on PE.

In the fifth chapter I map out the use of participatory evaluation in the study. I discuss how participation is organized in the evaluation, the effects of evaluation on the partners, and the challenges I faced while doing participatory evaluation. I start the chapter by introducing the project, the *Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP).* The second section describes the process of evaluation, including the two stages in which the evaluation research was conducted. The third section outlines the methods and the data sources that are used in the evaluation research. Since each of the three phases of RTEP was evaluated, section four encompasses how the data is organized from the three years. The fifth section explains how participatory evaluation affected the partners and the partnership. In the sixth section, I describe those limitations and challenges that I observed while conducting participatory evaluation in the RTEP.

Chapter Six offers the findings of the school-university partnership project for novice teacher education in rural areas of South Africa. In looking at the evidence, I offer examples from the three cohorts, the 2007 group, the 2008 group and the 2009 group. The chapter starts with explaining how multiple 'communities of practice' formed due to partnership/RTEP. The second section chapter reports the socio-economic conditions of the area where the schools are serving. It is then followed by the standpoints from each of the key participants: student teachers, the schools, and the RTEP staff about the partnership/ RTEP. In addition, it also includes the viewpoints of learners, parents and the relevant staff from the Department of Education about RTEP.

In Chapter Seven, I revisit the partnership project and offer the larger effects on each of the three key partners. The chapter starts by describing the evolution of the partnership between the schools and the university. In the second section, I trace the 'after-life' of four student teachers who participated in RTEP and were serving full time in-service teachers at the time of interview. The third sections discusses the broader challenges within the perspectives of inequalities in rural areas associated with the wider impact of globalization and market-led strategies adopted by the South African government.

Chapter Eight provides the conclusion and implications of the study. The chapter starts with a summary of the chapters and discusses the implications of the research and creation of new knowledge. It also re-examines the effectiveness of 'Community of Practice' in teacher education, especially related to teaching practicum and identifies some discrepancies. The chapter also includes the limitations of the study and my final reflections on participatory evaluation that I experienced with RTEP. Finally, I offer recommendations for the RTEP project as a whole and for UKZN separately.

Chapter 2   The educational context for looking at teacher preparation

2.0   Introduction

In this chapter I offer a historical context of some major issues in the South African education system, including the issues related to teachers. I also provide an overview of major policy transformation in education, in particular teacher education, and present current trends and gaps in teacher education in this chapter.

The first section of the chapter covers some main issues and challenges that the current South African education system has been facing with a reference to apartheid legacy. The second section moves on to the major reforms undertaken by the post-apartheid government to transform the education system, and, in relation to this, the third section elaborates the policy-practice gap through the lens of historically disadvantaged schools and communities. The fourth section describes the case of schools and university collaboration for teacher development in South Africa. The chapter ends with a brief discussion.

2.1   The apartheid legacy and the issues and challenges in the post-apartheid education system

Though the legacy of apartheid is observed in every fabric of the South African society, it is most visible in the education system (DoE, 2007). The apartheid education was based on a dual system—the better or 'special' system for white South Africans and the 'ordinary' for black South Africans. It created inequalities in the shape of different infrastructure, resources, and preparation and training of teachers on the basis of race, ethnicity and spatial locations (Christie, 1991; Kallaway, 2002). Apartheid enacted several laws and acts, most notably the 'Bantu Education Act', to systematize apartheid education. The formal era of apartheid education was begun in 1953 when Hendrik Verwoerd, the then Minister of Native Affairs and who later served as the Prime Minister of South Africa, introduced Bantu Education to Parliament in 1953 as follows:

"*I just want to remind the Honourable Members of Parliament that if the native in South Africa is being taught to expect that he will lead his adult life under the policy of equal rights, he is making a big mistake. The native must not be subject to a school system*

which draws him away from his own community, and misleads him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze (Rose and Tummer, 1975:266 as cited by Christie (1991))."

Though 'apartheid' as a system was formally introduced in 1953, the policies of segregation were initiated long before. In 1913, the Land Act set up the 'reserves', later called 'Bantustans' or 'homelands' where the majority of the Black population, comprising 80% of South Africa was forcefully zoned to 13% of the South African land with no rights to live and work in urban or settled areas (The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The movement of the black population was severely restricted. Considered as 'contract migrant workers', blacks did not have the same rights to move and work freely as their white counterparts (Christie, 1991, p. 53). In 1923, the 'Natives Act' was passed, which allowed the native South Africans to work in urban areas 'as long as they minister to the needs of Whites' (Christie, 1991, p. 46). Education for white South Africans was free and compulsory, but for black South Africans it had many problems with no resources. The 'Bantu Act' entrenched the inequalities by making it mandatory that all African schools must be registered with the government, leaving no room even for the missionaries to set up schools in the small segment of black population (Christie, 1991). The schools were only allowed to establish in 'Bantustans' or 'Homelands', which were controlled by the 'Homelands' owners. Though the 'Bantu Act' increased black enrollment significantly in schools, it aimed at creating a different social class in South Africa to meet the expanding economy's demand for semi-skilled or unskilled black labor. In 1988, about 50% of the enrolled black learners drop-out before finishing higher primary schooling and only 2.7% of them were able to finish the standard 10 (Christie, 1991). The schools for the African population were overcrowded, lacked school facilities and had a shortage of teaching staff, especially in rural areas. In contrast, the schools for whites had resources, with qualified and efficient teaching staff. Africans were educated for unskilled jobs and labor while whites were prepared for privileged jobs and opportunities for further education (Christie, 1991; Morrell & Moletsane, 2002). The black population in 1989 was about four times larger than the white population. However, per capita expenditure on black education was less than one quarter of what

was spent on white education as shown in the table below. Similarly, sharp inequalities were also observed in teacher qualification on the basis of race and ethnicity, which shows how the policy of apartheid created different opportunities for educational development for four main racial groups in South Africa.

Table 2.1:   **The state of teachers/ education across four major South African ethnicities in 1989**

1989	African/ Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Population (in %)	69.9	10.5	3.1	16.5
Per capita expenditure on education is South Africa (in South African Rand)	656	1221	2067	2882
Pupil teacher ration	38:1	18:1	19:1	14:1
Teachers with highest qualification (University degree) (in %)	5	13	43	32 (1979 figure)
Teachers with matriculate (Std 10) (in %)	62	63	57	68 (1979 figure)
Teachers with below Std 10 (in %)	32	24	0	0

Source: drawn from the data presented by Christie (1991).

The schools for the black population were separated from the white population with a different set of curricula, governance and resources. Technical and vocational education was only meant for the white population (Kallaway, 2002). The preparation and development of the teachers was also segregated according to the race and ethnicity. The 'white' schools were taught by the qualified 'white' teachers who shared the same language, culture and values (Christie, 1991). The Bantu Act established the superiority of a minority-led white group on the one hand and created a compliant and suitable trained majority-led black labor force on the other hand. The Bantu Act brought a new set of regulations, affecting teachers and schools. The teachers were under the firm control of the government. While teachers were allowed to train from independent institutions, their qualifications were not recognized by the Bantu Department of Education. The school budgets were pegged, requiring communities to supplement the funds to ensure maintenance and infrastructural development of the school and to pay teachers' salaries (Soudien, 2002). The affluent white communities were able to inject appropriate funds to support their schools, while impoverished black communities were left at the mercy of the government or their homeland's chief.

The apartheid era not only colonized the structure, resources and policies, but also

influenced South African traditions, culture and society. Many of the practices, which are not inherently indigenous, but are in parlance—for example sexism, gender violence, authoritarianism and corporal punishment—are direct legacies of colonial and apartheid education (Mattson & Harley, 2003; Morrell & Moletsane, 2002). The Bantu Act and subsequent legislation were biased and produced gender discrimination. Pregnant women and girls were not allowed to enroll in the schools or to work and were directed to be 'remove(d) visibly from the public eye' regardless of their marital status (Morrell & Moletsane, 2002, p. 236). The controlled movement of the black population within the country separated family members from each other and severely affected the family structure. The black unskilled migrant worker was able to go to urban areas for work, while women and children were left at home. Women worked as agricultural and domestic workers. In the absence of proper funding to arrange janitors and cleaners, girls and women were also expected to do cleaning at schools. This developed a patriarchal relationship at home and in society. Morrell & Moletsane (2002) observe that male dominance also affected the school system and it was (and still is) common for boys to have multiple sexual partners. Sexual assertiveness was considered as a part of gender identity and was vociferously exercised to assert 'cultural authority over women' (Morrell & Moletsane, 2002, p. 238). Though mass schooling helped the girls' participation, it did not enrich the lives and experience of girls' education. The Bantu Education offered a heartless and violent education system, which deeply affected the girls. Beating has been an integral part of schooling discipline since colonial times and was used exclusively in the Bantu education. Since the majority of teachers were unqualified and ill-trained, corporal punishment was often used as a tool to silence the children. Similarly, it was also used to discipline children who were increasingly disenchanted from the flawed schooling and became rebellious towards teachers and parents (p. 234). African men who emerged from the system were best suited to perform unskilled work with emphasis on toughness, masculinity and physical strength. On the other hand, women suffered from both racial and gender discrimination. With no legal rights and access to quality education, women were considered as inferior, subjugated by the racial as well as gender dominance. One South African historian, Peter Kallaway describes apartheid as follows:

"The consequences of this [apartheid] system in terms of human suffering and the abrogation of human rights are difficult to overestimate, and it has been recognized as one of the most dramatic cases of institutional educational injustice in the history of the twentieth century (Kallaway, 2002, p. 3)."

The legacy of colonization and apartheid brought many challenges to post-apartheid South Africa, including racial inequities, urban-rural disparities, poverty and HIV and AIDS. Below, I consider some of these.

2.1.1 HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS has severely affected teachers as well as learners, and has pushed South Africa to the point where the country has faced a reduction in the supply of teachers. With HIV prevalence rates of about 18% among school teachers (21% among those of 25-34 years of age; and 13% among 35-44), a net reduction of 5.7% was observed in the teaching force during 2004 (DoE, 2008). In 2004 alone, 8% of the teachers who were HIV-positive died from the disease (UNAIDS, 2006). HIV and AIDS is severely disturbing the entire school structure. The work of teachers is affected due to periods of illness and emotional, moral and financial suffering. It has been observed that as soon as the affected teachers realize that they are HIV-positive, they lose interest in their careers and professional development. It has also affected the workload of other teachers, as they have to step up to fill the vacuum created by their sick colleagues (Coombe, 2000). Illness, absenteeism or the death of a teacher has had a devastating impact in rural areas where the schools are often understaffed and are heavily dependent on a few teachers.

Similarly, AIDS has a catastrophic impact on learners. There are increasing instances of children becoming orphans as their parents die from AIDS. Traumatized with the loss of one or both parents, orphaned learners have to depend upon their extended family members – close or distant—for their livelihood. Many of these learners often have to lead their families and to take care of siblings, which results in the

deepening of poverty, the shift in focus from education to survival and building new social relationships (Case, Paxson, & Ableidinger, 2004).

The quality of education is heavily compromised due to HIV and AIDS. The affected learners are more likely to get a low quality of education than others. Phurutse (2005), in a country-wide empirical survey, reveals that a school's socio-economic conditions, HIV and AIDS and low performance at schools are interrelated. During 2001-2003, the schools with poor socio-economic conditions and a high HIV and AIDS prevalence rate performed poorly in matric examinations. In contrast, the schools serving communities with a high socio-economic status and low HIV and AIDS prevalence rate performed better in the matric exams. Similarly, Case, Paxson and Ableidinger (2004) observe that poor educational outcomes among orphans are also linked to the tendency for orphans to live with their distant relatives in the absence of their parents. The kind of relationship they have with their extended caregivers is one of the key determinants that decides whether orphans stay in school: a good relationship means the continuation of their schooling, and a bad relationship means they will drop out from school sooner or later. These findings have serious implications for South African education as a large number of South African children, especially in rural areas, are orphans and are living with extended family members.

2.1.2 Gender violence and discrimination

In South Africa, there are more female students than male students enrolled in schools and in tertiary institutions (Pandor, 2005). It is, however, misleading to conclude that girls and boys have equal educational attainments. Girls' education is linked to the broader gender representation, and the way women are portrayed and constructed in society. Thus, the representation of women in managerial positions in the department of education, head teachers in schools, and senior positions in decision-making government bodies is minimal compared to men (Unterhalter, 2005). Girls who are enrolled in schools are faced with gender violence, poor learning conditions at schools and lack of opportunities to convert their skills and education into a competitive job market. Human Rights Watch (2001), in its report, observes that gender violence in South African schools is 'widespread'. Not only boys, but also male teachers in schools are involved in

sexual abuse (HRW, 2001). The most prominent forms of violence and abuse include rape in school toilets, empty classrooms, school hallways, hostels and dormitories, assault, and sexual harassment. Violence against girls has a great impact on their school's performance, which includes disruption in education, lost of interest and focus, emotional and behavioral problems, and serious implications on health, including unwanted and teenage pregnancies and the risk of sexually transmitted disease (HRW, 2001). Sexual violence affects girls' performance in school. For example, Hallman (2005) observes that school attendance of girls who were raped decreased by 30%; their school tardiness was increased by 8%, and they were 18% more likely to leave school without finishing their matriculate degree compared to those who did not experience rape or abuse.

2.1.3   Poverty, inequities and urban-rural disparity

Even though it has been 16 years since the end of apartheid, South Africa is still plagued with inequities, including urban-rural disparities. The impact of inequities is visible in all social and economic opportunities available to South Africans, including the right to education. Although 43% of the South African population lives in rural areas (Census, 2003), they lack equal opportunities for education compared to the children in townships and urban areas, as one learner from one of the rural areas observed:
"*We have a problem. The government says education is equal for blacks and whites but in fact ours lags behind. I blame the government. It has not created equal education for all. Different things are taught in urban and rural areas. That's where the problem lies* (The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005, p. 3)."

Post-apartheid South Africa guarantees that education is a constitutional right for every child. However, this constitutional right has not been realized in many parts of South Africa. There is a high 'opportunity cost' associated with children in rural areas, especially those who are a sole breadwinner or who supplement family income. In addition, school fees and other education expenses multiply the opportunity cost. The schools lack basic infrastructure, electricity, clean drinking water and sanitation and education materials. The Nelson Mandela Foundation (2005) clearly outlines the case for schools in rural areas and describes the crux as follows: i) voices from urban areas have

'monopolised the attention' (p139), which leaves the voices from the rural areas unheard at the policy level; ii) the policy documents, regulations and implementation were insensitive to the needs and requirements of the rural areas; iii) education alone cannot address the deeply-rooted social and economic grievances of the rural areas.

2.2 Reforming the education system: important policy steps initiated by the post-apartheid South African regimes

In the post-apartheid era, the focus was on transforming the education system in South Africa. Several significant steps were taken to improve and restructure the governance/administration, distribution of resources, legislation and the curricula (Moletsane, 2004). Eighteen fragmented departments of education that were based on race and ethnicity were merged into one national and nine provincial departments. The responsibility of teacher education was repositioned to the higher education institutions under the national government to train the teachers. Race and ethnicity were no longer criteria for the allocation of the education budget. Access to schooling, provisions to support a school's infrastructure and the learner-educator ratio has improved across the country. More equitable distribution of resources is assured through successive education budgets, and school nutrition programs were introduced to support poverty-ridden parents and to make schools an attractive place. School Governing Bodies are established to make the schools democratic and to encourage parents' participation in school matters (The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Similarly, some notable steps were also undertaken to transform the education policies and legislation to democratize education, encourage critical learning and transform the roles of teachers and learners in South African schools (Morrow, 2007; Nxawe & Waghid, 2003). The main purpose of the transformation was to redress the past inequalities and to provide equal opportunities to all communities in South Africa irrespective to their race and ethnicity. Some of the key policy documents that have affected schools and teachers are the following:

2.2.1 Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) and Curriculum 2005 (C2005)

Although with the recently elected Zuma government in 2009, OBE is under review, at the time of conducting this study, OBE was very much present. Outcomes-

Based Education (OBE) is considered both a comprehensive (Botha, 2002) and ambitious (Jansen, 1998) model of educational reform in South Africa. Introduced in 1997, OBE is based upon the assumption that to address the crises in South African education, the system had to work to guarantee success for all. This involved the following: decentralizing the curriculum development; promoting a learner-centered philosophy to empower learners; and making schools more effective through localized accountability mechanisms (Botha, 2002). On the basis of the OBE framework, the new curriculum known as Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was introduced in 1997 with three key foci: i) OBE; ii) Integrated knowledge system; and iii) A learner-centered pedagogy. However, C2005 is so closely linked with OBE that it became synonymous to OBE (Harley & Wedekind, 2004). The OBE and C2005 linked the success of the learning system on learners' outcomes with an emphasis on three key issues: i) Teachers need to develop their own learning programs that are appropriate for the learners and go beyond the textbooks to enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes; ii) Teachers need to assess the learners continuously. Thus, Continuous Assessment (*CASS*) was designed, requiring teachers to continuously track the progress of the learners and to provide continuous feedback to the learners about their performance. iii) Education needs to be 'child-centered'. Teaching effectively needs to encompass the surroundings of the learner, who is now a focal point of education. OBE and C2005 delinked the curricula, designed in the apartheid system, from race and ethnicity and set common standards for all South Africans. C2005 focuses on learning areas rather than discrete subjects, identifying the competencies that learners need to achieve, and set expectations and roles that teachers need to play (Sayed, 2004).

2.2.2   Norms and Standard for Educators (NSE) (DoE, 2000)

While OBE/ C2005 is focused on learners, *The Norms and Standard for Educators* is directed toward educators. It recognizes the 'competencies' (norms) and 'qualifications' (standard) as key determinants for educators to be involved in the education sector. The NSE policy documents outline:

"*The policy describes the roles, their associated set of applied competences (norms) and qualifications (standards) for the development of educators. It also establishes key strategic objectives for the development of learning programmes, qualifications and*

standards for educators. These norms and standards provide a basis for providers to develop programmes and qualifications that will be recognised by the Department of Education for purposes of employment (Morrow, 2007)."

The NSE identifies seven key roles for educators as follows:
1) Learning mediator
2) Interpreter and designer of learning programs and materials
3) Leader, administrator, and manager
4) Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner
5) Community, citizenship and pastoral role
6) Assessor
7) Learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist

The NSE encourages critical learning and teaching in schools. Of particular relevance to this project is the 'teacher's community, citizenship and pastoral role'. In the context of HIV and AIDS in particular, the NSE requires the teacher to:

"..*practice and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. The educator will uphold the constitution and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society. Within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational and other needs of learners and fellow educators. Furthermore, the educator will develop supportive relations with parents and other key persons and organisations based on a critical understanding of community and environmental development issues. One critical dimension of this role is HIV/AIDS education* (DoE, 2000, p. 14)."

2.2.3 Education WHITE PAPER 6, Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (EWP6) (DoE, 2001)

EPWP6 was designed and adopted within the legal framework of the South African Schools Act of 1996, which made education mandatory for all children (7-15 years). It also responded to numerous international frameworks and policy contexts on

'Education For All', calling the governments to include inclusive education in their education priorities. In 2001, the South African Department of Education announced the Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education to accommodate learners with special needs, including those children affected by HIV and AIDS. The then Minister for Education, Professor Kader Asmal, while announcing the white paper, outlined the two key objectives of the paper: First, to identify weaknesses and gaps in the current education system related to inclusive education, and to provide immediate assistance to the affected school-going population, which had been left out and cannot be accommodated within the existing education system; Second, to develop an integrated inclusive education and training system over the time that recognizes, accommodates and caters to the diverse learning needs of all learners regardless of their disabilities and special needs (Asmal, 2001). The policy requires schools and teachers to address all barriers to learning in schools, including poverty, disability, HIV and AIDS and others. This seems to be a holistic model of education, which considers HIV and AIDS as just one of the many obstacles to teaching and learning that the education system, especially teachers and schools, have to address.

2.2.4 The National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Learners and Educators in Public Schools, and Students and Educators in Further Education and Training Institutions (DoE, 1999)

Realizing the enormous impact of HIV and AIDS on the education sector, particularly on teachers and learners, the National Department of Education adopted the national policy on HIV and AIDS for learners and educators in public schools to ensure the right to 'education for all' with no discrimination, particularly in regard to HIV and AIDS. The policy provides a framework for the development of provincial and school policies and strategic plans to: prevent the spread of HIV infection; demystify HIV and AIDS through stigma & fear reduction and installation of non-discriminatory attitudes; and develop knowledge, skills, and behavior for protection and care (DoE, 1999). The policy targets not only learners and educators in the schools, but also district managers, pre-service teachers and educators in training institutions and the broader school community, including parents, health workers and school administration.

Notably, the policy calls for a safe school environment, provision of health advisory committees or drawing expertise from the health sector in schools, integration of life skills in the main curriculum, and provision of appropriate skills to the in-service and pre-service teachers (Moletsane & Mitchell, 2007).

2.2.5 <u>National policy framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (DoE, 2007)</u>

This policy released in 2007 provides a framework for recruitment, retention and professional development of teachers, especially beginning teachers. The policy recognized the importance of teachers' roles in steering South Africa into the 21st century and the complex nature of teaching. With the vision "more teachers, better teachers", the policy aims to address the issues of apartheid legacy, social inequality, especially in rural schools, teachers' demand and supply, and making the profession attractive to young South Africans. The framework understands teacher education in two systems: Initial Professional Education for Teachers (IPET); and Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD). The framework envisions teachers' professional development as a 'self-motivated' process where the primary responsibility for professional growth lies within the teachers, and the Department of Education is responsible for creating an enabling environment (ELRC, 2009). In line with the South African Schools Act of 1996 and the EWP6, the framework aims to address, among other items, the negative impacts of poverty, and HIV and AIDS.

2.3 From policies to implementation: gaps and shortfalls

Though the post-apartheid education policies have made a major breakthrough in releasing South African education policies from the clutches of apartheid and colonization, critics have questioned the effectiveness of these policies on schools, teachers and learners across the country (Chisholm, 2004; Jansen, 1998; Morrow, 2007; Sayed, 2004). Though the policies have helped in building the South African middle class, especially a racially mixed middle class, they fall short in empowering the historically disadvantaged and marginalized groups. For example, Morrow (2007) observes that the OBE cannot yield the same results in different settings. The OBE

implementation requires a supportive environment, which is missing in under-resourced schools. The teachers, especially in rural areas, often lack appropriate skills and means to meet the demands of OBE. Further, the reporting system of OBE, *Continuous Assessment (CASS)*, is overloaded with procedural requirements, leaving less time for teachers to teach. Morrow (2007) has observed that the above-mentioned seven roles of teachers, as specified in the *Norms and Standards for Educators*, have made the teachers' work more complex and difficult, especially in rural areas. Teachers serving in well-resourced urban schools are more likely to fulfill the seven roles, but teachers in rural and township schools will struggle in the presence of large classrooms, poverty-ridden areas and traumatized learners due to HIV and AIDS.

Mattson and Harley (2003) reveal substantial differences between the policy and practice, especially in rural schools. The new set of education policies with a 'modernist' approach to prepare South Africa for 21st century does not conform to the ground realities and traditions in the rural areas. Many teachers lack the appropriate professionalism, confidence, competency, training and thinking, which has restricted them in implementing the policies in letter and spirit. The changing roles of teachers, including the 'teacher as mediator', 'teachers as facilitator and administrator', and 'teacher as designer of learning programmes' require strong reflexive competencies, which many of the teachers, especially in rural areas, have been lacking. Citing the findings of a nationwide study conducted by the President Education Initiative to ascertain the effectiveness of OBE and C2005, the authors observe a complete disjuncture between policy and practice. Though teachers have accepted the fundamentals of learner-centered pedagogies and critical learning, as prescribed in OBE and C2005, they were not fully prepared for critical learning and teaching. For example, the authors have reported that teachers in one school mentioned that changing the physical settings of a classroom—i.e. placing learners in groups and moving them from the walls—would automatically generate child-centered pedagogy and critical learning. Mattson and Harley (2003) also observed that the new set of policies failed to understand the 'environmental restrictions' in many South African regions, including stereotypes, cultural taboos and violence. Many of the new roles for teachers are not even consistent with the teachers' own personal and cultural values and the local traditions. For example, teachers in one area informed the

authors that they opted to avoid conflict rather than open up discussion in order to prevent communal backlash and a violent reaction (Mattson & Harley, 2003). A teacher in a primary school described her teaching environment in the following way:

"*We had a group of boys in Grade 6 who used to be in and out of school. These boys were being trained as soldiers to protect their political party leaders in the area. Sometimes they carried guns at school because they had to alert at all times for the safety of their leaders. We had very little to say in this regard because we had a fear, but what they were doing was dangerous for their lives because they were still very young for that* (Mattson & Harley, 2003, p. 288)."

Jansen (1998) noted that the reforms in educational policies, especially the introduction of OBE and C2005, were initiated on a transformative note, but ended up regaining the political credibility of the South African government. The author contends that the attempts to ignore the classroom practices while transforming the education policies will only yield to the failure of the new policies.

Sayed (2004) observes that the post-apartheid policy change in teacher education is generally criticized on four fronts. On the first front, the change is considered as 'loss of innocence' as it failed to produce the desired results. On one hand, the policies failed to improve the situation of historically disadvantaged groups who were systematically excluded and marginalized during the apartheid era. On the other hand, the dominant forces were successful in maintaining the privilege. The principles of equity were compromised in the governance, deployment, recruitment, and training of teachers and the distribution of resources. On this account the reform in teacher education is seen as "*a victim of pragmatic orientations of a new bureaucracy which betrayed the 'true ideal' of a new South Africa* (p250)." On the second front, the change is viewed as 'necessary cost-saving'. The desire to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teacher education in the system surpasses the social goals, processes and the content. Most of the decisions, including relocating teacher training from colleges to the universities under the direct control of the central government were driven by the assumptions of decreasing the cost and improving efficiency. On the third front, it is contended that the change is an attempt to 'correct teacher deficit'. Teachers are often depicted as 'undisciplined', spending less

time on actual teaching tasks and are not professionally capable. This has damaged the teachers' image, and the new policies were successful only in setting standards, regulations and codes of conduct with new surveillances and inspection structures on teachers to correct their images. Finally, on the fourth front, the change is considered as a 'symbolic rhetoric'. It implies that the political leadership enacted the different policies to gain short-term benefits, mainly related to their political gains, rather than for the purpose of genuine implementation. Though the policies used the rhetoric of 'radicalization', they fell short in delivery of equity and fairness as they were seen as a 'mismatch' with the ground realities and were taken as contradictory and complex.

Given the above critique on policy transformation, the current inequities and urban-rural inequalities in South Africa are also seen as the direct consequences of globalization and the market-oriented state policies (Bond, 2000, 2006; Mindry, 2008). Bond (2000) observes that the post-apartheid government, soon after taking power, shifted its reform agenda from its socialist liberation mandate to the strict disciplinary policies of modern neoliberalism. This has done significant material damage to the poor and the working class. The failure of the leadership of the African National Congress, the South African ruling party, to deliver its promises started when the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was replaced by the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) within a couple of years of its inception. Nelson Mandela, in his very first election victory speech, regarded the RDP, which had a firm backing and support from all key social movements and civil society actors, as the basis of ANC victory and promised to use it as a cornerstone of its policy. Designed on the notion of 'affirmative action', the focus of RDP was on extensive state support to meet all basic needs of South Africans, redistribution of land, and equitable economic and social growth. In contrast, the GEAR was designed to discipline the financial affairs of the government as per the desires of 'Washington Census', a corporate sector and neoliberals within the ranks of the government. The GEAR labeled the government's expenditures as excessive, especially on service and wages. It further asked the government to employ market-led strategies to design its economic and social policies.

In relation to what Bond observes as the shift in the government's policy from socialist mandate to neo-liberal assimilation, Stromquist (2005) narrows it down and

links it to the growing inequalities in the South African education sector. Stromquist (2005) argues that the neoliberal-led education reforms have created social and economic marginalization of the deprived. Education, as per the market-led agenda, is considered as a commodity and the schools and the universities are the market place, where education can be purchased according to the individual's economic and social well-being. Although the emphasis of the dominant discourse of 'knowledge economy' is on the spread of education, knowledge and continuous learning, government spending on education and training has significantly decreased, especially in poor nations. The main impacts of neoliberal policies on education are a reduction in educational expenditures (user-charges), decentralization of education system (governance), and the evaluation/ assessment of education systems through a set of universally comparable standards (quality). All these impacts have negatively affected the poor and disadvantaged. With heavily curtailed public spending on education, the burden to send students to school is on parents. Even if the school is free, parents have to bear the associated cost through expenditures on uniforms, books, and educational materials. Despite the high cost of schooling, the return of education can only appear after a long-term investment, which most of the rural communities cannot afford. Considering the high opportunity cost of schooling and long-term investment on education, many parents in the rural areas prefer to keep them at home to help in domestic and farm work. Similarly, one of the key tenets of globalization is decentralization and privatization of education. However, the underlying assumption is not to empower local people, but to increase the efficiency of the system and to reduce the cost. Parents and local communities are increasingly involved in schools to make the school's bureaucracy flexible and efficient. The education budget is still controlled by central ministries, and the rhetoric of tailoring schools as per local needs does not support any evidence of decentralizing the monetary resources, skills and training, and decision-making prerogatives to the localized units. However, an immediate effect of decentralization is on the reduced budget and national support for education. Similarly, quality education is another key area of the globalization discourses. In the absence of sufficient resources for teacher education and schools' infrastructure, the quality is limited to testing students. Under the auspices of international donors, universal standards are developed to assess the student across and

within the countries. The 'wealth-based performance differential' between the learners from the rich and poor countries is used to criticize the deficiencies of the poor countries without strengthening and correcting the public system (Stromquist, 2005).

A key challenge for the South African education system is to successfully link policy principles to grounded realities. In terms of a teacher's knowledge and skills, they often have a poor grasp on the content and lack a 'sense of plausibility' (Morrow, 2007). The remedies cannot be carried out through a 'modernist' false assumption that a generic set of skills and knowledge, which is universal, formal and content-laden, can be transferred to teachers, which they can apply in all settings (Mattson & Harley, 2003). The perceived change requires programs that focus on teachers' subjective understanding of their work, their everyday experiences in the schools and an awareness of the context in which they are teaching. Furthermore, many of the post-apartheid South African policies have widened the gap between historically disadvantaged schools and historically advantaged schools and it has to be seen in the wider context of socio-economic development in the age of globalization (Chisholm, 2004; Christie, 1999; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Harber, 2001; Harley & Wedekind, 2004; Stromquist, 2005).

Given the above, the case of initial teacher education is particularly critical as beginning teachers have an important role to carry forward the post-apartheid education transformation. Many in-service teachers are regarded as the product of the flawed teacher education system in the apartheid era (Teacher Development Summit, 2009). But this is not the case for novice teachers. However, it remains a challenge in terms of how to prepare beginning teachers who are more able to understand and negotiate the radical changes in the nature of the work, identities, values and competencies of teaching in post-apartheid South Africa (ELRC, 2009).

2.4 Towards school-university partnerships for beginning teacher education in South Africa

The National Teacher Audit Report in 1995 was the first major document which highlighted the severe discrepancies in South African teacher education. Reviewing 281 institutions that were offering teacher education, the report concluded that the existing system of teacher education, which was inherited from the apartheid era, was inefficient, expensive and unable to produce quality teachers for all South Africans. The apartheid

ideology has systematically suppressed the provision of quality teachers in a desired number for the black majority. Teachers were trained in racially defined institutions to serve the specific needs of geography, race and ethnicity. When the newly democratic government came into power, the crises of teachers, both in terms of quantity and quality, is considered one of the critical challenges for post-apartheid South Africa (Sereto, 2004). As a remedy, new policies, structures and governance were enacted during post-apartheid (as discussed above) to provide equal educational opportunities to all South Africans. The fragmented and divided structures for teacher education along racial and geographical lines were replaced by a uniform, central system under the direct control of the Federal government. The multiple structures for teacher education were all merged into Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with greater autonomy to prepare teachers for all South Africans. In 2004, the Council of Higher Education (CHE) initiated a review of teacher education, and a National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development was gazetted in 2007, as discussed above. The framework provided the basis for teacher education in post-apartheid South Africa (Kruss, 2008).

From 1994 to 2006, despite major policy shifts, the restructuring of the education system, the enactment of the new curriculum, and the transformation of the teaching landscape, many argue the quality of education across the South Africa has not significantly improved (Kruss, 2009; Morrow, 2007; The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). In addition to the many discrepancies discussed in the above section, one key reason for this failure relates to the gaps in teacher education itself.

Johnson, Monk, & Hodges (2000), for example, observe that the lack of a supportive environment (physical, social, and political) minimizes teachers' potential to act and they are unable to apply all of what they learnt into their practice. Buthelezi (2004) observes the same, but in the context of HIV and AIDS. While reflecting on teacher training programs, she asserts that most of the existing programs are unable to address the context in which teachers are teaching in the classrooms. Consequently, when trained teachers try to teach, they often felt constrained by the different ground realities. Similarly, most of the current teachers' professional development programs have less teacher involvement in the design and conceptualization of the training and professional development projects. The programs are designed within the broader policy frameworks

with a top-down approach. Teachers are either not involved or contacted at a later stage in the process. As a result, trained teachers find it difficult to translate their learning into action due to changed realities.

Samuel (1998) asserts that teacher education, especially pre-service teacher education, has to de-link itself from apartheid ideology. He suggests wider collaboration between teacher training institutions and learning sites (i.e. schools) to equip teachers as well as teacher educators the required skills to critically challenge their apartheid-dominated ideologies, culture, and history. He argues that teachers, as well as teacher educators, in collaboration with the school systems, have to be 'critical reflective practitioners' who continuously examine and confront the existing teaching practices and theories and generate new ideologies that are consistent with post-apartheid South Africa.

Barasa & Mattson (1998) have noted that most of the South African teachers trained in the apartheid era lack 'values', 'commitment' and 'competencies' to improve their professional development. One way to improve their commitment toward their professional development is to provide them the space for self-reflection and self-reflexivity. The importance of self-reflection and self-study in teacher education is also observed by Stuart (2006). Using visual arts, for example photographs and videos, as a tool for self-analysis, Stuart observes that pre-service teachers were able to reflect upon their attitudes and behaviors related to HIV and AIDS and the stigma associated with the pandemic.

Mitchell (2004), in a study of 'memory work' involving beginning teachers, proposes that having them recall their past experiences of gender violence and inequality can help to shape the present and future. Locating memory work within the larger area of self-study in teacher education, she argues that memory can allow beginning teachers to study notions of teachers, schools and learners as they (or their teachers) experienced during the apartheid era, and articulate their role as teachers for post-apartheid South Africa.

Morrow (2007) notes that many schools, especially in underprivileged areas, have been facing issues of inefficiency and maladministration, a poor conceptual grasp by the teaching staff on their subject areas, and a lack of resources at schools. He concludes that

South African schools lack a sense of 'systematic learning' and suggests a 'professional' remedy, focusing on preparing quality teachers who are competent and committed.

Several South African authors have pointed out that South African society has placed very high expectations on teachers, but has provided less support to them (Kallaway, et al., 1997; Moletsane, 2004). Moletsane (2004) outlines three specific expectations that society has heaped upon teachers. First, teachers in the post-apartheid era have to lead the path to redress the past grievances. Second, teachers have to respond to high unemployment rates, high failure rates in grade 12, teenage pregnancy and sexual violence in and around schools, and the pandemic of HIV and AIDS. Third, teachers have to develop a new generation that is capable of ensuring economic prosperity of South Africa in the new era. Despite the complex tasks given to teachers, the system that supports them is overburdened. The reciprocity that teachers should receive from the system as well as from society is missing. Teachers lack personal and professional development, welfare and respect, good pay, basic infrastructure and physical resources at their work places, especially in rural areas. The situation is further aggravated when teachers themselves are victims of many issues such as poverty, violence and HIV and AIDS. Consequently, teachers are not only poorly placed to play their role, but are also highly demoralized because of their limited abilities to deliver multiple expectations in the given situation (Moletsane, 2004).

Kruss (2009) draws attention to the current institutions that prepare teachers. After examining the case studies of five South African universities that offer teacher education, she emphasizes that HEIs themselves need to improve their practices and contribute to 'creating new knowledge' related the initial teacher education and their preparation. She concludes that a lack of focus on the system that produces teachers is also one of the reasons for the failure of producing quality teachers (Kruss, 2009).

While South African researchers assert the need to revisit the discourse of teacher education, they also advocate for an integrated effort to address the myriad of inter-related challenges as noted above. The participants of the First Teacher Development Conference in KwaZulu-Natal convened by the provincial Department of Education in 2004, for example, strongly supported the need to improve the teaching and learning competencies as per the complex social issues of poverty, HIV and AIDS, and gender

violence. Participants also emphasized that teacher development should be seen as an "umbrella for school-based interventions that target the various complex educational and social issues that confront teachers and schools" (Moletsane, 2004, p. 210). However, Molestane (2004) further stresses that the efforts to address those issues have to be taken by more than one sector of the society. Similarly, the participants of the Teachers Development Summit 2009, convened by the Department of Education in collaboration with different partners, including South African's largest teacher union in Johannesburg, strongly observed that teacher development is both a right and duty of schoolteachers, and the schools' sites are the best place to develop teachers. The summit also contended that while teachers are ultimately responsible for their professional development as a part of life-long learning, the provision, management and quality assurance is the collective responsibility of all stakeholders and must be adequately resourced. The supportive teachers development strategies must be designed and appropriately resourced, especially where the social context of school makes exceptional demands on teachers (DoE, 2009).

The post-apartheid legislative and structural transformation in the education sector, as discussed above, brought new possibilities for HEIs and schools to work together. In particular, Section 21 was enacted in the South African constitution, encouraging schools to devise their own ways to address some of the problems. Section 21 gives specific powers to schools to democratize the governance of the schools, ensure community participation in the school administration through school governing bodies, and collaborate with different agencies to seek resources and improve practices.

2.5 Discussion

Teachers have a pivotal role in transforming the education system inherited from apartheid. The system has gone through major overhaul during the past 16 years in terms of delinking it from the oppressed policies of apartheid based upon racial, ethnic and linguistic fragmentation. The new set of legislations has shaped teachers' identities simultaneously as professionals (such as a 'liberator', 'facilitator' and 'subject specialist'), workers/state functionaries (employees of the Department of Education) and community/social workers (pastoral and community development). It has altered the teacher's job significantly and has put them under immense pressure to act and deliver.

Yet there is a lack of understanding about teacher education itself, especially related to historically disadvantaged schools, for example in rural areas. Teachers have little involvement in the process of policy development. Yet teachers are demanded to implement the policies. The top-down approach fails to fully grasp the local environment, which is rich and diverse, but complex. Teachers lack information to fully understand the policies, and the policies lack a regard for grassroots complications. This further aggravates when many teachers have been facing multiple challenges related to HIV and AIDS, poverty, a lack of resources and violence with no or little support. The issues with which the South African education system is engulfed in require a broader political, financial, professional and social response, and no single agency or sector is capable of offering a solution. In terms of teacher education, a renewed focus is needed to conceptualize the appropriate framework for teacher education in relation to rural schools. The framework should be capable of addressing the shortcomings in teacher education and linking it with a broader socio-political, cultural and local context.

Chapter 3   The praxis of schools-university partnerships: benefits, challenges and issues in practice

3.0   Introduction

There has been a burgeoning interest in school-university partnerships in recent years though the main body of research is limited to the experiences in the industrialized world. The need for school-university partnership emerged from the West when a call for reforming the education system was intensified during 1980s. In the United States, for example, there was a common perception that teachers were not fully capable of addressing the new social, political and economic challenges of technological and globalization advancements (Holmes Group Report, 1986). In other parts of the world, including the United Kingdom and Australia, the need for school-university arose as a result of a strong sense of urgency that teacher education is less relevant to schools. Educators were concerned that that teachers' training was less connected with the learning sites, i.e. schools, and that teacher education is not very relevant to classroom practices (Edward, Tsui, & Stimpson, 2009). A general consensus is observed among educators from different countries that pre-service teachers are getting insufficient formal training from the universities, and that there is a need to ensure that teachers' preparation and professional development is situated in their workplace (Tsui, 2009).

