SMALL SPACE FOR MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC LIFE?
A COMMUNITY’S PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT
IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE PROGRAM

by

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Because the majority of children in many countries are being raised in the dual contexts of home and early childhood settings, early childhood education and care programs are an important site of inquiry not only because of their implications for children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development, but also for their influence on early childhood educators, parents, and the community at large. At the same time that researchers and practitioners were increasingly recognizing the importance of community involvement in early childhood programs, reforms in governance worldwide were giving rise to discourse on small participatory spaces that theorists contend are crucial to the health of a democracy and core to the idea of civil society. This study helps close the gap in the scarcity of research knowledge and educational practice that considers the perspectives of teachers, parents, and other members of a marginalized community in a non-western setting of their participation in an early childhood program. In particular, it sought to understand better whether parental and community participation in an early childhood setting in a South African township has the potential for constructing and strengthening citizenship. This study found generally that participation in this pre-school offered opportunities for meaningful participation in civil society; some participants, however, expressed disappointment and frustration at continuing disparities and inequities.
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<td>ABET</td>
<td>Adult Basic Education and Training</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black economic empowerment</td>
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<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement</td>
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<td>CEPD</td>
<td>Centre for Education Policy Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE</td>
<td>Early childhood education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECCD</td>
<td>Early childhood care and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early childhood development</td>
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<td>DBE</td>
<td>Department of Basic Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth Employment and Redistribution</td>
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<td>NIP</td>
<td>National Integrated Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human immunodeficiency virus infection/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>NECD-NGO</td>
<td>National Early Childhood Development – NGO Association</td>
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<td>NEF</td>
<td>National Educare Forum</td>
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<td>NEPI</td>
<td>National Education Policy Investigation</td>
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<td>NFQ</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-government organization</td>
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<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic and Community Development</td>
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<td>PPEN</td>
<td>Public Participation in Education Network</td>
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<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reconstruction and Development Programme</td>
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<td>SACECD</td>
<td>South African Congress for Early Childhood Development</td>
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<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African Schools Act (1996)</td>
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<td>SAQA</td>
<td>South African Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
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<td>TB</td>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund</td>
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<td>WCED</td>
<td>Western Cape Education Department</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Education cannot be easily separated from needs for care, socialisation [sic], support and community cohesion (Moss, 1996).

Today, Thursday, November 24, 2011--the loveliest time of the year in the Western Cape, the air mild and mountains etched against a crystal sky --is graduation day at Lelethu Pre-Primary and After-School Care. Although I arrived early, the pre-school is already abuzz with excitement and activity. The principal, Elizabeth, composed, smiling, and as always impeccably dressed, is in her office making a last-minute check of the morning’s plans with Sonya, a mentor and an original member of the School Governing Body. Because the school’s photocopier is out of order, the printing was done in town yesterday, so Ncumisa, the school secretary, and Alice, a junior teacher, are still busy folding programs. The whole school is sparkling clean thanks to the efforts of a committed team of mothers and grandmothers who worked late into the night, many after an exhausting day’s work. Pre-school staff who yesterday stayed long after children had left making sure that classrooms were tidy and children’s work and art attractively displayed are unflustered in anticipation of the most important event on the school calendar. Dressed in their best summer outfits, they oversee boys and girls from the elementary school move chairs from classrooms into the courtyard and set up the table for senior staff and dignitaries. Mothers and other women from the community prepare tables on the verandas for refreshments that will be served later and help Doris in the kitchen.

While the ceremonies are due to begin at 10:30 a.m., excitement begins mounting soon after 9:00 a.m. as guests drift into the courtyard. Pre-school children, arms and legs glistening from Vaseline applied by attentive mothers, some dressed in the school uniform—blue shorts, yellow T-shirts, white socks, and black shoes—arrive; some wander off to classrooms or noisily chase friends around the courtyard, others hang precariously from the climbing frame, their excitement palpable. Unaccompanied neighbourhood toddlers join the games. Young parents fashionably attired in Western dress and older women wearing traditional skirts and headgear settle themselves in their seats as others join them, there are greetings, much chatter, and laughter, an overall sense of expectation, belonging, and
community. I recognize a few parents, and we greet each other; I sense their pride in their young children’s achievement.

By 10:30 a.m. the chairs are filled with parents and other visitors, some from ‘outside’ the community; young children sit on laps or stand beside caregivers. Led by their classroom teachers, one hundred and eighty pre-school children file into the space left for them between the high table and rows of chairs; silence descends on the crowded courtyard. The children, now quiet and solemn, are seated in neat rows on the paving by their teachers who then sit beside their classes on small chairs. Next, the school principal, members of the School Governing Body, representatives of the Western Cape Education Department, and the local City of Cape Town councillor move graciously into their places to begin the ceremony that starts with singing of the national anthem Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrika (God bless Africa) that ends with an English stanza:

Let us live and strive for freedom
In South Africa, our land.

I look around at parents and grandparents, mentors, and visitors from the township and from ‘outside’, listen to the harmony of African voices, and watch the slight rhythm of children’s and adults’ bodies swaying.

Speeches delivered by the principal, Elizabeth, and then by Sonja, mentor and member of the School Governing Body, and the local town councillor all express pride in the children’s achievements and gratitude for the community’s participation in the pre-school. Victoria presents a review of the year, its highlights and successes, as well as anecdotes that cause much laughter. Sonja, well known and respected in the community, appeals to the audience’s love of story, using a metaphor to describe the school’s growth—a trickle, now a raging river that is heard and seen by many in the community; this prompts nods of approval and agreement. The sun begins to heat up the crowded space but throughout the ceremonies the children sit quietly waiting for their time to perform on traditional drums and sing isiXhosa songs for a delighted and proud crowd. When the highpoint of the ceremony arrives, the placing of caps on small heads and awarding of diplomas carefully rolled and

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1 The term ‘outside’ is used by residents of the township to refer to neighbouring, predominantly white, middle-class communities.
2 Modified in 1997, the new national anthem that includes four of the official eleven languages reflects hope for post-apartheid South African society.
tied with a yellow ribbon, the young children continue to be well mannered and respectful, seemingly conscious of the significance of the occasion.

Closing prayers are delivered reverently by Liliane, the oldest member of the preschool staff. The children are ushered back to their classrooms for ‘cold drinks’ and biscuits; parents leave their seats and congregate around the table where Doris, the school’s cook, and a group of parents serve sandwiches, cake, and tea. For the moment, the hardships of township life are forgotten as the community comes together to celebrate.

My interest in this particular preschool in a South African township in the Western Cape grew out of two research studies conducted during my Master of Education program and a service learning project with colleagues from the Faculty of Education at Brock University: one study investigated the way a marginalized community came together to create, build, and maintain a preschool in the years shortly after the first democratic elections in South Africa; another involved the development of a literacy module with amaXhosa women, deprived of an education during apartheid, and now associated with the preschool and; and the third, a collaborative project with the staff of the preschool, involved the creation, implementation, and evaluation of a program for primary-age children who attend an after-school program at the preschool. In these studies, I observed keen engagement by the community at large in this preschool, which within a few years of its founding had become a hub of learning and support not only for young children, but also for their parents and grandparents and young women and men in the community. The question

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3 A popular children’s drink made from cordial, sweetened fruit concentrate, and mixed with water.
4 Biscuits--in Canada cookies.
5 In a South African context, a township refers to the often underdeveloped areas, usually on the periphery of towns and cities that, from the late 19th century until the end of apartheid, were racially segregated, reserved for non-whites (black Africans, Coloureds and Indians). Today, township life is often associated with poverty, crime, and violence (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011).
6 The term amaXhosa refers to Xhosa people.
7 In this study, I use ‘parent’ in a general sense for the adult or adults--parent, foster-parent, grandparent, extended kin, or sibling--who care for the child and interact with the preschoo.
that intrigued me was whether, from the community’s perspective, participation in this small space offered opportunities for participation in and enhancement of democratic life, for constructing and strengthening citizenship in a new democracy.

The focus of this study, therefore, was participants’ professional and personal learning and their perceptions of whether this new knowledge has served to construct citizenship through enhanced capacity for participation and a greater sense of efficacy. I wanted to understand if members of this community see themselves as actors--‘makers and shapers’--rather than passive beneficiaries--‘users and choosers’ (Cornwall, 2002, p. 16). In addition, my inquiry sought to establish whether their participation in this pre-school has strengthened citizenship through deepening networks and awareness of a more cohesive community where a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect exists.

**Understanding Community Participation**

Community participation is a broad concept that includes numerous definitions, whom it is expected to involve, what it is expected to achieve, and how it is to be brought about (Agarwal, 2001; Cornwall, 2003). While ‘community’ is often treated as a single, clearly identifiable and homogenous group, the situation is, in reality, more complex. In this study, community is defined as people living within a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more social ties with each other and with the place in which they live (Christenson, Fendley, & Robinson, 1994).

While dictionaries (e.g., Merriam-Webster[^8] and Oxford Dictionaries[^9]) define participation as being actively involved with others in an activity or event, researchers (e.g.,

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[^8]: http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/participation
[^9]: http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/participation
Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2006; Kabeer & Kabir, 2009) more specifically identify the overall objective of community participation more specifically as a mechanism to empower and facilitate an improvement in the people’s lives. Ndekha and her colleagues (2003), for example, define community participation as “a social process whereby specific groups with shared needs living in a defined geographic area actively pursue identification of their needs, take decisions and establish mechanisms to meet these needs” (p. 32). Recent literature frames citizen participation as a fundamental human and citizenship right, a prerequisite for making other claims.

Frameworks provide useful insights into the scope of experiences associated with community participation, but by their nature, represent simplifications of a more complex reality. The most commonly cited typology of community participation is Arnstein’s (1969) ladder which depicts participation’s multiplicity of meanings. The different rungs on her ladder relate directly to the degree to which citizens have attained decision-making power. The bottom rung of the ladder—manipulation—describes a level contrived to substitute for genuine participation where the objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs but to allow power holders to ‘educate’ the participants. The next two rungs—informing and consultation—progress to levels of ‘tokenism’ that allow those with less power to hear and to have a voice although they lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by those with more power. Placation is a higher level tokenism where the ground rules allow those with less power to advise but retain for those with power the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making influence. Here, citizens may enter into a partnership that enables them to
negotiate with traditional power holders. At the topmost rungs participants gain the majority of decision-making seats or full managerial power.

Increasingly complex theories of participation with a shift towards understanding participation in terms of the empowerment of individuals and communities have been advanced. In a tool to categorize effective participation, researchers (e.g., Skinner, 1995) consider roles and responsibilities of individuals and communities involved in partnerships, suggesting that community members adopt different roles; as beneficiaries of the program and users of services; as representatives of local opinion; as the source of general community activity; as the source for the delivery of programs; and as potential long-term partners in the project or program.

Yet others conceptualize a nested structure of membership in community participation: a relatively small core group of people whose passion and engagement energize and nurture the community; active participants who participate frequently in multiple capacities; occasional participants who participate only when they are involved in a specific project or have something specific to contribute; peripheral participants who have a sustained connection to the community, but with less engagement and authority, either because they are newcomers or because they do not have as much personal commitment to the practice although they may experience the community as a network; and transactional participants, outsiders who interact with the community occasionally without being members themselves to receive or provide a service (e.g., sponsors and donors). Scholars contend that that each community needs to find a balance among constituencies. On the one hand, peripheral members should not be marginalized; on the other, core members may be distracted and even overwhelmed by the demands of a wider periphery.
Outcomes of Citizen Participation: A Framework:

Researchers (e.g., Gaventa & Barrett, 2010; Mansuri & Rao, 2004) contend that existing studies have often failed to establish causal links between community participation and desirable outcomes; in addition, most lack the views of those directly affected. Thus, in order to examine the idea of meaningful participation in civil society and to evaluate evidence that citizen engagement makes a difference and enhances democratic life, appropriate indicators needed to be made explicit. For this purpose, I used Gaventa and Barrett’s 2010 typology of democratic and developmental outcomes of citizen engagement as the framework on which to base my research questions and their categories for measuring a community’s perspectives of outcomes of their participation in a pre-school in a South African township.

In their meta-analysis based on a sample of 100 grounded, empirical case studies from 20 countries published between 2003 and 2010, Gaventa and Barrett extracted over 800 outcomes of citizen engagement. While focusing on the positive, their study recognizes that outcomes of participation are not always positive. They argue that their findings are important and significant since they indicate types and patterns of outcomes that can be expected from “citizen engagement based on observable outcomes, not a normative framework of what outcomes should look like” (p. 56). The synthesis of a large sample of qualitative research, they contend, facilitates a degree of generalizability that could not be achieved by a single research case.

Gaventa and Barrett also examined to what extent differences in outcome were affected by types of citizen engagement and the nature of the political context. While cautious about drawing generalizable conclusions, they found “interesting patterns and
propositions” (p. 57) emerged that confirmed their qualitative findings. While most case studies centred on the way citizens interact with states, these researchers were interested that citizen engagement through associations, even in the least democratic setting, showed the highest percentage of positive outcomes.

From Gaventa and Barrett’s typology of democratic and developmental outcomes of citizen engagement, I selected two to determine outcomes of participation in the pre-school in this case study: constructing citizenship and strengthening citizenship. Rather than drawing a straight line from participation to outcomes, I understand that intermediate outcomes may be equally important. Gaventa & Barrett (2010) argue that engagement is itself a way of constructing a sense of citizenship— an awareness of rights, knowledge of legal and institutional procedures, disposition towards action, organizing skills, and the thickness of civic networks are all indicators that help to measure the degree to which democratic citizenship is emerging. More aware citizenship together with stronger citizenship practices can contribute to strengthening citizenship—a broader sense of inclusion of previously marginalized groups with the potential to increase social cohesion across groups.

**Research Question**

Using Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) typology as an organizing framework for measuring outcomes of participation, I set out to consider how this space—a pre-school in a township—may offer opportunities for increased learning and awareness of capacity to act and an enhanced sense of efficacy. In addition, I investigated whether parental and community participation has played a role in deepening social networks and the development
a cohesive community. Therefore, the following main question and sub-questions drove data collection and analysis for this study:

From the community’s perspective, does this small space—an early childhood education and care\textsuperscript{10} centre in a marginalized community in a transitional state\textsuperscript{11}—offer opportunities for participation in and enhancement of democratic life— for constructing and strengthening citizenship?

(a) Has parental and community participation in this space fostered increased knowledge, capacity for participation, and a sense of efficacy?

(b) Has parental and community participation in this space played a role in the deepening networks and development of a cohesive community where a sense of inclusion, dignity and respect exists?

**The Purpose of this Study**

While there has been increasing emphasis on enhancing family support and parent engagement efforts in pre-schools worldwide, most studies suggest continued parental engagement in their children’s education is positively associated with pre-school children’s cognitive and social-emotion development (DeMulder & Stribling, 2012); others, contend that community participation in early childhood settings contributes to overall community development. This study helps close the gap in the scarcity of research knowledge and educational practice that considers the perspectives of teachers, parents, and other members of a marginalized community in a non-western setting of their participation in a pre-

\textsuperscript{10} The terms *early child education* (ECE), *early childhood education and care* (ECEC), and *early childhood development* (ECD) are used synonymously throughout this study to refer to the holistic intent embraced by early childhood care, education, and development.

\textsuperscript{11} According to Munro (1996) the goal of transitional states is “to entrench state apparatuses that are able to manage society, constrain social conflicts, direct or promote economic development, and generate a degree of sustainable social allegiance to a 'new' socio-political order that is measurably different from the 'old' draconian system.”
primary\textsuperscript{12} school. In particular, I sought to understand better whether parental and community participation in early childhood settings has the potential for constructing and strengthening citizenship in a transitional state. As Cornwall (2002) contends, “more micro-level research is required if we are to understand which forms of participation work in which kinds of spaces to provide people with opportunities to realize inclusive, active citizenship” (p. 28). Lister (2007) also observes that there remains an imbalance between theoretical and empirical advances in our understanding of citizenship. She believes that the field would be enriched by more empirical studies of “the everyday world of citizenship”—the cultural, social, and political practices that constitute lived citizenship for groups of citizens in different national and spatial contexts and of the way citizenship’s inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics are experienced by both citizens and non-citizens. Second, as suggested by several researchers (e.g., Edwards, 2004a; Robins, Cornwall, & von Lieres, 2008), rather than thinking of Western models of civil society as universal, the need exists for further research on the realities and complexities of associational life in non-Western societies including sub-Saharan Africa. Third, participation of disadvantaged communities in democratic life is not only germane to educational research but has far-reaching implications for policy and practice in other communities in fragile or emerging democracies and transitional states. Seeking insights into programs and practices that contribute towards fulfilling the broader concept of serving local needs and aspirations, this study presents a potential model for parents and members of other marginalized communities to enhance participation in democratic life, opportunities for constructing and strengthening of citizenship.

\textsuperscript{12} The terms \textit{pre-school} and \textit{pre-primary}, and \textit{Grade R} are used interchangeably in this study. In South Africa, Grade R or Reception for five-and six-year-olds is equivalent to senior kindergarten in Ontario.
Early Childhood Development: International Recognition

This study that considers the perspectives of parents and members of a local community to better understand whether parental and community participation in an early childhood setting has the potential for constructing and strengthening citizenship in a transitional state is set within the context of growing awareness of the importance of early childhood development, both internationally and within South Africa.

South Africa’s transition to democracy coincided with the period around 1990 that marked significant changes for young children; early childhood education and care programs began to move to a place of recognition on the international stage with the focus of attention shifting from issues of child survival to a more encompassing understanding of what children require to thrive (Pence, 2004). On November 20, 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child was formally adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, with 61 countries signing the document on January 26, 1990. By September of the same year, 20 countries had ratified the Convention, bringing it into international law (UNICEF, 2001). Then in March 1990, the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien emphasized the importance of early childhood education as a crucial part of basic education. A few years later, in several key publications the significance of the early years as a key period of brain development became a central focus for discussions regarding child development: the Carnegie Corporation’s report, *Starting Points: Meeting the needs of our youngest children* (1994); the Canadian report by McCain and Mustard (1999); and OECD’s *Starting strong* (2001).

As children became visible in their own right (Garcia, Pence, & Evans, 2008), early childhood provision—education and care from birth to school entry—became a growing priority in many countries. Until this time and throughout the world, early childhood was largely a private concern, with children embedded in the larger family structure. However
parents, who now tend to be both employed while their children are young (OECD, 2002) are increasingly demanding early childhood education and care. In addition, this phase of education and services is being recognized increasingly as important in its contribution to a wide range of social, economic and educational goals (OECD, 2010) for children and their families.

In the late 1990s, UNICEF for example was placing integrated early childhood education and care programs as a centerpiece of its activities, with a strong focus on children’s rights. An integrated, holistic approach paid attention to health, including women’s health, nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, psycho-social care and early learning and child protection. The focus was seen to strengthen the capacities of families to care for young children by increasing the access of families and communities to good-quality basic services and strengthening national policies for the young child (UNICEF, 2001; Pence, 2004).

By 2010 over two-thirds of children aged four and five were enrolled in education across OECD countries as a whole, including Canada, and rising to almost 80% in OECD countries that are part of the European Union. The latest figures available for South Africa indicate that in 2001 just over 1 million of an estimated 6 million children in the zero to six age range were enrolled in some type of early childhood education and care program (Williams & Samuels, 2001).

Because the majority of children in many countries worldwide are now being raised in the dual contexts of home and early childhood settings, early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs are an important site of inquiry not only because of their implications for

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13 Since the 2011 South African census statistics are not available at the time of writing, results of the 2001 census are used throughout this study unless otherwise indicated.
children’s cognitive, social, and emotional development, but also for their influence on early childhood educators, parents, and the community at large (Ball, Pence, & Benner, 2002; Buchbinder et al., 2006; McCain & Mustard, 1999; OECD, 2001; Putnam, 2000). According to researchers (e.g., Arimura et al., 2011; Hayden, 1998; Pushor, 2007), early childhood education and care programs need to be recognized as agents which create social capital\textsuperscript{14}; i.e. social relations and networks based on cooperation, trust, and reciprocity, and closely related to the concept of civic virtue (Fukuyama 1995; Putman, 2000). Others conceive of early childhood settings as a resource responsive to local needs, conditions and values, places where not only teaching and learning occur, but where social relationships, networks, and communities contribute to the wellbeing of young children, their families, and community development (Arimura et al., 2011; Farell, Tayler, & Tennent, 2004; Moss, 1996). Adding to the discourse, Munford and her colleagues (2007) in their study of aboriginal children in New Zealand contend that early childhood care and education programs that seek to support parents and children and to foster positive change have the potential to provide neutral and safe avenues for communities to access wider supports.

At the same time that researchers (e.g., Arimura et al., 2011; Ball et al., 2002) and practitioners increasingly recognized the importance of community involvement in developing and delivering early childhood development programs, reforms in governance worldwide were giving rise to discourse on ‘small participatory spheres’ that theorists contend are crucial to the health of a democracy and core to the idea of civil society (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Edwards, 2004a; Fleming, 2002). In spaces that emerge organically where members know each other and feel a responsibility for one another,

\textsuperscript{14} Putnam (2002) defines social capital as the “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (p. 67).
researchers suggest individuals collaborate for common interests often without the infrastructure or resources that comprise larger organizations. Indeed, Fine and Harrington (2004) maintain that Putnam’s (2000) definition of civil engagement—trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficacy of society by facilitating coordinated action—describes what these small groups do.

**Recent Early Childhood Policy in South Africa**

The importance of the young child in South African policy has been recognized through the inclusion of early childhood development (ECD) planning in documents relating to the National Departments of Social Development, Health, and Education. Written in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, and the South African Constitution, the Children’s Act No 38 that came into effect in 2010 recognizes young children as rights holders and the early childhood period critical for the realization of children’s rights. With a chapter on early childhood development (ECD), the Act describes the Department of Social Development’s responsibility for ensuring that centres meet established norms and standards for Grade R—the target age group of the pre-school in this study).