In this chapter, I explore school-university partnership within the context of teacher education, especially in relation to South Africa. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The chapter starts with a broader overview of the term 'partnership' to frame school-university partnership. The section provides a brief description of different typologies associated with the partnership, critical elements, challenges & tensions, and the dynamics of relationships within the partnerships. The second section discusses the broader partnership discourse in the international context by providing a brief overview of the aid politics through donors and INGOs and its implications in connection to international development. In the second section, I discuss the emerging themes of school-university or university-based partnerships for initial teacher education. The section starts with identifying the gaps in the existing models of teacher education and the potential role of the school-university partnership within the broader reform agenda in teacher education. In this section, I also outline several key existing models of university-

based partnerships with their distinct features and challenges. I also reassess these models with relation to major criticism associated with teacher education reform, including within the perspectives of inequalities linked to globalization. The section ends by providing a description of a new dimension i.e. learning in school-university partnership through 'Communities of Practice'. The final section covers school/ university-based partnerships within the context of international development. In this section, I discuss why the concept of school-university partnership is under-researched in international settings and how the dominant concept of school-community partnership has affected the education system in general and teacher education in particular. The chapter ends by providing an overview of some current trends in South African Higher Education Institutions, including school-university partnerships.

3.1   Overview of partnerships

The impetus for developing collaborative partnerships is the acknowledgement that working together is likely to achieve the objectives that cannot be accomplished while working alone. When dealing with an issue or problem whose solution goes beyond the scope of any single agency, a collaborative relationship with other agencies may be a viable approach and may serve as a lever for change. The literature on partnership lacks consensus in defining partnership (Brinkerhoff, 2002; McQuaid, 2000). The term 'partnership' covers differing concepts and practices and is used to describe a range of relationships in different circumstances and locations.

Given the lack of consensus on the term 'partnership', different typologies of partnership are developed to understand the function of partnership. For example, Karasoff (1998, p. 15) distinguishes three types of relationships within the partnership that are often used interchangeably: 'Co-operation', 'Co-ordination', and 'Collaboration'. 'Cooperation' is described as joint activities engaged in an informal setting to achieve individual and mutual goals. Although parties involved in 'Cooperation' may keep going about their individual business, cooperation involves information sharing and networking between them. 'Coordination' represents the next level of relationship. Parties involved in coordination work together with shared activities and may have some joint formal structure. 'Collaboration' is the third or the final level, which is more structured and

formal than the former. In 'collaboration', the parties share common goal(s) and responsibilities. In collaborative relationships, parties may restructure the process and make it conducive for shared decision-making and responsibility, cooperation, and mutual interdependence (O' Hair & Odell, 1994).

Edward, Tsui, & Stimpson (2009, p. 6) observe two major types of educational partnerships: 'Complementary; and 'Collaborative. In 'Complementary' partnerships, both parties recognize that each partner brings its unique characteristics and has separate responsibilities with no common structure. The amalgamation of the diverse attributes complements each party, which in turn, helps the partners to achieve those goals that cannot be achieved while working alone. In 'Collaborative' partnerships, both parties plan and work together under a common structure.

Brinkerhoff (2002, pp. 21-22) identifies three main perspectives of establishing partnerships: i) 'Normative'; ii) 'Reactive'; and iii) 'Pragmatic'. Partnerships established in 'normative' perspectives, mainly from Civil Society Organizations, are a critique of dominant partnership approaches, which are usually uneven and heavily tilted toward one or a few partner(s). The advocates of 'normative' partnership stress equality, balance of power, inclusiveness, democratically initiated structures, shared decision-making, reciprocal accountability, and empowerment. The second perspective is a "reactive" that emerged as a reaction to normative partnership. Because of the severe criticism by the advocates of normative partnerships on the dominant partnership discourses, some organizations have reflected upon their practices and sought greater participation of their stakeholders. However, many others have responded to the criticism by largely co-opting the terminologies and changing language in their reports, mission statements, and documents. Examples of 'reactive' partnerships can be located in the practices of large organizations representing government, donors and the corporate sector. The third perspective is 'pragmatic' with individuals and organizations realizing that their objectives cannot be accomplished unless they establish a partnership. The intent of such a perspective is not to make the partnership equal or to assure a balance of power, but rather to achieve predetermined individualized goals through partnership. This kind of arrangement can be contractual or based upon some agreed terms and conditions.

3.1.1 <u>Partnership in practice: Challenges, tensions, and inter-organizational dynamics</u>

In practice, most of the partnerships are uneven. Some partners have dominating roles and others have subordinating roles. The historical and political context in which partnerships develop and work shape the relationship. At the same time, each partner organization with different characteristics such as structures, procedures, aims and objectives tends to function and relate with other partners in different ways (Cardini, 2006). Thus, partners have to face several challenges and barriers to develop strong partnerships. These barriers or challenges are related to the: i) Structure and function of the partnership; ii) Culture and Language of the organizations involved in the partnership; and iii) Individuals representing different organizations in the partnership (Cardini, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000; Karasoff, 1998). Structural and functional barriers emerge when partnerships have ambiguous, complex, and dynamic structures. This type of barrier is common when the partners are not fully aware of other partners and their specific roles. The structural and functional barrier emerges in the absence of flexibilities in the processes of implementation and planning the partnerships as well as in the partner organizations. A cultural and language barrier is related to the different ways in which organizations are used to working. Partnerships with diverse working cultures may involve a lack of understanding and inaccurate views of other organizations (Cardini, 2006; Huxham & Vangen, 2000). An individual barrier includes the attitudes and behaviors of the people affiliated with the partner organizations. Though the partnership is established between the organizations, the individuals who lead the partnership and represent different partner organizations have an important role to play. Thus, collaboration is often referred as an attitude and a process that occurs among people, not only among institutions (Karasoff, 1998).

The above barriers often lead to the feeling of fear, apathy and cynicism within the collaborative framework. This in turn paves the way for an attitude, which unduly protects individual territories within the partnership. These barriers, if not handled properly, can harm the partnership and can produce a collaborative inertia instead of collaborative advantage through the partnership.

3.1.2 Partnership discourse and international development

The term 'partnership' has different meanings in the Western industrialized world and in international development work (Lewis, 2000). In the West, the concept of a welfare state necessitated the role of the 'third sector' in service delivery and advocacy. Privatization in the 1980s has further increased the role of non-state actors and the relationship between government and voluntary agencies has changed, particularly in service delivery. Alternative terminologies such as "contracting" (a fee for services exchanged) emerged and reconstructed the inter-organizational relationships. Though partnerships may remain unequal, each sector recognized mutual dependency and institutionalized inter-organizational relationships through contracting.

In international development, the dominant partnership discourse emerged in the aftermath of colonization (Fowler, 1998; Lewis, 2000; Rao & Smyth, 2005). The national governments of the newly liberated states assumed a major responsibility for the economic growth along with social and political stability. However, the governments remained under constant pressure from Western governments as well as from human rights groups. Western governments and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) often criticized the governments' inabilities to fulfill the dream of economic growth, and human rights groups lamented the governments on their lack of commitment to addressing the challenges that the poor and marginalized groups had been facing. Thus, during 1960s and 70s, the concepts of three different entities: the government; the market; and the civil society emerged. Similarly, the hard conditionalities associated with the models of economic liberalization and growth as presented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank during the 80's further curtailed the governments' abilities to act as a major service provider. Alternatively, the non-governmental organizations were seen as potential agencies to fill the gap of service delivery, and to bridge the links between the market forces and the government through partnerships. This led to a significant increase in financial aid to NGOs through Northern donors and NGOs amidst the environment of economic and development adjustment and privatization (Rao & Smyth, 2005). New debates regarding the 'desired relationships' between Northern NGOs and Southern NGOs surfaced with a common conclusion of

forging 'partnerships' (Fowler, 1997). The neo-liberal terminologies of 'good governance' and 'corporate social responsibilities' in the 1990s further established the role of non-governmental organizations in development work.

Given the above brief history of partnerships, the dominant model of the partnership in developing countries generally consists of the following three sectors: i) Donors; ii) Governments; and iii) NGOs/CBOs. The most common reasons cited to forge partnerships in international development are: i) Decline in development funds; ii) Dominance of a neoliberal development agenda (such as privatization and minimal role of government in service delivery); iii) Disenchantment with the role of governments as effective and efficient vehicles for service delivery; and iv) Expansion of civil society organizations (Fowler, 1997; Hailey, 2000; Rao & Smyth, 2005).

In international development, two types of relationships within the partnerships are widely seen: "authentic or active" (Hailey, 2000, p. 314); and "dependent or conventional" (Hatley, 1997, p. 16). In authentic partnership, the partner organizations need each other to achieve their aims and objectives. The partnership is based on mutual trust and commitment, shared values and culture and accepted standards of legitimacy, transparency and accountability. The relationship in an 'authentic' partnership is horizontal and reciprocal with a two-way exchange of information between the partners (Hatley, 1997). In sharp contrast to 'authentic' partnership, a 'dependent' partnership is unequal where one agency drives the agenda (Hatley, 1997). The 'dependent' partnership is vertical, bureaucratic and is often guided by the availability of funds and vested interests. In relation to the above, Martelia and Schank (1997) observe that dominant partnership model is a "hidden colonialism" (p 283), in which the Northern partner controls the plan, design and funds of the partnership. The Southern partners are contacted to employ cost-saving strategies and to involve the Southern partner in the implementation of the activities. Alternatively, the authors suggest the approach of "working for" rather than "working together" with a focus on mutual exchange and strong linkages between the two partners (p 283). Between northern-southern alliances, the authors emphasize that a larger role should be given to the southern partner.

'Authentic' partnerships have several benefits, including an efficient use of resources, increased institutional sustainability, improved participation and sharing of

knowledge and skills (Hailey, 2000). However, if the partnerships are not 'authentic' it can create several problems, including a lack of trust and power imbalances between the partners (Hailey, 2000). One partner (Northern NGO) enjoys 'expertise', access to funds, and 'political power' while the other partner (Southern NGO) has limited resources. The 'power imbalance' is clearly evident in multi-sectoral partnerships involving donors, INGOs, government agencies and local NGOs.

In the absence of an authentic partnership, Kapoor (2005) draws attention to the dangerous implications of an unauthentic partnership. He asserts that the desire of INGOs to work directly with local community-based organizations has resulted in promoting a culture of 'cooking up projects' by the local NGOs to justify the funding. The present structure of funneling the funds through INGOs to local NGOs develops a relationship that is based upon the vested interests of both INGOs and local NGOs. It further promotes dependence and dominance, and maintains the status quo. Above all, he fears that such attitudes/practices resulted in killing or a 'taming of' genuine grassroots activism for real social change.

Martelia & Schank (1997) argue that the term 'collaboration' or 'partnership' has its roots in the developing world and in genuine struggle. The radical solidarity movements in Latin America, during late 60s and 70s, were based on the principle of cooperation between organizations through the sharing cultural experiences and working together for a common cause. The authors further observe that the process of globalization and privatization significantly influenced and tamed the spirit of working together for a social cause into market-oriented individualistic interests. Miraftab (2004) observes the dominant model of public-private partnerships in international development as an instrument to advance the neo-liberal agenda of decentralization. Terming the partnership as the "Trojan horse" (p 85), the author asserts that the partnership can dispose the available resources from the poor through false promises of sustainable development.

3.2 Emerging themes in partnerships: school-university collaborations for transforming novice teacher education

Though the above discussion broadly presents the dominant partnership discourse and its challenges, a variety of focused-partnerships also exist between different sectors and institutions. One such kind of partnership is between schools and universities, though they are relatively new. Dillon, Mitchell & Strong-Wilson (2007) observe that globally learners in schools are increasingly diverse all over the world in terms of culture, language, learning, and social class. The global movements to improve education, whether *World Fit for Education* or *No child left behind* in the U.S. or Europe and *Education for All* in the rest of the world, have all focused on dealing with the diverse student population in schools, especially related to diversity, quality, accessibility, and achievements and learning. The attention to meeting their demands is more focused on schools and teachers in an era of diminishing resources and increasingly stressful and less stable families. Thus, schools are now under a constant pressure to play an important role in dealing with the changing landscape of the student population, and need to work in close collaboration with other agencies such as social, health and community services.

Dillon, Mitchell & Strong-Wilson (2007) observe that a key component within teacher education relates to how pre-service teachers are prepared to address the diverse needs of the learners and the associated challenges. Traditionally, schools and the universities have had distinct roles and missions. However, a shift in tradition has been observed in many Western contexts. The need for a school-university partnership emerged when it was considered that traditional models of teacher education were not fully capable of producing teachers for changing times (Edward, et al., 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 1990; Sandholtz, 2002).

There are a number of gaps in contemporary models for teacher education. Schulz (2005), for example, reckons that contemporary teacher education programs fall short of preparing teachers to respond to the enormous challenges such as dealing with the most diverse learners amidst a complex society and a rapidly changing technology-based economy. Citing John Dewey, Schulz argues that traditional teacher education is too

focused on the acquisition of skills and classroom mechanics, leaving no room for the student teachers to understand the full range of their responsibilities.

Lieberman & Miller (1990) observe that many traditional approaches to teachers' professional development have focused on a deficit approach, reflecting the fact that teachers need to learn from experts to overcome their "deficits" through mechanized and temporarily build-up training and learning settings. Within this view, student teachers are passive recipients of a certain training program or method rather than active participants. It further isolates teachers from their schools and implies teacher training as an add-on type activity with no or little link with the local context where teachers practice their teaching (Sandholtz, 2002). This lack of connection between the local school environment and professional development weakens teachers' abilities to teach effectively in contexts that are difficult and challenging.

Many educators have also highlighted the importance of context-based reflective teachers and showed their resentment toward teacher preparation that lacks contextualization (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Kincheloe, 2003). Schon (1983) has coined the well-established notions of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' for professionals, and contends that teachers need to be connected with their workplaces and daily experiences to become reflective teachers. John Dewey places 'teachers as investigators' as an important pillar of his progressive education movement. He views a teacher's role as inevitable in democratizing knowledge and investigating the success and failures of the school (Dewey, 1997). Similarly, Kincheloe (2003) observes that the contemporary top-down teacher education has failed to connect the coursework with a teacher's workplace, and emphasizes that teachers need to engage in critical research in schools to rediscover themselves and to improve the system and pupils' learning.

Tsui, Lopez-Real, & Edward (2009) argue that teaching in schools is complex terrain and many traditional approaches to teacher education ignore the powerful multidimensional nature of learning that comes from the broader cultural artifact and the environment where the teaching and learning takes place. Tsui (2009) observes that traditional research on teacher education has been primarily limited to the learning of teachers solely from the teacher educators with less or no link with the co-participants and the specific social and cultural context where the learning or practice is situated.

The discussion above illustrates that the traditional teacher training practices delink the process of teacher preparation by ignoring the wider context where teachers work. Thus, several initiatives have been undertaken to reform teacher education through collaborative approaches, especially between schools and universities, which I attempt to discuss briefly in the next section.

3.2.1 Various models of pre-service teacher education involving university-based partnerships

As a part of broader teacher education reforms, several models of pre-service teacher education and schools-university partnerships—for example 'Professional Development Schools' (PDS) (Darling-Hammond, 1994), 'Teaching portfolios' (J. Xu, 2003), 'Student Cohorts' for pre-service preparation (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Mandzuk, Hasinoff, & Seifert, 2003), and 'Community Service Partnerships (CSP)/ Community Service Learning (CSL)' (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000)—are in parlance. A brief explanation of these models is as follows:

The idea of the Professional Development School (PDS), in its simplest form, provides an opportunity to the school community and university faculty to work together for broader education reforms, including training of new teachers, improvement in existing teaching practices, renewal of curriculum and school structure, and enhancement of student learning (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Byrd & McIntyre, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Osguthorpe, Harris, Black, & Harris, 1995a). PDS allows teachers and university faculty to engage jointly in research and reflect upon their practices. Osguthorpe, Harris, Black, & Harris (1995b) observe that creating school-university partnerships through PDS can help in bringing broader reform within the education system for at least two reasons, as follows: First, school-university partnerships generate new knowledge by linking practice, research, and theory. The collaboration puts research into practice and practice into research and gives school teachers and university faculty an opportunity to work together expand their knowledge-base through self-reflection; and second, it develops an integrated system for development where teachers, administrators, and university faculty work together for education renewal through school restructuring and teacher improvement.

A teaching Portfolio is regarded as another effective reflective tool, which has a potential to improve teaching and learning practices of pre-service teachers. A traditional teaching portfolio is a structured collection of a teacher's reflective work, documenting her/his abilities, effectiveness, and achievements over a period of time and across diverse contexts (Delandshere & Arens, 2003; J. Xu, 2003; Y. Xu, 2004). J. Xu (2003) noted that school-centered teaching portfolios have the potential to improve professional development learning as well as professional development collaborations within school wide communities. Similarly, Mitchell, Dillon, Strong-Wilson, Pithouse, Islam, O'Connor, Rudd, Staniforth, & Cole (2010) observe that teaching portfolios are not confined to classroom practices, but they can embrace practices outside the classrooms and schools within the larger context of partnerships.

Beck and Kosnik (2001) observe that unlike other professions, teacher education is largely isolated and considered as an individualistic job. Building communities of teacher candidates through 'cohorts' is one of the initiatives, which can help in making teacher education a collective work in collaboration with other stakeholders. A dominant cohort model consists of placing a group of student teachers together during their entire pre-service programs, ranging from coursework to other teacher preparation activities, including teaching practicum under the supervision of a small faculty team for the duration of the program (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Mandzuk, et al., 2003; Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe, 1992). In the absence of any empirical impact of cohorts on teacher education, the available literature is focused on the impact of cohorts in relation to socialization, structures and group dynamics, pedagogical skills and handling or organizing of the groups from the viewpoint of the faculty (Mandzuk, et al, 2003).

The fourth model of university-based partnership outlined above, Community Service Partnerships and within them Community Service Learning, is increasingly gaining popularity worldwide, linking Higher Education Institutions with social development (Currie & Subtozky, 2000). A typical Community Service Partnership puts academic institutions, community structures, and service providers in a three-way partnership. It helps students learn from their involvement in communities and provides opportunities for community development and academic research. Community Service

Partnerships can help universities to fulfill three important roles: teaching, research and outreach (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

The discussion above indicates that a number of collaborative approaches have been sought between schools and universities in order to improve education, especially teacher education. Simultaneously, there are concerns about the effectiveness of school-university partnership with respect to what is claimed about the broader objectives of the partnership within the teacher education reform agenda. Critics argue that many of the objectives of the reform agenda is narrowly focused on institutional objectives, ignoring the multi-faceted and multi-dimensional learning from the collaboration. In the next section, I attempt to address some of those concerns.

3.2.2 <u>Reassessing university-based partnership models for teacher education and the impact of globalization on teacher education</u>

There are concerns about the paucity of research in ascertaining the impact of various partnership models on pre-service teachers and local communities. It has been observed that much has been written on the success of specific models, but not much has been provided on the failures of the programs. For example, Campoy (2002) asserts that the most successful PDS are documented, but less is written on the failures of PDS initiatives. There is a lack of information about the effectiveness of many goals of the PDS, and one reason for this gap is the complexity of PDS itself. Several of the key goals of PDS—for example, the increase in learners' standardized test scores, the improvement in the quality of teachers, the improvement in curriculum, the improvement in the practices of teacher educators/ training institutions, and the conduct of educational research at the school's sites—are quite overwhelming, ambitious and hard to measure. Further, many of the goals stated above need long-term interventions and the cause of effects is difficult to isolate to PDS in the presence of multiple factors in school. Campoy (2002) deliberates that another key reason for the PDS failure is the reluctance of the schools and the university to embrace the change and their lack of readiness to refine their missions in the light of the partnerships.

Delandshere & Arens (2003) observe that portfolios are mostly used as a tool for "meeting the standards without much opportunity for meaningful dialogue and debate

about education, teaching, and learning" (p 72). In the absence of research on broader theoretical perspectives of portfolio development activities, the existing research is mainly focused on a call to respond to performance-based assessment, which includes portfolios as an evaluation tool (i.e. how the teacher education program is working), a pedagogical tool (i.e. helping the student teachers to understand teaching), and an instrumental tool (i.e. helping student teachers to find jobs and to prepare for job interviews).

Mandzuk, et al. (2003) argue that not much empirical evidence is available to support the cohort model, especially its long term effects on the professional lives of teacher candidates. The available literature on cohorts is mainly focused on the aspects of 'socialization' and 'group dynamics' between the cohorts and the relationship between the cohorts and the institutional arrangement created by the university (Beck & Kosnik, 2001; Mandzuk, et al., 2003).

Similarly, Ward & Wolf-Wendel (2000) observe that the impact and benefits of the Community Service Partnerships are well-documented, but mainly reflect the viewpoints of universities. There is a dearth of literature from the vantage point of communities. The traditional practices related to community-university partnerships in community service learning are more targeted toward aligning with charity than social change. The charitable purpose of service learning tends to identify the deficits in the community and try to fill those deficits, making it a working-for rather than a working-with approach. The empirical results showed that a majority of the faculty members get engaged in service learning for their academic reasons rather than community-centric reasons. Similarly, students get involved for egoistic rather than altruistic reasons. In general, the effects of service learning on the communities are as 'beneficiaries' rather than partners in identifying the problems and solutions. Ward & Wolf-Wendel (2000) have proposed that the focus of Community Service Partnerships should be empathy and empower and suggest the following four steps to achieve them: i) 'Connect through commonalities' i.e. only those faculty members and students should be engaged in Community Service Partnerships who have something in common with the communities; ii) 'Blur the boundaries' between the campuses and communities i.e. the traditional distinctions between the campuses and communities should be minimized by allowing

more fluidity between the two; iii) Students and faculty members should be aware of their position, power and privileges in society and how they would relate it in service relationships; and iv) 'Encourage reciprocal assessment' i.e. both the university and communities must be involved in assessing the impact of intervention (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, pp. 775-776).

In addition to the above-mentioned model-specific concerns, educators have also called for close, de-romanticized appraisals of the current trends and reforms in education, especially in teacher education. For example, Schulz (2005) argues that existing practices, especially related to the teaching practicum, are narrowly focused, examining how pre-service teachers can transfer the techniques that they gained from university settings into school settings. The author asserts the need to shift the focus of the traditional, technical practicum from a performance-scan to a broader educative focus, with opportunities for critical inquiries related to the broader school community. The teachers need to go beyond the walls of the classrooms and learn the art of knowing the learners and their needs, the education system, and, more broadly, the communities, the families and the agencies. Citing Cochrane-Smith (1991), Schulz (2005) proposes that the best way to undertake a critical inquiry is through a school-university partnership with a collaborative approach. It creates opportunities for both teachers and teacher educators to reform their practices and influence their respective communities. The teachers and teacher educators can work with the student candidate to move beyond classroom competencies to the broader roles of teachers within the social and ideological context.

Apple (2001) is more broadly skeptical about current reforms and linked them as a direct consequence of the impact of globalization on education, including teacher education. Though he acknowledges that the jobs of teachers and the role of teacher educators are becoming increasingly complex and challenging in the present era, he disagrees with those who have observed that the school population is becoming more and more diverse. On the contrary, he argues that the school population is stratified on the basis of race, ethnicity and social class through a market-led 'alliance', comprising neo-liberal market-led strategies, conservative modernisms and a new middle class. Market-led strategies have deregulated teacher education to make it competitive for the key

players—for example HEIs, private teachers training institutes and the school boards—with an assumption that the competition will lead to effective and efficient systems. Concomitantly, conservative modernisms have tightened their role by setting uniform standards for what constitutes teaching skills, knowledge and assessment. The new middle-class-comprising managers/administrators of the school/teacher education institutions and parents (in some cases) have more power to implement things, but less control over policy development. The school administrators have to demonstrate their performance as per prescribed curricula and standards, in which they have diminishing control. Much emphasis is placed on building and maintaining the image of the institutions in compliance with external standards rather than the content and pedagogy. Ultimately, the marketized model of education is targeting middle class and more affluent parents since they are more likely to exploit the market mechanisms of education. Children of more affluent parents fit nicely in the system as they bring with them the desired social, economic, and cultural capital to the schools, which can improve school efficiency, performance and image as per universally acceptable performance indicators. In collaboration with parents, the schools are stratified, for example on the basis of class and race. Mechanisms of exclusion, for example school fees, stiff admission policies and rigorous selection criteria are placed to exclude other groups. Thus, the schools seek the gifted, able children, mainly from the affluent and middle class communities, and those who are seen as less academically able are least desirable. The implications of such conditions pose enormous challenge for teachers and teacher education. This stratification is even reflected in teacher education programs as he observes:

"*The unfortunate results of this may be even fewer working-class and poor students, fewer students of color, and a less diverse population in general who will enter our teacher education programs. This will be even more the case for those teacher education programs that are seen as high status and highly competitive. Where will we get the teachers to teach in our schools? What will they look like? Because of this, I want to claim in the strongest possible terms that anyone who is deeply concerned about the current realities and the possible futures of teacher education must start with an unromantic appraisal of what is happening in the larger field of educational reform* (Apple, 2001, p. 194)."

Apple (2001) asserts that teacher education is deeply linked with the larger education politics and cannot be seen as stand-alone. Teachers need to understand ideological and political restructuring in the education systems, and to question who is controlling education and whose purpose is it serving?

This discussion signifies that the efforts to reform teacher education through school-university partnerships have also come under criticism with respect to broader dimensions of partnership or collaboration as well as in relation to the impact of market-led strategies on education, especially its implications on the work of teachers.

3.2.3 Programmatic concerns in school-university partnerships: tensions, obstacles, and challenges.

In addition to the above methodological concerns regarding different models for teacher education reform, the proponents of school-university partnerships also acknowledge programmatic concerns. The main purpose of school-university partnership in PDS is to enhance student learning. However, it is observed that limited attention is given to actual student learning and much attention is given to the results of collaboration, the professional development of teachers, and change in teachers' attitude and behaviors (Abdal-Haqq, 1998).

Creating effective partnerships is labor-intensive and demands a significant investment of time. Building trust, developing shared understanding, and creating effective communication links between the schools and university is critical and involves considerable amounts of time. A school-university partnership, especially a field-based program, requires more intense interaction between the partners (Abdal-Haqq, 1998; Smedley, 2001).

Securing appropriate resources to sustain the partnership is another challenge. In general, arranging resources to develop a partnership in the first place is easier than acquiring resources to maintain and sustain the partnership (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Though the university and school's settings share many similarities, they do not necessarily share similar views on organizational structures, values and concepts of teaching and learning, and reward structures. Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe (1992)

observe three dilemmas in terms of university-school relationships. The first dilemma is a 'didactic vs constructionist' way of learning. Teachers, especially pre-service teachers, often enter the teaching profession with a view that they have a responsibility to tell students. Some teachers at this stage also hold the view that students have to learn as they learned, and expect to teach as they were taught. This didactic view of instruction does not necessarily conform to the university faculty, which focuses on allowing students to construct their own meanings through their personal and social experiences. The second dilemma is related to 'replicative vs reflective' practices between school and university professionals. Teachers in schools usually concentrate on replicating the best or proven teaching and learning models. The university-faculty, on the other hand, emphasizes reflecting upon practices and experiences to generate new ideas and research niches. The third dilemma is a 'basic vs applied' research and associated rewards. The university-based research is focused on traditional research with emphasis on theory. Research in schools, if conducted at all, is often focused on improving teaching practice rather than contributing to teacher education scholarship. Further, the rewards associated with the research in each setting are also different. The university-faculty is rewarded for conducting research, but not so much for putting research into practice. In contrast, the teachers are rewarded for their practice, but not for their contribution to the theory.

Finally, the role of other stakeholders is important in the success or failure of school-university partnerships, which are often ignored by both schools and universities. While reflecting upon the experience of a Salt Lake City school district and the University of Utah partnership, Winitzky, Stoddart, & O'Keefe (1992) observe that the partnership project overlooked the role of the school district office and the university administrative support, which in turn severely hampered the partnership in achieving its goals. In the absence of any 'formalized involvement' of these two relatively external stakeholders in the partnership, the administration (both at the school district level as well as the university level) was unaware of the partnership and was unable to associate itself with the partnership. The related faculty and the school staff were working hard, but their line-up administration/management was not aware of new developments and a changed relationship.

3.2.4 A new dimension of school-university partnership: preparing teachers through 'communities of practice'

Tsui, Lopez-Real, & Edward (2009) draw attention to another dimension of learning—learning in socio-cultural perspectives through school-university partnership. The authors argue that much of the research on school-university partnership is focused on products, especially in the improvement of individual student teacher cognitive skills. However, there is a paucity of literature on the "processes of learning" and "theoretical motivation" in school-university partnerships (p25). With respect to student teachers, the authors argue it is still understudied how a student teacher regards his or her relationship with the broader social processes in which s/he works. Emphasizing that learning in teacher education is a socio-cultural phenomenon and it cannot take place without the understanding of the broader social, cultural and political environment where teachers work, the authors assert that learning in the school-university partnership should be seen within the wider context of social theories of learning and frameworks. One such theoretical framework, as initiated by Lave & Wenger (1991) and later developed by Wenger (1998), is 'Communities of Practice' (CoP). The term was initially derived to denote apprenticeship learning of novices from the existing community of practice until they become part of the CoP. Lave and Wenger (1991) defined the term as:

"*A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its condition for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e. legitimate peripheral participation)* (p. 98)."

Later, Wenger (1998) broadened the term to a group of individuals participating in communal activity, and experiencing/continuously creating their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. The CoP

framework emphasizes that learning is a social process, constantly shaped, re-shaped and mediated by the members of the community within the broader socio-cultural environment.

With its antecedents in Vygotsky's theory of learning (see Vygotsky, 1978), which asserts that people connect with the socio-cultural environment in which they act and react in a shared experience, learning in CoP takes place in mutual engagement with other members of the CoP and with the broader environment in which the CoP works. Wenger's notion of learning in CoP (Wenger, 1998, p5) is centrally focused on 'community' (a group of people whom we work with), 'practice' (the act of living and actively involving in the social experience or social enterprise), 'identity' (the systems of relationships produced and reproduced in the communities, and the individual defines and defined by these relationships); and 'meaning' (how we make sense of our experience and practice). Three things are crucial to form communities of practice: i) domain: an identity defined by a shared domain of interest and commitment that separates members from other people; ii) community: the members, in pursuit of their shared interest, engage in joint activities with sharing knowledge and information and learning from each other; and iii) the practice: It is a group of practitioners, who developed a shared practice through shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, and ways of addressing recurring problems (Wenger, 2006). The following figure (Figure 3.1) best describes the discussion presented above related to learning in CoP.

Figure 3.1:   Components of a social theory of learning in Communities of Practice
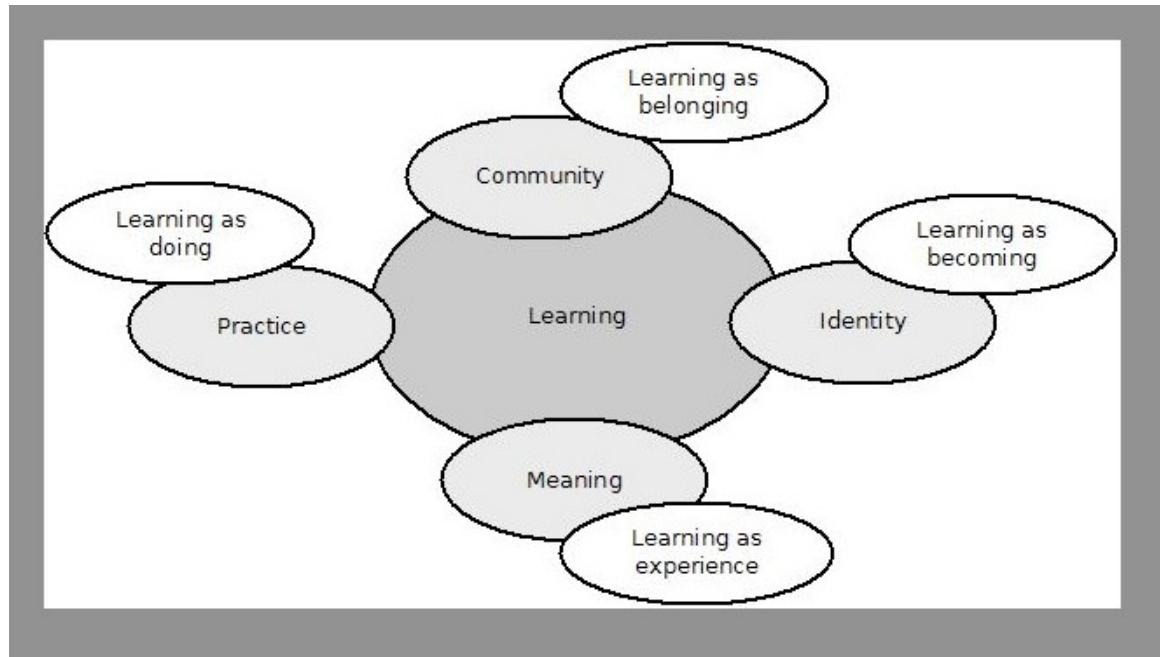
Source: Wenger (1998, p5)

The CoP develops a dynamic environment representing different participants, including mentors, mentees, schools, society, learners and others, where the learning becomes a continuous process driven by the forces of reflection, self-improvement, and learning from others. CoP has been used in a variety of settings, however, the learning in CoP through school-university partnership has been under-researched until recently (Tsui, Edward, et al., 2009).

3.3   School/ university-community partnership in international development

The concept of university-school partnership for pre-service teacher education is new in the developing world. The lack of attention is primarily due to the fact that the political and social climate is ideally not in favor of local school-university partnerships. This includes non-availability of the resources to develop effective partnerships and the limited capability of the schools and the universities to influence the teacher education system in the country. The development of partnership requires resources, and neither public schools nor universities in the developing countries have enough resources to engage themselves in partnerships. The contemporary development model in the South is

largely donor-driven and politically focused. A genuine school-university partnership for pre-service teacher education does not entirely fit into contemporary discourse. Most of the support is either provided in the market-oriented sectors which are considered as 'cost-effective', 'efficient' and yield the 'highest rate of returns' or highly ambitious poverty reduction strategies and projects on good governance. While reviewing the World Bank's strategy on education development, Klees (2002) reveals that teachers' needs, qualifications and pre-service training are areas that seldom receive the World Bank's attention. The same is true with other bilateral and multilateral donors. For example, USAID launched a very high profile Education Sector Reforms Assistance (ESRA) to revamp the education sector in Pakistan in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001. The ESRA has a small component on teacher education, and even that small component has no link with the existing teacher training mechanism in Pakistan. While visiting the project in 2005, I observed that the project has been providing training to teachers from deprived rural schools. In collaboration with a U.S.-based INGO, ESRA has been sending teachers for a 4-6 week crash training course in one of the U.S. universities. Instead of strengthening and improving the existing mechanisms of teacher preparation and teacher training in Pakistan, the USAID project opted to transport the selected rural teachers, who neither speak English nor have been out of their village in their entire life, all the way to the United States.

Unlike in the West, the schools and the universities in the developing world have a minimal role in influencing policies on education, including teacher education. Many of the countries have separate teacher training structures (for example teacher training institutions or colleges), which are managed/ governed by the federal or provincial governments with tight policies and rigid bureaucratic structures. This also hampers the establishment of the partnership between schools and the university/ teacher training institutes as they lack influence on policy-making and its implementation.

Instead of school-university partnerships, much attention is given to community-school partnerships, which have secured a lot of attention from donors, multi-lateral agencies and northern NGOs. The privatization of the education and the lesser role of the governments to control education encourages many northern NGOs and donors to establish their own community schools or alternative structures for education through

their partner southern NGOs. Though community-school partnerships are found to be successful in expanding the accessibility of basic education, mobilizing the resources, and increasing the parent/community participation in the school's common administrative tasks, they fall short in producing new/local knowledge, reforming the curriculum, making a visible impact on the education system, and bringing a genuine change through school teachers and partnerships (Ghosh & Naseem, 2004; Tsayang, 1998b).

Tsayang (1998b), citing evidence from the experiences of school-community partnerships in Nigeria (Igwe, 1988), Tanzania and Botswana Quarshie (1992), concludes that the school-community partnership projects in the above cases yielded a positive impact on fund-raising efforts and improved administrative support in schools, but failed to make an impact on the curriculum and teaching practices relevant to the local needs. Even those initiatives that were intended to improve curriculum and to restructure the education system did not yield the desired results due to different ground realities as follows: i) teachers and the school management observed the community participation as an interference to their academic professional autonomy, and were not ready to welcome the community participation in governing the schools; ii) the community was ignorant about what role they could play in improving the school curriculum and teaching practices; iii) many parents deemed that modifying the curriculum as per local needs would hamper the smother the mobility of their children into the labor market as the market forces were less flexible to adjust any innovations in the curriculum that fit the local needs; and iv) the examination-led education system left no room for teachers, schools and the community to amend the teaching practices and the curriculum as per local needs. Evaluating the six cases of school-community partnerships in Botswana, Tsayang (1998a) argues that the partnership helped the schools to secure resources and democratize the schools' decision-making processes, especially those related to finances. However, it fell short in creating new knowledge as per local needs.

The aforementioned evidence indicates that school related partnerships are mainly related to improving the accessibility and involvement of the community in schools' activities. However, such initiatives cannot replace the critical aspects of providing quality education, especially those that are linked with the quality of teachers.

3.3.1 <u>The case of university-based partnerships in the context of South Africa</u>

As mentioned previously, the post-apartheid legislation, including restructuring of the education department and relocating teacher education to HEIs provided new opportunities for the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to work in collaboration with local communities. Teaching, research and community engagement were set as three main goals for the South African HEIs (Hall, 2009). Engaging simultaneously on the three fronts of teaching, research and community is a new experience for many HEIs with an added responsibility that the intervention is relevant, applied and strategic (Kruss, 2006). On the one hand, it has to contribute to South Africa's integration into the modern world, and on the other hand, it has to ensure equitable social development of South Africa. This challenging task requires that the South African HEIs have to engage in interventions, which could be utilized to create new knowledge and to improve the conditions of the impoverished communities. Kruss (2006) therefore suggests a contextualized model of partnerships, driven and controlled by the participants as per their context. Though her main observation is related to the partnerships between the universities, industry and the government agencies for improving the technological education, the importance of developing a contextualized partnership is relevant to other fields as well, especially when the broader objective is to improve the public sector.

The need to develop contextualized partnerships in teacher education is evident when Pennefather (2008) argues that one of the reasons for a shortage of quality teachers in rural areas of South Africa is the influence of the dominant discourse of "deficiency framework" (p 89) on teachers, which implies that teaching in rural schools is inferior and undesirable. While recognizing that the rural schools have been facing several problems, including lack of resources, poverty and HIV and AIDS, she emphasizes that teacher education institutions need to challenge this deficiency framework by preparing teachers with flexible competencies that can enable them to teach in uncompromising contexts and conditions. While reflecting upon her experience in one school-university partnership project, she mentions that involving rural schools in teacher preparation and arranging teaching practica in rural schools could challenge the deficiency framework. She provides an overview of a partnership project between the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in collaboration with the Norwegian University of Science and Technology

(NTNU), with two deeply rural schools in South Africa. Established in 2003, the partnership was extended to four rural schools in 2008. Each year, a field trip was arranged to the schools in which the students of Post-Graduate Certificate in Education program (PGCE) performed their teaching practicum in the rural schools. The project helped the partners, especially student teachers to challenge the perception of the contexts and their role as teachers. Since the student teachers lived and worked together, it helped them to work with each other to tackle the issues that they encountered in the rural schools. The student teachers reported that the placement helped them to develop/refine their professional identities and understand the rural context, battling with the issues of low resources and more workload for the teachers with large classrooms and more pastoral work. Besides student teachers, the partnership project also helped the schools in many ways. The schools started to realize their role in student teachers' professional development and the school's teachers gained new skills, information about the latest curriculum debates and the use of technology through student teachers.

As Pennefather contends, school-university partnerships can help in making teacher education responsive to rural schools; Ansari (2002) reports that community-based contextualized partnerships could help in health professionals' education towards understanding the issues related to health in under-resourced areas. Examining the five community-based partnerships between the local communities, local health service providers and the institutions training health professionals, Ansari asserts that the partnership increased the access of quality health services to the poor, who were deliberately deprived on the basis of racial segregation during the apartheid era. He argues that, like many developing countries, the current model of professional health education based upon industrialized countries is not relevant to meet the basic health care needs of most South Africans. The clinical training of health professionals is typically conducted in tertiary hospitals that have all resources, which are usually not available in the workplaces after graduation. Students find it hard to adapt to environments different from where they were trained. Thus, the partnership was established to make health professionals' education and training relevant to the needs of under-served areas, and to provide students in health fields the opportunity to experience team-based, non-hospital primary health care in the disadvantaged areas of South Africa. Some significant

outcomes of the partnership project include the development of new competencies for health professionals that are relevant to the local communities, an increase in the commitment of the student health professional to serve in the disadvantaged areas after graduation, improve the curriculum and practices of health professionals' education, and improve the practices of local health service providers (Ansari, 2004). Ansari & Phillips (2001) further examine the structural and operational characteristics of the 'contextualized' community-based partnerships in the area of professional health education in South Africa, especially in the rural areas. The authors identified the following seven potential impediments and the opportunities for improvement in the formation and working of the partnerships: i) Representation: All stakeholders in the partnerships were not fully represented. Academics were overrepresented and the service providers and the community workers were underrepresented. This is very important, especially in the rural and remote areas where people who are politically, geographically, and tribally isolated can be easily marginalized in the coalition-building process; ii) Ownership and commitment: Stakeholders must see that the partnership is for them, not for other people who they do not know. The partnership must have a voice for all the stakeholders who do have a 'sense of pride' in the accomplishments of the partnerships; iii) Leadership skills: The partnership's leadership should be receptive and easily accessible. Further, it should be legitimate, visible, competent and trustworthy; iv) Communication: All partners should be aware of the partnership and related activities. It helps the partners to decrease their isolation and increase the awareness of the trends that affect them; v) Capacity building and social capital: The participants in the partnership are from diverse backgrounds with different cultures, sets of skills and literacy levels. It is important to empower them through training and professional development activities; vi) Power issues and self-interests: While working with rural communities, it is important to understand how the communities are represented and by whom. Often the people claiming to represent the wider community are actually protecting their own interests and ignoring the vulnerable groups. Understanding the history of the location and associated political and social ideologies and agendas of different groups involved in rural communities can help in understanding the power issues; and vii) Vision and clarity of purpose: the partnership's goals and concepts should be clearly outlined and understood

across all the partners. Regular communication through formal and informal meetings and directives can help the partnership to remain dynamic and improve the partners' common understanding and vision.

The work of Ansari (2002), Ansari & Phillips (2001) and Pennefather (2008) is in line with others who argue that rurality is a transformative signifier, with a capability to influence the attitudes and motivations of teachers, health workers and learners (2008; Marsden, 2006). However, the transformative nature of rurality is currently under-researched. Balfour, Mitchell, & Moletsane (2008) assert the need to re-conceptualize the professional development programs in South Africa - for example teacher education - with respect to the generative theory of rurality, as the authors write:

"As a first step, we regard as critical some realignments within academic settings so that rurality as envisioned through such complementary programs as rural extension, community development, rural sociology, rural medicine, and public health, along with rural education, contributes to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary dialogue. At one end of the spectrum we might, as teacher-educators, explore the ways in which a faculty of medicine trains doctors for rural settings or how faculties of education might work strategically with faculties of agriculture. At the other end of the spectrum we might consider drawing on the rich bodies of work within cultural studies (see, for example, Wendell Berry's [1977] classic The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture); African film studies and literature, ranging from the postcolonial investigations of homestead and childhood in relation to rurality and development; through to tropes within such films as Jim Comes to Jo'Burg (Rutherford, 1949) and Yesterday (Roodt, 2004); and of course to a study of visual images within the popular imagination of South Africa (p107)."

Though the above examples indicate a growing interest among the Higher Education Institutes to work in collaboration with the local communities, there are also concerns that if the collaboration is not properly contextualized it can lead to the homogenization of HEIs over the local communities. For example, Mitchell & Rautenbach (2005) have noted that their experience in a pilot partnership model launched in six different areas of South Africa during 1999-2002 was unsuccessful in developing a shared and mutually beneficial understanding of working together. Comprised of the

local government, local university and the local rural community, the partnership project, *Community Higher Education Service Partnership (CHESP)*, aimed at reconstructing civil society through the development of socially accountable models for higher education, research, community service, and development. The project was poorly planned as neither the university nor community was prepared for the partnership. In the partnership document, the 'community' was unfairly conceptualized as 'previously disadvantaged' which limited the possibility of the 'community' to become an active partner. The power balance was explicitly in favor of the university, as the funds were released to the university with the responsibility of accountability and reporting back to the funders. Given the apartheid legacy of inequalities and oppression, the community was more interested in infrastructure development and the fast delivery of relief to meet the basic needs through the partnership work. At the same time the university's interests were narrowly focused on teaching and research. The contrasting expectations were never negotiated between the partners, and in practice the partnership remained focused on academic disciplines rather than community development. The local community remained disappointed, as no tangible outcomes were observed with respect to their expectations. The dominance of one partner even silenced the community from raising its voice during the project; however, as soon as the pilot phase ended, the community refused the request to continue from the university, citing a lack of capacity to handle the demands and increased workload from the partnership.

The above case reiterates the importance of making the partnership 'authentic', with a focus on proper contextualization, a shared understanding of the partnership, and a mechanism to negotiate and address the expectations of the partners in the partnership.

3.4   Discussion

The concept of partnership is complex, evolving, and its practice varies in different environments, geography, conditions, and purposes. There is little agreement on the exact definition of a 'partnership'; however several typologies are offered in order to understand the partnership phenomenon. Different terminologies such as network, collaboration, co-operation, and inter-organizational relationships are used interchangeably to describe partnerships. In essence, partnership is based on a notion that

organizations or sectors collaborate or enter in a relationship in pursuit of the tasks that cannot be achieved when acting alone. There is no question about the benefits of true or 'authentic' partnership, but the process to establish 'authentic' partnership is tedious and complex. The most common form of multi-sectoral partnerships in an international setting is private/donor, public, and community/NGO partnership. The neoliberal globalization and its market-led economic agenda have greatly influenced and institutionalized the urge to foster partnerships. As a result, more and more partnerships began to emerge between NGOs, donors/private and the public sector during the late 70s and early 80s. However, the intent of forming relationships between the three sectors is largely based upon securing and managing funds and financial aids from the donors. Though historical and political context is a key to determine the exact relationships, it is generally observed that such partnerships are established to advance the neoliberal agenda of privatization and decentralization.

In an era of diminishing resources and rapidly changing economic and societal needs, schools and universities, the two traditionally distinct sites, have started to work together to complement each other. Within the educational partnership discourse, new themes such as university-school partnerships have emerged to reform education in general and teacher education in particular. Although the main body of literature is based upon the experiences in the industrialized world, an over-whelming interest is observed in school-university partnerships across the globe. The basis of partnerships is regarded as a way to reform the teacher education and associated communities, for example schools and universities, by making teacher education context-based and relevant to the changing needs of society. Several university-based collaborative models, for example Professional Development Schools (PDS), the Teaching Portfolios, the Student Cohorts, and the Community-Service Partnership (CSP) or Community Service Learning (CSL) have been put forth to fill the gaps in teacher education. Though much has been written about the best practices and the success stories in different contexts, several key areas, for example the long term impact of these initiatives on pre-service teachers, the schools, the university and the local community, are somewhat missing. As a result of the lack of research on the long-term impact of such interventions, the critics also fear that some of the initiatives could be either too ambitious or narrowly focused with respect to

institutional interests and short-term objectives. Similarly, the impact of globalization on education has made the reforms in education, including teacher education, highly complex and skeptical. A key question in this regard is how the reforms have helped the education sector, including teachers, to ensure quality education to all strata of the population regardless of their class, gender, ethnicity and race.

During the past decade, much attention in school-university partnership literature has been centered on building pre-service teachers' cognitive, pedagogical and technical skills, but less is written about learning in partnerships in relation to socio-cultural theoretical framework. Teaching in schools is a complex job and the larger socio-cultural environment where teachers teach affects their performance. This warrants an expansion of the notion of learning in teacher training from narrowly focused 'mentor' to 'mentee' relationship to the broader social environment where the teachers practice. 'Communities of Practice' as introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) is one promising theoretical framework, which describes learning is a social process. Though the concept has been used widely in different settings, it is currently under-studied with respect to learning in a school-university partnership.

The post-apartheid transformation in South Africa has brought together the HEIs and the local communities in the field of education and community health. New areas of interventions are increasingly emerging to foster contextualized linkages and collaborations between HEIs and the local communities, especially in the historically deprived rural areas. Though such interventions are relatively new, they have a potential to understand the needs of local communities and to sensitize education and health professionals about issues in rural areas. However, there are also concerns about how the collaboration can be advantageous for historically disadvantaged communities, which have little say in dominant development discourses. It is therefore important that any such interventions have to be assessed within the framework of those communities. A school-university partnership is an organizational design, in which the university usually has a privileged role. It is unlikely to establish the relationship between schools and the university on the basis of equality. However, an emphasis can be made on making the partnership mutually beneficial and the creation of knowledge through partnership, which can go beyond institutional benefits.

Chapter 4   Participatory approaches to research and evaluation

4.0   Introduction

In South Africa, it is all too easy to ignore the voices of rural schools and to direct attention to well-resourced, more visible urban schools in terms of policy development and its implementation (Chisholm, 2004; The Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). I used participatory evaluation to generate what I hoped would be a rich, inclusive, and utilization-focused understanding of the partnership project the *Rural Teacher Education Project* (RTEP). Furthermore, my decision to use participatory evaluation also complemented the very nature of the project, which itself is participatory in nature and involves a component of action-research on the part of pre-service teachers. Working with the idea of participatory evaluation helped me to design a strategy with active involvement of rural schools and pre-service teachers—the two key participants of the project—in the research process. Thus, this chapter explores participatory evaluation as an appropriate methodology to analyze the collaboration between rural schools and the local university in the RTEP.

While the areas of Participatory Research and Participatory Evaluation (PE) are, of course, part of a very broad field of work ranging from creating social movements and challenging power structure and power relations, as noted by many critical scholars and field practitioners, my particular interest, as mentioned in the first chapter, is to see how people 'make sense of their work' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) through their own means. What are the expectations of each key partner (schools and the university) from the collaboration, and how are these expectations met over time?

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides an overview of the participatory approaches to research and evaluation within various philosophical and theoretical strands. The second section provides critical/ salient features of participatory research as background information to contextualize PE. The third section discusses participatory evaluation, including what participatory evaluation is, why it is used, what its different forms/usages are, and an example from the field to demonstrate how PE is practiced in the field. The fourth section problematizes the PE discourse by

discussing the major criticisms of PE, including the criticism over participation, facilitation, power and knowledge among the participants.

4.1   Overview of participatory approaches to research

Participatory approaches to research are a family of approaches and as such are ever-evolving. Researchers and practitioners often use the term participatory approaches to research interchangeably with the terms Participatory Action Research (PAR), participatory learning and action (Abdi, Puplampu, & Dei, 2006), Participatory evaluation and Action Research. There is no final definition for participatory approaches to research and different scholars define participatory research in different ways. However, looking at a range of the following perspectives is helpful in terms of mapping out the participatory research.

Robert Chambers (2007) defines participatory action learning also known as PRA as:

"A *growing family of approaches and methods [such methods include visual techniques, group and team dynamics, theatre and popular culture, etc.] to enable local people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor, and evaluate* (p102)."

Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury define participatory research as:

"*a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities* (cited in (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003, p. 11))."

Hall (1988) defines Participatory research as:

"*a three-pronged activity: it is a method of social investigation involving the full participation of the community; it is an educational process; and it is a means of taking action for development* (p. 208-209)."

Fals-Borda (2001) considers PAR as a 'philosophy of life' that would convert its practitioners into 'thinking-feeling persons' and defines *PAR as:*

"vivencia (lived experience) necessary for the achievement of progress and democracy, a complex of attitudes and values that would give meaning to our praxis in the field (p 33)."

The definitions noted above are just a few examples to demonstrate that participatory approaches are a 'growing family of approaches', and the focus of participatory approaches is people's knowledge, participation, and action (practice) to improve their practices.

The lack of consensus on its definition is embodied into its historical roots, which are complex and evolving. Participatory approaches have emerged over time through different research approaches. Its historical roots can go as far as Greek era when the term 'praxis' was first used by Aristotle to denote 'critically-informed practice' for action-reflection (McTaggart, 1981), and as recent as the scholarly work of Kurt Lewin, Paulo Freire and others. Historically, practices such as community struggles, transformative adult education, feminism, and social and popular movements such as environmentalism and anti-globalization have greatly influenced PAR theoretical traditions (Jordan, 2003). It is also considered that the term 'action research' has its roots in the North and the West where it could be found in early labor organizations, Catholic movement, and in liberation theology. Kurt Lewin, who is considered a pioneer of Action Research (AR) in the United States, used AR as 'collaborative research with a liberating intent' (Byrdon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003, p. 12). The use of AR was then enhanced with the democratization process with intent to tackle the social problems. For example, Sol Tax, a prominent American anthropologist and a specialist on Native Americans, named it 'action anthropology' and used it significantly with the Native Americans' struggle in the United States. Kurt Lewin's AR is also criticized for placing more attention on group dynamics than taking actions to improve the conditions of the affected people, which, in turn, resulted in a gradual separation of action from research during 1960s (McTaggart, 1997). However, scholars and activists like Myles Horton used action research to promote the movements of social justice and civil rights in the United

States, which led to the revival of AR as a liberating methodology (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003).

While Kurt Lewin and his predecessors were introducing and conceptualizing Action Research in the European context, a parallel effort was initiated in the developing world with much focus on action-reflection or 'praxis'. The term participatory research came from the third world in the early to mid seventies. In the aftermath of colonization, PAR emerged to seek alternatives for marginalized people from the South to address their needs who were dissatisfied with the dominant Western research methodologies (Fals-Borda, 1988; Smith, 1997). Paulo Freire, in particular, emphasized a method of investigation by the people that involves a learning process of investigation, examination, criticism, and reinvestigation to raise the critical thinking of all the participants thereby creating a dynamic movement between the research, action and social transformation (Freire, 1988). In addition, the emergence of popular education, in the aftermath of colonization, has also contributed to the development of PAR. The popular education interventions not only focused on promoting informal and functional literacy, but also fostered different forms of movements that were 'critical', 'emancipatory' and 'democratic' (Jordan, 2003).

4.2   Critical features of participatory research and evaluation

Participatory research is continuously developing through field practices and is used in different settings with different foci. In any case, participatory approaches have the following key features that place them in a useful position to democratize the knowledge and making research rich, action-oriented and meaningful.

Unlike other research approaches, participatory research is local and actual rather than general or abstract. It seeks specific people, places, and practices. It is a learning process in which people seek to understand their local realities as precisely as possible through their historical, cultural, and social context, so that their real practices can be accessible to reflection, critical discussion, and reconstruction (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998).

Knowledge production in participatory research is participants' own understanding of the situation around them. It is a combination of individual knowledge

and a shared knowledge of the group doing PR. McTaggart (1997) also added a third form of knowledge (i.e. external knowledge) which comes from academics or an external facilitator. However, he further observes that the local knowledge should be considered as a primary source of knowledge and the external knowledge should not be allowed to dominate the participants' own understanding of the situation.

Participatory research rejects the idea that research is 'objective' and value-free. Instead, it is a highly value-laden, political, socially engaged and democratic process. The social, historical, cultural and political assumptions held by the participants inform the research and its process. The participants strive to improve their social practices and learn from the consequences (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood & Maguire, 2003; McTaggart, 1991).

Participatory approaches are collaborative and are done by people with people, not on people. Researchers in participatory approaches work together in reconstructing not only their social realities, but also the actions that constitute them (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). It examines the social practices that link them with other people. People in participatory research investigate their practices of 'communication', 'production' and 'social organizations' and explore the possibilities to improve these practices (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

Chambers (2007) identifies three important pillars of participatory approaches and evaluation that separate them from the dominant research methodology as follows: i) behavior and attitude of outsiders, who facilitate, not dominate (such as listen, learn, and unlearn; relax and don't rush; ask from people; embrace error; and have fun) ii) the methods, which shift the normal balance from closed to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual, and from measuring to comparing; and iii) partnership and sharing of information, experience, food and training, between insiders and outsiders, and between organizations.

4.3   The case of Participatory Evaluation (PE) within the broader discourse of research and evaluation

Participatory approaches to research take various formats in different fields and domains. One of its forms is participatory evaluation. As evident from its name, the evaluation focuses on an activity, actions or a program, which have already started or taken place. It distinguishes itself from the conventional methods of evaluation, which

were heavily relied upon outside experts to 'objectively' assess the effectiveness of the programs (Huberman, 1995; Jackson & Kassam, 1998a). Freedman (1998) noted that PE was formally introduced in the development literature in 1970. In 1980, the PE was used more widely around the world and different orientations of the PE started to emerge. Scholars and practitioners like Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda and Anisur Rahman aligned themselves to use participatory research as a transformative political approach to empower local people against exploitation and repression. Others, most notably Robert Chambers and Budd Hall, concentrated on strategies to give a true meaning of participation and to involve all stakeholders in the research and evaluation process. During the 1990s large donors and multilateral organizations also started using participatory evaluation and research in their work, despite the fact that they were aggressively promoting inequalities through their different policies and programs (Jackson & Kassam, 1998a).

Rebien (1996) noted that the PE attempted to address the two important shortcomings in the traditional evaluation practices. First, the evaluation is usually conducted as an 'instrument' to demonstrate the accountability/ justification of the money spent by the funder or the dominant stakeholder. The tendency to use evaluation as an accountability tool retained supremacy over learning. The stakeholders/beneficiaries remain marginalized in the evaluation process, with no relevance to their issues, concerns and practices. The evaluation only served the purpose of those who commissioned the evaluation. Second, most of the evaluations are designed within the donor's framework with little or no relevance to the recipients. Thus, when the evaluator or evaluation team departs, the knowledge left with the recipients is either very limited or of no use for the local people.

Participatory Evaluation thus emerged to make evaluation relevant to the local needs. Guba and Lincoln (1989) observe participatory evaluation as a way to understand how people make sense of their work, and how the evaluation helps them to empower, self-reflect, and take actions to improve or change their reality. Coining the term 'fourth generation evaluation', the authors refer it as a hermeneutic/ dialectic process where the issues, concerns and claims are raised and the stakeholders guide the process. The knowledge produced in the fourth generation evaluation is not objective, but emerged out

of interaction between the stakeholders (and evaluator). With a focus on stakeholders' participation, the fourth generation, as per Guba and Lincoln, pays close attention to the following key principles that are overlooked in traditional evaluation: i) Stakeholders, in evaluation, are usually at risk. The findings of the evaluation can place their stake in jeopardy. It is unfair and discriminatory to do an evaluation without the stakeholders, as the evaluation would have direct effects on them. Involving stakeholders in the process of evaluation will provide an opportunity where they can raise questions about their concerns and provide feedback related to the outcomes; ii) Evaluation produces knowledge, and knowledge is power. Stakeholders are usually 'exploited' or 'disempowered' as the information from the evaluation is either completely withheld or revealed to the selected groups among stakeholders with the feeble arguments that stakeholders are technically incapable of using/understanding the evaluation and its political significance. Thus, the involvement of the stakeholders in the process of data collection and data analysis helps them to access the information, which is related to their situation and experiences; iii) Stakeholders' involvement in the evaluation helped the utilization of the results. Often, it is seen that the externally controlled evaluation is not relevant to the local needs, and the stakeholders do not find any utility to engage in the aftermath of the evaluation; iv) Stakeholders' involvement in the evaluation encourages mutual learning. The group listens to and understands each other's perspectives and points of view. This helps broaden the evaluation framework and enhance the understanding of the reality; and v) Stakeholders' involvement broadens the 'range of evaluative inquiry' and makes the framework and process open-ended. Traditional evaluations focus on predetermined objectives, making the evaluation predictable with limited effects. In contrast, involvement of stakeholders widens the agenda, in which no one knows what information and outcomes will be generated unless all the stakeholders' concerns, issues and claims are taken on-board.

Patton (1997) viewed that an evaluation must be judged by its use, especially by its users. He, therefore, contends that the evaluation should be designed in a way that can help the intended users to use it. Advancing the term 'utilization-focused' evaluation, Patton asserts that intended users should be the driving force of the evaluation, and the use of the evaluation should start from the beginning of the evaluation, as soon as the

stakeholders, including evaluator, interact with each other. Patton further laid out some key principles for the evaluator to ensure participation as follows (p 100): i) Involvement of the participants in all phases of the evaluation process: The participatory evaluation involves the participants in goal setting, establishing priorities, formulating questions, interpreting data, making decisions, and connecting process to outcomes. Participants' involvement in the process is not symbolic, but real; ii) Participants 'own' the evaluation: The ownership belongs to the participants. They make major decisions regarding the focus of evaluation; iii) Group work: participants work together as a group, and all processes and outcomes of the evaluation are very relevant to them; iv) Self-accountability: participatory evaluation promotes self-reflection and self-accountability among the participants; v) External facilitation as a catalyst: The evaluation belongs to the participants. The facilitator ensures the group cohesion & collective inquiry, and acts as a collaborator and a learning resource. Though Patton recognizes the importance of participation in the 'utilization-focused' evaluation, he did not insist on making the evaluation a truly participatory with all stakeholders. Rather, he expects the evaluator to find "strategically located people, who are enthusiastic, committed, competent and interested" (1997, p54).

Over the years, participatory evaluation has been widely used as an organizational learning praxis (Suárez-Herrera, Springett, & Kagan, 2009). In this regard, the participatory evaluation research framework proposed by Cousins & Earl (1995) and then by Cousins & Whitmore (1998) has received a great deal of interest from organizations and evaluators, especially in the field of education (Daigneault & Jacob, 2009; Suárez-Herrera, et al., 2009). Cousins & Earl (1995) conceptualize participatory evaluation as a problem-solving approach with a focus on organizational learning, especially in an educational setting. PE increases the likelihood of using the findings for improving the practices. As per Cousins & Earl (1995), participatory evaluation is conducted in partnership with a research specialist(s) and primary users or practice-based decision makers over a specific issue. The primary users are those individuals and/or organizations that are responsible for the program development and have a vital interest in the program. Participatory evaluation is responsive to local needs and at the same time maintains the research quality. PE, as per Cousins & Earl, is based upon three key themes: i) PE is done

by a small number of primary users in collaboration with the facilitator; ii) Ownership of the evaluation is shared between the members of the participating organizations; and iii) Primary users fully participate in the entire process of evaluation i.e. identification of the problem/question, data collection and analysis, and the dissemination/ usage of the evaluation.

Unlike Action Research, PE does not necessarily strive for improving the practices simultaneously and generating a valid social theory (Cousins & Earl, 1995). Similarly, the PE may also differentiate itself from the emancipatory and liberatory research that always focuses on absolute empowerment of individuals and groups, and to rectify the injustices through challenging and transforming the power structures and creating social movements (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998). Although PE has a potential to generate a social theory or create social movements, its main interest is on using the evaluation data to solve the practical problems within the specific context. Within the contexts of schools, participatory evaluation intends to transform the schools and school system into learning organizations (Huberman, 1995; King, 1995). It builds their capacities, so that they can continuously improve their practices on their own. PE also creates an environment that enables organizational learning and self-evaluation. It develops a learning culture within the organizations and individuals who keep reflecting upon their actions and strive to improve their understanding of the issues surrounding them (King, 1995; Wildavasky, 1985). Unlike the stakeholder's evaluation, the facilitator in PE is not a consultant, but a participant deeply engaged in the process of change with a joint responsibility. One key contribution of PE is that it develops linkages between the schools and the staff with the broader environment. The collaboration developed through PE between the researchers, practitioners and institutions can help the schools to tap into more resources and support (Huberman, 1995).

Cousins & Whitmore (1998) classified PE into two streams: Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE); and Transformative Participatory Evaluation (T-PE). P-PE focuses on participants' involvement in the process of evaluation in a way, which enhances the evaluation relevance, ownership, and thus utilization. P-PE affects the programs' instruments, concepts and its usage. T-PE, on the other hand, is a radical

approach, which focuses on empowerment, transformation and creation of social movements for social justice (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

Suárez-Herrera, Springett, & Kagan (2009) comment that even if PE focuses on solving the problem, it supports intentional change for social transformation within organizational learning praxis. The authors argue that the emphasis of the evaluation should be to develop sustainable communicative networks through capacity building of the stakeholders for intentional change. PE then contributes to the creation of the dynamic networks among the stakeholders, which produces social production of knowledge, contributing to a collective conception of learning about them. The networks enable the participants to learn about themselves, the organizations in which they are involved, and the underlying assumptions and features of the phenomena, which they are evaluating. This, in turn, leads the transformation from static learning of the organizations to a dynamic development process where the social production of knowledge as well as social mobilization can be achieved. Hence, the focus of such communicative networks is not only to mend the differences between the organizations, but also to develop interactive learning with the help of one another to examine the basic assumptions in which the stakeholders articulate actions within their specific context.

4.3.1 The process of PE: an example from the field

In participatory evaluation, the stakeholders, especially those who have the most at stake in the program are actively involved in all phases of its process. The process may include the following phases (McTaggart, 1997; Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002): planning the evaluation design, including identification of research questions, designing methods for data collection, collecting data and its analysis, preparing findings and recommendations, and taking actions to improve the practices and disseminating the results.

Different formal and informal methods and ways can be adopted to initiate a participatory evaluation process. Among the formal, the most common method to initiate a participatory evaluation process is doing a workshop-style evaluation, in which the participants design, plan and execute the evaluation (Feuerstein, 1998; Mertens, Berkeley, & Lopez, 1995). Alternatively, informal ways to initiate a participatory

evaluation process include involving the participants through discussions and meetings (Anderson & Gilsig, 1998; Whitmore, 1998). The following example from India can help in understanding the process of participatory evaluation:

Feuerstein (1998) observes that PE not only helped improve the program goals and outreach, but also incorporated a new level of commitment from the community related to community-based primary health care in the rural areas of Patna, India. The health care activities were primarily extended from an urban hospital based in Patna through its outreach program in periurban and rural areas of Patna. Though several evaluations of the project were undertaken, there was a general feeling among the local community that the recommendations of the former evaluations helped a limited section of the community, ignoring the others, especially women and children. Thus, the idea of doing participatory evaluation in which local health and social workers along with community members would design their own evaluation was put forward by few community workers. Since most of the health workers were unfamiliar with the research, an external facilitator was hired to help the evaluation process. The evaluation started with a six-day training workshop to plan and prepare the evaluation with a team of twenty health care and social development workers associated with the program. This includes development of the evaluation agenda, identification of the data collection methods, and training of the health workers to collect data. A questionnaire was also developed to conduct a survey related to maternal and child health care services in the training workshop. After the workshop, the participants collected the data through interviews, focus group discussions and a survey. The data was then analyzed and presented in a tabulated form by the team members. Apart from the findings, the team members viewed that the process of evaluation itself had increased the awareness of the program and exhibited greater coordination between the program and the community. The results were then compiled into an evaluation report, which included different charts, posters, visual aids and narrations. Once the report was ready, it was presented to the community for their feedback and approval. Community members were invited to the outreach center, where the results were presented, discussed and finalized with the community members. Finally, a three-day workshop was held in which the team members, hospital senior staff and community members participated. The findings and

the analysis were shared with the participants and final decisions were made on improving the program.

4.4   Problematizing Participatory Evaluation

As discussed above, PE has been widely used for organizational learning. Critics have pointed out that such use of PE may lead to techno-managerial solutions to fix the narrowly-defined organizational problems, ignoring the critical reflections of stakeholders within the broader political, social and cultural environment (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Gregory, 2000; D. Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Williams, 2004). The participation in the evaluation is organized as a short-term measure to achieve some pre-determined goals and objectives, and to use it as a leverage for the acceptance of the evaluation (Gregory, 2000; Williams, 2004). The criticism is mainly on the issues of participation within broader social, political and cultural contexts and the impact (role) of evaluator/facilitator on the locals. In the next paragraphs, I offer more discussion in this regard.

There is a strong emphasis on the nature and the organization of the participation in the participatory research (Hall, 1988; McTaggart, 1997). Oakley (1991) points out that the structural, administrative and social obstacles, especially in rural areas, restrict genuine participation. The structural obstacles include the prevailing political environment, which discourages citizens' openness, and prefers to keep the key decision-making strictly in controlled hands. In such situations, the tension is likely when centrally planned objectives are promoted through local mechanisms, which were not involved in decision-making and the planning process in the first place. The other structural restriction is the legal structure, which restricts participation, especially with respect to people in rural areas. The legal system is inherently biased, which maintains the status quo. People in rural areas are largely ignorant of their rights and are unaware of the laws that could benefit them. Oakely writes:

"*In other instances the legal system acts as a direct constraint on the rural people's involvement in development activities. This is particularly the case in terms of legislation, which governs the right of legal associations of different categories of rural workers. Studies undertaken by the ILO have highlighted how this right of association has been*

legally withheld from different groups of rural workers, which thus frustrated their efforts to build organisations to represent their interests. Similarly, legislation which gives sweeping powers to government to disperse "unlawful" assemblies can act as a powerful deterrent to the forming of organisations by rural people (p304)."

Administrative obstacles are another impediment to organize genuine participation. The governments and the donor agencies plan developmental work from their centralized administrative offices/ministries, mainly located in urban areas, with a direct control on resource allocation, information and knowledge. The staff members in the offices usually have a perception that it is not appropriate to involve rural people in all developmental affairs, as they are incapable of performing management and administrative tasks. The planning data is often complex, academically theorized and no effort is made to make it a way intelligible for rural people. Further, it involves a cost (financial as well a time) to encourage local participation, to which neither organizations nor planners want to commit.

Social obstacles are one of the most important impediments in organizing true participation. In rural areas people are normally accustomed to leaving the decision-making to their local elites, suggesting that dependency is deeply and historically embedded in many rural communities. Further, one of the greatest challenges for many of the marginalized groups in the rural areas is the challenge of their survival, which takes most of their energies and resources, leaving no or little time for participation in the research activity. In addition, the people in rural areas are not a homogenous entity. Though they may share the same level of poverty, they are different in their caste, class, gender and geographical locations. These factors divide rural people, and the meaning of participation varies from one group to other. Similarly, gender in particular plays an important socio-political dynamic. Women, generally, have a prescribed role, and are not encouraged to take a dominant role in local decision-making activities.

Since the evaluator/facilitator with an external expertise has a key place in participatory evaluation, Rahman (1993), as cited by Gregory (2000), is concerned that it could be anti-participatory. The evaluators are always placed as privileged or tend to have a status as they bring resources or 'show the way' by helping the locals to get organized

and/or link them with the institutions or networks. This creates dependency, which in turn shifts the power imbalance in favor of external expertise. Thus, the conception of a shared control of the evaluation process cannot be materialized in presence of such imbalances. Gregory (2000) highlights Rahman's (1993) observation that such imbalances should be dealt with and removed at the methodological level, and people should be empowered to the point where they unlock their mental dependency by starting to take initiatives. The facilitator, on the other hand, should also learn from the process and devise ways to relinquish the control to the people.

Feminist researchers have similarly argued that some of the issues of power & knowledge need to be examined more critically (Gore, 1992; Humphries, 1996; Lennie, Hatcher, & Morgan, 2003; Maguire, 1987). Lennie, Hatcher & Morgan (2003) have feared that because of the close relationships developed between the participants in the participatory research and evaluation, some participants could be excluded, disempowered, and even exploited unintentionally. Furthermore, participants representing different institutions and different structural hierarchies also play an important role in making the relationship unequal. These issues are particularly important when women or other vulnerable groups from disadvantaged rural areas are involved in research with relatively privileged participants that may have different needs, agendas, expectations and knowledge/expertise. These authors observed that a greater attention is needed to acknowledge the difference between the participants, especially related to their gender, knowledge and power, and expertise (Lennie, Hatcher & Morgan, 2003). Garrow (2004) noted that far more negotiation and engagement is required between the participants (including facilitators) and the micro/macro context in which the research or development is conducted to make participatory research equally beneficial to all participants.

A key to PE success is how powerful stakeholders or partners change their behaviors (Jackson & Kassam, 1998a; Rebien, 1996). It remains a challenge if the powerful can surrender the power of controlling the process to the participants. Chambers (2007) contends that power in developmental work is usually considered an asset as it helps get the work done. People with power have a huge scope in changing things for the better. However, he also considers power as a disability and writes:

"*For learning, power is a disability. Part of the explanation of persistent error lies in interpersonal power relations. Powerful professionals can impose their realities. For many years psychoanalysts sustained the belief that the child sex abuse was a fantasy. Uppers' learning is impeded by personal dominance, distance, denial and blaming the victims* (Chambers, 2007, p. 76)."

Chambers (1995) also observes that it is less difficult for the powerful to give up their power than for the rich to give up their wealth. He writes,

"*For the rich to give up their wealth, without being forced by countervailing power, is difficult and improbable; but [for the powerful] to give up dominance at the personal level, putting respect in place of superiority, becoming a convenor, and provider of occasions, a facilitator and catalyst, a consultant and supporter, is less difficult; for these roles bring with them many satisfactions and non-material rewards* (Chambers, 1995, p. 42)."

The experience, however, suggests that in some circumstances giving up power is as difficult as giving up wealth. For example, Rebien (1996) while doing participatory evaluation in Zambia and Tanzania observes that stakeholders have little bargaining powers in the broader power framework. In such situations, relative major concerns from some stakeholders are regarded as minor concerns for others. Rebien (1996) has noted the field staff who was fully involved in the process of evaluation identified the bad service conditions—for example quality of bicycles used to do field work, their repair costs and low salaries—with an expectations that evaluation would help to address their genuine concerns. However, the program managers and funders were more interested to learn about the program goals and the quality of inputs rendered in the project. The bad service conditions were regarded as a minor part of the whole picture. A similar issue was also observed in Swaziland where the participatory evaluation came up with some concrete actions for change, but could not be implemented, as it demanded an increase in budget, which was beyond the control of the participants. This implies that even if the process is participatory it has limitations in influencing the conditions of power structures.

This leads to the question of how participatory evaluation can influence those attitudes that establish defensive mechanisms to maintain the status quo and power

structures Rebien (1996). This is in line with the dilemma of learning in PE with respect to single-loop and double loop learning, as coined by Argyris & Schon (1974) in organizational learning. In single-loop learning, the processes are adjusted and altered to reach the desirable objectives and goals, while in 'double-loop' learning the actual goals and objectives are challenged (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

Most of the PE work is initiated at the micro-level. Local people challenge their situation and work together to improve their situation and practices. PE creates the processes of change at the local level, however, the change is too local and micro compared to the dominant macro forces of globalization, transnational corporations and their allies. The challenge is how to scale up the processes and apply them in the bigger context (Gaventa, Creed, & Morrissey, 1998). It is therefore important that successes at the micro-level should be linked together to create broader movements and political activities to challenge the dominant discourses.

4.5   Discussion

Participatory evaluation is becoming increasingly popular due to its built-in characteristic of inclusiveness. The research participants, who are generally considered as 'subjects' in traditional evaluation methodologies, have a genuine chance to participate fully in the participatory evaluation and to 'make sense of their work'. The theoretical roots of participatory evaluation are in the broader framework of participatory approaches to research, which has several shapes and formats. Thus, PE can be transformative, leading to the creation of social movements for emancipation and absolute empowerment or can be used to solve specific problems and improve practices. In any case, it is important that a 'true' participation of the people and stakeholders is organized, that is, they are fully involved in the identification of the issues, data collection and analysis and making decisions on the basis of informed analysis.

Participatory evaluation can also be problematic. The blanket use of participation for narrowly conceived projects and organizational learning, without considering the broader socio-cultural and political context, has limited the success of PE within the broader perspectives of participatory approaches. There are growing fears that the participatory approaches can be 'co-opted' by the institutions representing dominant

forces of power to maintain their hegemony over the margins. Equally, it can also be misused as a 'toolkit' to 'mobilize the local labor and ideas' in the name of participation, or as a 'professionalization' tool just for improving the practices while ignoring the broader issues that are responsible for the flawed practices.

My choice of using PE as a methodology to evaluate RTEP, as I describe in more detail in the next chapter, comes out of the recognition that it requires all key participants to be involved in the evaluation, it encourages self-assessment and self-reflection among the participants, it generates collective knowledge, and it allows the participants to take subsequent actions. PE has a visible bias in favor of those partners who are least powerful, which is the case of the rural schools in South Africa. A significant feature of PE is the *process* of the evaluation, which itself is as meaningful as the findings and a source of an ongoing development. Given that RTEP is a partnership project, the process of 'being involved' in PE, I propose, could help the partners offer their views about the partnership and develop a shared understanding of the partnership by working together in the evaluation.

Chapter 5   Conducting the fieldwork

5.0   Introduction

This chapter documents my experience using participatory research in evaluating the partnership through the *Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP).* As mentioned earlier, the focus of the evaluation was to ascertain what the partnership project offered to the two key partners, the schools and the university, but especially the schools. Given that the university is considered as the dominant or stronger partner in the partnership, the evaluation aims to understand the schools' version of the partnership. In this chapter, I focus on: how I organized the participation in dealing with seemingly diverse participants i.e. cohorts of student teachers, in-service teachers, school principals, and the RTEP staff representing UKZN; what challenges I faced while doing participatory evaluation, and how I coped with those challenges. The chapter also discusses how the data is collected, what tools and methods are used, and how the data is crosschecked, verified and triangulated.

The chapter is divided into six sections. In the first section, I offer a description of the *Rural Teacher Education Project* (RTEP) that was carried out over the three years. The second section discusses the process of evaluation, which includes a two-stage evaluation approach. Section three describes how I organized the data from the three years. In section four, I elaborate on the methods and the data sources that are employed, and how the data is treated. It also includes the steps that were taken to ensure that the collected data is consistent, trustworthy and reliable. Section five offers my own story, explaining my role as someone external to the project. In this section I describe what role I played as a facilitator, how I situated myself in the research, how I organized the participation, what challenges I faced while doing the participatory evaluation and how I handled them. Section six presents how the evaluation process helped the partners to improve their relationships, especially how they self-reflected upon their practices through participatory evaluation.

5.1　The Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP)

As introduced in Chapter One, the Rural Teacher Education Project (RTEP) is a pilot project undertaken by the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) in three rural schools (Mulanga Primary School, Khambula Higher Secondary School and Ginyane High School[2]) in the district of Vulindlela in the KwaZulu-Natal province in 2007. RTEP is one of the five components under the broader umbrella of a school-university partnership project, *Every Voice Counts*, which was initiated in 2002 between the university and schools. The first phase of RTEP was piloted in 2007 with the purpose of providing opportunities to novice teachers to experience the challenges in the rural schools through school-university partnership. Based upon the evaluation of the pilot phase (RTEP 2007) in which all the participants agreed that the project should continue, RTEP was replicated in two of the three schools in 2008 (RTEP 2008) and 2009 (RTEP 2009). Besides providing an alternative teaching practicum for student teachers, RTEP focuses on five key areas: a) rurality; b) gender violence; c) HIV and AIDS; d) numeracy; and e) literacy (Balfour, Moletsane, & Mitchell, 2007).

5.1.1　RTEP 2007(Phase I)

RTEP 2007 was implemented in the following key steps:

The first step involved the planning process in which a cohort of twenty-two student teachers in the 3rd and 4th year of their studies at the Faculty of Education/UKZN was selected to participate in an alternative practicum experience. The student teachers were recruited with racial diversity in mind as well as commitment to education. The RTEP team also visited the three rural schools and met with the principals and the teaching staff to share the idea and finalize the project. In consultation with the schools' leadership, the project was planned and the mentor teachers were selected by the schools to mentor the student teachers during their teaching practicum in the schools.

In the second step, the selected student teachers were oriented to the project through a series of workshop sessions on research and service learning. The orientation helped the student teachers prepare themselves for their roles in the project. The student

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[2] The names are not real

teachers were also provided information related to research methods, including action research and community development.

In the third step, the student teachers were placed in the three rural schools for a period of 4 weeks in the month of July and early August, 2007. Just prior to the beginning of the practicum block, the cohort was expanded to include two third year Bachelor of Education students from McGill University. In the first week, the student teachers observed the teaching of their mentor teachers in the school. In the second week, the student teachers taught and the mentor teachers observed and evaluated the teaching of the student teachers. During the third and the fourth week, the student teachers continued teaching in the schools and also conducted interviews with the learners and the school teachers. Some of the student teachers also visited the local health clinic and met with local health workers. During the last two weeks, the student teachers also assisted their mentor teachers and the school administration in invigilating exams, marking papers and carrying out other administrative tasks at the schools.

All the student teachers along with the project coordinators (two international interns) were accommodated together at a local Guest House in the rural area approximately 30 km away from the three schools. Every evening, the student teachers regularly met with each other and shared their experiences in the 'de-briefing sessions'. The student teachers maintained reflective journals covering their daily experiences, challenges and observations related to teaching, rural schools and the project.

5.1.2   RTEP 2008 (Phase II)

As per the evaluation of the RTEP 2007, the project was replicated as RTEP 2008, and as RTEP 2009 in two of the three participating schools from the RTEP 2007. In RTEP 2008, nineteen student teachers, twelve of whom were returning student teachers from RTEP 2007, participated in RTEP 2008. Two international interns (one from Germany and other from the University of Guelph, Canada) and a visiting faculty member from McGill University also joined and stayed with the cohort in RTEP 2008. One distinct feature of RTEP 2008 was the introduction of 'after-school' activities covering a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including poetry, debate, theatre, and

soccer. Along with the schools' teachers and the project interns, the cohort of RTEP 2008 was also involved in conducting the 'after-school' activities.