In addition, the goal of UNICEF’s National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD 2005-2010 was to bring greater synergy and coordination to government programs undertaken by various departments in ECD and aimed primarily at giving “the children of our country the best start in life by building a solid foundation of physical, emotional, psychosocial,

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15 Fukuyama defines trust as “the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of the community . . . These communities do not require extensive and legal contractual regulation of their relations because prior moral consensus gives members of the group a basis for moral trust” (1995, p. 26).
cognitive, and healthy development” (UNICEF, 2005). Biersteker (2013) contends, however, that many aspects of the NIP are beyond the legal and funding frameworks and the necessary buy-in has not yet been achieved in all the provinces or even at the local level.

Thus, although South Africa is recognised as having progressive and comprehensive policies in place, the Children’s Act leaves funding for ECD services to the discretion of the provinces; the danger of competing priorities in a country battling poverty, underdevelopment, and inequity is the reality (Biersteker, 2013). That the Act does not require that states fund or provide EDC services has become a matter of serious debate nationally and the impetus for considerable civil society mobilization and advocacy for better government support (Biersteker, 2013; Spreen, personal communication).

Rights-based advocacy, particularly the right to education and importantly a specific focus on early childhood education, has gained considerable currency in South Africa in the last decade. Those working in this area have been vocal advocates for strong community participation in education and empowerment through community-based education programs, social mobilization, and outreach efforts. Besides movements such as the Children’s Institute in Cape Town--perhaps the largest advocacy group in South Africa for children’s rights--are numerous national media campaigns and local literacy programs (e.g., Nal’ibali that hosts children’s programming on public radio stations in all official languages and the South African version of Sesame street--Takalani Sesame) that create awareness of the importance of early childhood education programs, emphasizing literacy, nutrition, and parental education and involvement.
Research Design

To answer my research questions and to provide a detailed picture, I used a case study design with data collected from multiple sources; I also included elements from the methodology of portraiture (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis, 1997). As Lightfoot-Lawrence and Hoffman Davis (1997) explain in their seminal work, *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, the portraitist strives “to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of people . . . documenting their voices and visions—their authority, knowledge and wisdom” (p. xv) believing that embedded in a unique case the reader will discover universal themes.

While developing relationships of trust and understanding with participants, I listened for what Lightfoot-Lawrence and Hoffman Davis (1997) describe as goodness—strength, resilience, and creativity—“a generous stance” that they contend “opens up space for expressions of weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability” (p. 158). This search for goodness is embedded in relationships characterized by empathy that developed from my knowledge of the participants’ world; however, not wanting to idealize stories, to impose my definition of good on the inquiry, or to assume a singular definition was shared by all participants, I attempted to identify and document each participant’s particular perspective (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis).

Data were collected from multiple sources during three visits to South Africa: August 2011, November/December 2011, and March 2012; interviews and more informal conversations with individuals associated with the pre-school as well as members of the local and broader community; attendance at meetings in the township and at locations ‘outside’; observations at the pre-school; my fieldnotes; and official Western Cape Education
Department (WCED) policy, curriculum documents, correspondence, and internal documents.

**Researcher Positioning**

As I reflect on Neilsen’s (1998) notion that “each of us comes from somewhere, but that ‘somewhere’ casts a different shadow in each of our encounters with others” (p.197), I consider my own position as a researcher and wonder whether I am an insider or an outsider in this study. I was born into a family with deep roots in South Africa and grew up in the province of Natal (now KwaZulu Natal); Africans were an integral part of my life. Zulus were my caregivers; they played with me; they spoke isiZulu to me and delighted in my ability to respond to them; they shared their breakfast with me: sweet tea and *phutu*, the stiff corn porridge that is the staple food of Africans; and on Sundays I heard them singing and dancing in the valleys beyond our home where they held church services.

My childhood was unquestionably privileged, but my warm and loving relationships with Africans “reflected a complicated entanglement of intimacy and distance” (Lightfoot-Lawrence, 2009, p. 69). Throughout this study, I was, therefore, conscious at all times of my researcher position. While intimately aware of historical-social-cultural context, able to speak and understand the language of the participants, I have not lived in South Africa for thirty years.

The amaXhosa women in my previous research studies, although oppressed and deprived of education in their youth, showed determination to pursue their dreams for a better future. In this study I hope to be able to discredit deficit stereotypes of members of this marginalized community by listening to their stories thereby validating their position and life
experiences as knowledge and by illustrating the ways they participate in an emerging democracy as they seek to transform not only their own lives and those of their children but to connect to the wider community.

Outline of the Study

This thesis is presented in nine chapters. Chapter Two explores first the notion of space within civil society that forms the conceptual background for this study and the implications of participation in spaces created in and by communities. Next, a review of literature explores the concept of parental and community participation in children’s schooling, particularly family involvement in early childhood education and care programs. Third, I examine principles of adult education with particular reference to traditional African education and the transformative potential of education for adults.

Chapter Three describes the current status of young children and adult learners in South Africa with reference to educational policies and legislation that have sought to redress some of the inequities of colonization and apartheid, particularly for members of marginalized groups and communities.

In Chapter Four, the research design of the study is explained. First is a description of the context of the study in terms of South Africa generally and more specifically the particular township in which the pre-school at the centre of this case study is located. The rationale for the research design and data collection methods are discussed and detailed participant information provided. Then, the process of analysis and interpretation is explained, with particular reference to the framework used to make explicit what may be considered appropriate indicators of meaningful participation in and enhancement of
democratic life. In the last section, I reflect on some of the ethical and methodological issues encountered.

The findings of this study are covered in Chapters Five to Eight: Chapter Five narrates the history of the pre-school--the centre of this case study—that was created in and by the community and has become a space of learning not only for young children but also for adults and youth in the township. Chapter Six and Seven explore, from multiple data sources, perspective of the pre-school staff and members of the community of whether this small space within civil society offers opportunities for adults and youth for learning, for enhanced capacity for participation together with a sense of efficacy—the construction of citizenship. Chapter Eight seeks to understand whether parental and community participation in this space has played a role in strengthening citizenship—in deepening networks and creating awareness of a cohesive community where a sense of relationships, trust and reciprocity exists.

In the Chapter Nine, I conclude that this small space, a pre-school in a South African township, has indeed for many played a role in constructing citizenship through opportunities for participation in and enhancement of democratic life. In spite of enduring social and economic inequities, participants perceive that this pre-school offers opportunities for profession and personal learning. Many participants reported positive outcomes: an increased sense of agency\(^{16}\), confidence to claim their rights, and a sense of control to make decisions that affect their lives and those of their children. Others, however, indicated a reduced sense of agency—misunderstanding, frustration, humiliation, and exclusion. For many, too, the

\(^{16}\) Rather than the term *empower*, I prefer to use *agency* where applicable. Merriam Webster defines empower as ‘to give authority to someone, to promote the self-actualization or influence of, to enable’; however, scholars argue that since people must recognize empowerment and claim it for themselves, empowerment cannot be bestowed by others (Mosedale, 2005; Rowlands, 1997).
pre-school had offered opportunities for strengthening of citizenship through deepening networks and the development of a more cohesive community where a sense of inclusion, dignity and respect exist. Evidence of more negative outcomes were also apparent: signs of fractured connections within the local community and beyond—a continuing sense of exclusion and lack of respect.

Despite the lingering legacy of apartheid, participants’ responses reflected their historic resilience to hardship, their determination to overcome obstacles, and their hope for a better future. Many expressed their confidence in education as the way out of poverty and oppression and their resolve to wait patiently since they believe the future is theirs. They understand that working within existing limits is often necessary to achieve small gains with the hope that these may ripple out to bring wider changes. Long-term optimism appeared to go hand-in-hand with short-term realism, fostered by largely unchanged daily living conditions.
CHAPTER TWO: PARTICIPATION IN SMALL SPACES

The challenge of building democratic polities where all can realize their rights and claim their citizenship is one of the greatest of our age (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

To position my study in relation to other research, I examine the idea, implications, and challenges of participation in small spaces within civil society. In order to contextualize small spaces, the first section begins with a brief overview of current discourse on civil society and citizenship. I then examine that part of civil society that focuses on participation in associational life, with particular reference to voluntary organizations in Africa that have historically played an important role in civil society. Next, I consider the idea of small participatory spaces that has emerged during the past two decades together with the challenges and complexities that exist between expectations and the reality of meaningful participation in these spaces in civil society. The section that follows includes an exploration of a specific area of participation in civil society: parental and community participation in children’s education. Finally, pursuing my interest in small participatory spaces as potential sites for adult learning, the goals, theory, and practices of adult education, specifically as they relate to African worldviews—ways of being and doing—are then surveyed.

Civil Society

While the concept stretches back two thousand years, more recently, civil society has come to be understood as the realm between the market, state, and family (Edwards, 2004a; Fleming, 2002; Parekh, 2004). Cohen and Arato (1992) define civil society as “a sphere of social interaction between economy and state, composed above all of the intimate sphere (especially the family), the sphere of associations (especially voluntary associations), social
movements, and forms of public communication” (p. ix). Concurring, Giner (1995) characterizes civil society as “an historically evolved sphere of individual rights, freedoms and voluntary associations whose . . . pursuit of their respective private concerns, interests, preference and intentions is guaranteed by a public institution called the state” (p.304).

Adding to the discourse, Edwards (2004a) contends that civil societies play several roles: social, political and economic. In a social role, civil societies are places of “caring, cultural life and intellectual innovation” (p.14), where people learn skills of citizenship and positive social norms that foster stability. This concept of social capital is associated with resources and embedded with norms of trust and reciprocity, created by participation in civil organizations, and seen as having the capacity to facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation. At their core, concepts of ubuntu (discussed later in this chapter in the section on adult education) and social capital, particularly notions of trust and reciprocity, are similar (Dryden-Peterson, 2009).

The concept of social capital is used in adult, community, and informal learning to explore the wider benefits’ of such learning in terms of community identity and citizenship. According to Field (2000), community based and informal learning can both stem from and help to create the kind of social capital that is needed to enable the most excluded groups and communities to break through the profound external obstacles and internal constraints that are inhibiting regeneration and renewal.

Theorists distinguish between bonding social capital, social ties within homogeneous communities, and bridging social capital, social ties built across heterogeneous communities that span social cleavages, such as race, language and class. While bonding between like-minded people may reinforce homogeneity and build strong ties, Putman speculates it may

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17 This definition is based on the work of Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1988), and Putnam (2000).
exclude those who do not qualify. On the other hand, Putnam (2000) argues that bridging social capital “can generate broader identities” (p. 23) through which individuals “transcend . . . social and political and professional identities to connect with people” unlike themselves (p. 41). Overall theorists contend that trustworthiness is fundamental to civilized life (Putnam, 2000). As Fukuyama (1995) claims: “a nation’s well-being . . . is conditioned by a single, pervasive, cultural characteristic: the level of trust inherent in society” (p. 33).

In addition, playing a political role within civil societies, voluntary associations are seen as a counterweight to the power of states and corporations and essential in promoting accountability, transparency, and ‘good governance’ (Edwards, 2004a; Marais, 2011). In emerging democracies Marais (2011) contends that strong balanced relations between political forces and civil society are particularly important factors.

In an economic role, civil societies centre on securing livelihoods and providing services where states and markets are weak and nurturing social values (e.g., trust and cooperation), networks, and institutions that strengthen market economies.