5.1.3 RTEP 2009 (Phase III)

Like RTEP 2007 and RTEP 2008, RTEP 2009 (phase III) was implemented in July-August, 2009 with the same procedures, but with more management and supervision offered in line with the evaluations produced in RTEP 2007 and RTEP 2008. A total of twenty-two student teachers participated in the project in RTEP 2009. Two student teachers from Norway also joined RTEP 2009 and completed their international teaching practicum. In addition, three interns from McGill University participated in RTEP 2009 along with the returning McGill faculty member, who participated in RTEP 2008. The group helped the student teachers to coordinate the project, especially 'after-school' activities.

The research project approval:

The research project was approved by the McGill University's Ethical Review Board (see attachment) as well as by the UKZN Ethical Review Committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants who were interviewed, videotaped or participated in the focus group discussion by the external facilitator or the student teachers. In case of children, informed consent was obtained from their parents and teachers. All forms used for consent are attached in the appendixes.

5.2   Process of evaluation

Each year, the participatory evaluation/ research was carried out in two-stages as follows:

5.2.1 Stage one: student teachers as action-researchers

The research in the first stage of the evaluation was carried out by the student teachers. The student teachers conducted interviews and informal meetings with the learners, mentor teachers, school principals and local activists, especially during RTEP 2007. During RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009, the student teachers conducted interviews

with the learners and focused on observing the overall learning and teaching environment in the rural schools.

During RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009, the student teachers were also involved in conducting 'after-school' extra-curricular activities with the learners, which involved drama, poetry, debate and soccer. This provided them an opportunity to enrich their observations around rurality and rural education as they engaged with the learners as well as with in-service teachers through informal ways.

All data and information was extensively discussed in the 'debriefing sessions' and documented in the reflective journals, which each of the student teachers maintained in all the three phases. The 'de-briefing sessions', which were regularly video-taped, allowed the student teachers to validate, dispel and triangulate their observations and findings. This helped many student teachers to improve the breadth and depth of their journals, whereby making them a rich source of data related to their experiences, observations, analysis and reflections. Some student teachers also recorded the interviews of the school teachers, principals and the learners. Since the student teachers had a dual role of teachers as well as researchers, the journals and the de-briefing sessions reflected not only the challenges that they faced while they were teaching in low-resource contexts, but also provided an insightful observations related to socio-economic and political aspects of the rural locales.

The reflective journals, the debriefing sessions, and the videos produced by the student teachers served as a main source of data and helped significantly to initiate and frame the second stage of the evaluation.

5.2.2 Stage Two: external facilitation to broaden the base of participatory research

Each year, the second stage of the evaluation began after a gap (ranging from three weeks to eight weeks) when the student teachers completed their teaching practicum, and resumed their course work at the university. In the second stage, all the main stakeholders of the project (i.e. the RTEP administration, the schools and the student teachers) were involved. The second stage broadened the research agenda by involving the schools and the RTEP team along with the student teachers in the research

process. It helped me, as an external facilitator, to dig deep into the evaluation and frame questions for further investigation concerning to all participants. Focus group discussion, in-depth interviews and participatory workshops were conducted with the student teachers, mentor teachers, school principals, and the RTEP team. During 2007, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were also conducted with the parents, community workers and the relevant staff from the department of education.

5.3   Organizing data from the three years of RTEP

All three phases of RTEP (i.e. RTEP 2007, RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009) were evaluated using the same methods, but with differing foci as per the programme and participants' requirements. The main focus of the evaluation of RTEP 2007 was to explore how the project helped the student teachers to improve their skills to teach effectively in the rural context/challenging situations. The evaluation in the first phase was also focused on exploring how the schools viewed the seemingly 'academic' partnership relevant to their issues. Though the data was largely collected from the direct participants of the project, others, for example parents, local community workers and the relevant staff from the Department of Education, were also contacted to get their views and to verify what direct participants thought about the project and about issues and challenges of teaching in the rural areas.

The evaluation of RTEP 2008 was a follow-up to the evaluation of RTEP 2007. In this phase, more attention was given to understanding how the partnership, between the schools and the university, evolved and developed over the two years of RTEP. Furthermore, it also explored how the schools used the partnership to address their issues and how the university, a bigger partner in the partnership, responded to the concerns/issues/expectations of the schools.

The evaluation of RTEP 2009 focused on the relatively long-term effects of the partnership project related to the schools and the university. It explored the broader changes/ impression that the partnership project made on each of the main stakeholders/ beneficiaries: the schools, UKZN's Faculty of Education, and the student teachers. Besides meeting with the school and the university staff, I also conducted interviews with the four former student teachers in order to ascertain how their participation in RTEP 2007 and RTEP 2008 had affected their actual teaching after graduation.

5.4 Participants, methods and data sources

The participants include 61 student teachers, 30 mentor teachers and school teachers, three school principals, five RTEP coordinators, eight RTEP/ UKZN staff members, 16 parents, and eight officials from the Department of Education. Given the diversity of the participants, several activities were designed for each of the participants (see table below). The activities were designed not only to get their feedback about the project, but also to engage them in the process of evaluation. The main data sources include: participatory workshops, focus group discussions, interviews, observations, reflective journals, and video tapes. The activities and methods that were carried out with different stakeholders are summarized as follows (table 5.1):

Table 5.1:   A summary of methods used with different participants

Methods used	Participants	Number of workshops/ interviews/discussions (years in which the activities were performed)	Duration
Participatory workshops (for SWOT analysis)	Student teachers	2 (in 2007)	2-3 hours
Focus group discussions (Unstructured)	Student teachers; Mentor teachers; Parents; RTEP related UKZN	13 (2007, 2008, 2009)	1-3 hours
In-depth interviews	Student teachers; School principals; Mentor teachers; Learners; Community activists; Concerned officers from the Department of Education; RTEP team members	20 (2007, 2008, 2009)	1-2 hours
Telephone interview	RTEP II coordinators	2 (2008)	
Review of Reflective journals maintained by the student teachers during their practicum		22 journals were reviewed in 2007; 21 journal were reviewed during in 2008; 15 journals were reviewed in 2009	
Informal visit to schools	Informal visits to schools to meet the school staff and learners	11 (2007)	
Formal meeting with the related Department of Education	Seven circuit officers and their supervisor for the schools in Vulindlela	1 (2007)	1 hour
Videos	Several videos created by the student teachers. The videos contain interviews with the school teachers and learners		

5.4.1   Data sources

The data for the three years of RTEP was collected through the following methods:

i) Reflective logs and journals

The reflective logs developed by the student teachers served as a major source of data. One key feature of the reflective logs is that they had been used as a reflective tool as well as a source of data (Friesner & Hart, 2005). The reflective logs are usually a longitudinal mode of research, where the information about the experiences is collected over a span of time (Friesner & Hart, 2005). One of the key things that a reflective log exhibits is the extent of the interaction with other people, things and the environment (Bridges, 1999).

The student teachers were specifically asked to structure their reflective logs and journals around the three questions: i) what do they see normal in rural schools?; ii) what don't they see normal in rural schools? And; iii) how do they cope with the things that they consider to not be normal? The student teachers maintained the logs every day and documented their experiences. Though the quality of the journal varied, a typical journal includes the experiences of teaching in rural schools, interaction with the teachers, learners and with one another, interaction with the schools' physical and learning environment. The student teachers did not limit their logs only to the above questions. The logs covered almost all aspects of their interactions ranging from: accommodation to the time spent at schools; interpersonal dynamics with each other to the relationships with the school staff and the project staff/ coordinators; and participation in the 'debriefing sessions' to the coordination of the 'after-school' activities.

As mentioned above, I used reflective journals as a starting point for the second stage of evaluation. I have divided the data from the reflective journals into the following three categories: i) Common issues and concerns related to the project for further probing; ii) events, stories and incidences that each of the student teachers observed or experienced; and iii) individual analysis of the experiences. The data was then taken up in

the participatory workshops, focus group discussions and individual interviews with the stakeholders, including student teachers, to cross check and deepen the analysis.

ii) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are used to get a deeper understanding of the research issue. Not only is intense probing used in in-depth interviews, but systematic recording and documenting is also involved in the in-depth interviews. Guion (2006), for example, identifies the following key characteristics that separate in-depth interviews from a regular interview: Open-ended questions, Semi-structured format (i.e. allow questions to flow naturally on the basis of responses and the flow of conversation dictates what questions are asked or omitted and in what order), Seek understanding and interpretation (i.e. try to interpret what you hear, and seek clarity and a deeper understanding from the respondent throughout the interview), Conversational, Record responses, Record observations (i.e. non verbal behaviors), and Record reflections (i.e. record views and feelings immediately after the interview). Thus, following these characteristics, I used in-depth interviews to acquire a vivid picture of the participant's perspectives with a desire to learn everything that the participant wanted to share (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). In-depth interviews allowed me to get deeper insights about the project and the partnership. I tried to engage with the participants in a neutral manner, listened attentively, and asked follow-up questions and probes based on those responses. I also followed Kvale's seven principles of effective interview investigation, which include: Thematizing, Designing, Interviewing, Transcribing, Analyzing, Verifying, and Reporting (Kvale, 1996, p. 88).

Where possible, I also audio taped the interviews. In some cases when I realized that the respondents were not feeling comfortable, I stopped taping the interviews. The probing was not only limited to a few sessions of in-depth interviews. I used multiple channels, mainly consisting of informal meetings and visits, to clarify and gain a deeper understanding of the issues raised in the interviews and discussions. I constantly took notes during the interviews/ focus group discussions and expanded the notes afterwards.

iii) Focus group discussion

In contrast to in-depth interviews where deep understanding is sought from one person, I also employed focus group discussion to seek a range of differing views about the partnership project. Focus group discussion is useful to expand the knowledge-base and allow the participants to interact with each other (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus group discussions are also used to understand the social norms and differences in perspectives (Mack, et al., 2005). Thus, the focus group discussion helped me to allow the participants to raise their contrasting views and to understand each other's opinions. In addition, I also used focus group discussion as a forum where the findings of the evaluation were shared with all the participants. While employing the focus group discussion, I ensured a relaxed and open environment during the discussion. For example, while doing the focus group discussions at schools, few student teachers presented their experience about the project and appreciated the school's teachers as mentors before the beginning of the discussion. This made the environment relaxed for the discussion. The focus group discussions with the parents were conducted by a student teacher.

iv) Participatory workshops with the student teachers

During 2007, two participatory workshops were conducted with two different groups of the student teachers. In the workshops, student teachers, in small groups, developed a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the project. The student teachers then presented their SWOT analysis and responded to the discussion. After the presentations, the discussion was opened to all participants.

v) Informal meetings with the stakeholders

In addition to reflective logs, the in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participatory workshops, several informal meetings were also conducted with the various stakeholders. The purpose of the informal meetings was to seek clarifications, verify findings and analysis, and deepen the observation. I documented these informal meetings in my field notes.

vi) Videotapes developed by the student teachers and video recording of the debriefing sessions

During the practicum, student teachers developed several videos. The videos include interviews with the learners and teachers and group activities carried out in after-school activities. Further, all debriefing sessions were videotaped. The videos helped to identify the common themes and categories for further investigation. Furthermore, the videos that contained the interviews with the learners informed the evaluation on the learners' viewpoints about RTEP.

vii) Field notes

Field notes helped me to enrich my understanding of the issues. I have divided my field notes into two categories: i) Description of the events, which included interviews, meetings, workshops, and focus group discussion; and ii) My reflections on the events, surroundings, norms and practices. I used the field notes as a source of data as well as a 'reflexive validity' tool to articulate how as a researcher or facilitator, I may have affected the direction and focus of data collection and the study (Mulhall, 2003).

5.4.2 Treatment of data

The collected data was transcribed separately. The reflective logs/ journals of the student teachers were read and several sections were transcribed separately onto MS Word. Similarly, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and the participatory workshops were also transcribed. I watched all of the videos created by the student teachers and made field notes while watching. Some videos were also transcribed. My personal field notes, which also include my personal observations as well as my informal meetings with the direct and indirect participants, were extended and typed into a Word document.

My interaction with the data, especially with the student teachers' journals, was exploratory and interpretive. When I extended my interaction with the student teachers, schools and the RTEP staff, I wanted to generate new ideas to expand or challenge existing theories with respect to available literature and data. Thus, I followed what Coffey & Atinson (1996) describe as 'Abductive approach' to data analysis:

"[This approach] seems to capture more productively how researchers in all discipline actually think and work. It allows for a more central role for empirical research in the generation of ideas as well as more dynamic interaction between data and theory. Abductive reasoning or inference implies that we start from the particular. We identify a particular phenomenon—a surprising or anomalous finding, perhaps. We then try to account for that phenomenon by relating it to broader concepts. We do so by inspecting our experiences, our stock of knowledge of similar, comparable phenomena and equivalent stock of ideas that can be included from within our disciplines (including theories and frameworks) and neighbouring fields. In other words, the abductive inferences seek to go beyond the data themselves, to locate them in exploratory and interpretive frameworks (p 156)."

An abductive research approach is an important method in qualitative analysis, especially when all the research variables are not known in advance (Levin-Rozalis, 2004). This appeared to be in line with the argument that participatory research should not be designed in advance, and it should emerge through spontaneous reactions from the participants (Rahman, 1993). Using abductive inference, I initially focused on the student teacher's experience with the RTEP and picked up phrases from the student teachers' journals such as '*My experience [in rural schools] is an eye-opener*', '*I am astonished to see the plight of learners*', '*It has moved my life*', and '*I never expected that rural schools are so different*'. I then brought these phrases into the group discussions, interviews and participatory workshops with the student teachers, school teachers and the RTEP to investigate further what made the student teachers to think this way. Simultaneously, I also tried to bring the perspectives of the schools and the RTEP team on the above phrases with the opportunity to challenge/ expand them. The new phrases or ideas that came from the school teachers were: '*the student teachers were angels*'; '*they helped to release our workload*'; '*we see the opportunities of our professional development*'; and '*what is RTEP and what does the partnership mean?*'. Thus, abductive inference helped me to identify the broader generic themes or categories for further analysis. This includes, for example, the 'factors affecting the rural schools'; 'existing discourses in teacher education programmes in relation to teaching in rural areas'; 'social/ personal

dynamics between the student teachers and with the schools and how they shape the learning'; 'broader concept of partnership between the rural schools and the university' and 'teaching/ learning environment at schools'.

According to Patton (1999), "*The first decision to be made in analyzing interviews is whether to begin with case analysis or cross-case analysis…..beginning with cross-case analysis means grouping together answers from different people to common questions or analyzing different perspectives on central issues* (p. 376)*."* Since the study involves three diverse partners, I began with the cross-case analysis of the above mentioned categories or themes using what Glaser (1965) and later Glaser & Strauss (1967) have called 'Constant Comparative Method (CCM)'. Glaser (1965) noted CCM as: "*In contrast to analytic induction, the constant comparative method is concerned with generating and plausibly suggesting (not provisionally testing) many properties and hypotheses about a general phenomenon, e.g., the distribution of services according to the social value of clients. Some of these properties may be causes; but unlike analytic induction others are conditions, consequences, dimensions, types, processes, etc., and, like analytic induction, they should result in an integrated theory* (Glaser, 1965, p. 438)."

Glaser (1965) has further noted that CCM can be described in four stages: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory (p 439). Using CCM, I along with the participants attempted to analyze the data from various perspectives. In Table 5.2, I offer an example how different issues that generate different meanings/ perspectives among the participants turned into a broader shared understanding.

Table 5.2:   An example to demonstrate how I used CCM in data analysis

Categories	Initial reactions from the direct participants			Initial reaction from the indirect participants	Broader shared understanding
	School teachers	Student teachers	RTEP team	Parents and representatives from DoE	
Schools' teaching and learning environment	Learners lack learning culture	Teachers lack commitment		Teachers lack commitment and support	Teaches are under-qualified, ill-trained and felt isolated; lack commitment; parents lost faith on teachers; schools lack resources and consistent support to engage in systematic learning
The concept of school-university partnership for teacher education	Partnership lacks the school's perspectives	Relevance of curriculum and how teachers are prepared needs consideration	The main purpose is to prepare novice teachers for rural schools	No teaching placement in rural schools; exodus of matriculate from the rural areas; the quality of education in rural areas is heavily compromised	Teacher education alone is not a solution unless supported by enabling broader socio-economic circumstances

5.4.3   Reliability and validity of the research

Reliability, validity and generalization are the central elements of traditional experimental research. However, in liberatory or interpretive inquiry, the conventional

terminologies of 'validity', 'reliability' and 'generalization' of the research are replaced by 'consistent', 'trustworthy' and 'dependable' research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Smith, 1997). The non-positivist and interpretivist research sees human behavior as dynamic, which keeps changing through time, space and resources. The findings or experiences in one context cannot necessarily be replicated to the other context. Smith (Smith, 1997, p. 242) citing Patti Lather (1991) has noted the following four in-built methods for validating the participatory research:

i) Triangulation: The data collected is checked and cross checked using multiple methods and sources of information with the help of the participants. The triangulation or 'audit trial' increases the creditability of the data and its interpretation among the participants (McTaggart, 1997).

ii) Construct validity: In construct validity, the participants question their practices. It enables them to examine their practices, and to construct new knowledge by examining their existing realities. Reflexivity is a key component to construct validity.

iii) Face validity: The data is returned back to the participants for analysis and interpretation. This process increases the trustworthiness of the data and its meaning.

iv) Catalytic validity: The data or the findings that emerged from the research are eventually culminated into actions. The more action or transformation that takes place out of the findings, the more valid the research is.

I attempted to employ 'data triangulation' as well as 'methodological triangulation' (Denzin, 2006). Using 'data triangulation', the collected information was triangulated by asking similar questions (or questions related to same categories) from the student teachers, schools' teachers, school principals, and the RTEP team. The relevant information gathered was also verified from parents, community workers and the concerned officials from the local Department of Education in 2007. Some examples of data triangulation include the existing teaching practices in rural schools, the relevance of the education system/curriculum with respect to rural communities, the impact of the student teachers on the learners and schools, and broader socio-economic conditions of the area.

The data was also 'methodological triangulated,' as multiple sources of data collection was used. With respect to student teachers, reflective journals along with

interviews, focus group discussions, participatory workshops and informal meetings were used to collect data from the student teachers. From the schoolteachers focus group discussions and informal meetings were used to collect the data. From the school principals, the data was collected using in-depth interviews and informal meetings. In addition, the videos created by the student teachers that contained interviews of the schoolteachers and the principals were also used to crosscheck the data.

Whenever there is a point of disagreement among the various partners, the data was sent back to the participants for further discussion. For example, the issue related to a broader teaching and learning environment generated different viewpoints among most of the student teachers and teachers (as I will show in the next chapter). The issue was then discussed again with the schoolteachers and the student teachers for more analysis and in-depth interpretation.

Moreover, since the evaluation was action-oriented, it generated actions to correct and modify the existing practices and launched several initiatives, as a direct result of the evaluation, to improve the relationships and the project. The subsequent programmatic improvement of RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009 also demonstrate the richness and reliability of the data.

5.5   Situating myself: challenges of the evaluation process and organizing the participation from the viewpoint of an external facilitator

My first visit to South Africa was in August 2007, and I spent approximately three months there. I based myself in the University of KwaZulu-Natal at Durban with frequent and regular visits to the schools in the rural area. My presence at UKZN helped me to meet regularly with student teachers and the RTEP staff. In addition, it also gave me the opportunity to meet informally with various teaching and administrative staff at UKZN to gain a deeper understanding of South Africa's socio-political and historical context. I made a second visit in 2008 to assist the evaluation of the RTEP 2008 and spent about a week in South Africa. My third visit was in February/March 2009 to participate in an international conference on school-university partnership, organized by the RTEP management/UKZN. In addition to my participation in the conference, I also managed to visit the schools and met with the school's staff and some student teachers. I

spent ten days on this trip. My fourth trip was in October 2009, in which I carried out an evaluation of RTEP 2009. As discussed earlier, each time I went to South Africa was after a period of 3-8 weeks when the student teachers had finished their practicum in the RTEP. In addition, I was neither involved in the actual implementation of the practicum nor in the planning of the practicum and my involvement in the RTEP only began in the second stage of the evaluation each year. This had advantages as well as disadvantages. On the one hand, it helped me to position myself in the evaluation as someone who is not a part of the project or the RTEP management team, which is dominantly represented by the university. This relatively unbiased position with no conflict of interest assisted me in creating an environment where the whole notion of the partnership is challenged and negotiated with respect to the schools. This is particularly important in relation to the partnership discourse, as I mentioned previously; the voices of the rural schools in South Africa are ignored easily. Similarly, only being involved in the second stage of the evaluation also helped the participants to look back at their experiences through fresh perspectives. On the other hand, and for personal reasons, I was unable to become a part of the team who stayed together and conducted action research, and was unable to then observe the daily interactions and interpersonal/ inter-organizational dynamics between the participants of the project.

Given that South Africa is a racial and cultural mix society of different ethnicities, I found that my Indo-Pak subcontinent origin helped me to develop a good rapport fairly quickly with the participants, even though I was from Canada. Although small in number, South Africans of Indian descent are very visible and vibrant in South Africa's socio-cultural and political life. As approximately 3% of South Africa's population, the Indian minority has had firm roots in South Africa since the late 18th century. However, they were not considered South African citizens until 1964 and were subjected to the same discrimination that was directed to the Black majority (www.indiansouthafrica.com). The South African Indian community also very actively participated in the struggle against apartheid. Thus, my Indian heritage helped me to adjust and mingle with the participants in the project and to understand their culture more rapidly compared to other external facilitators.

No matter how the participation is organized, participatory approaches are 'logistically challenging' for the partners as they require extra efforts and activities which may not fall within their 'familiar or convenient places and time' (Kindon & Elwood, 2009, p. 27). While facilitating the participatory evaluation, I also found it challenging to organize an 'authentic' participation and to transfer the research ownership to the participants who have different research and organizational cultures, hierarchies, varied interests and expectations from the evaluation (Katsui & Koistinen, 2008; Kindon & Elwood, 2009). The issue becomes more challenging when it deals with the participants of different 'power, status, influence, and facility of language' (McTaggart, 1997:28) as happened in this case when the participants were the student teachers and their professors on one side, in-service teachers and their managers (school principals) on the second side, and comparatively well-resourced university and under-resourced schools on the third side. Furthermore, each group had a varied set of resources, including time and commitment to participate in the evaluation activities. For example, the student teachers were all full time university students, and their involvement in the second stage of the evaluation was completely voluntary. Furthermore, their main interest in the project was confined to gaining teaching experience in the rural areas and to develop/improve their teaching/professional practices. It was hard to expect them to commit a considerable amount of time for the research evaluation. Thus, their participation is contingent upon their free time and availability. The under-resourced schools, on the other hand, were interested in getting more resources for the schools along with regular professional development opportunities for their existing staff. They too had limited time and resources to engage themselves in all evaluation activities. Similarly, the RTEP team members representing the university were interested in deepening an understanding of rurality itself, an issue of less immediate concern to the schools. They were also constrained by the time. However, all three groups of stakeholders were interested in having their voices be fully recognized, heard and included in the evaluation even though they made informed choices by limiting their participation in the evaluation process as they felt appropriate.

Thus, I found that my initial plan to give control of the evaluation to a core group representing the project staff, student teachers and the schools' staff did not gain currency

and was regarded as not feasible. Thus, it put an added responsibility on me, as a facilitator, to conduct participatory evaluation in a situation where none of the partners was willing to go beyond their self-prescribed roles due to the constraints discussed above. Alternatively, I tried to engage all stakeholders through different activities in the evaluation process and constantly shared the experiences, concerns and recommendations of each group with other groups on regular basis. In the next section, I discuss more about how I embraced this challenge.

5.5.1 My three roles in the second stage of the evaluation: coordinator, researcher and activist

The role of facilitator is a key concern and a big challenge in participatory research, as discussed previously. It is noted that when an external facilitator tries to patronize the research process, the basic purpose of participatory research cannot be served. The other extreme case is the situation where the facilitator, especially the outside or external facilitator, tends to consider itself as a neutral consultant with no involvement in the process of change or action. This attitude is not consistent with the philosophy of participative inquiry, which encourages the people to take positions. It is a "social responsibility" of the facilitator to assist the group to take actions toward social change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p 559). Reason (1994, p. 334) even observes that participatory research in some settings cannot be done without someone (i.e., a facilitator) who has the time, skills and commitment, and who could be a member of a privileged or educated group. Thus, the role of facilitator is critical, especially in starting the process of change in some circumstances.

In view of the above, I situated myself in three roles: a) As a facilitator, b) As an activist and c) As a researcher. As a facilitator, I worked with all stakeholders and assured that every voice was included in the evaluation process (especially the voices of mentor teachers and principals since, unlike student teachers, they did not get an opportunity to share their experiences and/or feedback about the project). I developed an informal working arrangement with all the three stakeholders, in which all the information is shared and discussed. As an activist, I tried to create a space where the participants could challenge the very basic notion of the partnership/ RTEP, existing

practices in teacher education at UKZN, and the relevance of the education system/ teacher education with respect to rural communities. Although my 'activisim' may not be in line with the critical scholars, who view activism as a way to challenge the power structures within the broader political discourses of empowerment and emancipation, it, however, helped me, as a facilitator, to negotiate the case of schools by making the partnership more beneficial for the schools; as a researcher, I attempted to ensure the quality of the research by making it professional and focused.

In my initial days, I focused on gaining trust among stakeholders through informal meetings and introductions. I tried to follow the key principles, as laid out by Robert Chambers (1997), for external facilitators in participatory research as follows: a) behavior and attitudes of outsiders who facilitate. The facilitator does not dominate (instead s/he listens, learns, and unlearns; relax and don't rush, ask questions from people, embrace error, and have fun); b) methods, which shifts the normal balance from closed to open, from individual to group, from verbal to visual, and from measuring to comparing, and c) Partnership and sharing of information, experience, food and training between insiders and outsiders, and between organizations.

5.6 Making the evaluation process reflective and useful for the participants

Being a facilitator, I also tried to make the evaluation process empowering and as useful as the findings (Patton, 1997; Uphoff, 1991). I tried to make the evaluation process an informal platform where the stakeholders initiate a dialogue, understand each other's positions, self-reflect, and improve relationships. In this regard, I offer the following examples to demonstrate how the evaluation process helped the participants to self-reflect upon their practices and improve the partnership and the RTEP over time:

1) I remember the first time I asked one of the school principles '*what do you think about the RTEP partnership with UKZN?*'; he was silent until I was corrected by the project coordinator who re-phrased the question as '*what do you think about the student teacher project?*' This gave me an impression that the partnership is narrowly focused on 'project-related' relationships, at least from the schools' perspective. However, as schools started to get more and more involved in the evaluation process, their understanding of the partnership improved and expectations from the partnership

also started to emerge. In my initial visits to the schools during 2007, most of the discussion remained focused on the logistics of the RTEP. However, at the end of 2007, the discussion turned to the very basic notion of the partnership, including what the schools are getting from the partnership and how it affects the broader teaching, learning and education environment in schools. A step further, the schools and the teachers also started to self-reflect during the process of evaluation. One of the teachers in the focus group discussion, during 2007, observed the evaluation as:

"This [focus group discussion] has helped us to go back and analyze the impact that the student teachers have made on our school through collective discussion. This is the first time that we are getting the opportunity to discuss openly about the project and share our voices. Knowing others' [teachers] point of view and discussing them in detail is helping us to draw conclusions about the project and to understand it clearly."

2) I also attempted to make myself responsive to the concerns, needs and suggestions of the schools. While doing so, I was cautious and respectful of the opinions of the schools and did not try to influence the opinions for the sake of evaluation/research needs. This helped me to develop a trust with schools, which later helped the partnership and the research to be more trusted. For example, two unrelated events during the evaluation process at one of the schools ended up improving the trust and confidence between the partners.

Event 1:   In one of the meetings with the school principal, the project coordinator inquired about the consent forms from the parents regarding the use of photographs that the student teaches had taken during their practicum. The scepticism regarding the use/misuse of the pictures was evident, when the principal replied: "*What'd you do with the photographs*?" After being told that the photographs would be used for an upcoming academic exhibition in South Africa, he rightly demanded to see the pictures for himself. In the next meeting, the school principal along with the deputy principal reviewed the pictures. While remained focused on pictures, they frequently pointed their fingers to the pictures as they recognized the events, places and persons. They laughed at some postures and tried to remember the memories that had been captured in the pictures. Once

they finished they looked relaxed and asked a copy of pictures for the school. The vice principal even went further as she observed: "*there is no harm in granting the permission for using the pictures*". Yet, there has been no word from the principal regarding the permission. His silence has been taken as an implicit "No" and we decided not to pursue this matter further.

Event 2: A few days later, the school invited me to participate in a forthcoming regular school-parent meeting. The school was expecting 80-90 parents at the meeting and was concerned about how to communicate with such a large gathering in the absence of a sound system at the school. The principal asked me: "*Is it possible for you to bring a mega-phone from the university*?" Even though I gladly agreed, I was not sure who to contact at the university. The principal replied: "*O.K. then you need to be here at 8:00 [in the morning], as we'll be starting the meeting at 8:30 sharp". "How far do you live from the school",* he inquired. On my response, *"about two hours drive"*, I saw few signs of worry on his face as he was calculating, on my behalf, the time I would need to get up in the morning and to head off to the school. Reading his expression, I promptly assured him that I would be on time.

It was a chilly early morning and the rain has just stopped in overcast conditions when I left my place for the school for the parent-meeting. On my arrival, the principal was surprised to see me as he was not expecting me on time due to bad weather. It surprised him further as he saw that I managed to get a portable sound system with a wireless FM microphone instead of a mega-phone. As the meeting got going, the participants increasingly became more and more enthusiastic in the discussion. It seemed that they wanted to take full advantage of the sound system, especially the wireless microphone which was so handy in passing around to the participants during the open discussion. The meeting, which was related to school, soon changed into a community gathering where people offered singing condolences to the recently deceased community members and announced forthcoming community meetings and celebrations, in addition to discussing the issues related to the school. Though these kinds of add-ons, in rural areas, are not unusual in any particular community gathering, the sound system added to

the excitement. The meeting, which was scheduled for an hour, lasted for more than two hours.

After a week, when the project coordinator and I were leaving the school after our meeting with the school teachers, the principal thanked me for bringing the portable sound system, and informed me that it was a wonderful experience to do a big parent-meeting with a proper sound system. The principal gave us an envelope which was full of parental and school consent forms, granting the permission to use the pictures. Furthermore, he opened up his desk drawer, took an official school seal, and affixed it on all the consent forms. While we were looking at each other, surprised, he said: "*I am sorry! We were unable to get the remaining consent forms back from a few parents as the teacher who took on the responsibility got sick. But as soon as we get them, we'll fax them all to you.*"

The above demonstrates the importance of relationships and trust in research. On one hand, it provides evidence that trust is built when the participants start to see and realize that the research or intervention is responsive to address even those needs which do not fall under the formal ambitions of the research. On the other hand, it also indicates the complexities of the partnership or participation in a situation where one partner/stakeholder, with no or little resources, in some ways relies on the other, more resource-rich partner.

3) Participatory research and evaluation is about and with the people. Therefore, the process must be open and inclusive. When I started visiting the schools, I observed that some of the school staff, especially the female staff, was not very open in the meetings. I remembered that in one of my initial visits to the school, the vice principal was reluctant to meet. I found her uncomfortable to discuss the partnership and the RTEP project. Being the only female vice-principal of the school in an area where top positions are mainly meant for men, her reluctance to discuss the issues and challenges about the partnership was quite understandable. Perhaps, she feared that if she misunderstood or was misquoted in the interview/meeting, she might be in trouble in this environment dominated by men. However, as a result of our regular visits to the schools with flexible and responsive attitudes toward all stakeholders during the past three years, the trust and confidence started to emerge and the fear started to dissipate. I remembered that one time she asked if we could provide her some information about improving the academic qualifications through UKZN. We provided the information, which she appreciated. All

these informal meetings and dialogues helped her to open up and participate freely over time. When I visited the school in 2009 to meet with the principal, it came as a pleasant surprise when I saw her discussing the project and the partnership quite freely in the absence of the principal. While I was about to leave, after realizing that the principal was not around to meet as scheduled, the vice-principal asked me to wait for few minutes. After approximately fifteen minutes, she came and informed me that she was discussing the RTEP 2008 with her staff. She then discussed the RTEP with me and provided some useful recommendations for improving the project.

4) The evaluation re-engaged the student teachers with each other through focus group discussions and participatory workshops. The student teachers reflected back upon their experiences and revisited their conclusions that they had drawn from their experiences from the RTEP. For example, two 3rd year student teachers, during the evaluation of the RTEP 2007, reported that they were 'overwhelmed' by the challenges and problems associated with the rural schools. They concluded that they lacked the passion and perseverance to teach in rural schools. However, these two student teachers not only returned and participated in the RTEP 2008, but also changed their mind regarding the possibility of teaching in rural schools. One of the two student teachers, in her in-depth interview in 2008, mentioned that the participatory workshops and the focus group discussions with the student teachers and the school teachers helped her to change mind.

5) The evaluation process and the subsequent use of the evaluation have also influenced the UKZN and its senior management to recognize the case of schools in deprived rural areas. When I visited UKZN for the first time in 2007 to help the evaluation of RTEP 2007, I noticed some uncertainty and pessimism around RTEP. Besides the issue of funding, the concerns were mainly related to the safety and security of the student teachers, the actual benefits of the project, and the cost of sending student teachers for the practicum in the far-flung rural schools. One of the RTEP team members describes his experience of managing the project in 2007 as:

"*The management of the project was very stressful, especially when I got calls from the coordinators (from the field) in the evening about the challenges that the student*

teachers had been facing. All the time, I remained concerned about the safety of the student teachers who were residing away from their homes in different settings."

Similarly, another UKZN staff who was also briefly involved in the RTEP 2007 reported that some members of the UKZN community observed that the project was 'cost-ineffective' as the student teachers could be sent to the nearby township schools for the practicum. It was very obvious that the pilot phase of the RTEP (i.e. RTEP 2007) was struggling to gain recognition from the UKZN (a key partner in RTEP), and the project team was unsure if they would be able to replicate it in the coming years. The project was under pressure not from outside the RTEP, but also from inside. In one meeting, one of the RTEP team members, after listening the complaints, challenges and criticism of the student teachers concluded that this was the first time that they developed a project for teaching practicum in the rural schools, but now it looked like that it would also be the last time to plan such an effort. During this environment of uncertainty related to the future of RTEP, the participatory evaluation of RTEP was initiated. The participatory evaluation provided the formal and informal 'structures of communication' between the partners, notably among the schools and the UKZN. An open dialogue was initiated between the student teachers, schools and the university. Through this interaction, all participants got the opportunity to listen and discuss each other's point of view. The student teachers' journals and the documentation of the RTEP 2007, including the evaluation report also played an important role in addressing the concerns and clarifying the project. Moreover, the student teachers who participated in RTEP, during their remaining course work at the university, discussed their experience with their professors and colleagues. The RTEP team also advocated and disseminated the benefits of RTEP across the UKZN. RTEP, which at one point was struggling to gain currency among the top UKZN management, has started to get recognition for its contribution to exposing the issues and challenges related to teacher education in rural South Africa. Resultantly, the Dean of the Faculty of Education and the Dean of Research at UKZN, in their key note addresses at a two-day international symposium, *Every Voice Counts: Critical Partnerships for Teacher Education and Rural Communities*, on school-university partnership and the rural education organized by the RTEP team between

February 26- 27, 2009 in Durban, acknowledged the importance of the initiatives such as RTEP about informing the policy makers and the institutions responsible for teacher training on the needs and challenges related to teacher preparation for schools in rural areas. And more recently, in my latest visit in late 2009, I was told by one of the university staff members that some senior administrators at the Faculty of Education were seriously considering improving their teaching practicum model in light of the lessons learned through RTEP.

5.7   Discussion

Using PE in RTEP, I found that the process of evaluation as useful as the findings itself. The process of evaluation helped the partners to understand each other's perspective and build the trust and confidence to improve their relationship. Further, it provides formal and informal structures where the participants reflect and self-reflect upon themselves and enhance their understanding.

A two-stage model was used to evaluate RTEP. During the first stage, the student teachers collected the information and analyzed it. In the second stage, I, as an external facilitator, broadened the evaluation base by involving the schools, mentor teachers, the RTEP management team, along with the student teachers in the evaluation process. Separate activities such as short participatory workshops, open ended focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observations, reflective journals, and video tapes were used to collect the data and was analyzed using 'adaptive method' and 'Constant Comparison Method'. The process of data collection and data analysis was held simultaneously with the involvement and consultation of the participants. The data was cross-checked and triangulated with the participants and with other relevant participants which are not directly involved in RTEP. Given the limitations of the partners, which confined them to self-identified roles in the second stage of the evaluation, I, as an external facilitator, attempted to serve multiple roles to make the evaluation process as meaningful as I could. The participatory evaluation helped the participants to assess the RTEP with respect to their expectations and to understand each other's point of view.

Chapter 6   School-university partnerships: evidence from the field

6.0   Introduction

This chapter analyzes the data from the journals, interviews, focus groups and my field notes in relation to the RTEP. I attempt to explore the question of how the 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) emerged from the partnership, and how it influenced the professional development and professional identities of the student teachers. In addition, I also look at how the schools and other participants viewed the notion of the partnership in RTEP. In looking at the evidence, I offer examples from three cohorts, the 2007 group, the 2008 group (made up of returnee students from 2007 plus new 3rd year students), and the 2009 group (made up of returnee students from 2008 plus new 3rd year students), school staff, the RTEP management and the learners at the schools.

The chapter begins by outlining the social settings that helped foster CoPs. The second section focuses on how the CoP studied the socio-economic conditions of the schools. It also includes the observations made by the local community activists, parents and the local Department of Education. The third section looks at the ways in which each of the four key participants viewed the project: Student teachers, Schools and in-service teachers, the RTEP management representing the Faculty of Education at UKZN; and learners.

6.1   Studying the social setting: 'communities of practice'

An integral aspect of the cohort model of teacher induction or teacher preparation is the idea of social learning (Bandura, 1977). Thus, when groups of student teachers are placed in the same school as part of a cohort, a key question relates to whether this might contribute to a collaborative approach to learning or what Wenger (1998) describes as 'communities of practice'. Learning, as conceived by Wenger (1998), is not a 'reified time-bound activity', but is an on-going process, which is constantly developed in participating in an on-going practice (p. 95). Learning is distributed in the 'Communities of Practice' (CoP), as described by Tsui (2009), as follows:

"Participation in communities of practice shapes our experience just as it shapes the communities of which we are a part. It is in the process of participation that meaning is constructed and negotiated. Participation is broader than direct engagement in specific practice with specific people. It is part of who we are and is something that we carry with us even if we are not interacting with others (p37)."

As discussed in Chapter Two, two key concepts of Wenger's notion of learning from the 'Communities of Practice' are: i) community; and ii) practice, as Wenger observes:

"Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor" and the 'participation' is *"the social experience of living in the world in terms of membership in social communities and an active involvement in the social enterprises* (1998, p 55)."

However, as per Wenger, not every community or practice can develop 'community of practice'. Wenger described the three dimensions of developing a 'community of practice' as: i) joint enterprise, that is, the members collectively develop an understanding of what their community is about, hold each other accountable, and contribute to the enterprise; ii) mutual engagement, wherein the members constantly interact with each other, establish norms and relationships, and reflect upon the engagement; and iii) shared repertoire, in which, the members are able to produce language, tools, artifacts, stories and other collections that are also accessible to each other (Wenger, 2000). With the help of these dimensions, the 'communities of practice' can constitute the competence in the given context among the members.

Structurally at least the entire setting of collaborative learning either from 'communities of practice' or from other modes is also ideal for reflexive self-learning. Similarly, it also enhances the learning as Smylie (1995) observes that learning in groups or cohorts provides the opportunities to: i) work with and learn from others on an ongoing basis; ii) learning collaboration in group work; iii) take advantage of working with and learning from others of similar position; and iv) diversify learning from variation, challenge, autonomy, and choice in work roles and tasks (Smylie, 1995).

The RTEP helped the cohorts of student teachers to develop a social space which led to the development of 'Communities of Practice' (CoP). Though spearheaded by the student teachers, the CoP developed in the RTEP represents different levels of participation and different groups of people, as follows:

6.1.1 Student teacher cohort as a 'community of practice'

The main 'community of practice' seemed to be among the student teachers themselves. The partnership project placed the student teachers in groups or cohorts (Bandura, 1977), where in theory at least, they would have a space to discover, re-discover and learn from each other. Since the student teachers were accommodated together, worked together in the schools, and learned together, they got several intense opportunities to share and learn through formal and informal ways. The most important formal means of learning is exhibited in the daily 'de-briefing' sessions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, each evening, during the teaching practicum, the student teachers met with each other and reflected upon their daily experiences. The project coordinators, some of them experts in different participatory techniques, conducted the sessions. The student teachers discussed and shared their frustrations and achievements in the groups, some of which were based on their 'at the end of the day' experiences and some of which were organized on broader issues such as addressing HIV and AIDS. In some sessions, the faculty members of the UKZN also participated in the debriefing sessions. The informal means of learning included spending their free time together in the evening, sharing accommodation with each other, meeting informally with each other during free time at school, and participating in the 'after-school activities'. Student teachers described their experiences as follows:

"*Had a great time and learnt a lot about working with others and [learning the] group dynamics. [It] was great meeting [with] other students and learning to live with them for the 4 weeks. Hope I will be able to get back next year*! (Student Teacher Reflective Journal 2007)."