**Citizenship**

As with the idea of civil society, little unanimity of thought exists about what constitutes a citizen or what a good citizen does. Generally, the politics of citizenship may be conceptualised in terms of different types of rights that accrue to citizens as members of a political community. These include civic rights, which are rights of access to the law; political rights, which are rights of participation; and social rights, which are rights of basic social provision - the ‘moral economy’ rights of expectation and need (Munro, 1996).
Discussions of citizenship outline several approaches or perspectives, rather than distinct categories: liberal, communitarian, and civic republican.

**Liberal**

Liberal citizenship is conceived as a status which entitles individuals to a specific set of universal rights granted by the state, above all the right to vote within a representative democratic system. Central to liberal thought is the notion that citizens act rationally to advance their own interests and that the role of the state is to protect citizens in the exercise of their rights. Granting citizens the same rights is understood to promote equality through making a person’s political and economic power irrelevant to rights claims (Jones & Gaventa, 2002). With the status come duties, which the individual, as a member of the community, has an obligation to fulfil (Hunt, 2011).

In 1950 Marshall added social to legal and political rights, arguing that citizens have a right to their minimal social and economic needs and that this security should be provided by the state. While not advocating for the elimination of inequalities, Marshall believes that a reduction in risks associated with capitalism for the poorest citizens would lead to a sense of community and social cohesion. Rawls (cited in Jones & Gaventa, 2002) goes beyond Marshall’s conception of redistribution arguing that liberty entails individuals being able to make choices through their lives that are not constrained by the social-economic conditions of their birth. Young (1997), on the other hand, contends that liberal citizenship does not ensure social equity but may mask inequalities. Lister (1998) explores further the possibility of unequal access to liberal citizenship in systems where it is universalized, differentiating between citizenship as legal status of membership of a state and substantive citizenship that relates to the enjoyment of rights and obligations associated with membership.
Communitarian

The notion of self-interested, independent individuals conceived by liberal thinkers is critiqued by communitarians who argue that an individual’s sense of identity is produced through relations with others in the community of which he or she is a part. Here the individual can only realize his or her interests and identity through deliberation of the public good; individual liberty is attained through public service and affording precedence to the ‘common good’ over the pursuit of individual interests (Esin & Woods, 1999).

Civic republican

In the civic republican tradition, on the other hand, human beings are not isolated individuals but social beings, and society not a collection of competing individuals but an organic whole. Civic republicans argue that citizen action should not be confined to voting or communicating with law makers; rather citizenship should be viewed as individuals participating in decisions that affect people’s lives from the local to the global level. Only through playing a full part in achieving the common good do individuals realize their own potential. On the other hand, many forfeit individual interests and concerns for a greater cause (Hunt, 2011).

Linking approaches to citizenship

Theorists (e.g., Lister, 2007) attempt to unite the liberal emphasis on individual rights, equality and due process of law, with the communitarian focus on belonging and the civic republican emphasis on processes of deliberation, collective action and responsibility (Jones & Gaventa, 2002). Hunt (2011) contends that in South Africa liberal and civic republican ideas of citizenship have historically been linked to different racial communities; while English-speaking South Africans have espoused liberal citizenship, Afrikaner and
black communities have embraced civic republican notions of citizenship as seen in the movement to preserve Afrikaner identity and the struggle against apartheid. Black students coming together to challenge the state forfeited individual safety, interests, and concerns as they worked towards a ‘common good’ (Hunt, 2011)

**Citizenship in transitional states**

In transition-to-democracy states, associated with a fledgling democratic government newly installed or restored after a period of undemocratic and repressive rule, citizens face many challenges. Not only do newly democratic governments need to establish civil and political rights and the rule of law they also have to come to terms with the legacy of an authoritarian past (Seeberg, 2013).

While full democratic citizenship is attained through the exercise of political, civic, and social rights, theorists (e.g., Gaventa, 2006a; Jones & Gaventa, 2001) argue that citizenship is hollow where citizens do not enjoy equal rights and entitlements. In the liberal view, entitling all citizens to a universal set of individual rights treats each person as equal and makes provision for disadvantaged groups and individuals to challenge inequalities and injustices. Young (1989) argues, however, that liberal citizenship does not ensure equity: “rights and rules that are universally formulated and thus blind to differences of race, culture, gender, age or disability, perpetuate rather than undermine oppression” (p. 266). Moreover, entitling all citizens to the same rights tends “to abstract inequalities from political and historical contexts in which they were produced and maintained” and to ignore their influence over people’s awareness of and capacity to advocate for their rights (Jones & Gaventa, 2002, p. 10). Thus, while formally members or citizens of the political nation,

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18 Throughout this study, like Hunt (2011), I use apartheid-era categorizations of race as descriptors of South Africa’s population groups to reflect continuities within common usage.
enduring inequities in transitional states exclude citizens from the rights and benefits associated with belonging and citizenship (Swartz, Harding, & de Lannoy, 2012). “Beyond the material effects of poverty and unemployment are the emotional consequences, including loss of dignity and autonomy, of purpose and coherent structure to life, of a sense of safety and the onset of feelings of hopelessness” (Swartz et al., 2012, p. 29-30).

In addition, in transitional states, strengthening vertical accountability where citizens are able to hold governments and political elites accountable for their use of power is an essential but often a slow process (Spreen & Vally, 2006). Furthermore, deepening democracy in transitional states is hampered by weak horizontal accountability: patronage, corruption, stifling of dissent, and shrinking political space of national governments and their citizens due to the power of global markets, multinational firms, and international institutions (Swartz et al., 2012).

Since many participants in this case study in a transitional state may be considered marginalized, notions of inclusive citizenship and citizen identity are germane. Kabeer (2005) helps “to shed light on what inclusive citizenship might mean when it is viewed from the standpoint of the excluded” (p. 1). From her work in different contexts, Kabeer identifies values of inclusive citizenship that emerged ‘from below’. While these values may not be universal, she argues they are widespread enough to suggest that they constitute a significant aspect of the organization of collective life and of the way in which people connect with each other (p. 3). Justice is articulated in terms of “when it is fair for people to be treated the same and when it is fair that they should be treated differently” (p. 3); recognition “the intrinsic worth of all human beings, but also recognition of and respect for their differences” (p. 4); self-determination or “people’s ability to exercise some degree of control over their
lives” (p. 5); and *solidarity* “the capacity to identify with others and to act in unity with them in their claims for justice and recognition” (p. 7). The value of solidarity may reflect a horizontal view of citizenship which accords as much significance to the relations between citizens as to the vertical relationship between the state and the individual.

At the centre of contemporary thought is the need to conceptualize citizenship as both status, which accords a range of rights and obligations, and as active practice. Theorists (e.g., Cornwall, 2002; Kabeer, 2002; Gaventa, 2006a; Lister, 1998) distinguish between the idea of *being* a citizen and *acting* as a citizen, a notion that views citizens as having the capacity to exercise agency and recognize themselves as social actors. Kabeer (2002) contends, however, that formal recognition of rights does not necessarily turn people into agents since “to claim one’s rights, there has to be a prior belief in one’s rights to have rights” (p. 20). Like Kabeer, Cornwall (2002) believes people need first to see themselves as citizens, aware of their rights and responsibilities, rather than as beneficiaries or clients, and then through popular education and mobilization acquire skills and confidence that enable them to participate in civil society as ‘makers and shapers’ rather than ‘users and choosers’ (p. 16). Participation is a right that enables citizens to realize their social rights. Fleming (2002) argues that “more participation produces individuals with more democratic dispositions, who are more tolerant, more sensitive to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment”, and more likely to examine their own choices—“all qualities conducive to the success of democracy” (p.167).

Recent thinking stresses that a requirement of democracy and citizenship is for citizens not only to exercise the right to participate but to struggle in order to guarantee rights, monitor state institutions, and hold them accountable. Acting collectively, individuals
may redefine the notion of citizenship by contesting relations of dominance and establishing or struggling for processes for participation and accountability in ways they are governed (Kabeer, 2002). As Marais (2011) argues, “a fundamental measure of genuine democracy and freedom is the ability to challenge the architecture of the status quo” (p 353). Cornwall is emphatic that “to be an active citizen is to become a political subject, aware of his/her rights and power to struggle for them” (cited in Dagnino, 2005, p. 8).

Kabeer (2002) believes that citizenship is a way of defining personhood by replacing claims based on custom with those guaranteed by the state and that “citizenship and identity are intrinsically connected” (p. 21) since denying groups recognition reinforces a lack of agency, self-respect, voice, and choice. Thus, the way people understand themselves as citizens is likely to have an impact on their perception of their rights and obligations and on whether they participate, in what form, and for what reason. Kabeer (2002; 2005) argues that citizenship learning and membership of associations promote notions of personhood. In addition, a synergy can emerge through partnerships and collaboration with others (Gaventa, 2006). Relations between citizens are effective not only for collective action but also for generating a sense of community and thus citizenship (Jones & Gaventa, 2002). “Building members’ solidarity and horizontal connections changes individual notions of selfhood to recognition of a collective identity based on shared interest” (Kabeer, 2005, p. 187).

Researchers (e.g., Kabeer, 2002; von Lieres, 2005) draw attention to the ‘bifurcated’ nature of citizenship in transitional states where individuals are citizens of the state in one context and subjects of traditional authorities in another. They argue that the emergence of the modern state in the West saw the rise of “an impersonal public sphere, where the laws of the land and forces of the marketplace prevailed” and civil rights expanded at the expense of
customary claims and obligations (Kabeer, p. 17). However, in new democracies and fragile states, where notions of citizenship are incomplete and fragmented, they contend that kinship and community relations continue “to provide the anchor for security for individuals” (Kabeer, p. 18). Here, the definition and practices of citizenship may reinforce pre-existing forms of social inequality, negating the ideas of agency and equality that citizenship is intended to promote. Identities and affiliations of the private sphere of family, kinship, and community, rather than those prescribed by the law, structure social life, reproducing in the public sphere forms of inequality which reflect social relations of the private sphere (Kabeer, 2002; Kabeer & Kabir, 2009; Thompson, 2001). In these contexts, citizens expect that “demands of kin will take precedence over civil procedures and that their civic rights are conditional on . . . relationships they are able to mobilize” (Kabeer, 2002, p. 20).

In the case of South Africa, the transition from apartheid brought optimism and promises of change, “dreams of possible futures . . . of conceptualising the nation and one’s inclusion in it, where dreams hold a deeper significance of overcoming the current context of ongoing poor education, inequality, unemployment and poverty” (Swartz et al., 2012, p. 33). Swartz and her colleagues believe, however, that the dream of democracy, together with a global consumer culture, has led young people in particular to unreasonably high aspirations, despite the lack of opportunity to fulfill their dreams. With little reference to the past, they see education and hard work as key to achieving socio-economic mobility, an optimism that they will have access to opportunities in the new South Africa, that the future is theirs (Cross et al., 2002). As a young participant in a study in a Western Cape township remarked: “If you don’t have dreams, you will never be anyone in life” (Swartz et al., p. 32).
In spite of immense challenges, citizens in some transitional states have made real gains in terms of social inclusion and economic justice. For example, in Brazil, mobilization has secured new rights for some of the most marginalized citizens, and the rights-based health system centred on principles of equity and universality has resulted in improved health outcomes (Cornwall, Romano, & Shankland, 2008). As a result of marginalized people in post-apartheid South Africa engaging with the state in multiple, new democratic spaces, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has been credited with coercing a reluctant government to make antiretroviral drugs available to people with HIV-AIDS (Robins & von Lieres, 2004).