"*One of the best thing about the project is that we lived together, worked together and shared our rooms with different partners. It taught us how to interact and learn from*

others. Whenever we find any problems [while teaching], we always find that other student teachers are also facing the same problem. This encouraged us to find solutions with others (Focus group discussion with student teachers, 2009)."

"There are lot of things which can cause stress but because we worked as a group and we understood each other, we were able to conquer everything (Interview with Student Teacher, 2007)."

Some internal dynamics and tensions among the 'communities or practice' were also observed as one of the project coordinators writes:

"At times the lines that divide the group run deep. For example, most times the dining room is split exactly in half: white people on one side, black people on the other. Other times it is one cohesive group, with shared experience overpowering any differences. I cannot stress enough the social implications of this study, within the school and among the student teachers. It has broken down barriers and opened up new avenues of communication, discussion and learning (Wake, 2007: 6)."

At the same time, not all of the group experiences were necessarily 'positive' as a group of student teachers observe:

Few of us in the group were of the impression that we would be paid for our participation in the project. But when we realized that there is no financial compensation to their participation, some of us got angry over this and thought to leave the project in the middle. We were clearly divided into two groups. Fortunately, it was all settled down (Focus Group Discussion with Student Teachers, 2007)*."*

On investigating further how the above 'issue' had been settled, one of the student teachers elaborates:

"One student teacher among us took a lead and raised some very impressive points related to the profession of teaching. It helped us to realize that the practicum [RTEP] is about improving our understanding and practices related to our profession, which we

have chosen by ourself. It is not about making money (Interview with one Student Teacher 2007)."

Another student teacher narrated a 'disturbing' incident that happened among the student teachers as:

"*A disturbing incident happened in our van on the way home today, a male African student teacher hit one of the African girls. Apparently, they had history at Edgewood [UKZN] too, so they are both troublemakers. It was definitely an interesting insight into the gender issues prevalent in the culture. At the same time it saddens my heart as this country is so desperate for teachers that we are willing to compromise on the character and morality of the potential student teachers. There is no way a person who is very violent or has stabbed a girl before should be allowed within any distance of a teaching training institution* (Reflective Journal of one Student Teacher 2007)."

The 'community of practice' also exposes the challenges related to the diverse attributes of the group or what the student teachers called themselves as weaknesses, as follows:

"[Due to my deep rural background] *My English is very weak, and by listening others [student teachers] I realized that I have to improve my language to fully participate in the discussions. My main learning came out from listening others and to meeting with my friends informally* (Interview with the Student Teacher 2007)."

Similarly, one of the project coordinators observed the negative attitude among the members of the cohort as:

"*There is one student teacher who always wants to dominate the group discussion. Not only that, his remarks most of the time were quite insulting to other group members. Everyone noticed that. Sometime it wonders me, why that person has not been kicked out from the project yet* (Interview with a project coordinator 2008)."

Student teachers, as a 'community of practice' were able to develop mutual relationships, formal as well as informal, which helped them to learn from each other and

reflect upon their experiences. However, they were also exposed to the group dynamics of 'community of practice,' especially with relation to different cultures/attitudes, expectations and language proficiency among the group members.

6.1.2   Student teachers and mentor teachers as 'communities of practice'

Each student had at least one mentor teacher from the school. These mentors were assigned by the principal to work with the student teachers in their subject areas as per the standard guidelines for the teaching practicum in South Arica. The initial interaction between the 'mentor' teachers and the student teachers in 2007 was not very positive. As some student teachers observed:

"During the first week, the mentor teachers felt threatened as we would take their jobs away from them or report to the Department of Education about their weaknesses (Student Teachers, 2007)."

However, as the days progressed and student teachers and the mentor teachers got more chances to work together they slowly become part of a 'community of practice' particularly in the context of the activities performed at schools. The student teachers and the mentor teachers noted their mutual interaction as:

"I'm first amazed to see how teachers here are concern about learners. My mentor teacher is like a social worker, counselor, mother as well as father. She knows learners that comes to school with empty stomach, learners that do not have parents that has problems in terms of school fees, uniform (Interview with the Student teacher, 2007)."

"My mentor teacher was very easy going. She helped me to conduct the lesson and provided a valuable feedback. She taught me love and passionate for the learners (Student teacher, 2009)."

While most of the student teachers appreciated their interaction with mentor teachers, some student teachers were also disappointed:

"I had three mentor teachers. I was not satisfied with one of them. She gave her class to me and took rest. I did not get any help from her. She was very pre-occupied. She

did not have time. The other two mentors were fine (Interview with the Student teacher, 2009)."

Another student teacher mentioned not getting the expected support:
"*My mentor teacher was very uncooperative. She kept changing my lesson plan without informing me, thus making my task difficult. [In such situation] I thought I was thrown in front of the learners with no [lesson] preparation* (Interview with the Student teacher 2008)."

Like Student teachers, most of the mentor teachers enjoyed learning from 'communities of practice':
"*We all are inspired by the student teachers. Although we meant to mentor them, but we learned and impressed with their passion and commitment….it is very refreshing to see young teachers coming with new skills and pedagogy, especially related to technology. Most of us have been teaching for many years and have outdated the skills that we brought when [we] graduated. The student teachers have reminded us the forgotten skills* (excerpts from the focus group discussion with mentor teachers 2007).*"*

The mentor teachers similarly had some misgivings. As one of the mentor teachers told me:
"*This year, my student teacher [mentee] was not good. He did not follow my advices. I enjoyed providing mentorship to the last year student [teacher], but not this year* (Interview with a mentor teacher 2009)."

The interaction between the student teachers and mentors developed another level of 'communities of practice'. Though the interactions between the student teachers and mentor teachers were not as intense as the student teachers themselves, it provided them the opportunities to work together formally and informally and gain experience, whether positive or not, within the school settings.

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6.1.3   Student teachers and project coordinators as 'communities of practice'

Each year, the student teachers' teaching practice in rural areas was coordinated by the project coordinators. The project coordinators, all of a similar age group as of the student teachers, were the international graduate and undergraduate students who came for internships. The coordinators were accommodated along with the student teachers during their practicum and coordinated the teaching practicum and conducted the de-briefing sessions. They also helped the student teachers carry out "after-school" activities in phase II and phase III of the project in 2008 and 2009, and some coordinators also evaluated the student teachers' classroom lessons. The role of coordinators in the CoP was considered as blessing as well as misfortune. The student teachers, who appreciated the presence of the project coordinators, noted that the coordinators were the important source of learning new expertise and about different cultures. A group of student teachers reported:

"*As a group, we had a great communication and we become friends. Every Wednesday, we had fun-nights. It really helped us to share our culture and values from different nations and countries* (Focus group discussion with Student teacher 2009)."

Another student teacher observed that project coordinators not only coordinated the project, but also evaluated their practicum as needed. She says:

"*The coordinators helped us a lot, and we learnt from each other. Sometime they also evaluated us [our teaching] on our request* (Interview with the Student teacher, 2009)."

Similarly, learning in the 'communities of practice' also helped the project coordinators further their knowledge in such areas as international development and teacher education. As one coordinator describes her experience:

"*Words cannot adequately describe the experience I have had on a personal level. It has been phenomenal. I feel that this study is relevant, applicable and important. I have seen and learned more from the learners, schools and the student teachers that I can't begin to describe. I wake up each morning and am so grateful to be here* (Reflective Journal of a project coordinator 2007)."

On the other hand, there were also voices from the student teachers who did not like the idea of inviting "outsiders" to coordinate the projects, and hence the potential for the development of the CoP milieu was limited. For example, some of the student teachers mentioned:

"*We noticed that the project coordinators were more inclined toward the white student teachers, thus ignoring us in-terms of making decision. One day when we had some free time in the evening. The group was divided: most of us wanted to go out to get some daily use stuff; others wanted to stay and get some rest. The coordinators did not listen to us and ruled in favour of the white students teachers* (Focus Group Discussion with Student Teachers, 2008)."

While some black student teachers were concerned that project coordinators were more inclined toward the white student teachers, in the same vein some white student teachers were either not happy with the project coordinators as they expressed their views as:

"*The project coordinators should be from South Africa. The foreigners usually come with some pre-conceived notions about different racial groups in South Africa… and it reflects in their action and attitude. They were not very much aware of our history and culture* (Focus Group Discussion with Student Teachers 2008)."

Another group of student teachers that was not happy with the project coordinators was concerned that the 'outsiders' were not well-informed about their culture, issues and history. They expressed their sentiments as:

"*The project coordinators, especially if they are coming from other countries, should be extensively briefed about our culture, history and current issues* (Focus Group Discussion with Student Teachers 2008)."

"*During the de-briefing sessions, they [the project coordinators] were so much focused on HIV and AIDS as it looks like that this is the only problem in South Africa* (Interview with the Student Teacher 2008)."

"*It is better to have coordinators from South Africa, instead from other countries. They do not know our culture and history. Sometimes it appears that they are following-us all the time* (Interview with the Student teacher, 2009)."

The above observations demonstrate that while the potential was clearly there for the project coordinators to be part of CoP, there were clearly tensions in relation to an 'outsider' status.

6.2 Studying the context: socio-economic conditions of the schools/ area

Given that a key issue within RTEP as whole is to focus on beginning teachers to develop a better understanding of rurality, an important question relates what their perceptions are about rurality. In this section, I provide an overview of the socio-economic conditions of the schools/area as per the observations of the student teachers, school teachers and the local activists.

6.2.1   Poverty-ridden learners and poor school infrastructure

Student teachers observed that the schools are under-resourced and located in the poor areas with many challenges, such as hunger, poverty and lack of resources, as follows:

 "*During [school] break today I noticed that some of the learners fight for the food. I am assuming this is because this is the first meal that they are getting in the day or it could mean that it is the only meal that they get a day. It would seem that the food is the inspiration for the learners to come to school (Student teacher reflective journal, 2007).*"

One student teacher portrayed the lack of resources and lack of attention to the school where she was placed for the teaching practicum as follows:

"*Everywhere there are signs of dilapidation and rurality. Broken windows, unpainted peeling filthy walls, rubbish strewn everywhere, broken desks in the yard, abandoned classrooms and delightful goats strolling casually in and out of classrooms* (Student Teacher's Reflective Journal 2007)."

In connection to the above, another student teacher observed:

"A chalkboard is present but is wiped either by a tissue or an end of a broomstick…. Litter is of abundance around the school and there are goats roaming freely inside who feed off all of it – serious! Often I would be teaching when a goat would arbitrarily walk inside. There are no door handles on any door in the school as they seem to be quite sought after by thieves for a quick buck. The school has no electricity and running water—except for that hose in the front that has clean water coming from the Berg (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

The student teachers have also noticed how the lack of basic resources in the schools made teaching and learning challenging in the classroom activities. One other student teacher described a learning activity in his classroom as follows:

"The amazing thing is that the learners were doing isometric drawings (technology class) and only 3 people out of a class of 35 had rulers (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

The teachers concurred with the student teachers and described that the area is poverty-ridden. They put their observation about the area as:

"The area in which we are serving is very poor. People either work on agriculture land or do some labour work in the town. Even those who work in town, their families live here. Most of the children in the area are orphans. Even those who are not orphans, they are taken care by their mothers and extended family members as their fathers work and live in town (Interview with Deputy school principal, 2007)."

In another focus group discussion teachers described how the poverty in the area has affected the learners in the schools as follows:

"*As you can see that our school lacks resources. We do not have the text books and basic education materials. Learners cannot buy [the books] as they cannot afford it. They even come to school hungry* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers 2007)."

6.2.2   Teenage pregnancy, gender violence and HIV and AIDS

In addition to poverty, the area is battling with teenage pregnancy, HIV and AIDS and gender violence (including sexual harassment). Some student teachers observed the situation of high teenage pregnancy and orphanhood as:

"In the area, there is a high rate of teenage pregnancy .… Some parents have died and their children have to look after themselves or live with their extended families. .…I asked (from my mentor teacher) why some of the learners come to school wearing dirty uniforms …..she told me that most of the learners are borne by young mothers especially the girls that they taught few years ago (in the same primary school) and these girls are still young and they don't have time to look to those young ones (Student teacher reflective journal, 2007)."

"There is a high rate of HIV and AIDS in the area… (one of the major causes that spread the disease in the area) is that the most of the girls fall in love with the taxi owners/drivers because they give them money…there is a high rate of sexually transmitted disease because there is a lack of knowledge about having protected sex (Student Reflective Journal, 2007)."

"Many families in (the area) are headed by children because of HIV/AIDS.…this is normal (in the area) (Student Reflective Journal, 2007)."

The teachers also noted that the area has a high rate of teenage pregnancy and gender violence. In one of the focus group discussions, the teachers described the challenge of teaching in such situation as:

"*It is hard to teach those learners who are traumatized because of gender violence and rape, which is a common problem here. Sometimes it gets even worse when we know who the perpetrator is and who the victim is, but we can't do anything. In our school, we have a case where the learner raped his classmate. They both are still in the same class* (Focus Discussion with the school teachers 2007)."

When I asked the same group (2007) what school or teachers did in this case as soon as they figured out that the perpetrator and the victim were from the same school [or even in the same class], the teachers replied: *"We did nothing. It is the government's responsibility to arrest the perpetuator."*

To deepen my understanding of the area and the issues, I also met with two community activists and a professional health worker. In my meeting with them, I was interested to know how and what the student teachers and the schools were saying might be corroborated by local professionals. The two local activists, Ms. May Moshenga and Ms. Gethwana Makay, had been involved in a range of social and human development activities in the area. Similarly, Dr. Janet Frohlich was managing a local non-profit health clinic, CAPRISA (Centre for the AIDS Programme Research in South Africa), serving the area since 2000. They all agreed that the rate of teenage pregnancy was alarmingly high. Dr. Frohlich described the situation as:

"Teenage pregnancies and HIV and AIDS are major problems in the area. About 95% of the pregnancies happened in the sexual-debut. HIV and AIDS among out-of-school youth is prevalent despite several interventions that Caprisa had designed with the Department of Health. HIV and AIDS could not be curbed unless the local schools, especially the primary schools, were involved. When Caprisa, along with the Department of Health, contacted out-of-school youth, most of them had either already developed risky behaviours or been infected with HIV. Our experience shows that early interventions through schools could help not only to reach the youth at a very early age, but also to involve parents/guardians in the process (Interview with Dr. Frohlich, 2007)."

In my meeting with Ms. Moshenga, she commented on gender violence and teenage pregnancy as follows:

"*Young girls, especially orphans or living with extended family members entered in a friendship with older men to improve their lifestyle. It includes being attracted by getting incentives such as free cell phones, rides in taxis, and cash. Then it was simply impossible for the girls to avoid or refuse sexual relationships with these men. Most of*

the time, these men also provide financial and material support to the families of the girls (My field notes 2007)."

Ms Makaya further added: *"These girls then became soft targets to multiple sexual relationships/assaults even from their close family relatives such as uncles, step fathers/brothers* (My field notes 2007)*."*

Some student teachers noted that a few teachers at schools were also involved in sexual relationships with young learners. One of the student teachers wrote:

"Apparently only three of the male teachers in our school don't have girlfriends/girls they use (one teacher has five). The situation is sickening. I want to scream and rant and rave at the abuse and trauma those girls must experience. It is a situation over which I have no control, I want to cry (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

Another student teacher contended:

"I was shocked and angry that these teachers don't see that what they are doing is immoral and illegal. They are abusing their position…. Apparently the male teachers have a hand signal for the learners that they are 'dating' [ready to date]. If you are a teacher that is dating a learner, the girl or boy belongs to you, if another person wants the learner he/she must first go through the teacher. This is prostitution and it is going on right on school grounds (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

However, the cohorts of 2008 and 2009 did not notice the involvement of the school staff in sexual harassment or sexual relationship with the learners. One returnee student teacher, who participated in RTEP 2007 and was among those who pointed out the issues of sexual harassment, mentioned his experience his experience in 2008 as:

"*We did not observe any sexual harassment or sexual relationships between the teachers and learners. We do not know if they [teachers] have changed their attitude or have hidden it for the time we were in the schools* (Interview with student teacher 2008)."

The issues of sexual harassment can be seen within the wider discourse of gender and power. With respect to gender, it is observed that mothers and female guardians have a high stake in education in rural schools. As evident in all the three parent meetings in which I participated in 2007, approximately 90 per cent of the participants in the meetings were females (field notes 2007). One of the school principals also agreed that most of the time women showed up in the meetings, as he informed:

"In our area, it is considered that female family members have the responsibility to take care of child's education needs so whenever I call parents' meeting it is always dominated by the mothers/female members in terms of number and participation (School Principal, 2007)."

However, when it comes to the School Governing Body (SGB) configuration, females had a minimal representation and two of the schools did not have a single female office bearer in their SGBs. The issue seemed to be in line with the observation that gender discrimination at SGBs in South Africa is a common phenomenon, especially in the under-resourced areas (Duku, 2007).

6.2.3 <u>The learning environment at the schools: contrasting realities between the student teachers and in-service teachers</u>

When student teachers started their practicum at the schools, they tended to agree with the dominant discourses about teaching and learning in the rural schools. For example, one group of student teachers reflected upon their first day at school as:

"The school really runs in a haphazard way. Learners are not interested in learning and teachers do not care (Focus Group Discussion, 2007)."

However, as the student teachers connect themselves more broadly to the wider context and start reflecting upon 'self', they begin to change their perceptions. In doing so, they challenged some of the dominant discourses and perceptions about learners and schools in the rural areas. Here are few examples of how student teachers and in-service teachers viewed the teaching and learning environment at schools differently:

a) 'Learners lack learning culture'

In focus group discussions, the school teachers initially reported that the schools lacked learning culture as learners do not want to learn. The teachers observed:

"The learners in our schools lack learning culture, they do not want to learn and they do not respect us." One teacher added: *"Even their parents do not respect us* (Focus Group Discussion with the School Teachers, 2007)."

In another school, the teachers observed:

"The learners lost the interest in education. They are disrespectful. The parents are illiterate and it is hard to make them understand the value of education (Focus Group Discussion with the School Teachers, 2007)."

The student teachers, however, found a very different learning and teaching culture. They observed:

*"I did a lesson on conversational English which was very well received….I was so impressed with what they had learnt and how well they had applied it. We discussed synonyms and antonyms and I could see them staring intently at me, concentrating hard on what I was saying and how I said it. I could literally see the lights going on in their eyes. Hopefully, I get to teach them again! (*Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

"The learners are so thirsty for knowledge yet the educators are not supplying them with adequate amounts of information to satisfy their carving minds (Interview with a student teacher, 2008)."

In focus group discussion, one group of student teachers mentioned that teachers hold the keys to develop and maintain a learning culture at schools. The group contends:

"We very soon realized that learners are very enthusiastic to learn. During our first few classes, some of us found that learners were misbehaving and were not attentive. But when we keep teaching them with commitment, they [learners] also got commitment to learn. Moreover, we always try to communicate with the learners after the classrooms. This helped us and them [learners] to understand each other (focus group discussion with student teachers, 2008)."

In relation to the above, another group of student teachers highlighted the importance of teachers' own attitudes and practices to maintain the learning and teaching culture in schools. The group asserts:

"*They [school teachers] come to schools late, come to their classrooms with no lesson plan, leave their classes early and use excessive corporal punishment to exercise their control and authority. Consequently, the learners did not find the environment conducive for learning* (Participatory Workshop with Student Teachers, 2007)."

The school teachers who initially were of the view that learners lacked learning culture appreciated the new learning environment that student teachers brought to the schools. Some of them even joined hands with the student teachers and acknowledged the role of teachers in influencing the school environment. One group of teachers mentioned:

"*The student teachers were young and energetic. They brought down themselves to the learners' level. The learners found it very exciting and have started to take interest in education. Even some of us who used to come to school late, were disciplined. [Because] when we come to school, we always see the student teachers in school before us* (Focus Group Discussion with School Teachers, 2007)."

In another school, the school teachers observed:

"*The student teachers changed the entire school environment. The learners, who we thought do not want to learn and lack discipline, were suddenly become fully engaged with the student teachers* (Focus Group Discussion with the School Teachers, 2007)."

The parents also did not agree with those in-service teachers who mentioned that learners and parents were responsible for the lack of learning in the school. In one focus group discussion, the parents observed:

"*The school do not invite us to participate in school meetings and the teachers do not teach their children effectively. We have a high respect for the student teachers because*

we saw them teaching with full commitment (Focus Group Discussion with Parents, 2007)."

The deputy principal of the school also agreed with the parents and observed:

"*It is our fault. We only contact parents when we need funds…the parents now stopped coming to the meetings as they know that we only ask for funds* (School Deputy Principal, 2007)."

Similarly, a relevant officer from the local Department of Education also revealed 'all things are not ok' in one school as he pointed out:

"*The school used to have the best academic record and one of the highest enrolments in the area. The school was also having a small science laboratory. But, it is on the course of constant deterioration over the years. The problem lies with the school's administration, and it is very hard to take action against the school's leadership. It is a very complex process* (Interview with a relevant officer at the local Department of Education 2007)."

The above discussion shows the different perspectives that were noticed among the student teachers and school teachers regarding the teaching and learning environment at the schools. While some teachers believed that learners and parents lack a learning culture, the student teachers observed that teachers too did not attempt to develop a learning culture at the schools. Parents and the representatives from the Department of Education also observed that no efforts were made by the school to foster an enabling learning and teaching culture at the schools.

b) 'Effective teaching is not possible in low-resourced rural schools'

As mentioned before, schools have been facing several problems, including a lack of resources and support for the schools; some school teachers mentioned that it is very hard to teach effectively in school, as follows:

"Our school lacks resources. There are not enough education materials. The learners are poor and they cannot afford to buy the materials. At schools, we do not have enough materials. One text book is being shared by more than one learner. Further, learners are suffered from hunger and violence. A large number of them [learners] are orphans and live with extended family members. It is hard to teach effectively in this situation (Focus Group Discussion with school teachers 2007)."

Another group of teachers described their experience as follows:

"Learners are poor, orphans and traumatized by illness, deaths [of their immediate family members] and violence. We, as teachers, do not have enough resources to support them. We have a large class size, and sometimes it exceeds 60 learners to one teacher. It is really hard, both for us and for learners, to concentrate on teaching (Focus Group Discussion with school teachers 2007)."

On the other hand, the student teachers, while acknowledging that the schools lacked resources and support, most of them believed that effective teaching is still possible through better management and more commitment. They observed:

"The poverty is no excuse really; it's the poverty mindset that is crippling the school. There is a terrible sense of apathy and total lack of concern displayed by the teachers. No one has any real idea of what is going on or what to teach, as far as they are concerned we can teach anything we like. The learners are without a doubt at least four or five years behind in literacy skills….. as far as I can tell there is no communication between teachers in my learning area…there are no H.O.Ds (Head of Departments) therefore the principal is left as the sole authority to check up on teachers, he is incapable thus nothing gets done (Student Teacher Reflective Journal 2007)."

Some more student teachers offered their insight as:

"It is quite challenging to teach in non-conducive environment, but effective teaching can still be possible. It all needs commitment at the teacher's end and the ways to engage learners in the learning process (Student Teachers in Participatory Workshop, 2007).*"*

"..I had learned all the difficulties that most of the teachers are experiencing but for me these are not difficulties, they are challenges and I am just trying to find the solutions to defeat them (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

At this point, it is worth mentioning a story of one student teacher who re-engaged a slow-paced learner in school activities. The school had lost hope in the learner, who was apparently traumatized due to the sudden death of her mother. The student teacher described her story as:

 "There is a learner in class who never participated in any class activities at all. She was unresponsive to my teacher [mentor],- not even paying attention when her name is called [during the class roll call]. I started talking to her calling her by her name and greeting her in Zulu. She started responding to me and she even answered a question in my lesson today. I was so happy about it…. You are involved in the learners' lives because it impacts on their education in a big way…. I feel that some rural teachers have a disregard to education because they don't teach well. Some teachers here don't care about learners… I spent a lot of time with her…I was exploring the drawing activity to her. She spoke softly to me and she had a smile on her face every time I helped her. When she finished completing the activity, I asked the class to give her a clap. It was a miracle. She was grinning from ear to ear with shyness. I felt like I achieved something and was glad to make an impression on her (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

In my informal meeting with the student teacher, she described the context and the background of the story as:

"I took the challenge to re-engage the learner as my mentor teacher has lost her hope and had concluded that the learner's performance could not be improved. My mentor teacher also mentioned that the school did not have enough resources to support the learners, facing psychosocial issues. The learner was clearly lagging behind a few years in terms of learning compared to her classmates. According to my mentor teacher, it all occurred when the learner lost her parents due to HIV and AIDS (source: My field notes 2007)."

The above story elucidates how the student teachers attempted to provide emotional support as a means to re-engage the learners, who need psycho-social support.

Parents also agreed with the student teachers and noted that despite all the challenges, effective teaching is possible in the rural schools as follows:

"Our school tends to be one of the best schools in the area. But over years, it has been deteriorated. The school staff and the department of education are responsible for this debacle. The school staff does not do its work. The department only hires teachers. But the student teachers gave us a new hope to our children. When student teachers were at schools, we clearly noticed the difference. We found every person in the school was either teaching or learning (Focus Group Discussion with Parents, 2007)."

In another focus group discussion, the parents observed:

"During the project, we saw a clear difference in the attitude of our children. They are more eager to learn. We saw them doing their homework and seeking our help to finish their homework on time (Focus Group Discussion with Parents, 2007)."

During my visit to the local Department of Education, I observed that the Department also noticed the impact of the project on the school environment. In a formal meeting with the circuit managers, they deliberated:

"In rural schools, few pre-service teachers come to teach. Even those who come, we never noticed any difference. Sometime we come to know that someone from the town was assigned when he/she was gone. But in this project, we noticed that a group of student teachers were visiting the schools from day one. When we went to the schools, we found a very changed environment in schools when classes are full and every relevant person is deeply involved in teaching and learning. Even the parents were talking about the student teachers and their style of teaching. It is a very positive step for rural schools in South Africa. We extend our full support to the project. We also request the project administration to consider sending the pre-service teachers to more schools and for longer duration (Meeting with the Circuit Managers of the Department of Education, 2007)."

Though both student teachers as well as school teachers agreed that the schools were lacking resources, the difference of opinion emerged with regard to whether teaching could be made effective in the absence of the resources. The student teachers, who were supported by parents and even by some school teachers, viewed that despite all the challenges, effective teaching and learning can be created with commitment, skills and passion.

6.2.4   Are rural schools safe for multi-racial groups?

During my informal meetings with the UKZN faculty members and staff, I realized that a general perception in South Africa about the rural areas is that they are not a safe place to live and work, especially for whites. This has been further confirmed when I happened to attend an event organized by UKZN to launch a government-supported bursary programme for those selected pre-service teachers who agreed to teach at least two years in rural areas after their graduation (source: My field notes 2007). Ms Ina Cronje, the then Provincial Minister for Education, in her keynote address on September 9, 2007 vehemently rejected the fear that rural schools were not safe and urged all racial groups to consider teaching in rural areas at least once in their professional lives (Source: My field notes 2007).

In the case of RTEP, all the three cohorts of the student teachers, especially the cohorts of 2007 and 2008 were represented by three major racial groups in South Africa: black, white and Indian. The student teachers observed that the safety and security concerns of non-blacks are not an issue in rural communities. Several groups of white and Indian student teachers mentioned their experiences as follows:

"*Rural schools are very safe.... I had a great time and learnt a lot about working with others and group's dynamics was great meeting the other students and learning to live with them for the 4 weeks. Being part of [the school] was fantastic. I have a new perspective on rural schools and actually would not mind to teach there one day. Hope I will be able to get back next year*! (Reflective Journal of a Student Teacher, 2007)."

A group of white and Indian student teachers observed:

"*We found the rural schools [are] very welcoming, and we felt that, as far as safety is concerned, the rural schools are quite safe for multiethnic groups*" (Focus Group Discussion with Student teachers 2008).

Not only student teachers, but also local health and professional experts also viewed that living and working in the rural communities is safe. For example, Dr. Janet Frohlich, Manager CAPRISA, who herself is white and has been working in the area for few years described her experience as:

"*I never had a problem. It is a misconception that rural areas are not safe for Whites or other ethnic groups. In our organization, people from different parts of the world come here to work with us on volunteer basis. Most of them are White men and women. They live with the community and commute using the public transport with no fear*" (Interview with the Dr. Frohlich 2007).

Not only did student teachers feel that they were safe in rural areas despite their different races, they also viewed a racially mixed configuration of the group as a blessing. One group of the student teachers observed:

"*One of the significant parts of the project was that every race is represented in the group. We were really looking as a 'rainbow' nation*' (Focus group discussion with student teachers 2007)."

Similarly, one of the project coordinators who lived with the cohort of 2007 during their teaching practicum described her interaction with the multi-racial group as:

"*[I] had a very interesting conversation with one of the male UKZN student teachers. We talked about RTEP, his teaching practice, Vulindlela etc. He said this was the first time he had every stayed in the same room as a White person. The first time he had ever laughed and joked with White people. It is clear that this experience is much more than teaching practice in rural area. From everything I have heard, it has been a real eye opener-both academically and personally- from many of the student teachers* (Reflective Journal of a project coordinator, 2007)."

The schools staff and the parents also appreciated the multi-racial composition of the cohorts and noticed the difference that the racially mixed student teachers made on the overall learning environment of the schools. One group of teachers advanced their thoughts as follows:

"*Learners really enjoyed learning from the student teachers, especially from the 'Whites'. It is the first time that they got the opportunity to learn from the White students. Since they are very fluent in English, learners were encouraged to speak English with them* (Focus Group Discussion with the School Teachers, 2007)."

Similarly, some parents recorded their observations as follows:

"*Our kids were very enthusiastic to learn from the student teachers. The student teachers were a mix of different races. We do not remember seeing this racial diversity in our schools. We all noticed that and it has made a really big difference on us, and especially on our kids* (Focus Group Discussion with Parents 2007)."

The racial diversity among the cohorts was very well-received by the student teachers, schools and the community members/ parents. Further, it provided the opportunity to the student teachers to work closely with other racial groups during their teaching and learning in the rural areas. The student teachers, especially white and Indian student teachers, also vehemently rejected the perception that rural areas are not safe for white and Indian groups to teach and work. However, it is unfortunate that race still plays an important role in maintaining the social divisions of the post-apartheid South African society. As I already mentioned above, the Minister of Education in her key note speech while awarding bursaries to the pre-service teachers who were selected to teach in the rural schools, urged non-black racial groups to consider teaching in rural areas. However, only one of the thirty-five pre-service teachers who received the bursaries on the occasion was white (My field notes 2007).

6.2.5 'Rural idyll' as a site of contestation?

It is not only that the students noted the challenges of teaching in the rural schools; they also observed the strengths that characterized the rurality. As mentioned before, the

student teachers were impressed by the pastoral work of some teachers. Given that schools are under-resourced and teachers' pastoral work has not accrued to any professional or personal rewards to them, the student teachers clearly saw signs of empathy:

"I managed to speak to one of the teachers who was selling snacks and she sells because they help the needy learners and also organize the clothing and shoes (for the learners)… (I also) observed three teachers who were repairing the door for a toilet. They just took the initiative to do it for themselves…. I was so impressed (to see the teachers volunteered themselves to fix the door) (Student Teacher Reflective Journal 2007).*"*

Another student teacher described her experience as*:*

"I saw an alarming thing in the staff room, a learner who had come to the staff room crying out of hunger. It was such an awesome thing to see these female teachers nurture this child back to health, what a sight (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

Similarly, one student teacher commented about her mentor teacher as:

"[My mentor teacher] is not only a teacher but also a mother, social worker and counsellor [for the learners at schools] (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

Amidst the challenges in rural areas, many strengths of rurality—for example how people act as a homogenous group to support each other —sometimes go unnoticed. During my visits to one school and meeting with different school staff members and student teachers, I observed that even in difficult circumstances and with no support from the government the school itself has taken some initiatives to provide support to the needy learners as follows:

"The school has established a multi-purpose service center for the learners. The center provides counselling, medicines and food parcels to the learners. A three-member committee, comprising regular school staff has volunteered, to run the center. The committee gets candies, biscuits and snacks at a wholesale price from the city and sell them through school's tuck shop at a rate, slightly higher than the market. Parents and learners know that the price is a bit higher as the profit goes to the center. The center

occasionally gets food parcels from the local NGOs, 'Gifts for Us'. Whenever, the center faces financial difficulties, it limits the activities only to counselling (source: my field notes 2007)."

Similarly, I also observed that the school, in collaboration with the local community, arranged cheap labour to complete its pending construction as follows:
"Since the school's enrolment is increasing, the government has approved the construction of a new section for grade 11 and grade 12. The construction has started, but the funds were not enough to complete the construction in a timely manner. Instead of waiting for the government's decision to increase the allocation, the school in collaboration with the local community has taken the initiative by itself. With support from the local community, the school has arranged local labour for the construction. On one hand, it mobilized the local labour, and on the other hand it completed the new section on time. The informal partnership between the school and the community is paying off (source: My field notes 2008)."

The supporting role of local communities towards the social development of the areas is also observed by Dr. Frohlich, Manager CAPRISA, when she mentioned in her interview that the services of CAPRISA could not be made possible without the enormous support of the local community (source: my field notes 2007).

Rural areas are generally seen through the lens of poverty, hardship and deprivation. This dissuades many professionals, for example doctors and teachers, to consider rural outfits as their workplace. However, the experience of RTEP provided the opportunity to the student teachers to see the 'rural idyll' through a very different dimension, characterized by a sense of community, local efforts and pastoral work. On the other hand, it remains a question as to whether this work can bring lasting impact on the professional lives of the student teachers.

6.3 Looking at the project from the vantage point of the different participants

The key participants in the project involve cohorts of student teachers, principals and the mentor teachers, staff from the Faculty of Education at UKZN, and the learners. In this section, I attempt to present the experiences of each of the participants as follows:

6.3.1 The cohorts of student teachers

In some ways the cohorts of student teachers were the most important participants of RTEP. On investigating why the student teachers joined RTEP, I observed the following two main reasons that influenced the student teachers to join RTEP: i) To fulfill the requirement of the teaching practicum to finish their degrees; and ii) To gain experience teaching in rural areas.

For example, one student teacher informed me:

"*I have to do a teaching practicum anyway, so why not with RTEP* (Interview with the student teacher 2007)."

Another group of the student teachers deliberated:

"*I have already done my teaching practicum in urban and township schools. In fact, most of us do our practica in urban settings. I want to know how teaching looks like in the rural schools. I want to learn more and to test my skills in actual teaching. Now, I thought it is good opportunity to do a teaching practicum in rural schools. Few of my friends participated last year and they encouraged me to join RTEP* (Interview with the student teacher 2009)."

Despite the two different motives for joining the RTEP, the participation in the CoP helped the student teachers to enrich their understanding of teaching in the following ways:

i) Using interactive methods to engage learners in the classroom activities

One of the key things that the student teachers learnt from their participation is that effective teaching/ learning can be organized even in the challenging context by employing context-specific strategies as follows:

"*We decided to use different participatory and interactive methods of teaching, give respect to learners, and provide emotional and moral support to the learners affected from gender violence, HIV and AIDS and poverty. Some of us took out the learners in open fields to make their environment relevant to the teaching while others used local resources as teaching aids in their teaching practices* (Focus Group Discussion with Student Teachers, 2007)."

Another student teacher observed:

"*Being an under-resourced school, it certainly had extreme challenges. In natural Science, the learners said they each have a textbook. Unfortunately, the school does not have any apparatus of any sort – that had to be made up as we went along. To show how light bends for refraction I used a glass jar filled with water and put a pen inside. To show lateral inversion for reflection I asked learners to write their names inversely on a piece of paper and used a girl's little mirror, which was passed around—they loved it immensely!* (Student Teacher Reflective Journal 2007)*."*

Similarly, another student teacher documented her experience of how she attempted to create interactive teaching and learning in the absence of basic education materials. She writes:

"*My first lesson had started with grade 7C, the lesson I had planned for the class was an 'English' game which was simple and allowed the class to be at ease. It involved very little English but more comprehension and concentration. I explained the game to the class. …… Once the game got underway I gathered that the learners' vocabulary skills were very low as well as they suffered to pronounce basic words, the learners seemed to enjoy English and were "hungry" to learn the language and really found the game fantastic and enjoyed it tremendously. The learners were relaxed and by the end of the lesson they did not want to stop playing* (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)*."*

The student teachers used different interactive methods and the available resources to engage the learners in the classroom activities in the absence of basic educational materials and resources. The adaptability of the student teachers with the local environment to use it as a source of learning also demonstrates the importance of reflective teaching.

ii) Going beyond the classrooms to understand the broader role of a teacher

Apart from making classroom and curriculum-related activities interesting, the CoP also explored the broader role of teachers by going beyond the classroom boundaries. It helped them to understand the key characteristics of a good teacher as a group of student teachers put forward their reflections as:

"To be a successful teacher, it is important not only to teach with passion but also to go beyond teaching by providing emotional and moral support to the learners at schools (Focus Group with Student Teachers, 2007).*"*

Similarly, one student teacher shared her experience of how she motivated a learner by giving him the opportunity to share his problem. She describes:

"The most important thing that a teacher could do is to give dream of a better future to the learners. During my practicum at RTEP, I come across a learner who was repeating grade 10. He had no parents, and the people with whom he is living are not supporting him. He often accused of stealing from his guardians. He is poor and never brought his lunch. I doubt if he gets breakfast regularly. Even though I can't do anything for him, I listened and discussed his problem. By doing so, I was able to get him motivated for learning. I really feel proud of myself and I am still in touch with him (Interview with a student teacher, 2009).*"*

One more student teacher discussed the role of teacher, especially in a setting which has learners from diverse backgrounds. He observes:

"RTEP helped me to become a critical analyzer. Teaching is not about going to a class and delivering the lesson, but [it is about] socializing with learners. Learners have

different backgrounds, cultures, and abilities, which make them shy to participate. The teacher needs to understand all those differences and devise strategies to make them participate. Teaching must not only take place in the classrooms (Interview with student teacher, 2009)."

Another student teacher reflected upon her experience as:

"*I got a whole new insight about teaching [after my participation in the RTEP]. Teaching is not about teaching subjects, but it is about presenting a holistic view of learning. It is important to understand the learners as much as you can as they come from different backgrounds. It has impacted my life and thinking [as a teacher]* (interview with a student teacher, 2009)."

The above examples demonstrate that the student teachers explored multiple roles of a teacher. The student teachers realized that a good teacher not only makes the classroom activities attractive, but also attempts to understand the learners' identities. The following section also supplements this realization.

iii) Organizing learning in non-formal learning and teaching environment

In addition to organizing teaching and learning in formal ways, the CoP also experienced organizing learning in non-formal ways. Since the cohorts of 2008 and 2009 were also involved in conducting 'after-school' activities, this provided them more opportunities to interact with the learners through informal ways. The student teachers took advantage of such opportunities in their way to understand the learners' need and interests. One group of student teachers points out the importance of informal interaction with the learners and schoolteachers as:

"*After-school activities helped us to create a better understanding and build trust not only among ourselves, but also with the learners and the mentor teachers* (Focus Group with Student Teachers, 2009)."

Another group described how it saw the 'after-school' activities in relation to empowering learners as:

"*The activities provided some excellent opportunities for learners to expose their hidden talents, including poetic, athletic, and debating skills. The activities were not only a source of lots of fun, but also provided an opportunity to the learners, living in an area engulfed with social and economic hardships, to think differently about their lives and to engage them in much needed healthy activities* (Focus Group with Student Teachers, 2008)."

Similarly, another group of student teachers observed what it meant for the learners affected by the HIV and AIDS pandemic to be involved in 'after-school' activities as follows:

"*After-school activities contributed significantly in empowering the learners and to raise their voices on the issues such as orphanage, HIV and AIDS, and gender violence* (Focus Group with Student Teachers, 2008)."