The road from a repressive regime to democracy for citizens is not linear; as Gaventa (2006a) contends “democracy is constantly under construction” (p. 11) in a process through which citizens take more control over decisions that affect their lives. Beetham (cited in Gaventa, 2006a) argues that “control by citizens over their collective affairs and equality between citizens in the exercise of that control are key democratic principles” (p. 12).

**Associational Life**

As discourse on civil society and citizenship goes back to the Roman Empire, so the idea of associative freedom is consistent through the ages. On a visit to the United States in the late 19th century, de Tocqueville observed American democracy dominated by the notion of equality which, although having virtues, tended to isolate individuals; he believed the only way such a society was held together was through an extensive network of voluntary organizations. Putnam (2000) argues that the vitality and efficacy of democratic political institutions depend on society’s store of social capital that enables participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives. Naidoo & Tandon (1999) add that “unless
freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed and enforced and unless space is carved out of public life that permits voluntarily formed associations the right to act independent of state and market, then civil society cannot be said to exist” (p.9).

The debate of academics emphasizes the value of voluntary associations in curbing the power of centralizing institutions, protecting pluralism, and nurturing constructive social norms, especially trust and cooperation. Thus, a highly developed civil society is viewed by some as the foundation of a stable democratic polity, as defence against domination by one group, and as an impediment to anti-democratic forces (Edwards, 2004a; Putnam, 2000).

The idea of associative freedom arises from the belief that as free, equal, rational, and self-determining individuals, humans have the desire and should be able to enter into relations with others and pursue common interests. In these “spaces of un-coerced association” (Edwards, 2004a, p.20), Edwards contends objectives are achieved through dialogue, bargaining, and persuasion rather than enforced compliance by government or market incentives, and exit is possible without loss of status, public rights, or benefits (Edwards; Kaldor, 2004). Indeed, Parekh (2004) contends that “by freely associating with others in pursuit of personal and common purposes, human beings discover themselves, develop civic virtues and grow to their full stature” (p.21). Edwards argues that traditional social institutions, such as nuclear families and the welfare state, have been so weakened by capitalism that they provide little collective identity except as consumers. In these circumstances, he maintains people retreat to associations where like-minded people provide emotional as well as material support.

While civil society theory that makes assumptions about rights and responsibilities of associations, the characteristics they should cultivate, and the roles they should play in
society have been developed for the most part in Europe and North America (Edwards, 2004a; Trentmann, 2004), theorists emphasize the concept may be different across countries, cultures, and different periods in time (Akinrinádé, 2004; James, 2004; Parekh, 2004; Wiarda, 2003; Wickliffe, 1999). Howell (2004) suggests that some believe the concept of civil society is so deeply entrenched in Western political thought and historical experience that it has no place in an analysis of other societies. Such a dismissal, he contends, would fail to explain the gradual opening up of spaces for autonomous organizing or recognize the existence of multiple forms of organizing in pursuit of shared values, norms, and meanings. Thus, rather than thinking of Western models of civil society as universal, Edwards (2004a) suggests the need for further research on the realities and complexities of associational life in sub-Saharan Africa as well as in Islamic societies, South Asia, and Latin America.

In a recent study, Cavatorta and Durac (2011) question the validity of the link between an active associational life and democratization. Examining civil society in the Arab world, their study demonstrates ways that the activism of civil society strengthens rather than weakens authoritarian practices and rule. Through an analysis of the legal and political constraints on associational life and the impact of these on relations between different civic groups and between associations and state authorities, they argue that civil society playing a positive role in processes of democratic transformation is highly questionable.

Academic debates continue about the expression of civil society in Africa: some argue that African societies are too fragmented to support any notion of the public good (Wiarda, 2003), others that traditional African life itself displays features of a true civil society (Akinrinádé, 2004). In addition, notions of ‘voluntary’ association are complicated by the continuing importance of tribal and clan identities that are inherited, not chosen (Wiarda).
Glasius and his colleagues (2004) describe ways in which people arriving in cities in the developing world form mutual support networks based on ethnicity or region of origin: associations that are new and voluntary, but based on earlier rural relations. Adding to the discussion, Edwards (2004a) contends that in parts of Africa today “associations are developing a richer tapestry of associational life” (p.30); cultural and religious institutions (e.g., labour unions, burial societies, farmers’ organizations, and human rights NGOs) that express a collective identity based on clan or tribe coexist with newer forms of association have emerged in response to urbanization, education, and the development of the market economy.

Historically, women’s groups and associations in Africa have played an important role in civil society. For example, voluntary initiatives, particularly in faith-based groups and mother-and-child projects, opened up spaces for women to assume roles in civil society during the apartheid years in South Africa at a time that was far from democratic. More recently, networking locally, regionally, and worldwide has strengthened African women’s voices and brought about some improvements in their position in civil society (Kandil, 1999). Gouthro (2007) notes, however, that while there is “a plethora of micro-groupings” serving to address the needs of women at the local level, these organizations are “characterized by lack of capacity and resources and limited understanding of gender issues” (p.73).

**Small Participatory Spaces: Deepening Democracy**

Over the past two decades, reforms in governance worldwide have given rise to discourse on and a profusion of ‘small participatory spheres’ that theorists contend are crucial to the health of a democracy and core to the idea of civil society (Cornwall & Coelho,
Cornwall (2002) makes a distinction between new participatory spaces: on one hand are ‘invited’ spaces created from above through donor or governmental intervention because participation in decision making in social, cultural and political life has increasingly been viewed as a fundamental human and citizen right and as a way of deepening democracy (Ferreira & Roque, 2012; Gaventa, 2006b).

While the objective is to create free, open, and equal spaces, scholars (e.g., Cornwall, 2002; Robins et al., 2008) argue there is nothing inherently democratic about these invited spaces and simply creating them does not ensure greater participation or equity in resource distribution or decision-making. In fact, spaces created for marginalized people “may end up being filled by gatekeepers” who speak for but not with those they represent (Cornwall, 2002, p.8). Mansbridge (1997), however, believes that involving citizens more directly in processes of governance makes for better citizens, better decisions, and better government.

On the other hand, Cornwall identifies ‘created’ spaces that emerge organically from below where like-minded people join together in common pursuits. Activists argue that these spaces created by grassroots organizations that are internally inclusive and democratic are the key to civic life because they encourage involvement by disenfranchised groups in economic and political processes and confront structural barriers that limit equal participation and distribution of public benefits (Edwards, 2004a; Kabeer, 2002; Robins et al., 2008).

Fine and Harrington (2004) argue that small, grassroots groups provide communal spaces in which civil society is created. Here, where members know each other, are connected to each other, and feel a responsibility for one another, they contend individuals collaborate openly for common interests often without the infrastructure or resources that comprise larger organizations. Indeed, Fine and Harrington maintain that Putnam’s (2000)
definition of civil engagement--trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficacy of society by facilitating coordinated action--describes what small groups do. Individuals in these participatory spaces understand they have more to gain, or less to lose, by cooperating with the group than they do acting as free agents (Fine & Harrington). While group members do not always maximize individual interests, by recognizing the value of participating in group spaces, personal interests are satisfied. Thus, when small groups identify a problem or cause worthy of collective response, they become a vehicle through which people and resources may be mobilized to action (Classen et al., 2008; Fine & Harrington, 2004). In fact, Naidoo and Tandon (1999) contend that civil society is an arena where citizens collectively exercise civic values and continue to promote the common interests of community without threatening the rights of others.

While power may be carried over from other spaces, Cornwall and Coelho (2007) argue that marginalized groups may find greater opportunities for exercising voice through the creation of their own spaces--places of withdrawal and regrouping—and gain greater confidence and legitimacy to voice their demands. Such spaces may also serve to transform previously excluded groups by giving them time and opportunity to construct their political preferences and express their concerns for themselves.

The underlying effectiveness of small created groups is that participants know each other and shape their behaviour and self-image in the context of expected responses of others (Fine & Harrington, 2004). Since local cultures generate norms and behavioural expectations, and members in good standing accept these standards, group expectations define the group and draw boundaries that separate it from others, reducing the necessity of external control. Nevertheless, within the small group, status and reputation situate each member within “a
network of power, influence and action” (p. 349). On the other hand, these small groups in which both youth and adults participate may be models of civic engagement where ideas of justice, equality, and respect are translated into members’ conceptions of the good society. In addition, small groups may align with other groups and link local organizations to broader structural trends and ideologies, culminating in social transformation.

Some studies indicate that democracy and development are difficult to achieve without strong associational life in small spaces since these independent associations provide channels through which political participation is mobilized and states held accountable by their citizens; others (e.g., Cornwall, 2003) caution that participation does not necessarily produce more equitable outcomes. Robins and his colleagues (2008) argue the importance of delineating between the emergence of organizations ‘giving voice’ and “the actual process whereby marginalized groups are able to enter organised [sic] political life and effectively taking up wide-ranging issues and causes while entering . . . more influential political arenas and democratic institutions” (p. 1072).

Complexities, challenges and potential of participation

Researchers (e.g., Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Howel & Pearce, 2001; Robins et al., 2008; Todes Sithole, & Williamson, 2010) maintain that the gap between expectations and reality presents challenges for meaningfully participation in civil society that results in change. While the goal is for these civil society spaces—either ‘invited or ‘created’--to be free, open, and equal, issues of power and difference may serve to exclude and reinforce the status quo since “spaces in which citizens are invited to participate, as well as those they create for themselves, are never neutral (Cornwall, 2002, p. 8). Although new spaces and opportunities are emerging worldwide for citizen engagement, theorists argue that creating these new arrangements will not necessarily result in greater inclusion or change for all
citizens (e.g., Gaventa, 2006; Naidoo & Tandon, 1999). Examining spaces, Gaventa (2006a) suggests we need to ask how they were created, with whose interests, as well as the terms of engagement. As Chandoke (cited in Cornwall & Coelho, 2007) states, “Much depends on who enters these spaces, on whose terms and with what ‘epistemic authority’” (p.5).

Drawing on the work of French social theorists (e.g., Foucault and Bourdieu), scholars point out that concepts of space and power are inextricably linked. These spaces for participation are not neutral (Cornwall, 2002; Stromquist, 1999) since integral to the concept of any space, whether physical or metaphorical, is the image of ‘boundary’. Civil society, they argue, is not a level playing field, but a place where socio-economic, gender, racial, and ethnic differences might be understood as providing “a stage upon which contesting visions of the world and relations are played out” (Howell, 2004, p.121). Thus, assuming all individuals are equally able to form associations and engage in social and political activity ignores fundamental differences in power between social groups (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007). Cornwall and Coelho add that in developing democracies basic rights continue to be “distorted by vertical dependencies, accepted forms of exclusion, the unevenness or at times failure of public legality, and the persistence of pre-democratic forms of authority” (p.11). Naidoo and Tandon (1999) also draw attention to the divide between an emerging elite in civil society and that part of society “where the voices of millions are expressed” (p.198). Thus, while the current argument for best ways to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups is that participatory spaces should be open to everyone who wants to participate, these arrangements may reproduce differences of social, political, and economic power.

Since power differences exist both within and among associations, addressing and reducing inequities of power, access, and opportunities to engage in these new spaces are
critical for the promotion of societies that are civil (Edwards, 2004a; Howell & Pearce, 2001; Naidoo & Tandon, 1999). Some hold that while those who create a space are more likely to have power within it, they may not have as much power in another (Gaventa, 2006b); others argue that power gained in one space through skills, capacity, and experience may be used to enter and affect other spaces (Howell, 2004). So while these new democratic spaces suggest people coming together with opportunities for different voices and opinions to be heard, reality is that issues of power and difference may undermine the possibility of consensual decision-making and indeed reinforce the status quo. Freedom, on the other hand, is the capacity to participate in a given space, as well as to define and shape that space.

Cornwall and Coelho (2007) conclude from empirical studies that expanding democratic engagement needs more than an invitation to participate; rather, people need first to recognize and value themselves as citizens, not as beneficiaries. While discourse on the benefits of participation assume that citizens are ready to participate if they are offered opportunities, involvement of poor and marginalized citizens is challenging, especially in post-authoritarian and post-colonial states where there is a legacy of distrustful relationships between citizens and the state. Many critics argue, too, that women are those most likely to lose out, finding themselves and their interests marginalized or overlooked in apparently ‘participatory’ processes (Cornwall, 2002). A sense of powerlessness and lack of skills and resources may prevent marginalized individuals and groups from engaging in associations or small groups (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007).

Theorists influenced by Habermas’ theory of ‘a discursive public sphere’ maintain that in addition to needing more than an invitation to participate, participants need to be provided with sufficient information and access to expertise, as well as encouragement to
engage in rational debate that instils new norms of conduct (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Fleming, 2002). Simply creating spaces may not change the ideas and assumptions some participants bring with them (Edwards, 2004a). For example, citizens who have experienced paternalism or prejudice in their daily lives may carry these expectations to the participatory sphere. In particular, for people living in poverty and subject to discrimination and exclusion from mainstream society, entering a participatory space may be intimidating. Thus, the challenge for inclusion is overcoming embedded inequities in power, access, and opportunities that undermine “the authority of subaltern actors” (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007, p.13).

Yet another complexity to expanding democratic engagement is that while civil society organizations are commonly believed to possess democratizing properties that are associated with the public sphere (Edwards, 2004a; Putnam, 2000; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007), we are reminded that civil society is only as democratizing as its practitioners. Spaces themselves, however, do not make for meaningful citizen participation; rather, it is the actors who participate in these spaces with their understanding of citizenship, demands for rights, and awareness of the possibilities of active engagement (Cornwall et al., 2008). Naidoo and Tandon (1999) add that while an important component of civil society is an environment that encourages citizen-initiated voluntary associations, it does not necessarily follow “that all associations fall within the rubric of civil society” (p.198); for example, organizations that promote intolerance and exclusion based on race, religion, ethnicity, and gender. In developing democracies, organizations may confront challenges of accountability, manipulation, and unnecessary bickering, thus weakening their structures and benefits. In addition, in some post-independence countries, the activities of civil society groups rather
than fostering the development of a democratic system in fact constitute a threat to its survival (Akinrinádé, 2004). Scholte (2002) draws attention to civil society’s ability to either enhance or undermine democracy and concludes that the role of civil society as a “force for democracy” must be further scrutinized and that civic associations must “not merely assert--but also demonstrate--their democratic credentials” (p. 299).

Addressing inequities of power, access, and opportunity are preconditions for societies that are civil, a task that some suggest should include government action since major social transformations or systemic changes in policy and economics have rarely been achieved by associations or small participatory spaces alone (Edwards, 2004; Wiesen, Prewitt, & Sobhan, 1999). Pérez-Díaz (1995), too, draws attention to “the critical importance of connections and mutual dependence between the different components of civil society” (p.99). Thus, to achieve change requires coordinated action across society, where states, business, associations, and families come together with a common purpose to address the challenges facing those who are excluded. Without civil society as the public sphere, there is no just and democratic way to reconcile different views and secure political consensus about the best way to move forward. Then again, a healthy associational life is essential to the public sphere since it is in voluntary organizations that citizens carry on their conversations regarding the common good and addressing barriers that stand in the way; otherwise, only certain voices, interests, and associations will be heard. Conditions of equality, pluralism, and independence are necessary for civil society to nurture consensus, encourage collective discussions and debates, and achieve democratic outcomes in which all can fairly participate (Edwards, 2004a).
In the new participatory spaces that are emerging, described by Isangani Serrano (cited in Wiesen et al., 1999) as “countless small circles of citizen power from below, growing into powerful civic movements” (p.137), are possibilities for addressing and reducing inequities of power, access, and opportunity, where actors with limited voice and choice may participate meaningfully, with their involvement resulting for change that satisfies their own needs and aspirations in the construction and strengthening of citizenship.

**Parental Participation\(^\text{19}\) in Children’s Schooling**

Since the late 19\(^{\text{th}}\) century when the first parent-teacher association was formed in the United States, there has been growing recognition that schools cannot shoulder the responsibility of educating children single-handedly and that parents and communities can play a vital role in their children’s education (Ball, 2005; Carreón et al., 2005; Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; Kessler-Sklar & Baker, 2000; Mattingly et al., 2002; Pattniak, 2003; Pushor, 2007; Robinson & Fine, 1994).

Over the past 30 years, many states have legislated parental participation in their children’s education. For example, in the United States, federal and state initiatives to reform schools have had an explicit and often mandated parental role (St. John, 1995). The 2003 *No Child Left Behind Act* requires schools to develop ways to get parents more involved in their child’s education and in improving schooling, especially for the neediest students (Taylor et al., 2010). In the United Kingdom the support of parents is seen as crucial in promoting effective education. A government White Paper *Excellence in Schools* (Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1997) notes that parents are a child’s first and enduring teachers and

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\(^\text{19}\) While some researchers make a clear distinction between parental *participation, involvement, and engagement* and use the terms very purposefully in their writing and research, in this paper I use the terms interchangeably to describe a wide-range of activities in which families are involved in the educational lives of their children.
informs parents of the mandatory Home-School Agreements that delineate expectations and responsibilities of schools, parents, and students. The Ontario Ministry of Education contends that education is a partnership involving parents, students, teachers, principals, school boards, government, and the community. On December 1, 2005, Ontario’s then-Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy announced a new policy on parent involvement in Ontario: the formation of a new Office of Parental Engagement along with funding to support individual school councils, school boards, and initiatives to foster parent involvement. This policy formally changed parent involvement from being an “add-on” or an “optional” resource to a core educational resource to be supported and enhanced to further help students succeed. Based on a philosophy of decentralization and democratization (Sayed, 2002), the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) legislates stakeholder participation in school governance. The Act advocates the school community own their schools and take responsibility for the education of their children. The contention is that stakeholder participation benefits both the school and the community it serves (Bush & Heystek, 2003; van Wyk, 2004).

Some argue, however, that the concept of participation has been appropriated in a neoliberal context and that misappropriation of a language of liberation (e.g., empowerment and active democratic citizenship) reflects “the New Right as a way of offloading social responsibilities on to the family, the individual and the community” (Mayo, 2003, p. 40), especially in environments characterized by stringent budgets. Vally and Spreen (2010) add that in the case of South Africa “community participation in the governance of education has not led to the diminution of the disparities between rich and poor as many had hoped” (p. 134).
Multidimensional character of parental participation

In a review of literature of parents’ participation in their children’s education, I discovered that neither researchers nor participants--parents, other family members, teachers, administrators, and policymakers--share a common understanding of what is meant by parental involvement (Carreón et al., 2005; Edwards, 2004b). There is, however, growing consensus that the construct of parental involvement should be conceived of as multidimensional, characterized by a wide range of activities (Fan, 2001; Mattingly et al., 2002). For example, Epstein’s typology of parental involvement (2001) includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, support for learning at home, participation in decision making, and collaborating with the community. While parental involvement is assumed to contribute to children’s development and success, Corter and Pelletier (2005) argue that typologies do not explain the influence of context or “the way various forms of involvement lead to processes producing outcomes” (p. 8). Wantz and Messner (1994), on the other hand, define the roles of parents, students, and the school in their model of a parent-centred school. Other models explain parents’ involvement in their children’s schooling as constituting a transformative process in which parents draw on multiple experiences and resources to define their interaction with schools and school actors (Carreón et al., 2005; Swap cited in Edwards, 2004b). Borg (2001) contends that parent involvement, if a genuine attempt at grassroots participatory democracy and accompanied by systemic reform of organizational structures and leadership of schools, is known to have brought substantial changes in individual schools and their communities, a new paradigm where we move away from the traditional image of schools as places community members rarely enter to the transformation of the school into a community hub (Ball, 2005; Borg; Pushor, 2007; Wantz & Messner, 1994).
Many (e.g., Carreón et al., 2005; Edwards, 2004b; Smith, Dannison, & Vach-Hasse, 1998) note that parental involvement literature refers to parents in a homogeneous manner, with little attention to the transformation the family as a social institution has experienced and the ways these changes influence not only the way in which we understand what constitutes a family but also the function of the family unit. Edwards, working with low socioeconomic families, defines family involvement as a partnership between families, teachers, and members of the community who are brought together to achieve common goals. She emphasizes that this collaboration is a developmental process built over a period of time through the intentional planning and effort of every team member, in which families and teachers work, learn, and participate in decision-making experiences together (Borg, 2001; Edwards).

**Benefits of parental involvement in schooling**

Society in general and educational researchers in particular have long been interested in the potential positive effect of the involvement of parents and the wider community on students’ learning. A positive learning environment at home and high expectations of children’s success have been found to have a powerful impact on student achievement across all social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. When teachers collaborate closely with parents and community members, academics contend that all involved reap the benefits of a school that nurtures the learning of its students (Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Edwards, 2004b; Pattniak, 2003; Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005; Robinson & Fine, 1994).

For students, Parental involvement has long been shown to correlate with improved academic performance, higher test scores, more positive attitudes towards school, higher homework completion rates, academic perseverance, lower dropout rates, and few suspensions (Epstein, 2001; Fan, 2001; Grolnick, Benjet, Kurowski, & Apostoleris, 1997;
Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Robinson & Fine, 1994; St. John, 1995; Wantz & Messner, 1994).

For teachers and parents. Robinson and Fine’s study (1994) found that apart from benefits to students, parental involvement has advantages for teachers and parents. Teachers’ feelings of personal efficacy have been found to be related to parent involvement as well as to their perceptions of parent support. Teachers with a higher sense of personal efficacy are likely to judge parents as more able to produce intended effects for their children. Also, teachers who view their students’ parents as more effective experience higher levels of efficacy themselves. For parents, especially those in disadvantaged communities, in addition to opportunities to learn about child development and early childhood pedagogy, participation in their child’s school often enhances their confidence to parent and to become further involved in their community. Parents who contribute to their child’s school “suddenly ‘own’ it in a new way and . . . feel freer to ask questions and make suggestions to improve the quality of education and care” (O’Gara et al., 1999, p. 9). Parent involvement also helps to create a sense of the parent group as a community with shared interest in its children, stimulates teamwork, demonstrates the power of communal action, and builds the skills needed to make future community action successful (O’Gara et al.).