The cohorts of 2008 and 2009 regarded the 'after-school' activities as a means to understand their roles more broadly. Concomitantly, the activities also allowed the learners to connect their learning with the broader environment associated with their daily lives outside the classrooms.

iv) Developing student teachers' professional identities

The participation in RTEP also helped the student teachers to start thinking about themselves as teachers. In particular, they confronted if and why they want to teach, especially in the rural areas, and what does teaching mean to them? It appeared that the project helped the cohorts to classify themselves into three main groups: i) The first group, which is more than eager to teach in the rural schools after graduation; ii) The second group, which is willing to spend some time in rural schools without making any commitment and iii) The third group, which is not interested in teaching in rural schools at all.

The student teachers representing the first group described why they wanted to become teachers in rural schools as follows:

"*I discovered a very good teachers in myself. I am confident that I can bring a positive change and hope in the lives of the learners affected from poverty, gender violence and HIV and AIDS* (Interview with the student teacher 2007)."

"*My background is also from a rural school, and I can understand the deprivation [of the learners]. Since I got the opportunity to get my higher education, I have to pass it on to the learners in rural school* (Interview with the student teacher 2008)."

"*I will teach in the rural schools. I have to fill the gap. If I don't go no one else will go, and the rural schools will remain deprived* (Interview with the student teacher, 2009)."

"*Being part of the [rural] school was fantastic. I have a new perspective on rural schools and actually would not mind to teach there one day* (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

The second group argued that they would teach in rural schools provided that they had enabling environment. The group contends:

"*We would like to place ourselves in rural schools for a couple of years during which we'd like to observe how effective we're in the rural environment* (Focus Group Discussion with the student teachers 2007)."

The third group, comprised of 2-3 student teachers, was depressed and disappointed after experiencing the adverse conditions of the rural schools. They advanced their viewpoint as follows:

"*I am discouraged to see that rural schools do not have electricity, drinking water and sanitation. I cannot teach in this situation.*"

"*It is really difficult to teach in rural schools if teachers (in-service) and school administration are lazy and do not want to cooperate.*"

"*I am allergic to dust and cannot afford teaching in rural areas.*"

(Source: Excerpts from Focus Group Discussion and In-depth interviews with the student teachers 2007).

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Regardless of the above three classifications, all of the student teachers believed that RTEP helped them to understand what it means to become a teacher. One student teacher said:

"Teachers often did not realize their power. The power of making a big impact on the lives of learners no matter how difficult is the situation (Student Teacher Interview, 2007)*."*

Another student teacher observed:

"There is another side of teaching which before I didn't notice. Learning and teaching is not only happening in classrooms but also in the informal interaction between learners and learners and further with teachers also (Student Teacher Interview, 2007)."

The experience of the project allowed the student teachers to explore their professional identities. They 're-imagine(d) the self' as described by Carson (2009: 350) by contesting their existing perception about the rural areas. The student teachers started thinking about where they would like to situate themselves in terms of their teaching careers. Some of them openly shared their intention to teach in rural schools while others took a cautionary position. In any case, the student teachers felt that participation in RTEP enriched their understanding of becoming a teacher.

v) Challenging the existing teacher education programs

It is not only that student teachers attended to their professional development and professional identities through the participation in the project, they also contested how they are taught and prepared by the university. Based upon his experience of teaching and working in the rural schools, one student teacher commented on the courses that he had taken during his B.Ed program. He mentioned:

"*Most of the modules that are being offered at the Faculty of Education are irrelevant to what I have seen in the rural areas* (Interview with the student teacher 2007)."

Another student teacher stated that her experience with RTEP helped her to change the common perception about the state of schools in the rural areas:

"*We have been taught at the campus as all the schools in South Africa are fully equipped with basic resources and technology. But it is not the case in rural areas* (Interview with the student teacher 2007)."

One other student teachers went further by identifying what she thinks is missing in her teacher preparation with reference to rural schools. She noted:

"*None of my courses so far has prepared me how to teach a learner who needs emotional support. Not even my professors know how to deal with this, as they never been to rural areas* (Interview with the student teacher 2008)."

The above discussion illustrates how student teachers reflected upon their preparation as teachers in relation to schools in the rural areas. Student teachers compared existing classroom practices on campus with their experiences in RTEP and questioned their relevance in connection with the schools in rural areas.

6.3.2   In-service teachers' viewpoint about RTEP

The mentor teachers in the RTEP were another important set of participants, and played an important role in developing a CoP of student teachers and the mentor teachers. Though no extensive activities were directed toward the in-service or mentor teachers, they were the witnesses of developments in the schools and the teaching and learning environment that the cohorts might have brought in.

The teachers in meetings, interviews and focus group discussions informed me that student teachers made an impression on them, directly as well as indirectly, in the following ways:

i) Seeing themselves through the eyes of student teachers

Some teachers in the focus group discussion mentioned that they were impressed with the student teachers, and it had motivated them to improve their practices and skills. Here are few excerpts from the focus group discussions with the teachers:

"*We all are inspired by the student teachers. Although we meant to mentor them, but we learned and impressed with their passion and commitment …. the student teachers not*

only taught [to the learners], but they also provided emotional and moral support to the learners who are battling with poverty, hunger and are affected by the disease. This encouraged the learners to engage with their learning (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2008).*"*

"*Having eight young and energetic fresh teachers from the university has changed the learning culture in our schools. We [teachers] also learned from them [student teachers]. They brought advanced teaching techniques and innovations which we're lacking as we graduated a long time ago from the teachers training schools* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2007)."

"*Student teachers were angels. They're always willing to help learners [emotionally and morally] even out-of the classrooms. They had a close and one-on-one contact with the learners. They always came down to the level of the learners and helped us in re-engaging the learners in education. The learners are very happy with them. The student teachers served as motivators and motivated us at the time when we're depressed and dejected. This kind of work certainly helped us to boost ourselves and reflect upon us* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2007)."

Besides mentor teachers, the school administration also noticed the difference in the attitudes of mentor teachers, as one school principal described the impact of the student teachers on some of his staff as follows:

"*I have noticed, since we started RTEP, more in-service teachers are now interested in improving their qualifications. Two of my teachers have already registered themselves in the schools [to improve qualifications] and one more is considering to do so* (Interview with the school principal 2009)."

Although the cohorts of student teachers helped the schools to improve the learning and teaching environment at the schools, the school teachers observed that it was short term. They expressed:

"*Most of the positive impact of the student teachers on us and on the school was a short term and it disappeared over time* (Focus group discussion with school teachers, 2007)."

Another mentor teacher added:

"*The student teachers motivated us, but we are old horses. We need motivators to motivate us on regular basis* (Focus group discussion with school teachers, 2007)."

The observation by the teachers that the positive impact of the cohorts on the school environment was not easily sustained leads to the question of how to prolong the benefits of the partnership. Perhaps, one area that can contribute in keeping up some of the benefits is to look at and improve the capabilities and existing structures at the rural schools. As indicated by some mentor teachers, providing appropriate and regular opportunities for in-service teachers' professional development can help them in sustaining some of the benefits of RTEP, especially related to creating enabling teaching and learning environments in the schools. For example, one group of mentor teachers commented:

"*We need professional development workshops. Most of us were recruited using the old criterion for teacher's qualifications. Since then many changes have taken place, but we're unable to improve our competencies according to the new standards* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers 2008)."

Laughing at my question on whether the Department of Education provides any training opportunities for the in-service teachers, the group responded:

"*The workshops that the Department of Education conducted are largely related to Outcomes-based Education (OBE) and its associated Continuous Assessment (CASS), which is all related to stiff administrative and paper work [filling out the appropriate assessment and evaluation forms and creating tables]* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers 2007)."

In the absence of regular opportunities for professional development, the 'mentor' teachers appreciated whatever opportunities they received through RTEP. The 'mentors'

in the schools, who received a few orientation sessions from the UKZN on '*how to mentor*' in the second and third phase of the project, observed that sessions were very helpful:

We lack appropriate opportunities for professional development. We expect UKZN to help us in improving our skills. The workshops for mentorship were very helpful in providing guidance to the student teachers. However, they were too short. We need more such workshops (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2008)."

In the second and third phase of the project, a visiting faculty member from McGill University remained with the student teachers the entire time during their teaching practicum in the two schools. This resulted in placing a resource person at the schools to provide assistance to the teachers in schools, especially to 'Science' teachers. Some of the school's teachers in the focus group described their experience as follows:

"*[She] helped us a lot. We discussed different pedagogical strategies with her which helped us to improve ourselves* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2008)."

Similarly, in other schools, the mentor teachers observed:

"*The presence of a professor was very inspiring. Since her focus area was 'Science', she was particularly helpful to the 'Science' teachers. It is a very good development in the second phase that a person was placed to help the teachers* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2008)."

The interaction between student teachers and the mentor teachers through the project provided the opportunity to the mentor teachers for self-reflection. Inspired by the student teachers, a couple of teachers decided to improve their qualifications, and others reported that they were motivated by the commitment and skills of the student teachers. However, the change in the overall learning and teaching environment that was noticed when the student teachers were at the schools did not last long. This raises the complex question about the role of 'outsiders' to 'fix things' as well as the limitations of the impoverished environment to sustaining the benefits.

ii) Appreciating their role in teacher education and using the concept of 'mentor' to improve teaching in school

Whether the cohorts made any lasting impact on the attitudes of in-service teachers or not, the teachers and schools were delighted in their roles in preparing future teachers, as one of the school principals noted:

"We were delighted to see that we have a role in preparing future teachers. The workshops [provided by the UKZN] on mentorship were very useful. The project helped us to understand the rationale of mentorship (Interview with school's principal, 2008)."

Furthermore, the concept of 'mentorship' also seemed appealing to one of the schools. The school's principal in the interview mentioned that he was using the concept of 'mentorship' to train newly recruited school staff:

We are now using the same concept of mentorship in our school to orient our new staff. In our school, most of the time the new staff lacks needed skills to teach in rural areas. Moreover, they are not aware of the local culture and environment. Through mentorship, we're trying to fill this gap. I think we should provide mentorship training to all our teachers regardless they would mentor or not to the student teachers [if we decide to launch the third phase of RTEP] (Interview with school's principal, 2008)."

The schools felt privileged when they saw their contribution in making new teachers. Furthermore, the school was also using the concept of mentorship to help its newly appointed in-service teachers to acclimatize them to the new culture as mentioned above by the school principal.

iii) Sharing the teachers' workload in under-staff rural schools

In addition to giving a role to the schools in rural areas for the development of future teachers, the cohorts of student teachers through RTEP provided an immediate but short-term relief of staff shortage at schools. For example, one school principal mentioned:

"We do not have enough teaching force in the school. This year is even worse as we lost the school days due to a four-week nationwide teachers' strike. When student teachers came to us, we're already lagging behind [toward course completion]. The immediate

relief that we got from this project was a complementary teaching force that helped us to recover the days lost in the strike (Interview with one school principal, 2007)."

iv) Linking the schools with appropriate agencies and networks

Given the lack of opportunities available at schools, some student teachers also attempted to help the schools and the learners by linking them to the relevant agencies and departments to tap into resources. For instance, one of the student teachers, while teaching grade 11, observed that the learners were enthusiastic to pursue higher education, but lacked information and resources. After arriving back on campus, she collected information about potential organizations that could provide financial support to those needy learners who wished to pursue college education. In one of my visits to the schools, she accompanied me with all the information and passed it on to the pupils and the schools. Later, in my meetings with school principals and schoolteachers, they always mentioned this initiative by the student teacher. One school principal mentioned this initiative as:

"With the help of a student teacher [who was placed at our school], we are encouraging our grade 12 learners to further their education through. In rural areas, the conversion rate from high school to college is very low due to the lack of resources and culture. All higher learning institutes are located far from our area and the parents cannot afford to send their children to these institutions. It involves a lot of boarding and/or commuting expenses. The student teacher has introduced us a very good source, which could provide boarding expenses to the needy learners. Since the student teacher is close to finish her degree at UKZN, I am in touch with the Department of Education to offer her a job at our schools. As I learned from the mentor teachers and the learners, she is a very good teacher. Through her, I'd also like to capitalize all those linkages [with the agencies] that she introduced to the schools (Interview with the school principal 2007)."

In 2009, when I visited the same school, I found an advertisement in the school's office, inviting applications from grade 12 students for a Bachelor programme at UKZN. It also mentioned in the ad that the bursaries would be provided to all deserving applicants if they were selected for the programme. Responding to this ad, the principal

of the school told me that "*we have learnt all these good initiatives from some of the student teachers, who still remembered us* (source: My field notes 2007, 2009)."

Similarly, one more student teacher told me that he had noticed that the learners in the school where he was placed for the practicum needed support related to health services. Thus, he contacted some potential agencies to explore the possibilities for arranging health services for the students. Although he did some preliminary work, he was unable to sustain his initiative in the absence of time and resources. Thus, he asked my help to follow-up with the preliminary work that he already did. Though on my follow-up it turned out that the agencies he shortlisted could only support primary schools under certain conditions and locations, his initiative indicates that even though he had completed his practicum, he was still thinking of ways to help students and the schools (source: My field notes 2007).

One more example on how the student teachers attempted to remove the isolation of the schools with respect to linking them with appropriate government departments is evident from the following observation of one student teacher:

"*When I went to the school, I found that the school is without electricity because the main cable [electric] was stolen. Also, I found many learners are struggling with poverty while in South Africa we do have Department of Social Welfare, which is responsible to provide support to the needy learners. Thus, I called the relevant agencies, including the Department of Social Welfare and draw their attention to the plight of learners in the school* (Interview with one Student Teacher, 2007)."

In an interview with the deputy principal of the other school, he appreciated the student teacher's above initiative as follows:

"*I appreciate that some student teachers took initiatives and called the agencies which could provide some assistance to us. The other day a representative from the Department of Social Welfare came to the school to do a needs assessment survey* (Interview with deputy school principal, 2007)."

The staff of UKZN also took some initiatives to link the schools with different agencies, including various departments within UKZN where possible. For example, the UKZN linked one school, which already had a small computer laboratory with a few working computers, with its Internet network. At the request of the school, the relevant staff from the school was also trained in maintaining the network and helped in offering relevant courses related to computer applications to the students at the school. The school principal viewed this development as very positive:

"One of the remarkable benefits of the partnership was the linkage of our school system with the university's internet network and the subsequent training to the relevant staff and the provision of a digital camera, laptop and overhead projector. With this infrastructure support, we were able to offer a course on computer applications to grade 11 and 12. The Department of Education has emphasized that the provision of 'e-learning' in all high schools which, unfortunately, is still a distant reality in most rural settings due to lack of resources. But with the help of this partnership, we are now able to materialize this dream into reality. Though we have a capacity to maintain the resources, but we need a consistent support from the university to provide training to all our staff…Our teaching staff is using the projector and the digital camera in the classrooms and our administrative secretary is using the laptop. It is so handy that sometime she takes it at her home to finish composing the school's notifications and circulars (Interview with school's principal, 2008)."

Similarly, some mentor teachers in the school expressed their views in relation to the above as:

"*The students and parents are very happy with the course [computer application] that we offered to them and [with] the [availability of the] internet in the computer laboratory. But we need training to use computer applications and overhead projector in the classrooms. Currently, there are few teachers who know how to use the equipments. We are looking at UKZN to provide us such support so that we all can use these facilities* (Focus Group Discussion with mentor teachers, 2008)."

The school was also linked with the Department of Agriculture for its 'Garden Project.' The school designed its 'Garden Project' to cultivate its unused land, provide skills related to agriculture to the school learners, and to promote the potential of agriculture in the area. Appreciating these initiatives, the school principal in his interview mentioned:

"[Also] this year the staff from UKZN has introduced us with the Department of Agriculture for a 'Garden Project'. In our community, we have a limited unused land. With the help of the Department, we'd like to use this land for the betterment of the school and the community. Our discussions with the Department are at early stage, but we are hopeful to convert it into a full project (Interview with school's principal, 2008)."

In 2009, I specifically asked the principal to comment on any development related the school's 'Garden Project'. Though he mentioned that the project was still active, no further development had been made from the Department of Agriculture. However, he was still in touch with the department and was hoping that something more substantial might come up in the near future (source: My field notes 2009).

The above examples demonstrate that the partnership through RTEP created several opportunities, small or big, to network the schools with appropriate agencies to build their capacities and tap into resources. Some of them yielded positive results, for example the linkage of one school with the university's IT infrastructure which helped the school to offer IT related courses to grade 12, while others needed more consistent efforts and follow-up.

6.3.3 RTEP Management's viewpoint about RTEP

The third key participant in the RTEP was the RTEP management team representing the Faculty of Education at UKZN. The staff at UKZN associated with RTEP found the partnership project helpful in a variety of ways. One senior member of the RTEP management described the experience as:

"The project helped us to identify key research niche areas and provided our student teachers with a rural practicum which helped to develop themselves as passionate, caring and loving teachers (Interview with one of the RTEP Managers 2007)."

In a focus group discussion the RTEP managers responded to the question about what they had learned from the RTEP as follows:

"*There is a need to develop a [permanent] professional mentoring community at rural schools. Teachers in rural schools are a community, and there is a need to explore it further. The student teachers formed a community where they developed tools, shared their experiences and developed sharing practices. This could be done at schools on permanent basis. Professional development environment is a real generator of hope. The impact of 24 students placed and lived together was enormous* (Focus Group Discussion with the RTEP Management 2007)."

As I reported in the previous chapters, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, UKZN, in an international symposium, *Every Voice Counts: Critical Partnerships for Teacher Education and Rural Communities*, on school-university partnership and the rural education organized by the RTEP team between February 26- 27, 2009 in Durban, acknowledged that the RTEP and the similar interventions related to the rural schools had helped them to broaden the understanding of the issues and challenges in the rural schools of South Africa (Samuel, 2009). Similarly, in the same conference one senior staff member from the Faculty of Education, UKZN mentioned that, in the light of the RTEP, several new modules in the teacher education had been introduced into the existing curriculum for teacher education. These modules were specifically related to the challenges, for example how to teach effectively in the absence of basic educational materials and good infrastructure, at schools in rural areas (source: My field notes, 2009).

Similarly, the cohorts of 2009 presented their experiences to the Faculty members through the *RTEP Annual Symposium* held on October 8, 2009 in Durban. The Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Education, who chaired the session, expressed her full support to the RTEP and regarded the experiences of the student teachers as very informational (source: My field notes, 2009).

Also one key member of the RTEP management team in the interview mentioned the one of the key benefits of the project with respect to the UKZN:

"The three years of the RTEP has given us a clear message that we need to make some key changes in the way we prepare teachers, especially the teaching practicum. Using our experience in the RTEP, we are advocating and lobbying with the top officials of the Faculty of Education in this matter. I am glad that we have gotten a positive response so far [from the UKZN]. There is a strong possibility that the Faculty of Education will adopt the model of sending the student teachers in groups for our regular teaching practicum (source: My field notes, 2009)."

However, it will be a challenge for RTEP to influence the Faculty of Education more broadly and to make key changes in the existing practices of teacher education as several of the RTEP team members who initially envisioned the project have already left the Faculty of Education, although new faculty members have now become involved.

Within the UKZN, some staff members also raised concerns that the RTEP was not cost-effective. In my meeting with one of the faculty members, who was also involved in the RTEP, told me:

"There is concern over here why are we sending the student teachers for teaching practicum in rural areas that are distantly located from the campus. They can go to the places which are close, and where we can save transportation and accommodation cost. It is a challenge for us to go and to evaluate the teaching practicum at our own cost as the university is not willing to reimburse the transportation cost. Moreover, there are also some concerns that why a dysfunctional school is included in the project. What student teachers will get out of the dysfunctional school (source: field notes 2008)."

During 2009 more support and involvement of the various departments within the Faculty of Education, UKZN was observed. For example, faculty members from the departments of Mathematics, Information Technology, and Life Science also visited the schools and evaluated the teaching practicum of the cohort of 2009. In addition, the Dean of the Faculty of Education also participated in the final day of the teaching practicum where the student teachers showcase 'after-school' activities to the local communities at the school (source: field notes 2009).

However, the concerns regarding the cost of evaluating the practicum remain on hold as one of the UKZN staff members responsible for arranging the teaching practicum, during the *RTEP Annual Symposium,* held on October 8, 2009 in Durban in which the cohort of 2009 presented their experiences in front of the Faculty, commented:

The concept of the RTEP to send the student teachers in groups to the far-flung rural areas is very good, but it is quite expensive to send the tutors to evaluate the practicum. It is costing us about 10 times more than providing a mentorship to the students in a regular practicum (source: My field notes, 2009).

As shown above, the UKZN found that RTEP has given it the opportunity to identify key research niche areas related to education in rural areas, the gaps in the existing practices in teacher education and ways to improve it, and a sense of realization to devise strategies for professional development of in-service teachers in the rural areas. Although three members of the Faculty of Education initiated the RTEP in 2007, more support from the faculty was secured in 2009 when several of the Departments Heads, including the Dean of Faculty of Education, visited the schools. The international symposium on the school-university partnership and rural education, *Every Voice Counts: Critical Partnerships for Teacher Education and Rural Communities* in Durban (February 26-27, 2009) and an in-house, the *RTEP Annual Symposium*, in October 2009, in which the cohorts of 2009 presented their experiences as to how the rural schools played an important role in advocating the experience of the RTEP to the rest of the Faculty. However, the Faculty is also worried about the cost of placing student teachers in cohorts, especially in far-flung rural areas.

6.3.4   Learners' viewpoint about RTEP

Students in the two schools were also participants affected by the RTEP. One school principal described from his perspective how the RTEP affected the learners:

"*The project has an enormous impact on learners. They loved the student teachers. Many of them [student teachers] are now their role models. The learners are now inquiring from us how they could further their education to become as good as the student teachers* (School Principal, 2008)."

In 2008, I briefly met with grade 9, 10 and 11 pupils to ascertain their direct input about the cohorts and the project. One of the student teachers, who was fluent in the local language, conducted a short focus group discussion over the following three main questions: i) What did you like the most about the project? ii) What did you NOT like about the project?; and iii) What would you would like to see different next year? The learners responded as shown in the following table 6.1:

Table 6.1:   Short Focus Group Discussion with the learners in 2008

Things I liked the most about the project/ student teachers	Things I did not like	Things I'd like to see in the next year
• Student teachers explained lesson clearly. • They were respectful • They used different teaching strategies and came down to our level • They had passion and perseverance for teaching • They had love for us • They were very kind • The [student teacher] who taught me knew his stuff and was always well-prepared • They encouraged us. • They explained clearly • They had jokes and a sense of humour. • They were always happier and nicer. • They were approachable • It is fun to learn from them. • Learning to make videos was the best • Learning new technology was great • We loved after-school activities. It helped us to release our emotions and thoughts	• Nothing • Short stay of student teachers in our school • The [student teacher] who taught me was very good, but was short tempered • The [student teacher] who taught me was sometimes very tense. • The [student teacher] who taught me was not very good at resolving the conflicts among us.	• Would like to see them again next year. • Longer stay of student teachers in our school • Inclusion of men's soccer in "after-school" activities

RTEP also helped some learners get more focused on education. For example, one learner, when asked what he gained from the student teachers, gave a message to his fellow learners as:

"It is not the teacher who is supposed to teach. Both teachers and learners are here to learn. Don't blame teachers for your failure. You're here to learn… so you've to learn

even if the teacher is not around. Have your books out, and read them (source: excerpts from one of the video documentaries created by student teachers in 2008)."

As indicated in the table above, some learners also mentioned that 'after-school' activities helped them to release their emotions and thoughts through the activities such as poetry, drama, drawings, and debates. The following (Figure 6.1) is a sample of one of the learners' poetic works that he demonstrated in the 'after-school' activities:

Figure 6.1:   *An orphan* (a poem by a grade 11 learner)

I see him every day and night.

I walk with him everywhere I go.

He smiles. But you can see his simile...

his smile is not as usual.

He is devastated. He is destroyed.

He's orphaned.

He knows there is no body to call a Mom..

 no body to call a Dad.

 Inside his heart, he knows that..

 he's orphaned.

 He's strong outside, but he's weak inside...

 he's orphaned.

Is it really meant for him to be alone?..

no Mom..no Dad.

He's orphaned.

I can give him love. We can give him love. She can give him love. He can give him love.

But there is no one who can give him love as his mother did.. as his father did..

he's truly orphaned.

Source: Transcribed from video documentaries created by the student teachers in 2008.

6.4 Discussion

As mentioned in the beginning of the thesis, one key area that this study set out to explore was what and how CoP influences the perception of teaching and learning in rural schools, creation of professional identities, and professional growth of student teachers. This chapter demonstrates that when the cohorts of student teachers through the CoP link themselves to the broader social environment of the schools it makes a profound impact on the prevailing conceptions, professional growth and identity creation of the young teachers. The cohorts of student teachers from the B.Ed program at the Faculty of Education, UKZN along with the mentor teachers and the RTEP coordinators developed a unique CoP while doing their teaching practicum in two of the rural schools. Though three different groups (student teachers, RTEP project coordinators and the mentor teachers) participated and contributed to the making of CoP, the major contribution came from the cohorts of student teachers. The experiences of living together, working together, teaching together and constantly sharing their experiences with each other through formal and informal means within a broader domain helped the cohorts to emerge as a powerful CoP. The CoP produced shared learning, which was relevant to the local context. Based upon direct interaction with the local environment and in the local context, the learning was informed by the knowledge produced through mutual engagement and is constantly mediated in the larger associated social environment. Grounded in experience, this learning challenged the misconceptions about teaching and learning in rural areas, influenced the attitudes of the members of the CoP, enhanced the understanding of the issues, created opportunities for self-reflection and provided a common space for learning.

The direct experience of living and working in the rural areas also provided an opportunity to the student teachers to look at the rural schools by going beyond the traditional orientation of the rural areas, which usually portrays rural areas as backward, uneducated and opposed to progress. The experience helped the student teachers understand the dynamics of rural education, including the stereotypes—for example learners in the schools lacking a learning culture and rural schools as unsafe for multiethnic groups—and the ideals of rural civic life, for example strong values and communal relationships as a reference point to build rural communities and rural schools.

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In terms of teacher preparation, the learning and knowledge created through CoP is real and experiential. The cohorts of student teachers as members of the CoP personally witnessed the social reality, discussed issues, challenges and strategies, situated the learning in practice, and carried the emotions of fear, hope, anxiety and hurt. Though they recognized the importance of resources in organizing systematic teaching and learning, they also demonstrated with support from some in-service teachers how passion, commitment and emotions in the profession could instill empathy within the functions of teachers. And when it comes to making a difference in the lives of the learners, who need psychosocial and emotional support, the latter overrides the former. As a result of this learning, the student teachers started to think passionately about what it means to become a teacher, why it is important to be a teacher and what role a teacher can play in initiating a process of educational development in the deprived rural schools. The self-awareness was evident when the student teachers realized the power of a teacher: the power to make a difference in the lives of learners who need support. Despite harsh socio-economic conditions and the non-availability of reciprocal professional and material support to the teachers in the rural schools, the desire of a majority of the student teachers to teach in schools in the rural or impoverished areas is an indication that the RTEP graduates do value empathy and are ready to play their role in improving the condition of education and schools in rural areas. However, the choice to teach in rural schools is also influenced by the race of the members of the CoP. With the exception of one white and one Indian student teacher, the remaining student teachers who showed their interest in teaching at the rural schools after graduation were all black.

The project also challenged the way the teachers are trained in the Faculty of Education at UKZN—a key to negotiating and contesting already developed identities. They questioned the relevance of the modules being offered at the faculty with what they saw in the rural schools. Similarly, they were also disappointed to note that the classroom practices at the faculty overtly neglect the ground reality of the schools in the rural schools.

The tensions among the experiences of the members of CoP were also evident. A clear distinction is observed among the 'outsiders' and 'insiders' within the CoP. The interaction between the 'external' RTEP coordinators and the 'internal' student teachers

was not always seen as positive. Similarly, different viewpoints of some school teachers, as 'insiders' to the school community, and the student teachers, as 'outsiders' to the school community, about the overall teaching and learning environment at schools were also observed. In the former case, 'outsiders' influenced the 'insiders' when it comes to changing those prevailing attitudes and the practices which hampered the enablement of a learning and teaching environment, for example coming late to the classrooms and leaving early. However, the influence was short term. This raises the question of sustainability, especially in terms of how the improved learning environment can be maintained over a period of time at the end of an intervention.

In addition, another tension observed among the CoP is the social capital that each member brings in. In the case of RTEP, the personal background (i.e. rural as against the urban) and the language (i.e. fluency in English) mattered the most when it came to participating in the CoP as evident in the case of the student teacher who felt that he was silenced due to the lack of social capital.

As the data in the previous sections illustrate, the knowledge produced in CoP made an enormous impact on the thinking, attitudes and identities of the cohorts of the student teachers. However, so far, it is unknown how the newfound knowledge affected the 'after-life' of student teachers, especially their attitudes once they separated from the CoP and started their actual teaching practices in different schools.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, another key research question relates to ascertaining how the schools benefited from the partnership through school-university partnership/RTEP. The evidence suggests that the schools found the intervention beneficial. It helped the schools to improve their capacities; however, it greatly varied as per the school's self-interest, especially the role of its leadership. Like schools, the RTEP management also found the partnership beneficial with respect to policy-practice gap. However, the discussion related to the benefits or problems/challenges of the partnership with respect to schools remain inconclusive without taking into account how the partnership evolved over the three years of the RTEP. Did the relationship in the partnership improve or deteriorate over time? What are relatively long-term benefits of the partnership or experience of participation on the participants?

Chapter 7   Looking back at the partnership: the evolution of the partnership, the 'after-life' of some student teachers, and contextualizing the findings in the age of globalization

7.0   Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at how the school-university partnership facilitated the student teachers, project coordinators and the school teachers to form CoP and how it influenced the participants, especially student teachers. In this chapter, I investigate some broader effects of RTEP on partners with a focus on schools and student teachers. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section deliberates how the partnership evolved over a period of three years. In the second section, I explore relatively long-term effects of the project on the former student teachers. I contacted and interviewed four former student teachers to ascertain how their participation in the partnership project has affected their current teaching jobs. In the third section, I contextualize the findings with reference to the neo-liberal framework, as indicated in Chapter Two.

7.1   From 2007 to 2009: the evolution of the partnership between schools-university over the period of three years

The relationship between the participants, especially between the schools and the UKZN did not remain the same over three years. In this section, I intend to cover how the partners/participants think about their relationship, which travels from 2007 to 2009 as follows:

7.1.1   Changing relationships between the cohorts and the RTEP over three years

During my interactions with the cohort of 2007, the student teachers were concerned about the management of the project and the coordination of their teaching practicum, including their after-school interactions. For example, one student teacher writes in her journal:

"*The professors [RTEP managers] are classic academics; very poor communications, with simple concepts taking ages to explain and the most important obvious details not touched upon* (Reflective Journal of one Student Teacher 2007)."

During focus group discussion, the student teachers mentioned:

"*There is a lack of communication. Most of us were not prepared to the challenges of rural education, and when we experienced those problems no one was there to work with us. The coordinators were foreigners and their knowledge and expertise to the challenges of rural schools are as low as ours* (Focus Group Discussion with student teachers 2007)."

On this very concern, one of the RTEP's manager responded:

"*The idea of sending the student teachers in groups is to have them experienced the challenges, reflect upon their experiences and then to find the solutions. If we were there all the time, there is no point to send them in groups* (Interview with the one of the RTEP Manager 2007)."

Similarly, student teachers also reported that neither they nor the mentor teachers were prepared for the RTEP as follows:

"*We have dual roles: researchers as well as teachers. Though we were provided preliminary workshops related to conducting research, but they were not very relevant to what we experienced in the rural schools……..no one informed us [about] the challenges in the rural areas……..there was no interaction with the schools and the mentor teachers, when we arrived at schools we were strangers to the schools and the schools were strangers to us……..the mentor teachers were not prepared to embrace us as mentees. They did not know what to do as mentors……. Some mentors took the days off as they thought the teaching in the schools would be done by the student teachers…..The debriefing was an excellent concept, but it lacks cohesion and structure. No one was there to respond to our queries* (excerpts from the focus group discussion and the workshops with different groups of the student teachers 2007)."

As per the feedback from the cohorts of RTEP 2007, several efforts were made to address the concerns in 2008. More documentation related to the experiences of the RTEP 2007 was provided to the cohorts of RTEP 2008 and a visit to the schools was arranged prior to the teaching practicum. In addition, a 'buddy' system was introduced, in which each returnee student was assigned a 'buddy' to the new student, helping the new students to better understand the project and their roles. Similarly, debriefings in RTEP 2008 were structured on specific themes for each evening, and orientation workshops for the mentor teachers were also held at schools. The student teachers, especially the returnee student teachers viewed the improvement in RTEP 2008 as:

"*We are better prepared this time. We were taken to the schools before the teaching practicum to meet with the mentor teachers and to visit the schools. The debriefing sessions were well-structured and the coordination of the project was much better than the previous year* (Focus Group Discussion with the Student Teachers 2008)."

However, some student teachers were still concerned about the teaching practicum as follows:
"*The teaching schedule followed at schools was too erratic, lacked discipline and kept changing regularly which made us confused what to teach on a specific day* (Interview with the student teacher 2008)."

Similarly, another student teacher reported:
"*I and most of my colleagues were not get enough time to prepare lessons as we were given the topics to teach when we reached at schools* (Interview with the student teacher 2008)."

Some student teachers also reported that the mentors at schools were not prepared to mentor and felt that their practica were not properly evaluated, as they noted:

"*Mentor teachers still do not know their jobs. They left us in the classrooms and went away. No one was there to evaluate our teaching* (Focus Group Discussion with the student teachers 2008)."

In the RTEP 2009 the UKZN faculty worked more closely with the principals and mentor teachers before the practicum began. Some student teachers described the improvement as follows:

"*The schools and the mentor teachers were very welcoming. They looked well-prepared for us……the coordination and the management of the project was very good….Staff members from the UKZN also visited us and evaluated our teaching, this is a very nice development, which was missing in the last year. Moreover, some coordinator also evaluated our teaching* (Excerpts from interviews with various student teachers 2009)."

However, some student teachers still observed that mentor teachers at schools did not evaluate their practicum properly, as they observed:
"*My mentor teacher took me very lightly and did not evaluate my teaching….The mentor teacher handed the class to me and went out to sit under the sun with other teachers* (Excerpts from the interviews with two student teachers 2009)."

The student teachers in 2007 and 2008 participated in the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis (table 7.1 and table 7.2). The purpose of the SWOT analysis was to ascertain the key strengths and concerns of the RTEP are through the eyes of the student teachers. Further, it also provided a succinct summary of how the student teachers viewed the progress of the RTEP over a period of two years as shown in the following tables:

Table 7.1:   SWOT Analysis with Student Teachers in the RTEP 2007

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Excellent food, accommodation and transportation • Idea of Journals and de-briefing sessions • Combination of teaching and research (action research) • Diversity within the student teachers • Shared accommodation and working in groups • Relationship with external internees (project coordinators) from the different countries • Opportunity to practice in rural areas	• Lack of coordination/communication from the RTEP team • Unstructured de-briefing sessions • Unable to report/solve bad occurrences that were happening in the school • Lack of clarity about partners' roles • No interventions for mentor teachers and school leadership • No involvement of community-based organizations or groups in the project • Short teaching practice • In-appropriate workshop sessions to prepare student teachers for the project • No mechanisms for resolving the disputes among student teachers • Distant location of the project area
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Age (young), gender (balance) and race (mix) of the student teachers • Strong school leadership (in one school) • Strong community relationships • Availability of strong civil society • Friendly local department of education • Parents' motivation to participate	• Low-resourced and lack of socio-health facilities in the project area • Group dynamics and tensions among student teachers • Weak school leadership (in the remaining two schools) • Funding constraints to address all aspects of partnership (such as service delivery in the schools) • Globalization and its associated inequalities, especially in rural areas • Socio-political environment/incidences such as teachers' strikes

In 2008, the student teachers viewed the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the RTEP as:

Table 7.2:   SWOT Analysis with the cohort of 2008

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Excellent food, accommodation and transportation - Structured and purposeful de-briefing sessions - Selection of student teachers - Group work in each school - Friendly behaviour of mentor teachers - Strong project coordination and preparation - Excellent after-school activities and coordination - Opportunity to practice in rural areas	- No preparation for action research - No interaction with local community - No interaction with all mentor teachers before the project - Some mentor teachers did not observe us while we're teaching - No proper teaching evaluation from the Faculty of Education
Opportunities	**Threats**
- After-school activities have increased the motivation for self-learning among learners - After-school activities helped the learners to identify their hidden talents. - Safe-school environment - The project is continuously improving	- Low-resourced and lack of socio-health facilities in the project area - Group dynamics and racial tensions among some student teachers - Weak school leadership (in one school)

The above two SWOT illustrates that student teachers observed that the planning, management, preparation and support in the RTEP 2008 significantly improved from RTEP 2007. Though no SWOT was done with the cohorts of RTEP 2009, the student teachers in the focus group discussions reported more improvement in RTEP 2009. The

improvement included providing more support to the student teachers, including evaluating the some lessons during the teaching practicum   by the staff from the Faculty of Education, UKZN.

7.1.2   The evolution of the partnership between the schools and the university

In the above section, I have given evidence about how student teachers perceived RTEP responded to the concerns of the student teachers. I now turn to the experiences of the two schools: Khambula Higher Secondary School and Ginyane Higher Secondary School[3] related to the partnership with the university overtime.

i) Khambula Higher Secondary School (KHS)

As per the comments of a local DoE official, KHS is considered as one of the best schools in the area. The student teachers from all cohorts reported that the school has a strong leadership with a profound keenness on improving the school's performance. For example, one student teacher described the school as:

"The school has a very good management and active administration. The school is always interested in improving itself (Interview with the Student Teacher 2009)."

Furthermore, the school has benefited the most from the partnership compared to the other school as noted by one of the members of the RTEP management as:

 "the school takes whatever comes in its way [to improve itself] from the project (Interview with one RTEP staff member)."

It is interesting to note that the voice of dissent to adjust the partnership more in favor of the schools came from this school and its leadership. For example, when the school's principal was told that one of the key purposes of the partnership is to identify research niche areas with reference to teacher education, he commented as follows:

 "Research, research, research! Where does this research go? We want that research which helps the school. We really benefitted from the student teachers' project [RTEP], but we also want if we could get some help in our infrastructure development. For

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[3] The names are pseudonyms to protect the true identities of the schools

example, we want to take advantage of technology, but we do not have enough resources and capacity. Also, we are in the process of restructuring the school's library and we need resources to buy the books (Interview with school's principal, 2007)."

Thus, as per the schools' expectations, the university in the second phase made some significant changes in the partnership to address some of the concerns of the schools. As discussed in the previous chapter, most of the changes related to providing technological support to the schools (a digital camera, laptop and overhead projector were provided to each school in 2008), linking the school's computer laboratory with the UKZN's internal internet network, and networking the schools with other line agencies, for example the Department of Agriculture. In addition, the school's relevant staff was also trained by the university to use computer technology in the school. Thus, the principal in 2009 noted the five key achievements of the partnership:

"We have learnt a lot and made some significant progress while working together. From the school's perspectives, I would like to reckon the five key achievements: First, we have initiated few staff development programs. Through the partnership project, we realized that our teachers need consistent support toward their professional development. The professional development is currently limited to teachers in the area of physical science and computer application technology. We get assistance from the UKZN campuses located in Durban and Pietermaritzburg in this regard; second, we have successfully introduced Computer Application Technology (CAT) module for grade 11 and grade 12. It was a long-time demand from the students as well as from the parents. However, since we were lacking required infrastructure as well as skills, we're unable to offer this module. Through this partnership, we achieved both. We now have an infrastructure as well as skills. The module is now a permanent feature of grade 11 and grade 12 curriculums; third, we learnt how to network and build our own capacity. UKZN has introduced us with the Department of Agriculture to develop our "School Garden Program", and we are in touch with the Department. Further, few of the student teachers have linked us with the places from where we can get the books to build our school library; fourth, we learnt the 'areas of excellence' with respect to our learners through 'after-school' activities. Our learners seemed to be very engaged through these

*activities, which include poetry, drama, debates, and soccer. We are trying to sustain the activities by ourself; and finally, we feel proud that we have a role in teacher education. The idea of having mentors from the school is benefiting the school. It makes our teachers more responsible as well as the trained 'mentors' are now providing mentorship to the newly recruited staff (*Interview with the school principal *2009).*"

In summary, the school gained the most from the partnership and also influenced the partnership in favor of the schools. It used all the opportunities provided either by the student teachers or the university. Furthermore, the school also expressed its confidence to sustain some of the benefits by itself, as noted by the school principal.

ii) Ginyane Higher Secondary School (GHS)

Unlike KHS, the Ginyane Higher Secondary School (GHS) does not have a reputation of being a good school. After visiting the school, one can easily conclude that the school is in crisis as mentioned in several quotes from the student teachers, the school's teachers, parents and the relevant officials from the Department of Education. I summarize the state of the school as follows in my field notes:

It is confirmed from my meetings with the student teachers, Department of Education and parents that the school has deteriorated over time. There appeared to be a consensus among the student teachers and the parents that the school leadership and teachers are responsible for this debacle. Apparently, the school lacks leadership and commitment from its staff and lack of understanding among each other. A deep distrust between the school's teachers and the school principal is evident in the focus group discussion and the interviews. Even the learners do not respect the school principal as noted by the student teachers when they saw learners making a mockery of the principal's speech, which was delivered at the school's assembly. The only positive side is that the learners are eager to learn. Despite a school's failure to organize systematic learning, all student teachers, who did their practicum at the school reported that the opportunities created by the student teachers for learning were very well received by the learners (source: my field notes 2007-2008).