For schools. Research also shows schools are rated as more effective and present more successful school programs where parents are involved in their children’s education (Robinson & Fine, 1994).

Predictors of parent involvement

Parents’ expectations and beliefs, socioeconomic status (SES), sense of efficacy, social networks, and parenting styles are factors to consider as predictors of parent
involvement. Research has found that parents believe that involvement in children’s schooling is a normal requirement and responsibility of parenting and expect they will be actively engaged with teachers and children in supporting learning (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2001; McNamara et al., 2000; O'Gara et al., 1999). Findings also show parents often continue their involvement in their children’s schooling despite concerns about their own personal limitations or children’s learning difficulties. In addition, parents appear to involve themselves in their children’s schooling because they perceive invitations from their child or the child’s teacher suggesting their involvement is wanted and expected. In fact, teacher invitations have been found more influential than SES in motivating involvement (Hoover-Dempsey et al.).

Some studies have shown that parents with higher income and more education tend to be more involved in their children’s education and that parent involvement varies according to parents’ racial and ethnic background (Grolnick et al., 1997; Sheldon, 2002; Zellman & Waterman, 1998); others suggest that SES, formal education, and racial background alone do not adequately explain which parents get actively involved in their children’s education (Grolnick et al.; Sheldon, 2002). In their study, McNamara and his colleagues (2000) discovered, contrary to the differentiated socioeconomic parent typologies some teachers hold, that working class and poor parents may be as involved, committed, and even passionate about education as their middle class counterparts.

Gender is also a predictor of parent involvement, as studies show differences in the nature and extent with regard to the involvement of mothers and fathers in educational activities at home and school (McNamara et al., 2000). Mothers are often the default category in parent-child involvement with respect to low-income minority communities
(Jackson & Remillard, 2005), while mothers who are employed full time are less involved in their children’s education compared to those who are employed part time (Weiss et al., 2003).

Sheldon’s 2002 study supports the argument that social networks comprise social capital and suggests that this type of resource may affect students’ education through its effects on parental behaviour. In addition to network size, the individuals with whom parents interact seem to be associated with the way parents are involved in their children’s schooling. The number of parents with children at the same school and with whom a parent interacts predicts parental involvement at school. In contrast, the number of other adults (e.g., relatives, educators, and/or parents with children at other schools) with whom a parent speaks about her own child predicts parent involvement at home. Sheldon suggests that current school practices that facilitate parent involvement focus on educator-parent relationships but should perhaps be encouraging parent networks to form and function in support of the school and students.

Interestingly, research suggests that a positive parenting style, parental enthusiasm, and being nurtured by both parents are more important in predicting successful academic outcomes for children than the extent to which the parents are involved at school (Lee & Bax, 2002; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Zellman and Waterman’s findings suggest that parenting style is not enmeshed in a social context defined by poverty, wealth, or ethnic background and that parenting styles may be both teachable and changeable. Thus, focusing those concerned with the development and well-being of children on improved parenting may produce more significant and long-lasting effects on children than other types of parental involvement programs (Zellman & Waterman).
Community participation in early childhood development

Since the setting of this case study is community-based early childhood education centre, I sought examples of parental and community participation in similar programs internationally, including South Africa. Community engagement exists along a continuum from simply using a service to greater degrees of participation: passive involvement through attendance at meetings; participation in consultation on particular issues; involvement in actual delivery of a service; and decision-making power with respect to services (Ball et al., 2002). While mobilizing communities often presents challenges, studies show that the greater the community participation in early childhood care and education programs in local decision-making--planning, delivery, and evaluation--the greater the impact on building citizenship and community, strengthening social cohesion, and furthering overall community goals (Ball, 2005; Ball et al., 2002; Corter & Pelletier, 2005; Ramphale, 2002). Dahlberg and her colleagues (1999) add that early childhood settings have “the potential to become forums in civil society and, as such, contribute to a participant democracy and active citizenship” (p. 11).

Researchers (e.g., Ball et al., 2002; Corter & Peters, 2011) and practitioners increasingly recognize the importance of community involvement in developing and delivering integrated early childhood development programs. When services and parent support programs are added to childhood education and care programs, the potential is seen to improve child outcomes and overall family wellbeing, especially for struggling and vulnerable families. By participating in early childhood program development, delivery, and management, and by working with their own and others’ children, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners believe that parents, and, in fact, whole communities have the potential to
grow and develop in ways that enrich their own lives as well as those of their children (Ball et al., 2002; Munford, et al., 2007; Mohite & Bhatt, 2008; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008).

Moss (1996) adds that services for young children that “focus on only one function are a wasted opportunity and a failure to respond to the complex needs of children and families” since “education cannot be easily separated from needs for care, socialisation, support, and community cohesion” (p. 20). His vision, as is that of others (e.g., Arimura et al., 2011) is for services for young children, families, and local communities that are “comprehensive, coherent and flexible, integrated within one system, and conceived of as a local resource and institution, responsive to local needs, conditions and values” (Moss, p. 29).

Examples of community development among marginalized groups with respect to early childhood care and education programs provide evidence that meaningful community involvement can occur in environments where material resources are scarce. In the United States, Head Start, a federal preschool program for low-income children defines families by their strengths rather than their deficiencies. Besides promoting school readiness, the program provides comprehensive services to enrolled children and their families, which include health, nutrition, and social services (Office of Head Start, 2012). In New Mexico’s Family Development Program, founded through a grant from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, the development of early childhood care and education programs by and for predominantly minority families became a vehicle for community development. Through the creation of a preschool program that included parent involvement and education, family support, infant and toddler services, and an after-school program for older children, children
and parents benefitted: school performance and attendance of children improved, and many families gained economic independence and a greater degree of civic involvement.

Examples in the developing countries also illustrate that community participation in early childhood education and care programs may benefit young children, their families, and the wider community. After Kenya’s independence in 1963, pre-school centres expanded rapidly in response to President Kenyatta’s call for *Harambee*, “pulling and pushing together” (Prochner & Kabiru, 2008, p.127). Harambee encompasses principles of community initiatives based on joint efforts, mutual assistance, responsibility and community self-reliance. PROMESA started in 1978 in the Choco region of Colombia as a project that focused on the development of children but soon evolved into a comprehensive community development process led by community members (Ball et al., 2002). A 2004 PROMESA report highlights improvements in health, nutrition, sanitation, general health, infant mortality, rates of malaria, housing, employment opportunities, income levels, community cooperation and activities, “but the most striking changes were in the children and in the women who participate in the program” (Arango & Nimnicht, 2004).

Researchers (e.g., Atmore, 1993; Atmore, King, & Florence, 1994; Ball, 2005; O’Gara et al., 1999) contend that in disadvantaged communities concern for the needs and well-being of young children often provide the catalyst—the hook—for community development. They argue that strategies for the provision of services for pre-school children need to take into consideration the needs of the whole child within the context of the family and community as a whole. Supporting their argument, they (Atmore et al., p. 5) quote from a van Leer Foundation document:

> . . . the potential for change should be considered within the local setting, by and for the people whose lives it most closely affects. Education should take
into account the place of the learner within the specific family and community settings if it to be of value; family and communities can thus be helped to better their own environment, within their own terms of reference, as an essential means for balanced social and individual development.

Several scholars agree (e.g., Ball, 2005; Atmore et al., 1994) that community-based early childhood care and education programs rest on the following principles: While retaining as much responsibility for the child as possible, the family should receive the support it needs. In addition, the community should decide what services are needed and be responsible for setting up and managing the services or at least be actively involved in the provision. Although professionalization of services is not important, using, as far as possible, the skills of community members is encouraged (O’ Gara et al, 1999). In this way, early childhood care and education programs not only educate children but involve families and communities.

Ball and her colleagues (2002) contend that in some respects Majority World countries are more successful than more affluent countries in providing coordinated, community-based services to children and families because they are constructing systems from the ground up. By contrast, North American and European countries are faced with highly developed service infrastructures that have become entrenched in bureaucratic structures and traditions that tend to largely exclude community perspectives. As such, researchers see Majority World communities providing examples of alternative approaches to the delivery of early childhood care and education programs and evidence of the contribution of community development in the provision of early childhood education and care programs.

**Barriers to family-school partnerships**

Despite evidence that family-school relationships appear to be beneficial to all involved, these partnerships are often difficult to create and maintain (Edwards, 2004b;
Robinson & Fine, 1994). While governments on one hand promote parental involvement in school-improvement decisions, on the other, centralized control of planning and budgeting leaves little room for a parental role that influences decisions at the school level (Marais, 2011; St. John, 1995). Collaboration among policymakers in the design of parent involvement programs could have a powerful influence on student learning; however, like many mandated reforms, the intent of involving parents in educational decision processes in schools has seldom been fully realized (Develin-Scherer & Develin-Scherer, 1994). For example, Marais contends that, on the whole, to date the involvement of the School Governing Bodies in managing South African schools has been ‘feeble’.

Although they want the same outcome—the best for the child’s education—barriers can hinder a positive relationship between home and school (McNamara et al., 2000; Robinson & Fine, 1994). One challenge is a lack of clarity of boundaries between schools and families that can lead to confusion and frustration regarding expectations. In other cases, communication between home and school can become ritualized and impersonal, causing feelings of alienation and uncertainty about the sincerity of the other. The professional jargon of educators can also leave parents confused and frustrated. The challenge, thus, for schools is to be sensitive to how to communicate meaningfully with different parents so as not to talk above or below them (Robinson & Fine).

Less than positive home-school relations are often based on parent and teacher beliefs and assumptions about the other that undermine constructive collaboration and problem solving (Pattniak, 2003; Robinson & Fine, 1994). While parents do not deny teachers’ competence and authority in terms of pedagogy and content, parents sometimes perceive that teachers look down on parents and parental involvement, and once negative perceptions
occur, they can build into a stronger sense of “we” versus “they” (Robinson & Fine). Some studies suggest tensions are created when teachers do not always appreciate the cultural conflict that exists between the school and family in the context of values, beliefs, and behavioural norms with parents from minority ethnic groups (McNamara et al., 2000). To dismiss some of these barriers between teachers and parents, the leadership of the principal in his/her vision for the development of the school must aim to promote a culture of co-operation between school and home (Borg, 2001). Also, pre-service and in-service teachers need to be exposed during their professional development to strategies involving parents, to improving communication with parents, to interpersonal skills for working with parents, to models for parent involvement, and to the development of a community school (Bridgemohan, van Wyk, & van Staden, 2005; Keyes, 2002; Young & Hite, 1994).