However, an encouraging development that the partnership project brought to this school is a sense of realization among the teachers and the principal that they are responsible for the successes and failures of the school. For example, the school principal, in my meeting with him in early 2009 noted:

"RTEP has made a big impact on us. The school is improving after a few years of deterioration. Our school's result has increased from a success rate of 28% to 32%. Still, I think my teachers need to be disciplined, and I have contacted the UKZN to help me in this regard (Interview with the School's Principal in February 2009*)."*

A more explicit confession is observed when the school principal, during my visit in late 2009, mentioned in the interview that the crux of the problem in the school is the negative attitude of the school's staff, including himself. As he stated:

"I have to admit that the problem is in the school management, including myself. The school is on course of deterioration because of us. The enrolment is decreasing, the dropout is increasing and the school's result has gone down to its lowest level. We need to change our attitude. My teachers lack discipline. It is very heartening to see that the other school, which is also involved in the partnership, is doing so well, and we are declining. We requested UKZN to help us in this matter. I appreciate that they [UKZN] responded positively to our request. A team from the university met with us. In this meeting, we agreed to start with a SWOT analysis of the school. We also intend to involve parents as well. I am hopeful that we can turn this school around together (Interview with the school principal in October 2009)."

The above observation from the principal indicates the involvement of the school along with the UKZN/RTEP in improving the school. This is also confirmed by one of the staff members from the UKZN, who has been involved in the affairs. In my meeting, he informed me that the efforts were underway to involve all stakeholders, including community members and the parents to devise strategies in order to help the school (source: my field notes 2009).

It is also worth mentioning that some representatives from the national and provincial Department of Education also visited the two schools in mid 2009. As I came

to know from some staff members at UKZN, the Department of Education contacted the UKZN to visit the two schools. During the visit, the Department realized that GHS was not functioning properly and needed to be transformed. Further, as one staff member from the UKZN informed me, the DoE also sought the UKZN's support to improve the school. Thus, the visit from the National Department of Education and any possible subsequent follow-up from the Department might have played a role in making the school realize its problems. In any case, either a self-realization from the school's staff or influence by the Department or perhaps a combination of both, shows that the partnership is influencing the school. Furthermore, it also demonstrates that the partnership is drawing attention from the broader relevant players to the local/rural areas, helping to break down the 'sense of isolation' and loneliness of the schools[4].

In addition to the viewpoint of the school's administration about the RTEP, the mentor teachers also provided their feedback regarding how they viewed the RTEP overtime. As with student teachers, the mentor teachers were also involved in conducting the SWOT analysis for RTEP 2007 (table 7.3) and RTEP 2008 (table 7.4). During 2007 and 2008, the schoolteachers from both schools also participated in the SWOT analysis as follows:

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[4] At the time of writing this thesis, I have learned that the Principal has been dismissed from this school and also that the faculty from UKZN is carrying out a number of workshops with the staff on school management.

Table 7.3: SWOT Analysis with the schools teachers in 2007 (RTEP 2007)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Student teachers teaching in rural schools • Diversity in race • Love, passionate and care the student teachers provided to the learners • Innovative strategies and skills employed by the student teachers	• No preparation for mentor teachers • Lack of clarity about the roles • No provision for service delivery and infrastructure support • Short duration of the project • Not enough interaction with the community • Bad timing for teaching practice due the teachers' strike
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Improvement in the learning culture at school • Greater interest from parents	• Improvement in the learning culture appeared to be short term • School's weak administration and governance to sustain the benefits (in one school) • Inequalities between urban and rural schools • Poverty, disease and lack of resources in the area

In 2008, the school teachers from both schools again participated in the SWOT analysis and noticed the successes and gaps as follows:

Table 7.4: SWOT Analysis with the school teachers in 2008 (RTEP 2008)

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Consistency of the project in its second year • Workshops to prepare us for the project • Availability of a full-time in-residence faculty person from McGill to help us • Infrastructure support • Identification of linkages and networks for improvement in school's services • Interaction with UKZN's other staff such as some Heads of Department and information technology • Linkage with internet server (in one school) • After-school activities	• Workshops to prepare us were very short • No interaction with the community • Mentorship training was limited to selected teachers
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Improvement in school infrastructure (information technology) allows the school to offer computer related courses (in one school) • Increase in learners' awareness about the use of technology • Extra-curricular activities (after-school activities) provided the opportunity for interactive learning. • Consistent improvement in the project over time	• School's weak administration and governance to sustain the benefits (in one school) • Inequalities between urban and rural schools • Poverty, disease and lack of resources in the area

The in-service teachers in the SWOT analysis observed that the partnership project improved over time. In particular, the mentor teachers appreciated the opportunities for professional development through mentorship training and demanded that such opportunities should be more readily available for all in-service teachers.

iii) Problematizing the partnership: A case of communication with the third school

I noted earlier that the RTEP 2007 started in collaboration with three schools (one Primary and two Secondary schools), but it ended up in collaboration with only two secondary schools in the RTEP 2008 and RTEP 2009. The analysis of the school-university partnership through RTEP remains inconclusive unless what happened to the third school is not discussed. Though I was unable to meet with the teachers in the third school, I draw my observations on the basis of a short visit to the school, a brief chat with the school's principal and the discussions with the student teachers and the RTEP's management in 2007. The story of the third school is as follows:

When I contacted the school principal to confirm the school's visit as scheduled, the school principal responded: "*I am very disappointed as one of the student teacher has contacted the Department of Education and said some bad words about the school. This is insulting to us, and [we] would not like to carry the partnership further.*" Though I was neither prepared for this nor aware of the background on what the principal was referring to, my immediate response to him was to ask what could be done to save the partnership and how the school's concerns could be addressed. The principal replied: "*You should come with one of those [RTEP's managers] who came to the school at the first place and invited us in the partnership and also with the student teacher who contacted with the Department of Education.*" Realizing the urgency, one of the RTEP's managers agreed to go with me. However, the day when we scheduled to go to the school, I was told that no one from the RTEP's management was available to go and the school had already been informed that the RTEP's management would be in touch with the school to sort things out later. Thus, when the project coordinator and I arrived at the school, the principal asked: "*Where is the student teacher who contacted the Department?*" On my response that one of the RTEP Managers or someone from the UKZN would contact you in this regard, he angrily replied. "*What do you want to know?*" I attempted to ease his emotions by explaining that we are in process of exploring the standpoint of the schools about RTEP. "*Explanation of any sort of experiences from your side would help us to better analyze what RTEP delivered and what it did not,*" I added. Responding to me, he mentioned: "*We had a very bad experience, and we would not like to continue [with it].*

The student teachers were supposed to come only to teach, but they started interviewing the teachers and the learners. Moreover, this incident [approaching the Department of Education by the student teacher] is hurting me. I am a man and the principal of this school and I need respect." Meanwhile, few of the teachers entered the room and the principal attended to them and said: "*These people came from the UKZN to interview us, without the ones who introduced us to the student teacher project and without the student teacher who sent an email to the Minister.*" As I observed the school principal was not feeling comfortable in this meeting with us as well as the other teachers who entered in the room, I asked him if he would like to meet with RTEP's managers first before meeting us, to which he agreed. Thus, we left the school, along with a copy of the email provided by the school that the student teacher sent to the Minister for Education.

Later, it turned out that the student teacher neither wrote any bad words about the school nor had she contacted the Minister for Education without informing her mentor teacher. In my follow-up meetings with her and with other student teachers, the student teacher was trying to help a very slow learner, who was apparently traumatized due to the death of her parents. The student teacher discussed the matter with her mentor teacher, who encouraged her to contact the Minister for Education directly as the school did not have enough resources to provide psychosocial and material support to the learner. Thus, the student teacher sent an email, asking help from the Minister of Education. As informed by some student teachers who performed their practicum in the schools and were in contact with their mentor teachers from the school, a team from the Department of Education visited the school and met with the learner and the teachers. In doing so, the team also identified some other irregularities in the school, which apparently angered the principal (source: my field notes 2007).

I include the above analysis of the third school to highlight some of the problematic aspects of partnerships. It is evident that the lack of communication and the motivation to resolve the issues between the university and the school played a critical role in breaking the partnership. The lack of communication between the school and the RTEP was already present as both partners had different views about the roles of student teachers. However, it was fully exposed when the school's principal lost his temper about the email sent by the student teacher and the RTEP management was unable to resolve it.

The above cases—though poles apart—offer evidence on how partnerships can be seen differently in different context. On one hand, mutual-trust and effective leadership can play an important role in improving the partnership and capitalizing the benefits of working together. On the other hand, a lack of trust and delay in resolving the disputes harm the partnership, and even end up worsening relationships.

7.2 The long-term effects of the partnership project on the student teachers

One critical area of the evaluation of the third phase of the RTEP was to get a sense of how the RTEP affected the key participants, for example student teachers and schools, over a period of time. The consideration is particularly important with respect to those student teachers, especially the 4th year student teachers who participated in the RTEP, and have started their teaching careers in different schools after their graduation. Given that no information is readily available for those student teachers who have already graduated, I used my own means and previous contacts to contact them. Four of the former student teachers agreed to meet with me.

7.2.1 Portraits of hope, struggle and contrasting realities: exploring the afterlife of some student teachers

In a quest of how RTEP has affected the professional lives of the student teachers, I met with one former student teacher who participated in the RTEP 2007 and three student teachers who participated in the RTEP 2007 and RTEP 2008. At the time of my meeting, all the four former student teachers were teaching in different schools as full time teachers. My discussion with them focused on the following four questions: i) Describe your school and your current teaching job? ii) What differences have you observed between yourself (who participated in RTEP) and other teachers in your school? and; iii) Does RTEP make any impact on your current professional life?

On the basis of the interviews and informal meetings (one of them was by telephone), I developed the following portraits:

Portrait One: Thandi* (a black female teacher, who participated in RTEP 2007)

*not her real name

"My name is Thandi. I have been teaching 'Life Science' in one of the rural higher secondary school for the past one year. In my school, there are 400 learners with 15 teachers. The learners are struggling with poverty, disease and hunger. Many of the learners are orphans with no support. The school lacks infrastructure and basic education materials. It does not have a science laboratory even though it is a high school. No coordination exists between the school leadership and the teachers, and they both do not respect each other. Many of the teachers in the school are lazy and lack discipline. However, the learners in the school are willing to learn, but an enabling teaching and learning environment is missing. It is exactly the same situation that I observed while I was doing my teaching practicum in one of the schools (Ginyane High School) with the RTEP. It is a sad reality that most of the schools in rural areas are not doing well.

I was neither shocked nor surprised to see the bad school environment when I joined the school. It'd have been very difficult for me to teach [in this environment], had I not been exposed to similar challenges during the RTEP. I developed a very good network of friends and colleagues through RTEP with whom I am still gaining strengths and getting ideas. I am in touch with them and the RTEP provided me the strengths and skills to work in difficult situation. I discussed the problems and devised new strategies with them. Sometime, I even borrow the laboratory equipments from the UKZN and use them to teach 'Life Science' as my school does not have any equipment… but now I am tired. It is too much for me to handle. I want to leave this school…perhaps, I'd like to go to another rural or township school (Interview with Thandi 2008)."*

Thandi's experience demonstrates that the RTEP helped her to take challenges while teaching in school, which is struggling in terms of low resources, a lack of teacher commitment, ineffective school leadership and a poverty-ridden community. However, it is also clear that *Thandi* is increasingly frustrated over the lack of an enabling environment and is seriously considering changing her job/ school though she is still interested in teaching.

Similarly, during 2009, I interviewed three more student teachers who participated in RTEP 2007 and 2008.

Portrait Two: Bongani (a black male teacher, who participated in the RTEP 2007 & 2008)

"My name is Bongani. I have been teaching in a rural school for the past six months. I have participated in the first two phases of the RTEP. During RTEP I, I taught in one school (Khambula High School), and during RTEP II, I did my teaching practicum in the other school (Ginyane High School). The school where I am teaching is a high school and had 400 learners and 12 teachers. I am teaching 'Life Science' to grade 9 and grade 11. My school is a typical rural school with low resources and poor infrastructure. The teachers in my schools are not very committed to teach. However, exceptions are there and some of the teachers are very committed.

The most important thing that the RTEP has taught me is that I am a teacher and I have to teach with passion and commitment no matter how bad the situation is. My school does not have a very conducive environment for effective teaching, but through RTEP I got the wisdom as well as skills to make effective teaching and learning in the absence of a favorable environment. I am now more creative and confident. The challenges that I have been facing in my current job are exactly the same that I had faced while teaching during the RTEP. So, in a way these [challenges] are not new for me. I am doing my best what I could do to bring the change. But the change is not easy to bring. I am trying to identify the like-minded teachers and to discuss the problems. It is a risky job though. People think you are conspiring against the system. I am still new to the environment and will take my time to get adjusted (Interview with Bongani, 2009)*."*

My discussion with *Bongani* suggests that he has been working in a similar situation as *Thandi*. *Bongani* believes that his experience at the RTEP helped him to understand his role as a teacher and gave him confidence to teach effectively in difficult contexts. The school in which *Bongani* has been working is similar to *Thandi's* school and has been facing acute shortages in terms of resources. Similarly, a low morale is visible when *Bongani* says that he is trying to do his best and it is not easy to bring change in the given circumstances.

Portrait Three: Ayanda (a black female teacher, who participated in the RTEP 2007 & 2008)

"My name is Ayanda …. I have been teaching in a remote township school for the past one year. My school has 700 learners and 19 teachers. I am teaching Mathematics and Science to grade 9 and 11. My schools lack resources. However, this is not new to me and I was mentally prepared to handle the problem of lack of resources.

I have participated in the RTEP in 2007 as a third year student and then again in 2008 as a fourth year student [teacher]. There are few things that the RTEP has helped me to learn. First, it helped me to understand how to find out the means for effective teaching when no resources are available. My school does not have a proper science laboratory. To fill the gap, I occasionally arranged trips of my class to the UKZN's campus in Durban to expose them to the science laboratory. Second, it helped me to realize that, being a teacher, it is critically important to understand the after-school lives of the learners. The learners in my school have been facing enormous problems, including poverty, hunger and disease. Discussing their issues and problems helped me to understand their context and it also helped them to focus on school as they see that someone at school really care them. Third, I found that most of the teachers in my school are hopeless and frustrated. They have lost their faith in the system. It is important to release the frustration by discussing the problems and issues with fellow teachers. I have initiated and formed an informal community, where the teachers share their experiences and support each other. This is the best we could do under the circumstances. We even switch classes to help each other in devising new strategies for effective teaching. It gives us strength [especially] when we know that we are not alone. If I can make a difference in the lives of just a few learners, I think that I have done my job (Interview with Ayanda, 2009).*"*

Like the previous two portraits, the case of *Ayanda* is not different. She has been teaching in the same impoverished environment as *Thandi* and *Bongani*. *Ayanda* also found that her experience with the RTEP has helped her to understand her broader role as a teacher. Further, *Ayanda* has also developed an indigenous 'Community of Practice' among the in-service teachers to support each other, especially in an environment which frustrates many of the teachers working in her school. However, it is also evident that she

has been working in a difficult environment, which is affecting her as it influenced the morale of her colleagues.

Portrait Four: Brad (a white male teacher, who participated in the RTEP 2007 & 2008)

"My name is…. I have been teaching in a Christian-based private school for less than a year. The school is serving to the posh-urban area to white community. It is a very well resourced, disciplined and well-managed school. I have been teaching English to grade 7 and 9 and am enjoying my work.

Though I am teaching in the school, which is very different from the schools involved with RTEP in terms of resources, supervision and teachers' commitment and accountability, I feel RTEP has assisted me in many ways. It taught me to take initiatives. I always try to make the education material and the contents relevant to the learners' needs and the environment as I did in the RTEP. Similarly, I am now more creative, and I am passing this on to my learners. I have initiated few extra-curricular activities, including sports, singing and poetry. That's what I learnt from the after-school activities that we performed in the RTEP. I regularly hold a poetry café with learners to help them exposing their talents. It encourages them to produce their creative work and share it with others. It has really boosted the school environment. I feel that I have given passion and spirit to the school. RTEP has showed me that education is not about delivering the lectures. It is about to bring change and good in the lives of learners. This is the difference when I compare myself with other teachers in this school. They take the things for granted. Their dimension of looking at the teaching and learning is very narrow (Interview with Brad 2009)."

Unlike *Thandi, Bongani,* and *Ayanda, Brad* is fortunate to teach in an elite white school. The school has all resources and is led in a professional way. The RTEP helped Brad to broaden his vision about teachers and teaching, and he has demonstrated it by taking few initiatives to organize learning outside the school curriculum and classroom practices.

The above four portraits demonstrate that the learning through 'community of practice' has enriched their vision of teaching and learning. The student teachers, during their early professional lives, have been taking initiatives and striving for change even in

the challenging environment. However, the above portraits also exhibit a stark reality of inequities in the South African education system. The portraits of hope and struggle of *Thandi, Bongani* and *Ayanda* who have been involved in the under-resourced rural or township settings are completely different in their struggle than with *Brad*, who has been working in the resourceful urban setting. *Thandi, Bongani* and *Ayanda* have been striving in an environment, which is impoverished and poverty-stricken. Further, the schools' leadership and staff lack competencies and commitment. Thus, the focus of the newly hired, young teachers is to re-invent the normalcy or what is considered as everyday practices of teaching, learning and schooling. Even that looks quite stressful, daunting and dissuasive in an under-resourced environment, which is not conducive to learning. On the other hand, *Brad* has been thriving in the environment, which is enriched and blessed. Thus, the focus is to move beyond the traditional role of teaching /schooling to excellence, coupled with a feeling of joy and fun. Thus, the real experiences of *Thandi, Bongani* and *Ayanda* on one side and the experience of *Brad* on the other side have reaffirmed what Apple (Apple, 2001) has noted, and which I already discussed earlier, that the school's population, including teachers, have been stratified on the basis of race, language and social class as a direct consequence of the market-led reforms in education. This leads to another important consideration of how market-led strategies affected the provision of quality education to the communities of rural schools.

7.3   Contextualizing the findings: the impact of globalization on education in rural areas of South Africa

The findings of the evaluation with respect to the socio-economic status of the two schools and their related communities draw our attention to the deep inequalities existing between the urban and rural areas in South Africa. This has been further reinforced by the 'after-life' experiences of the four former student teachers who have been involved in the RTEP. In this section, I attempt to contextualize the partnership project and the findings within the broader context of the impact of neoliberal globalization on education. In doing so, I frame it with reference to what Stromquist (2005) suggests, as I discussed in the first chapter, regarding the impact of globalization on vulnerable communities in the field of education.

7.3.1 Isolating rural schools in terms of resources, support and opportunities

I have already reported extensively in the previous chapter how the student teachers and the schools viewed the lack of resources in schools. This is in sharp contrast to what is available in urban schools, as one of the student teachers expressed her dissatisfaction over the inequalities:

"*I feel like crying when I compare the schools in the RTEP with the one where I got my education. There is no comparison in terms of resources, discipline, skills and commitment and accountability [of the teachers]. Before my experience in the RTEP, I can't imagine that such schools [RTEP schools] even exist in post-apartheid South Africa. I feel ashamed of my government* (Interview with student teacher 2007)."

It is not only about lack of resources, but also about the feeling of isolation as evident in the discussion from the in-service teachers. The in-service teachers were quite open in discussing that there are not enough opportunities for relevant professional development. Though some of the broader discussion is already covered in the previous chapter, here are few excerpts which draw our attention to what specifically teachers in the schools in the rural areas want in their professional development, and which have not been provided to them yet:

"*The learners in the schools are facing the issues of poverty, hunger and disease. We never get any workshops on how to deal with these learners*" another teacher added "*we have oversized classrooms, and do not know how to organize learner-centered pedagogy in large class-rooms*" one more teacher commented: "*I have been teaching for the past 15 years, but never got any opportunity to improve myself. Sometime, I feel that my skills are outdated. I am impressed [with] the skills that the student teachers brought with them* (excerpts from various focus group discussions with the mentor teachers in schools 2007)."

The feeling of isolation by the schools in the rural areas takes another step when it comes to understanding how rural schools are ignored at the time of placing student teachers in various schools, towards fulfilling the regular teacher practicum requirement.

In my meeting with the relevant officers from the local Department of Education, one participant inquired *"if teaching practicum is an integral part of the B.Ed program, then why do the student teachers not come to our schools on regular basis"* (source: field notes 2007). Investigating further on this particular inquiry at UKZN, it turned out that the lists of the schools for potential teaching practicum are developed in consultation with the Department of Education and contain minimal or no representation of rural schools (source: field notes 2007). This is further supplemented by one student teacher as:

"The selection of the schools for our regular teaching practicum is on 'first-come, first-served basis'. Most of us prefer to do our teaching practicum in urban schools, followed by good-resourced township schools. Low-resourced townships schools are usually chosen by those students who are left with no other choice (Interview with the student teacher, 2007)."

The feeling of isolation is further entrenched with a sense of disenchantment from the system of follow-ups and on-site feedback to the rural schools from the relevant authorities as observed by one teacher as:

"Whenever the people from the Department of Education visit schools, they come with a pre-conceived agenda about how we are implementing the outcomes-based education and associated Continuous Assessment System (CASS). They never asked about the problems related to our context (source: my field notes 2007)."

The situation is even worse in other rural schools as Pennefather & Avery (2009) observe that in one of the school where they have been working no one from the Department of Education has ever visited the school for many months.

7.3.2 The myth of quality

The fallout of sheer ignorance toward the rural schools in terms of providing them resources, support and opportunities highlights a key problem in relation to quality of education. In my meetings with parents, school teachers and student teachers, they not only associated a low quality of education to the factors discussed above, but also pointed

out some broader dimensions. For example, the parents in the focus group discussions expressed their views as:

"*My son [who is in grade 12] could not read and write properly both English and Zulu.*"

"*My son struggled to fill out an employment application form even though they had their matriculate degrees.*"

 "*We are on the course of losing Zulu as well as English. The Edgewood Campus [UKZN] and other teacher's training institute should pay special attention in preparing English teachers* (Source: excerpts from the three focus group discussions with parents in 2007)."

Similarly, teachers also shared their perspective about the quality of education and mentioned how little control they have over the processes that determines quality education. A group of teachers observed:

"*The Continous Assessment System (CASS) has made our profession miserable. We have given a complex Performa, which includes a standardized set of competencies set by the Department of Education for quality assurance. The form has to be filled out for each student, and it constitutes about 75% of the student's assessment. Remaining 25% are for writing the final exam, which we assess. No matters how weak the learners are, they usually do reasonably well against those standard competencies as laid out in CASS, and which constitutes 75% of the performance. We have little choice in controlling the quality* (source: focus group discussion with teachers 2009)."

Student teachers observed that the curriculum was irrelevant and viewed it as a major impediment for quality education. One student teacher deliberated about the relevance of curriculum as:

"*Most of the activities in the books are written so that you need to have a dictionary. And at first when I was looking at the one of those textbooks I did not believe that it belongs to grade 6 learners as there were English words that I looked them on the dictionary and these were bombastic words. Most of the activities required parents involvement and in*

this rural area I do believe that most of the parents are not educated, they can't help their children….If they (teachers) use the books as is they will be wasting their time as no learner will understand. No learner will do any activity (Student Teacher Reflective Journal, 2007)."

The above depicts the complexity of quality education and demonstrates various standpoints in connection to quality education in rural areas. The parents asserted that schools were unable to deliver quality education as per universally acceptable standards or local standards (knowledge); teachers complained that they had no control over the quality; and the student teachers found no linkages between the curriculum and the local realities.

7.3.3   Education and the fear of 'urbanization'

In my discussions with parents and the teachers, I found most of them were concerned that the education system in general and the curriculum in particular is more 'urbanized' and less relevant to the rural areas. The system/curriculum is based upon the following notions that do not hold true in the rural areas. First, it is assumed that learners are living with their parents (ideally, a nuclear family system). In rural areas, a large number of the learners are either living with single parents or with extended family members, and in some cases they are leading their households because of the impact of HIV and AIDS on families. Second, it is assumed that the learners' guardians/parents are literate and would help the learners in doing their homework. In rural areas, many of the guardians/parents are illiterate. Further, when learners go back home from schools they are occupied with household chores and cattle keeping, getting no time to do homework. Third, the educational system is promoting rural-to-urban movement and services-focused labour supply. In focus group discussion, the parents mentioned that they had no problems with their children moving to towns related to their jobs. However, they are worried about the romanticization of the urban life as one parent observed:

"*After matriculation [the learners] can help us introducing new techniques and innovations [to] increase the productivity [land] and making more money from their*

existing farms. Instead, they [the learners] preferred office/clerical jobs with less salary in the town (Interview with Parents 2007)."

Responding to the potential of agriculture sector as a means of economic production in the area, one of the school principals noted:

"*There is a lot of potential in terms of land cultivation in this area. If I can get good support from the government, I am more than happy to leave my job and start cultivating the land* (source: interview with the school principal 2007)."

7.3.4 Decentralizing schools through School Governing Bodies (SGBs): a contrasting reality

In addition to lack of resources, a sense of isolation, low quality of education and lack of relevance of education to the rural communities, another policy-related concern is the decentralization of the schools through School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The SGB were introduced to increase the local control over the schools. However, it appeared that it did not help the local communities to gain control of the schools and to make key decisions. For example, some members of the SGB, who were also present in the focus group discussion, observed:

"*We know that in our school the problem is with the management and teachers. But we cannot do anything. We do not have any control over them. It is the Department of Education that has to make decision* (Focus Group Discussion with Parents 2007)."

Similarly, in another school, some members of the SGB observed:
"*We do not control funds. Most of the funds come directly from the Department to the school. However, the school principal in every meeting reports to us about the school. We have full faith in the school principal. He and his staff are doing a great job. Our job at the SGB is to provide full support to them* (Interview with parents 2007)."

The dominance of the school over the SGB and parents was also evident from the school-parent meeting in which I was present. The meeting was scheduled and called by the school to hand-over the already established admission and school policy to the

parents. After the meeting, the principal said to me: "*Since most of the parents are illiterate, we have to tell them each and every thing. Even then, when the new session will start they will complain that the school did not inform them the new deadlines and changes in the policies* (my field notes 2007)."

The above findings corroborate what other scholars (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Harley & Wedekind, 2004) observe about how the local control of the schools ('local governance') and the new curriculum/policies have different consequences for the rural and urban schools. Fiske and Ladd (2004) observe that the policy of local control has been manipulated differently in rural schools and urban schools. In rural schools, on the one hand, the principals/school staff dominates the SGBs, representing the poor and illiterate communities. On the other hand, in formerly white schools, the SGBs, representing well off and educated communities, dominate the schools. The SGBs in white and privileged schools are in a position to safeguard the interests of their communities and exclude others through excessive school fee and admission policy. This policy, on one hand, stratifies the schools on the basis of social class and race and, on the other hand, it helps the school to generate additional funds. For instance, the authors, citing the data from the two South African provinces, observe that the fees charged in the black schools constitute only 1% of the schools' revenue, which can only allow them to hire a fifth of an additional teacher. In contrast, the funds generated through fees in formally white schools constitute 54% of the school's total revenue, and which allows the school to hire at least four additional well-qualified teachers. Similarly, Harley and Wedekind (2004) observe that the new curriculum (C2005) which was designed with a transformative note has ended up as a political tool rather than a pedagogical tool. The results of C2005 are uneven. It widened the inequalities between the historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged communities. The affluent communities with more socio-economic resources found it easy to implement, and it helped them to formalize their long-standing practices. The historically disadvantaged communities, though welcoming the C2005 with great enthusiasm, fell short to get the benefits of the curriculum because of the lack of resources, poor infrastructure, unqualified teachers, large class size, and lack of teacher training.

7.4   Discussion

This chapter reports on the broader impact of the partnership project. It starts with shedding light on how the three years of the journey, which started in 2007, improved over time as per the feedback of the student teachers and the schools, an important component of the participatory evaluation. The evaluation of each phase of the RTEP, especially the involvement of the schools provided them with the opportunity to raise their concerns, question the notion of the partnership and helped the RTEP to understand the schools' perspective and to address them in the subsequent phases. In terms of a partnership between schools and the university, the chapter also points out the complexity of dealing with three different schools in relation to their participation and gaining the benefits from the partnership. The evidence from RTEP that the partnership influences each of the three schools in a very different way is an indication that a partnership is essentially an organizational arrangement and is greatly influenced by what different partner organizations brings to the partnership. The school, which already has what constitutes a good reputation, appears to gain the most. The school's skilful leaders graciously accepted whatever is offered to them, and successfully influenced the partnership in order to address some of its needs. The other school, which was struggling with various issues, including lack of commitment of its leadership from the beginning appeared to gain less. However, the realization of the need for the school as well as the involvement of the Department of Education through this partnership to look at the school's state of affairs more closely is an encouraging step, whose consequences are yet to come. The case of the third school which was only involved in the first year highlights the importance of strong communication and resolving the issues in a timely manner in the partnership. Furthermore, it also indicates that regardless of how participatory or responsive a school-university partnership might be, the university is a dominant partner and holds the key to taking critical decisions. The chapter also documents the impact of 'Communities of Practice' on four beginning teachers more broadly, now that they are teaching in different South African schools. Though they have been trying to apply the learning that they gained from RTEP in real settings, the unequal context and lack of enabling socio-economic and political environment are affecting their capabilities. This

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leads to another dimension of the South African Education system, which is intricately linked with the historically created urban/rural disparities and the inability of the post-apartheid regime to address them properly. The factors that affect the quality of education, the isolation of the schools from mainstream education, the lack of relevance of the curriculum/education system to the local conditions in the rural schools, and the policy of decentralizing schools with different consequences in rural areas are just a few of the indicators which point out the complexity of the notion of education development in rural areas in South Africa.

In this context, a key question for teacher education institutions and HEIs is what is the impact of small projects designed with good intentions in an overall broader socio-political environment which is not supportive? Though it is argued that the schools in the rural areas have to be seen beyond the 'deficiency framework' (DoE, 2005b; Pennefather, 2008) and indeed framed within an asset-based approach[5] (See De Lange, Bhana, Balfour, Buthelezi, Mitchell, Moletsane, Pillay, Stuart & Wedekind (2006)), the sad reality is that the deficiencies are inherently linked with the system and are profoundly affecting the rural areas. Before moving away from the deficiency framework, it is important to examine why schools in the rural areas are deficient. Who made them deficient? Why have the deficiencies not been eradicated even after 16 years of a post-apartheid era. Thus, a key challenge for HEIs in South Africa is to consider the cumulative effect of their efforts with respect to broader socio-economic divides in South Africa, which are heavily tilted toward a specific class. Does their work run the risk of becoming a conduit to reproducing the same social patterns that have entrenched the inequalities or does it have potential to radically challenge and alter the dominant discourse? This is an important question that UKZN and other HEIs need to examine.

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[5] The asset-based approach is central to 'Every Voice Counts' project. The project has identified five study areas: i) Reflexive methodologies in studying teachers' lives; ii) School leadership and management; iii) Voices of young people; iv) Teachers and communities addressing gender violence; and Partnerships and v) Pedagogies in preparing new teachers within teaching and learning. These study areas were regarded as critical if schools are to make a difference in the lives of children and young people in rural areas in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Chapter 8   'Learning from doing': summary, conclusions and pathways for further research

8.0   Introduction

In this thesis, I argue two things. First, the experience of RTEP shows that school-university partnerships can offer broader opportunities for learning in teacher education by providing spaces to the student teachers to emerge as 'Communities of Practice' along with the school community. In the case of RTEP, the student teachers along with in-service teachers within the broader social context of the historically disadvantaged rural schools created a deeper insight, which influenced the professional development, inspired the professional identities of the student teachers, and provided the opportunity to in-service teachers to reflect upon themselves. RTEP provided the student teachers an opening to negotiate and contest what Terrance Carson called 'authoritative discourses' (Carson, 2009, p 351). Comprising university courses, subject areas, teaching standards, and the discourses of veteran teachers, the 'authoritative discourses' shape teachers' identities and influence them to take a particular orientation about teaching (Carson, 2009). Further, my thesis also illustrates that the teachers in the rural schools have been working in an unequal socio-economic context compared to historically advantaged schools. Having said that, I also argue that a teacher's work is situated in the broader domain of society. No matter how much they are prepared, their capabilities, identities, emotions and morale are all influenced by the socio-political and economic environment where they work. Without addressing the broader environment and translating successful actions into applicable policy formation, even good efforts and initiatives may fizzle out before making a larger impact.

Second, I also assert that doing a participatory evaluation to assess the partnership can help the partners improve the partnership, especially within the perspectives of the schools. Though the relationship remains unequal, the partnership can be made mutually beneficial through reciprocal assessment. However, some critical questions to be asked here include the following: How can such partnerships become agents of change with respect to South African divided social order? How can an unequal broader socio-political and economic context be challenged and altered through collaborative work?

The findings of the thesis evolved from a participatory evaluation of the *Rural Teacher Education Project* (RTEP), piloted in 2007 and replicated in 2008 and 2009. The RTEP is one of the five components of a school-university partnership, involving the two rural schools in the rural district of Vulindlela in the province of KwaZulu-Natal and the Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal. Each year, several cohorts of 3rd and 4th year student teachers were sent to the two rural schools for a four-week teaching practicum and research. The student teachers lived together, were involved in action research, conducted extracurricular activities, and performed their teaching practicum in the two rural schools.

The final chapter starts with a summary of the findings followed by a discussion on the implications of the research and contribution to the knowledge. The chapter then revisits the notion of 'Communities of Practice' (CoP) in the light of the RTEP's experience in the third section. In this section, I also discuss participatory evaluation and preparation of teachers in rural settings in the light of this study. The fourth section covers a reflection on my role in evaluation and the fifth section outlines the limitations of the study. Finally, the thesis ends by suggesting areas of further research and making recommendations for the RTEP management and the Faculty of Education at UKZN.

8.1 Summarizing the findings

Given the complexity of partnerships and the apartheid legacy, particularly as outlined in chapter one, it is important to investigate a school-university partnership in the rural areas with a methodology which brings deep and inclusive insights, multiple realities and, more importantly, an improved way of moving forward. Thus, the study used a two-stage model based on participatory evaluation. In the first stage, the student teachers conducted action research through interviews and observations. In the second stage, the evaluation was extended to the schools and the RTEP staff. Each year, the second stage was started after a gap of 4-8 weeks of the completion of the teaching practicum to ensure that participants have ample time after their participation to reflect back upon their experience. Several methods of data collection, for example, short participatory workshops, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, student teacher reflective journals, and formal & informal meetings were used. The data was analyzed

using 'abductive research' to generate new ideas by going beyond data to exploratory framework (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and a 'constant comparison method' to illustrate different themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data was triangulated using both 'methodological' as well as 'data' triangulation techniques.

The findings of the evaluation brought forward the viewpoints of the three main participants of RTEP: the student teachers, the schools and the UKZN. Also, parents, local activists and concerned staff from the local department of education were also consulted to understand the local issues and to get their feedback about the project in 2007. Similarly, the learners at the schools were also contacted during the second stage of evaluation in 2008 to get their responses about RTEP. As mentioned above, the school-university partnership provided the opportunity for the cohorts, in-service teachers and the RTEP coordinators to emerge as a CoP, which helped the members to create new learning. Situated within the broader schools' social environments, the learning developed through testing new things, taking risks, challenging and negotiating the dominant discourses, and witnessing the emotions of hope and fear. The learning helped the student teachers to critically reflect upon their beliefs and start thinking about their identities, as teachers, and the role they could play with respect to giving hope and making a difference in the rural schools. The CoP helped the student teachers to discover a sense of purpose and the broader role of teachers— something which goes beyond the classroom practices—in their social contact with the learners formally as well as informally. The CoP also influenced the broader learning and teaching environment at the school, though the change was short-lived and disappeared once the cohorts departed back to the university, leaving in question of longevity of such initiatives, although it is not something that is easily assessed.

At the same time, the principal and teachers reported that the partnership helped teachers as well as schools. The participatory evaluation of the first phase of RTEP helped the partners to negotiate the goals of the partnership and to make it more meaningful for the schools and the teachers. Through the partnership, the schools got the opportunities of in-service professional development, improving their technological infrastructure, and developing linkages with the line agencies and other departments. Since the schools were very different in their performance and reputation, the benefits of

the partnership also varied accordingly and the schools' leadership played an important role in making the best out of the partnership. The partnership also helped the RTEP/UKZN to extend its research niche areas and teaching practicum to the rural schools, and to increase its understanding of the teacher education with relation to broader issues in rural schools. In terms of teacher education at UKZN, the cohorts of student teachers noticed that while at their courses in B.Ed programs they never realized how teaching and learning was so different in the rural areas. They also challenged the dominant discourses about teaching and learning in the rural schools, the significance of the modules and classroom practices at the Faculty of Education/UKZN for teacher preparation in accordance with the schools in the rural areas, and the relevance of the curriculum.

The RTEP and the associated CoP also exposed the broader challenges related to the socio-economic and political context, especially related to the globalization discourse within the South African context. The deep inequalities in the rural schools reaffirmed that despite the 16 years of transformation, the opportunities created in the post-apartheid era have different consequences for the rural communities. The rural schools seemed to be isolated and education appeared to be irrelevant to the local communities. The parents complained that their children are neither proficient in English nor in the local language. Further, they are also concerned about what they perceived to be a heightened focus on 'urbanization', where learners, after matriculation, prefer to move to towns for trivial jobs without exploring the local opportunities.

Tracing the 'after-life' of four student teachers: *Thandi, Bongani, Ayanda* and *Brad* who have started their teaching careers, intensified the concerns related to persistent inequities. While it is encouraging that all the four former student teachers thought that their RTEP participation helped them significantly in doing their actual teaching tasks, the differences in the context revealed a sharp variation in their work and emotions. On the one hand, *Thandi, Bongani and Ayanda*, three former student teachers who are working in rural areas and township schools have been facing the challenges of a lack of resources and an unsupportive environment in their schools. Thus, their focus is on the struggle to organize basic literacy amidst frustration and loss of hope. On the other hand,

Brad, who has been teaching in a private and privileged school, is striving to give excellence to the learners in a style amongst an environment full of fun and innovation.

8.2   Contribution to new knowledge

The findings from *New teachers for new times* contribute to several bodies of knowledge: learning through 'communities of practice' in work with pre-service teachers in a rural under-serviced context, and the area of participatory evaluation itself.

8.2.1   Communities of practice and pre-service teacher education

The whole area of CoPs that emerged from the school-university partnership is a relatively new within the South African teacher education. South African policies are often criticized for borrowing many of its policies from elsewhere (Kallaway, et al., 1997). However, the present model of school-university partnership through RTEP has much to offer to others.

First, placing cohorts through school-university partnership in the rural schools helped the cohorts to emerge as a CoP in the real social context. The knowledge produced through CoP profoundly influenced the cohorts' judgments about teaching in the rural areas, identity creation and professional development. The CoP provided the cohorts a new insight into the schools in rural areas as a desirable place to teach and work despite all of the socio-economic challenges. The insight is based upon the firm self-realization that the new teachers have a responsibility to contribute to redressing the past as well as on the conviction that they can make a difference in the lives of the learners, who are capable and responsive, but lack opportunities. This has a serious implication not only to South Africa, which is currently struggling to retain teachers and attract new educators, but also to other countries or regions that have been facing similar challenges.

Second, this study demonstrates that professional learning in teacher education through CoP transcends the narrowly conceived traditional models of learning, which as observed by Buysee, Sparkman & Welsey (2003) "an isolated activity in which an individual acquires knowledge from a decontextualized body of knowledge" (cited by Yildirim, 2008, p. 236). The learning coming out of CoP through social interaction with the members of the community and within the broader environment

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enhances the traditional relationship between mentors and mentees. The CoP provides a milieu representing different players, including mentors, mentees, schools, society, learners and others, and a dynamic environment wherein the learning becomes a continuous process driven by the forces of reflection and learning from others. As Lave (1988) says "*everyday practice is a more powerful source of socialization than intentional pedagogy* (cited by Hara, 2009, p. 117)." Most of the student teacher learning in RTEP occurred outside the formal spaces of learning i.e. informal interaction with the learners, school staff and with the fellow student teachers and from the environment where the schools are situated. This is in contrast from many dominant models of the practicum in teacher education programs, which are either criticized for narrowly focused classroom practices or the application of skills learned from the university into schools, leaving no room for learning from the broader social context (Schulz, 2005).

Third, one of the reasons for the failure of the school-university partnership is cited as either because they are too vague or ambitious (Campoy, 2002; Sandholtz, 2002). RTEP, in contrast, started with a modest objective—to identify research niche areas with respect to making teacher education relevant to the schools in rural areas, and to arrange a teaching practicum in real social setting. As the project grew, the relationships between the partners started to improve. Simultaneously, the needs and the expectations of the partners, especially from the schools, started to emerge. Since the expectations emerged during the process, they were perhaps more realistic than the traditional approaches to needs assessment. Also, the flexibility and the lack of strict technical specifications to control the partnership and the evaluation have made the experience broader and more reflective. For example, though the student teachers consistently reported that they were often left alone at schools with no extensive support from the RTEP's management, such arrangement, in fact, provided them with the opportunity to struggle and learn from each other. Similarly, no strict 'dos and don'ts' were handed to the schools, which in turn gave them the room to situate themselves in the project and to devise their own ways to participate in the partnership.

Finally, the RTEP experience and the subsequent participatory evaluation did not limit itself to the programmatic concerns of RTEP and teacher education, but it also exposed the flaws, which are directly linked with the performance and morale of teachers

in rural areas in the overall education system. Without addressing the acute socio-economic differences between rural and urban schools, it would be naïve to think that quality teachers can continue to work in the rural schools. Thus, it is important that HEIs and faculties of education need to re-visit their existing policies and practices with a focus on what they could do in addressing the broader issues of social development.

The study also contributes to the conceptualizations of Communities of practice. As mentioned earlier, the term CoP originated to help novices to learn from the experienced members of the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Later, Wenger (1998) refined the concept and focused more on the duality of participation. However, Wenger's most recent work (see Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002), is focused more on 'cultivating' and 'nurturing' CoP with the help of facilitators and consultants. This radically different stance from what Lave and Wenger (1991) initially suggested has been criticized on the grounds of making the CoP a tool of knowledge management using top-down approaches. My study tends to disagree that CoP can be nurtured through facilitators or consultants and the main learning in the CoP only comes from the interaction with the experienced members of CoP. In the case of RTEP, the student teachers in the CoP did not accept the membership of the external facilitators. Though the student teachers appreciated the coordination and valued them as a source of learning new cultures, the contribution of the external facilitators in creating common knowledge was not recognized by the student teachers. Similarly, it is not only veteran teachers who were the source of learning, but also novice teachers provided the opportunity to the veteran teachers to see themselves through the lens of novices. As discussed earlier, the passion, skills and innovation that the student teachers brought with them inspired many of the veteran teachers. Furthermore, the experience of RTEP also elucidated that peer-to-peer interaction is a powerful source of fostering learning in CoP. The knowledge created through mutual interactions between the student teachers while living and working together impinge the perceptions, attitudes, and reflexivity of many of the student teachers. Finally, the informal interactions between the CoP members and with the broader school environment also seemed to be a powerful source of learning. For example, the informal interactions with the in-service teachers, in which the student teachers observed them doing pastoral work or brutally beating the learners, and fixing

the school windows in their free time or sitting under the sun on cold mornings in winter while leaving the pupils stranded in the classrooms made a great impact towards generating emotionally-motivated learning.

The group dynamics within the 'communities of practice' play a key role in the success, failure and effectiveness of the CoP, an area that has not been explicitly attended to in the literature on CoPs. The tensions among race, culture, social class, and language play a crucial role in shaping the group dynamics. As evident in this study, the lack of social capital hampers some student teachers from gaining the most from the CoP. Similarly, the patterns of social assembly within CoP on the basis of race and ethnicity were also noticed. As observed by the project coordinators, white student teachers tended to fraternize with other white student teachers, and black student teachers felt more comfortable with black student teachers. Even in the second stage of evaluation the same pattern was observed when white student teachers came together and sat together in focus group discussions and workshops and, similarly, black student teachers also preferred to remain in their social spaces marked by their racial background. How this pattern of social assembly has affected the CoP requires a more careful investigation as my involvement only in the second stage of the evaluation did not allow me to witness and fully observe how racial patterns shape the dynamics of CoP. However, what is evident so far is that despite the fact that the learning occurred in the CoP was commonly shared by all ethnicities and races, a major difference was observed in the creation of professional identity on the basis of this learning. The black students were more enthusiastic and inspired to teach in the rural areas after their graduation than the other groups. This was further confirmed when *Bongani* and *Ayanda*, the two black student teachers, informed me that they were in touch with most of the black student teachers in their cohorts and all of them were teaching in rural and township schools. On the other hand, Brad, a white student teacher, informed me that all white student teachers (himself included) from his cohort were either teaching in South African urban schools or went abroad to teach. In relation to South Africa, this model of association is in line with what Jonathan Jansen (2009) observes in relation to the patterns of socialization on the basis of race and ethnicity. As he writes:

"*If there is one thing therefore that can be said about schools and universities in South Africa, it is that they are legally desegregated but socially segregated spaces. One reason for these stubborn patterns of racial association is that at the level of teachers and leaders, the same trends are to be observed; in other words, there is no adult modeling of alternative ways of being together among those deemed to be different* (p 136)."

CoP has the potential to strongly influence the impoverished local context. However, the complexities arise in sustaining the influence. In the case of RTEP, the CoP brings resources at least in terms of human capital comprised of young, energetic and skillful cohorts with a strong backing from the project coordinators, RTEP staff and the university for a period of one month. The influx of unprecedented resources within the context of historically ignored and disadvantaged schools in the rural areas has greatly enriched the entire environment in and around the schools. All of a sudden, the teaching and learning environment at the schools changed. Learners were observed to be more engaged with the qualified, disciplined and committed 'strangers' in an environment that seldom witnesses such an experience. Even some in-service teachers bought into being part of a 'community of practice' by disciplining themselves and changing their attitudes, though for a short time. The influence was so visible that even the parents and the local Department of Education noticed the difference. However, as the cohorts departed, the impact of CoP on the broader environment has also started to dissipate. In a sense, things get worse when the locale realized its deficiencies due to the new exposure, but lacked means to improve the deficiencies. Thus, it remains a challenge in the CoP as to how to sustain the impact that it will create on a larger social environment, which is under resourced and impoverished. It is therefore important that the 'community of practice' in teacher education with respect to schools be linked to long-term relationships between the schools and HEIs. Similarly, mutual strategies have to be devised to empower the local community so that they can address some of the deficiencies. This could help to minimize the negative implications of the 'community of practice' on a less powerful environment.

It is also important to explore the larger impact of 'community of practice' on individual members once they are separated from the cohort. Through cohesion, stability

and interdependence of the RTEP's 'community of practice', the student teachers while working together overcome many challenges and influence the broader environment. However, it is important to investigate more broadly how the pre-service teachers addressed those challenges once they left the RTEP's CoP. The case of the four former RTEP participants, who were contacted during the course of this study, is an entry point to investigate the effects on the members once separated from the CoP. Thus, more research is needed to understand the full scope of CoP, for example, how a CoP, when emerging in a supportive environment through school-university partnership, is different from a CoP emerging through indigenous efforts of teachers themselves.

8.2.2 Participatory Evaluation

As noted in Chapter Three, the area of participatory evaluation is one that is very complex. While this study is far from conclusive in terms of how best to ensure an approach that is fully participatory and engaging of all players, it goes some way to exposing some of the challenges and critically, some of the benefits. Within the discourse of school-university partnership, this study shows that school-university can be mutually beneficial if it is assessed reciprocally. Participatory evaluation can help the partners to understand each other's expectations, build trust and negotiate the goals and the processes of the partnership. It is important, however, that the evaluation or assessment, ideally at the formative stage, should be done with the flexibility to alter or adjust the partnership according to the will of partners. It is often feared that evaluating the partnerships, especially the diverse partnerships can harm the relationship by exposing the weaknesses, which can result in ending the relationship prematurely. But the case of RTEP shows that the weaknesses in the partnership if exposed in the formative stage can also provide an opportunity to address them and make the partnership stronger.

At the same time, Participatory Evaluation, not unlike the various manifestations of Participatory Research is an area that is far from 'neat and tidy'. There is a considerable literature, as shown in the previous chapters, about how 'participation' needs to be organized and what counts 'authentic' participation in evaluation. However, where I struggled in my work and what I regard as a contribution to the emerging body of work in this area relates to how to organize an 'authentic' participation when the participants do

not want to participate fully in the process of evaluation. For example, I was unable to secure full participation from any of the participants during the entire process of evaluation. It is not because the participants did not value evaluation; it was due to the fact that they all were so occupied and involved in other immediate tasks that they barely had time to devote themselves to the entire intensive process of participatory evaluation. In some cases, I even struggled to set up meetings with the student teachers, principals and the school staff. Even when the meetings were set-up through mutual consent, some of the participants did not show up and the meetings had to be re-scheduled. Apart from few student teachers who went to the schools with me, most of the student teachers preferred to meet once or twice in private or in groups on campus. The case of a school staff was even more challenging as it was hard to meet with the teachers after regular school hours, as they had to catch transportation on their way home. Though I also offered them the possibilities of meeting anywhere anytime at their convenience and choice, they preferred to meet only at schools during a regular lunch break.

All my meetings with the teachers, including the focus group discussion were carried out during the lunch break. As discussed in Chapter Four, I tackled the challenge by extending my role as a coordinator who constantly remained in touch with the participants, keeping them abreast of the process, preliminary analysis, findings and recommendation of the evaluation. Though it is not an ideal situation to do a participatory evaluation, it however, did not exclude anyone from the evaluation. Furthermore, it also provided them an opportunity to get engaged in the process as they could.

The participatory evaluation, sometimes, limited the knowledge as per the issues raised by the groups regardless of how deep they are. For example, some groups of student teachers were more concerned with the issues of food, accommodation, administrative support, and doing their 'practicum for the sake of practicum' during the evaluation than the learning they gained from their experience. Their observations with some of these issues, arguably of key concern because they addressed the basic needs, which got in the way of some student teachers to reflect critically upon their experiences and the broader issues in the group settings. However, it also made the facilitation even more challenging and required extra effort to navigate around the different ideas to capture all aspects of evaluation.

I mention these points because they highlight some of the dimensions that need to be built into any study using Participatory Evaluation. Much of the literature on Participatory Research, especially PAR speaks to issues of power, but the element of engagement and commitment amidst competing demands is also critical. In the case of RTEP, the practicum is just one component of the life of a pre-service teacher and takes place over 4 weeks for each of the 4 years of the Bachelor of Education program. For the teachers and principals the bulk of their professional lives are not built around a four-week practicum for beginning teachers. Rather, as noted in Chapter Five and Six, there are some key areas of concern, ranging from ensuring that hungry learners are fed to ensuring that grade 12 students pass the Matric exam. An important element of the design of Participatory Evaluation is to build in realistic goals and expectations. It is probably only in the life of the person conducting the study (in this case, me) that there is a '24/7' concern.

8.2.3 Preparation of teachers for rural settings

The issue of place itself – particularly rurality – is of course a key aspect of the study, and the thesis contributes to the under-studied area of teacher education in preparing new teachers for working in rural places. In this respect the study is located in what Theobald (1997) and Gruenewald (2003) amongst others refer to as place-conscious education, a movement that seeks to challenge the idea of 'placeless' education. Applied to the preparation of new teachers, this is a relatively new area. Indeed, as Kelly (2008) and Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008) observe, rurality and education in rural settings is a much neglected area of study. Barter (2008) highlights the fact that the bulk of research in the area of teacher preparation focuses on urban education (or perhaps 'placeless' education), and relatively little is known about the training of new teachers for work in remote and rural contexts. In drawing on the narratives of beginning teachers experiencing education in rural settings, often for the time, my study illustrates some of the issues of local development in relation to becoming a teacher in rural areas. For some, teaching in rural schools was attractive and for others it was not that attractive. For some, the experience of teaching in rural schools has profoundly influenced their professional identity, preparation and beliefs and for others it was not that intense. The importance of

engaging pre-service teachers in rural schools is particularly critical with respect to the fact that teachers have a pivotal role in delivering quality education, a fundamental right for all learners irrespective of their geographical location. Many of the new teachers who participated in the study were from cities and were urban-centric in their philosophy and training, and initially lacked the awareness and skills needed to teach in rural schools. In relation to this, a key area as pointed out in this study is how and what schools in rural areas can contribute to teacher education discourses in South Africa, which are largely urban-centric.

The thesis, then adds another dimension to the small but growing body of place-based literature in education that includes rurality as one aspect of place. Earlier work (see for example, Gordon, 1999) in the context of South Africa has considered such issues as the quality of education in rural settings, especially farm schools (or public schools on private property). The work of Corbett (2007) in Canada, and Green (2008) in Australia considers how rural schooling extends the educational and mobility aspirations of students and enhances their ability to negotiate with multiple social spaces in and around rural schools. Letts, Novak, Gottschall, Green, & Meyenn (2005) in particular note that rural schools are diverse places for learning, rather than places that are either 'too homogenized' or 'too difficult' to learn, teach and live. Clearly there is much more to be done but in a country like South Africa with its extensive rural population, further work in this area is central to the transformation in an 'education for all' framework.

8.3   Where am I in the evaluation? A self-reflection on my role

"*Knowing more about ourselves as teachers and teacher educators [and researchers] changes us, provokes growth, jolts us out of complacency-- sometimes radically, in ways that can seem transformative* (Lincoln and Denzin cited in Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber, 2009 p, 48)."

Self-study and learning from our own teaching and experience is itself a critical area in teaching and in research. Pithouse, Mitchell and Moletsane (2009) highlight the significance of self-study across the professions and throughout the process of research. My involvement in evaluating RTEP also provided me many opportunities for self-reflection. When I arrived in South Africa for the first time in 2007 I struggled with the idea of how I would conduct the evaluation, given that it involved diverse groups of

student teachers, university professors, schoolteachers and school administration. As most professionals might do in this situation, I brought several of the tools that I could use in designing different activities with different groups. As per Robert Chambers (Chambers, 1983) my 'professional biases', comprising my training, values, context and pre-conceived notions of development were about to hinder me in seeing the partnership through the broader vision of the schools and student teachers. However, when I met with the participants, I realized that they already have a wealth of information as well as eagerness to share it, which did not need to be unraveled through fancy tools. I only needed to listen to their viewpoints and concerns about their experience and ideas for advancement, and give them respect. Thus, I tried to "unlearn" and attended to what I could learn from the participants. My experience with impromptu meetings with the student teachers in the corridors of the university or at café and meeting with the school teachers while waiting outside the school principals' office helped me to understand a great deal about RTEP. Similarly, I also realized that participants always reflect upon their experiences whether 'we evaluate' them or not. Though evaluation provided them a formal opportunity to express themselves, it is critically important to acknowledge that the knowledge generated in the evaluation is how the participants wanted to make sense of their work.

Though my Indo-Pak subcontinent roots helped me to develop a mutual trust and a good working relationship with the stakeholders, I facilitated the second stage of the evaluation as an 'outsider' even though South Africa is a multicultural and multiethnic society with a historically vibrant and strong Indian South African community (see Chapter Five). As an 'outsider' in many ways to the project, there were, as I discussed earlier a number of concerns, and I am cognizant of my position, especially in reference to what Jackie Kirk observed as how 'I place myself and am placed by others' (Kirk, 2009, p. 118). Thus, I taught myself to make connections with the participants as much as possible, recognizing their roles, and understanding their version of development in an attempt to offer more than what 'we, the outsiders' usually offer, impeded by our lack of critical self-examination of our practices, values and beliefs. However, I really shared the pride of seeing the replication of RTEP, which was initially piloted for just one year, to a second and third year with much improved relationships with the schools after the

evaluation of the pilot phase.

8.4 Limitations of the study

Throughout the thesis I have hinted it and often elaborated on many of the tensions involved with doing this kind of work. Clearly, there are limitations and I would like to acknowledge some of them more explicitly here as follows:

First, the RTEP is a partnership between the schools and the local university. There is no or little involvement of local activists or the local community in the areas where the schools are located. Apart from a few veteran teachers, the rest of the participants were not from the communities where the schools are situated. Although I interviewed both parents and the local community activists during the evaluation of the first phase (RTEP 2007), no other opportunities were available for the local community and parents to express their viewpoints about teacher education in particular and education in rural areas in general. Given that RTEP is conceived and developed for the schools in the rural areas, the parents or local community have no representation in any development or implementation phase of RTEP.

Second, my initial plan to develop a core research team or group, representing the participants of RTEP i.e. the student teachers, university staff and schools to oversee and be actively involved in all phases of the evaluation did not materialize as none of the partners were able to spare time and resources due to their varied interests and time constraints. Thus, the engagement of the participants in the evaluation is limited to their self-identified roles in the evaluation as discussed in Chapter Five.

Third, although RTEP was initiated by a group of senior academicians and administrators at the Faculty of Education at UKZN, it is not a partnership formally initiated by the office of Dean or a similar ranked office at the Faculty of Education at UKZN. However, more and more teaching and administrative staff from the university is becoming involved in the RTEP over time. In 2009, various faculty members along with the Dean of the Faculty of Education visited the schools and some of them evaluated the teaching practicum. Similarly, the Dean of the Faculty of Education addressed the international symposium, *Every Voice Counts: Critical Partnerships for Teacher Education and Rural Communities,* held February 26-27, 2009 in Durban and highlighted the importance of RTEP.

8.5   Where to go from here: some pathways in moving forward

I now suggest some areas for further research and make recommendations to improve the partnership.

8.5.1 Recommendations for RTEP

First, it is important to assess the impact of the partnership project at the end of RTEP. As evident in this thesis, the partnership has made an impression on all participants, but it has not yet fully explored how the benefits will be sustained over time. In terms of the cohorts, it is important to explore how they have applied their experience from RTEP into the real settings of teaching. A longitudinal tracking study to observe and document what difference the project has made on the student teachers over time can make RTEP as well as teacher education more compatible to the grounded realities. Similarly, it is also important to investigate how the partnership has helped the two schools to maintain any of the benefits that it brought to the schools. The case of *Ginyane High School* is even more important as it is trying to emerge as a fully functional school from the state of dysfunctionality and has sought UKZN's support in this regard.

Second, a more critical area for further investigation is to ascertain what this project means to teacher education in relation to schools in rural areas. Is it just a project, like many others that have been piloted and subsequently replicated in two consecutive years in two rural schools through a small team of UKZN or does it have any broader implications? How will the Faculty of Education at UKZN embrace the experience? And what changes will come in the practices and responses of the Faculty of Education at UKZN in relation to the schools in rural areas in the light of this experience? These are some key questions that need to be explored. Though the RTEP team has started to advocate for more rural experiences for beginning teachers at the Faculty level by organizing seminars and symposia and arranging field visits for the Faculty and the Department of Education, more efforts are needed to advocate and disseminate the work. It is important that the lessons learnt from the partnership and the issues that have been identified through RTEP be genuinely reflected in the policies of teacher education at UKZN.

Third, the experiment of the RTEP has improved the partnership between the implementing team and the schools. The relationship between the two partners (i.e. UKZN/RTEP and the schools) has been improving. It is important that the project should continue in order to sustain some of the benefits as mentioned by the schools during the evaluation. This will help the schools to take ownership of some of the initiatives and take advantage of the partnerships in a more meaningful way. There is a need to involve the schools in the programmatic planning of the RTEP more closely. Though consultations were made with the schools on a regular basis, the schools can be involved more deeply in designing the RTEP activities. This will also help the schools to start analyzing the RTEP more critically in general and in relation to teacher education in particular.

Fourth, strong mechanisms should be devised to promptly act and resolve disputes quickly during the practicum. For example, the ending of the partnership with the third school due to the lack of communication must be avoided. Though that incident happened in the very first year of the RTEP when the relationships between the two partners were just starting to evolve and since then the relationship has developed significantly, it is still suggested that the RTEP management should look back and closely review their communication mechanisms with the other two schools.

Fifth, there is also a need to examine the involvement of outside coordinators in administrating/ coordinating the project. Though student teachers appreciated their commitment and the value that they brought in the project, they never get recognition as members of the CoP despite the fact that coordinators were of the same age and were themselves graduate students. Similarly, concerns were also raised by some student teachers about their sensitization to the South African history and culture.

Sixth, the three years of RTEP has helped the two partners build trust, open up their relationships, and to understand each other's role; it is now time to explore more broadly how the partnership can contribute to addressing the deeper challenges related to teacher education and rural development. Perhaps, conducting evaluation, ideally from someone who understands the local language, isiZulu at the time when the student teachers were doing their practicum can enrich the evaluation through more in-depth and direct analysis of the partnership and its relationship with the student teachers, school teachers, schools

and the local community. Although the past three evaluations of RTEP were conducted by separating the second stage of the evaluation from the first stage, which has its own advantages, the next evaluation of RTEP, if it continues, can be done along with the first stage. Further, this can make the entire evaluation even more participatory as the participants may have more time to contribute to the evaluation as it goes along with the practicum and to take ownership pro-actively.

Finally, RTEP is a partnership between the university and the schools with no involvement of the local community. In the absence of the local community, it is hard to transform the schools or teacher education as per local needs. There is a need to extend the partnership by involving appropriate genuine local civil society organization and/or social networks with the opportunity to lead the process. Many of the problems in the schools (for example, the issues of sexual harassment or corporal punishment or turning a dysfunctional school into an effective seat of learning) can be better addressed through the involvement of local social organization in the partnership. This will also help the partnership to flourish and sustain many of the benefits in genuinely created localized ways. For example, one of the local activists informed me that in a nearby rural area, the local organizations have found the ways to work with the schools to address the gender violence and corporal punishment. Similarly, Mindry (2008) observes that many small, local organizations in KwaZulu-Natal are working in their own communities to address various developmental and social issues, including HIV and AIDS. These organizations have developed successful engagements with the local governments and fostered alliances with other NGOs and researchers.

8.5.2 Recommendations for the Faculty of Education, UKZN and other faculties of education for teacher education

The post-apartheid South Africa education system has gone through major transformation in terms of policies, institutions and structures. However, the benefits of the transformation have not been fully reached to the schools in the rural areas. Thus, I would like to suggest the following recommendations for the Faculty of Education at UKZN and other Faculties of Education more broadly:

First, there is a need to revisit the ongoing teaching practicum and the way it is implemented. While the teaching practicum is an integral part of teacher education, it appeared that the schools in rural areas do not usually receive placements. The student teachers should be encouraged to take their teaching practicum in rural schools. The idea of sending the student teachers for teaching practicum in cohorts has worked well in RTEP in terms of developing self-mechanisms of share and support in the challenging context. The Faculty of Education may examine the possibilities of sending the student teachers for teaching practicum in small cohorts with opportunities for the cohorts to share and learn from each other's and to develop a 'community of practice' to enhance their learning.

Second, there is an urgent need to address the issues of qualifications and competencies of the in-service teachers in rural areas. Many of the in-service teachers lack appropriate training and professional development opportunities, and are under qualified to meet the demands of the new standards as pointed out in the working document of the recent Teacher's Development Summit (2009), which says "*a large number of serving teachers are not fully qualified (in terms of current requirements), and unqualified teachers continue to be employed, especially in rural schools, which exacerbates the already existing inequities in the system* (p 1)." Since RTEP is focused on pre-service teacher education, opportunities for similar professional development should also be provided to in-service teachers. Though this might be the responsibility of the Department of Education, the Faculties of Education need to find ways to draw the attention of DoE and work with them toward this important area. The lack of qualified in-service teachers at schools can also affects the performance of the newly graduated teachers, for whom the Faculties of Education are responsible.

Third, RTEP intervention has exposed the omissions in existing teacher education practices in relation to the challenges and issues of the schools in rural areas. The discrepancies are not only related to the relevance of the teacher education, but also how teachers are prepared. One reason for such a discrepancy is that educators/academicians who are responsible for teacher education are not fully aware of the challenges in the rural areas; as one student teacher observed, many of the professors at UKZN had never been to rural areas. This warrants regular and strong linkages between the academics at

Faculty of Education with the schools in rural areas. Perhaps, a CoP between the academics and the in-service teachers of the schools in the rural areas can help the university's staff to directly experience the richness, diversity, challenges and complexity of rural environment. Within such a CoP, the academics can go to schools and work with the schools' teachers in the rural schools. Similarly, the schools' teachers can come to the campuses to share their work and contribute to making teacher education more relevant to the schools' needs. Such strong sustainable and two-way connections between the Faculties of Education and the schools in rural areas can also help the schools to consider themselves as a part of system. Making teacher education flexible and giving more room to the novice teachers to contest and challenge the 'authoritative discourses', as indicated above, can help novice teachers to consider dismantling their existing notions and orientations about teaching and learning, and to open up to the issues of diversity and social justice.

Fourth, in relation to the above, many of the core challenges, for example the inequalities between the rural school and urban schools cannot be addressed through teacher education alone. Even effective teacher education can fall short in addressing the challenges if the broader socio-politico-economic environment is not conducive. The case of the rural schools as well as the experiences of *Thandi, Bongani, Ayanda*, and *Brad*, the four former student teachers who participated in the RTEP and now have been working in different schools, suggest the complexity of teacher education and the performance of the teachers if they work in unequal contexts. The project-based solutions to address the deep inequalities cannot yield the desired impact (Stromquist, 2005). It is an illusion to expect that even the provision of equal opportunities of education to all strata of society will lead to the solution of the chronic issues of poverty and underdevelopment of rural areas. Thus, there is a need to reconstruct a developmental model based upon integrated approaches with strong linkages between educational development and related socio-economic development. Stromquist (2005) rightly endorsed a four-step development as:

"*The resolution of inequalities will have to address multiple dimensions. A four-step sequence is proposed by Kliksberg (2001); the physical wellbeing of the poor and their connection to the environment is a fundamental issue to be addressed. Then comes the question of human capital and the strengthening of public schools. Next, explicit steps*

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must be taken to create social capital: partnerships with like-minded groups, participation in social networks, and the generation of confidence and rules for cooperation between citizens. Finally, steps must be taken to create employment (p 32)."

Given that some of the steps might not fall within the ambitions of HEIs, what should HEIs do? The academicians and the HEIs need to realign with civil society movements for shifting the socio-politico and economic dynamics (Currie & Subtozky, 2000; Kotze, 2005; Mindry, 2008; Stromquist, 2005). The HEIs in South Africa have a history of activism, providing sanctuaries for social action, and partnering with the struggle during the time of the anti-apartheid movement (Currie & Subtozky, 2000; Kotze, 2005). The same activism is needed again to change the divided social order. The academicians need to put themselves into practice for critical self-reflection and build the strong linkages with the local activists, community movements and civil society organizations for wider social change.

8.6   Final Reflection

This thesis attempts to understand the role of school-university partnership with respect to the challenges of education in general and teacher education in particular in relation to the rural schools of South Africa. As is obvious in the thesis, the South African education system is at a critical juncture to deliver on its promises related to rural people and in particular to those who are really suffering as a result of poverty and HIV&AIDS. There is still an element of hope, however, as can be seen in the words of this student teacher who observes:

"To me this teaching practice was very helpful there are lots of things that I have learned..... I had learned all the difficulties that most of the teachers are experiencing but for me these are not difficulties, they are challenges and I am just trying to find the solutions to defeat them."

To me, this is what 'new teachers for new times' can mean in the future.

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Appendix I Sample questions for the interviews/ focus group discussions

i.   Interview schedule: student teachers

1. What experiences have you had with the RTEP?

2. What did you like most about the RTEP?

3. What did you NOT like about the RTEP?

4. How the RTEP can be improved?

5. What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the project?

6. What did you learn most from the project?

7. What are the best and worst things you noted in the schools?

8. How satisfied are you with the preparation for the project?

9. How satisfied are you with the support from the RTEP?

10. How satisfied are you with the mentor teachers?

11. How was your experience with the other student teachers and porject coordinators?

12. In relation to the schools in ruaral areas, what are your thoughts about teacher preparation modules or teaching practicum at UKZN?

13. How do you compare your present experience with your previsous teaching practicum experience?

14.   Other comments:

ii.   Interview schedule: school teachers/ principals

1. What experiences have you had with the school-university partnership in general and the RTEP in particular?

2. What did you like the most about the RTEP?

3. What did you NOT like about the RTEP?

4. How the RTEP and the school-university partnership can be improved?

5. What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the project?

6. What were your expectataions from the partnership and were your expecations delivered?

7. What are the challenges of teaching and learning in the schools?

8. How satisfied are you with your role in the project?

9. How satisfied are you with the support from the RTEP team?

10. What is your experience in working with the student teachers?

11.   Other comments:

iii.   Interview schedule: RTEP team

1. What experiences have you had with the school-university partnership in general and the RTEP in particular?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the RTEP?

3. What are the challenges observed in the partnership with the schools?

4. How can the RTEP and the school-university partnership be improved?

5. What are your expectataions from the partnership/ RTEP?

6. How did the partnership establish and what mechamisms are in place to assure the functioning of the partnership?

7. What role did the schools play in designing the partnership/ RTEP project?

8. How satisfied are you with your role in the project?

9. How satisfied are you with the support from the other stakeholders?

10.   Other comments:

iv.   Interview schedule: community activists

1. What kinds of activities are you involved in?

2. What are the issues and challenges in your areas of work?

3. How schools can be linked up with the service delivery opportunities?

4. How community can be involved in the next possible phase of RTEP?

5. How local community can be involved in the school?

v.   Interview schedule: parents

1. What are your expectations from the school in which your children(s) are studying?

2. What are your expectations from the teachers of the school in which your children(s) are studying?

3. What issues and challenges are you facing in the community?

4. What role you can play in the improvement of the school?

5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the school in which your children(s) are studying?

vi.   Interview schedule: representatives from the local department of education

1. What are the issues and challenges that the schools are facing in the district?

2. What are the issues and challenges that the learners are facing in the district?

3. What kind of teachers is needed to teach in the district's schools?

4. How the department can be involved in the next phase of RTEP?

Appendix II   Consent letters

i   Informed Consent Letter for Teachers

Dear Teacher,

RE: Participation in Rural Teacher Education Project

As discussed with your school's SMT, we will be engaging in a pilot project at your school. The title of our project is the RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT (RTEP). The aim of the project is to develop a model for partnerships between higher education (UKZN) and rural schools that will assist schools to address the challenges they face as rural schools and the university to develop appropriate teacher education for teacher trainees.. These include poverty, the impacts of HIV and AIDS, and orphans.

The pilot project will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, a group of student teachers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be brought to do their teaching practice in your school. In addition, we, the researchers, together with the student teachers and two interns (research assistants) will conduct research on:

1. the experiences of the students teachers in the school;
2. your experiences and the challenges you face as teachers in a rural school and the strategies you employ to address them; and
3. the needs of schools in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty and possible strategies for addressing them.

As a participant in the project, we are requesting your participation in the following research activities:

- Classroom observations: We would like to observe you teaching one or two lessons
- Semi structured Interviews: We would like to interview you individually as well as with other participating teachers in your school. The interview questions will focus on the various challenges you (and the school) are facing and the ways in which it addresses them. These will include such issues as:
  - o   HIV and AIDS
  - o   Gender
  - o   Literacy
  - o   Numeracy and
  - o   Rurality
- Photo-voice and video-documentary: With your permission, we will be video-recording your lessons as well as the interviews you will be participating in. In addition, we would like to take photographs in your classroom and in the school. These video recordings will be used to develop a documentary for the project. We will consult you and other participants in the school regarding the development of the documentary, and again before the documentary is finalised.

In the second phase of the project, an external evaluator will be engaged to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot project. On the basis of the evaluation process, as well as the documentation we will be collecting in the first phase of the project, we will develop, together with the school, a comprehensive plan for wider implementation of the successful strategies and models which will have emerged.

We will be making a visit to your school to discuss the various aspects of the project. Should you have any queries regarding the project, we would be glad to answer them on our visit and at any time during the duration of the project. Alternatively, you could contact us on the telephone number supplied at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Professor R Balfour
Professor R Moletsane
Professor C Mitchell

| 3.1 RJ Balfour | 031 260 3138 | Balfourr@ukzn.ac.za | SLLMDE | PhD |

225

3.2 R Moletsane	031 260 1024	Moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za	FACULTY/ SES	PhD
3.3 C Mitchell	031 260 3690	Mitchell@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD

Declaration:

<u>RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT</u>

I………………………………………………………………………….(full names) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that, where possible, my identity will be kept anonymous, but that should this not be possible, I will be fully informed before any data is used by the researchers for any purpose. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE…………………………………………………………………

iii.   Informed Consent: UKZN Student Teachers

Dear Student Teacher,

RE: Participation in Rural Teacher Education Project

You have been selected to participate in RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT (RTEP). As part of your teaching practice you will be stationed at a rural school in the Vulindlela District. As part of this experience, you will also be participating in a variety of research and development (intervention) activities within the scope of the project. The aim of the project is to develop a model for partnerships between higher education (UKZN) and rural schools that will assist schools to address the challenges they face as rural schools and the university to develop appropriate teacher education for teacher trainees. These include poverty, the impacts of HIV and AIDS, and orphans. The pilot project will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, a group of student teachers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be brought to do their teaching practice in your school. In addition, we, the researchers, together with the student teachers and two interns (research assistants) will conduct research on:

1. the experiences of the students teachers in the school;
2. your experiences and the challenges you face as teachers in a rural school and the strategies you employ to address them; and
3. the needs of schools in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty and possible strategies for addressing them.

As a participant in the project, we are requesting your participation in the following research activities:

- Classroom observations: We would like to observe you teaching one or two lessons
- Semi structured Interviews: We would like to interview you individually as well as with other participating teachers in your school. The interview questions will focus on the various challenges you (and the school) are facing and the ways in which it addresses them. These will include such issues as:
    o HIV and AIDS
    o Gender
    o Literacy
    o Numeracy and
    o Rurality
- Reflective journals: We request that you keep your journal and make an entry everyday that you in the school regarding your experiences, your observations of the challenges and the ways in which the school addresses them, etcetera.
- Photo-voice and video-documentary: With your permission, we will be video-recording your lessons as well as the interviews you will be participating in. In addition, we would like to take photographs in your classroom and in the school. These video recordings will be used to develop a documentary for the project. We will consult you and other participants in the school regarding the development of the documentary, and again before the documentary is finalised.

In the second phase of the project, an external evaluator will be engaged to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot project. On the basis of the evaluation process, as well as the documentation we will be collecting in the first phase of the project, we will develop, together with the school, a comprehensive plan for wider implementation of the successful strategies and models which will have emerged.

We will be visiting your school to discuss the various aspects of the project during your four week stay there. Should you have any queries regarding the project, we would be glad to answer them on our visit and at any time during the duration of the project. You will have a Project Coordinator with you should you require any further information. Alternatively, you could contact us on the telephone number supplied at the foot of this letter.

We will be making a visit to the schools to discuss the various aspects of the project and should you have any queries regarding the project, we would be glad to answer them on our visit and at any time during the

duration of the project. Alternatively, you may contact us on the telephone numbers supplied at the foot of this letter.
Yours sincerely,

Professor R Balfour
Professor R Moletsane
Professor C Mitchell

3.1 RJ Balfour	031 260 3138	Balfourr@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD
3.2 R Moletsane	031 260 1024	Moletsaner@ukzn.ac.za	FACULTY/ SES	PhD
3.3 C Mitchell	031 260 3690	Mitchell@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD

Declaration:

<u>RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT</u>

I……………………………………………………………………(full names) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that, where possible, my identity will be kept anonymous, but that should this not be possible, I will be fully informed before any data is used by the researchers for any purpose. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT …………………………………………..

DATE………………………………………………………………………

iv.   Letter of Permission: Principal

The Principal
(Name of School)
Vulindlela District

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: Permission to conduct research at schools

We would like to request your permission to conduct a pilot research project at your school. The title of our project is RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT. The aim of the project is to develop a model for partnerships between higher education (UKZN) and rural schools that will assist schools to address the challenges they face as rural schools and the university to develop appropriate teacher education for rural schools.

The pilot project will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, a group of student teachers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be brought to do their teaching practice in your school. In addition, we, the researchers, together with the student teachers and two interns (research assistants) will conduct research on:

4. the experiences of the students teachers in the school;
5. your experiences and the challenges you face as teachers in a rural school and the strategies you employ to address them; and
6. the needs of schools in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty and possible strategies for addressing them.

The participants (teachers and learners) will be involved in the following research activities:

- Classroom observations: We would like to observe the students teachers' mentors teaching one or two lessons
- Semi structured Interviews: We would like to interview the teachers individually as well as with other participating teachers in your school. The interview questions will last for approximately 1 hour each and will focus on the various challenges the school is facing and the ways in which it addresses them. These will include such issues as:
    - o HIV and AIDS; Gender; Literacy; Numeracy and Rurality
- Photo-voice and video-documentary: With your permission (and that of the teachers, the learners and their parents), we will be video-recording the lessons as well as the interviews they will be participating in. In addition, we would like to take photographs in the classrooms and around the school. These video recordings will be used to develop a documentary for the project. We will consult you and the participants in the school regarding the development of the documentary, and again before the documentary is finalised.

In the second phase of the project, an external evaluator will be engaged to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot project. On the basis of the evaluation process, as well as the documentation we will be collecting in the first phase of the project, we will develop, together with the school, a comprehensive plan for wider implementation of the successful strategies and models which will have emerged.

We will be making a visit to your school to discuss the various aspects of the project. Should you have any queries regarding the project, we would be glad to answer them on our visit and at any time during the duration of the project. Alternatively, you could contact us on the telephone number supplied at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely,
Professor R Balfour
Professor R Moletsane
Professor C Mitchell

3.1 RJ Balfour	031 260 3138	Balfourr@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD
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3.3 C Mitchell	031 260 3690	Mitchell@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD

v.   Informed Consent: Parents

Dear Parent/Guardian

RE: Participation in Rural Teacher Education Project

We would like to introduce ourselves to you. We are Professors Balfour, Moletsane and Mitchell from the University of KwaZulu-Natal and we are running a project in your child's school. The title of our project is RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT or RTEP. As part of our project we would like to involve your child as a participant.

The aim of the project is the following:

- To allow third and fourth year education students to conduct their teaching practice in rural schools.
- To assist schools with dealing with the many social issues in the community, and to bring about change which makes schooling more effective in trying to address social inequalities by helping teachers to better understand their role in the community;
- To assist the university in identifying these issues so that we can develop teacher education programmes that prepare our student teachers to teach in rural schools .

The pilot project will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, a group of student teachers from the University of KwaZulu-Natal will be brought to do their teaching practice in your school. In addition, we, the researchers, together with the student teachers and two interns (research assistants) will conduct research on:

7. the experiences of the students teachers in the school;
8. your experiences and the challenges you face as teachers in a rural school and the strategies you employ to address them; and
9. the needs of schools in the context of HIV/AIDS and poverty and possible strategies for addressing them.

Your child and the teachers will be involved in the following research activities:

- Classroom observations: We would like to observe the teachers and our university students teaching your child's class for one or two lessons
- Semi structured Interviews: We would like to interview your child for approximately 1 hour about the various challenges the school is facing and the ways in which it addresses them, including HIV and AIDS; Gender; Literacy; Numeracy and Rurality
- Photo-voice and video-documentary: With your permission (and that of the principal, the teachers, and your child), we will be video-recording the lessons as well as the interviews they will be participating in. In addition, we would like to take photographs in the classrooms and around the school and your child may be in one of these. These video recordings will be used to develop a

documentary for the project. We will consult you and the participants in the school regarding the development of the documentary, and again before the documentary is finalised.

In the second phase of the project, an external evaluator will be engaged to evaluate the efficacy of the pilot project. On the basis of the evaluation process, as well as the documentation we will be collecting in the first phase of the project, we will develop, together with the school, a comprehensive plan for wider implementation of the successful strategies and models which will have emerged.

We will be visiting your child's school to discuss the various aspects of the project with the principal and the teachers. Should you have any queries regarding the project, we would be glad to answer them on our visit and at any time during the duration of the project. Alternatively, you could contact us on the telephone number supplied at the foot of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Professor R Balfour
Professor R Moletsane
Professor C Mitchell

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3.3 C Mitchell	031 260 3690	Mitchell@ukzn.ac.za	SLLMDE	PhD

Declaration:

RURAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROJECT

I……………………………………………………………………(full names) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to my child participating in the research project.

I understand that, where possible, my child's identity will be kept anonymous, but that should this not be possible, I and my child will be fully informed before any data is used by the researchers for any purpose. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my child from the project at any time, should I or she/he so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

…………………………………………………………………

DATE………………………………