Difficulties also exist in the home-school relationship for today’s families that face multiple demands (e.g., two-parent households where both parents work; long hours parents spend at work; an increasing number of low-income, single-parent families; income not enough to cover living costs; families headed by grandparents or children), with women most affected as they continue to bear primary responsibility for negotiating the demands of work and family (Bridgemohan et al., 2005; Sheldon, 2002; Smith et al., 1998; Weiss et al., 2003). In addition, a parent’s own negative school experiences, not feeling welcome or invited by the school, and not being given clear directions to help their children can hinder parental collaboration (Borg, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; St. John, 1995). Studies have found schools that serve poor students are often not welcoming places for their parents, many of whom have failed at education themselves (St. John).
Most families care about their children’s success but need more and better information from schools and communities to become and remain productively involved in their children’s education. This includes parents with lower incomes, less formal education, and those who do not speak English or read it well. Since structures, processes, and practices of the connections between home, school, and the community determine the success or failure of these connections, a framework for conceptualizing parent involvement is important (Edwards, 2004b).

Addressing these barriers is important if parents and educators are to work together productively (Carreón et al., 2005; Robinson & Fine, 1994; Wantz and Messner, 1994). Since having a voice in their children’s education is appropriate and legitimate for parents, the school has a responsibility to assist and support all parents in becoming knowledgeable and confident participants in the educational process. If schools continue to implement, even with the best intentions, parent participation programs without listening to parents’ voice, their particular needs and hopes, these programs will remain stagnant and do little to reduce the marked distance between home and school (Borg, 2001; Freire, 1970; Robinson & Fine).

**Evaluation of parent involvement programs**

Research, however, shows that presence and representation do not necessarily mean that parents and educators work well together or equally share decision-making, nor does it ensure the academic success of their children (Borg, 2001; Corter & Pelletier, 2005; McNamara et al., 2000; St. John, 1995). While many programs have been developed to promote parent involvement, some studies show there is little substantial evidence to indicate a causal relationship between interventions designed to increase parent participation and improvements in student learning (Corter & Pelletier; Mattingly et al., 2002; Young & Hite,
1994; Zellman & Waterman, 1998). Mattingly and his colleagues’ (2002) evaluation of 41 parent involvement programs in the United States found “flaws in the evidence upon which academic and political support for these programs is sometimes based” (p. 571). Besides deficiencies and lack of rigour in evaluation design and data collection techniques, the researchers encountered subjective indicators of effectiveness as well as lack of control groups to account for maturation and history effects. Their analysis also revealed inattention to the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of families that participated in these programs, possibly perpetuating an ecological fallacy about poor, non-white communities. Given “the far-reaching educational and financial implications” (p. 550), Mattingly and his colleagues (2002) advocate for empirical support for the idea that parental involvement can improve children’s academic achievement.

**Adult Education and Transformation**

The resurgence of interest in civil society, small spaces, and associational life is found also in adult education. Today, civil society is seen by many academics in an emancipatory way as providing space for the poor and excluded—a sphere of learning, democratic struggle, social movements, and political change (Fleming, 2002; Lalitha & Prasad, 2011; Mayo, 1999; Mezirow, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Stromquist, 1999); others, however, (e.g., Todes et al., 2010) question whether new participatory spaces are realizing their transformative potential, particularly for disadvantaged individuals and groups.

For women, especially those in postcolonial societies, small spaces may offer opportunities to discuss their experiences and desires, addressing immediate problems linked to basic needs as well as macro-level issues such as gender-fair legislation and access to credit (Hickling-Hudson, 1999). Studies in India and South America illustrate that in spaces
exclusively for women, their self-concepts are changed as they acquire skills and insights to analyze and challenge their situations of subordination (Gaventa, 2006a) and “turn fear into understanding” (Stromquist, 1999, p.195), and then design and implement strategies for tackling their problems (Hickling-Hudson). In thinking about gender and education in the context of developing countries, Stromquist believes that the education of women improves not only the lives of women themselves but also their potential and capacity to contribute to the wider community.

In order to understand adult learning that may, or may not, occur in the space provided by the pre-school in this study, I first examine recent ideas on the goals of adult lifelong learning. I then discuss briefly the importance of sociocultural context in adult education and the concept of *ubuntu* with its focus on the interconnectedness of community, relationships, and learning. Next, I consider instructional approaches and strategies that support African worldview and goals for education. The section ends with a short overview of the notion of transformation through education.

**The goal of adult education**

Education, many have argued, is essential for the practice of democratic citizenship, with Freire leading the way:

A literacy program must include political aims to build citizenship; the capacity to understand the world, to establish relations between facts and problems demands the politicization of persons, the political comprehension of the world, permanent curiosity, the right to participate, mobilize and organize the grassroots groups” (Freire interview in Stromquist, 1999, p.217).

At the 1998 UNESCO conference on Higher Education in Mumbai, a statement framing lifelong learning was produced: “We see a key purpose of lifelong learning as democratic citizenship” (cited in Preece, 2009). The South African Development
Community’s (SADC) Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training, too, defines the key purpose of adult learning as “democratic citizenship, connecting individuals and groups to the structures of political and economic activity in both local and global contexts” (Aitcheson, 2003). Thus, while the legacy of apartheid lingers in South Africa, various formal and informal initiatives have been implemented to improve the level of education of adults and women in particular (as discussed in Chapter Three).

*Traditional African education*

Traditional African education that takes place in a social and cultural context that emphasizes collective aspects of learning and includes concepts such as interconnectedness, community, and respect. This concept of interdependency within a community focuses attention on mutual, trusting, and understanding relationships where relationships with others and respect for those relationship are the foundation of all information and knowledge (Muyia Nafukho, 2006; Venter, 2004).

Positive and ethical human relationships are deeply rooted value in African society and central to *ubuntu*, a concept that links self to and forms part of the community as expressed in the Xhosa saying *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (‘I am because we are’). A human being is human through other human beings; the human being exists and develops only in relationship with others (Venter, 2004), a worldview of the interconnectedness of persons, their reverence to remote ancestors, their immediate forebears, those living, and those yet to be born (Preece, 2009). While individuality is not negated, the individual taking precedence over the community is discouraged. The community and belonging to the community are part of the essence of traditional African life; the individual is born into the African community and is inseparable from the community (Venter). “Whatever happens to
the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual” (Venter, p. 151).

According to African worldviews, the ideal person is one who has the virtues of sharing and compassion. The individual has a social commitment to share what she has with others and is valued for kindness, generosity, hard work, honour and respect, and living in harmony (Teffo, 1996). Solidarity is created through self-awareness, through awareness of self in relation to others.

While colonialism, apartheid, and urbanization have disrupted the “daily living of connectedness” that Krog (2008, p. 357) describes as having broken down bonds of nuclear and extended family, she argues that first generation urban amaXhosa are seeking to revitalize or at least maintain the spirit of *ubuntu*.

**Socio-cultural context**

Sociocultural theorists stress the importance of the social and cultural nature of adult education arguing that learning is an everyday event that is social in nature because it occurs with other people in a setting that provides tools to support and structure the cognitive process (Ntseane, 2006; Wenger, 1998; Wenger & Snyder, 2000; Wilson, 1993). Here, the process of knowledge and skill acquisition is a communal or collaborative activity not one whereby individuals make knowledge their own independently of other contextual influences, but one in which they can make it their own in a community of others who recognise and share a sense of belonging and knowing within a context (Bruner 1986). In 1916, Dewey emphasized the significance of the social environment that he contends . . . is truly educative in the degree in which an individual shares or participates in some conjoint activity. By doing his (sic) share in the associated activity, the individual appropriates the purpose which actuates it, becomes familiar with its methods and subject matters, acquires needed skills, and is saturated with its emotional spirit (p. 26).
Similarly, Lindemann (1926) declares that “the approach to adult education will be via the route of situations, not subjects” (p. 6).

Moreover, a situational learning perspective holds that most thinking and learning is a communal or collaborative activity. The process of knowledge and skill acquisition is not one whereby individuals make their knowledge their own independently of other contextual influences, but one in which they can make it their own in a community of others who recognize and share a sense of belonging within a context (Bruner, 1986).

Wenger (1998) identifies groups who share a common sense of purpose and a desire to learn as communities of practice. In these communities, bound into a social entity, Wenger contends that learning happens as people negotiate and renegotiate the meanings of shared experiences. Here, too, he believes people organize themselves to produce a capacity for practical action to respond to physical, social, and cultural challenges within their environment. Wenger argues that the group’s shared vision for a better community is the glue that holds these groups together.

The concept of culture20, too, is a critical consideration in a study of adult education. Lev Vygotsky (1999), one of the earliest pioneers of sociocultural learning theory, based his work on the concept that all human activities take place in a cultural context with many levels of interactions, shared beliefs, values, knowledge, skills, structured relationships, and symbol systems. Vygotsky contends that these activities and interactions are mediated through the use of tools, either technical (e.g., machines, computers, measuring cups) or psychological (e.g., language, counting, writing, and strategies for learning), provided by the culture—tools that ensure linguistically created meanings have shared social meanings.

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20 Taylor (1874), a cultural anthropologist, defined culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (cited in Cole, 2005)
**Experiential learning**

Together with a collective approach to knowing, African learning traditionally occurs in “the direct participation of the events of life” (Houle, 1980, p. 221) and focuses on relevant and genuine issues (Knowles, 1973; Marienau & Reed, 2008). Since the purpose of African learning is the development of “the whole person, a lifelong learner who is cultured, respectful, integrated, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the family and neighbours” (Omolewa, 2007, p. 596), adults learn those things they need to know “to cope effectively with their real life situations” (Knowles, 1980, p. 60). In addition, in traditional African society, knowledge is accumulated by observing and experiencing the social and natural worlds, a principle that recognizes the link between knowledge and experience (Dei, 2008).

In traditional settings, Africans learn through informal and non-formal channels rather than through formalized organizational structures and facilities as in the West (Fordjor et al., 2003; Ntseane, 2006). Traditionally, teaching takes place during a long period of apprenticeship during which the learner submits himself and devotes his service completely to the teacher in a relationship of mutual trust and understanding (LeGrand, Farmer, & Buckmaster, 1993; Omolewa, 2007).

**Narrative, dialogue, and singing**

In African education, an oral tradition places importance on narrative, dialogue, and singing. Traditionally a people’s origin, history, culture, and religion, the meaning and reality of life, as well as morals, norms, and survival techniques are orally transmitted (Omolewa, 2007). Expressed in stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, and in rituals, knowledge, community laws, and values are passed from one generation to the next (Dei, 2008; Obiechina, 1993). Therefore, opportunities to tell their own stories and to listen to the stories of others are
valuable and valued teaching tools (Omolewa). Singing is also an integral part of life for black South Africans. Mothers sing to their children, and the children themselves sing when they are very young. People sing solo, in groups and en masse at work, at play, in church, in the fields, as they walk along the street, at political rallies and trade union meetings, and now at many funerals. The singing is a different kind of singing than one hears in the West. An individual sings a line, the crowd takes the theme, repeats it and harmonizes, until another person embellishes the first theme or starts a new one. In this spontaneous creativity, Sparks (1990) believes that “all are bound by a spirit of unity and uplifted morale” (p.229).

In African education dialogue is also central to meaning making and for democratic power relations between teacher and participants (Freire, 1970; Gouthro, 2007; Ntseane, 2006). In conversations with others, the adult learner is able to connect with, learn from, or challenge the different experiences and interpretations of others (Belenky et al., 2000). Through the development of relationships of trust adults are able to openly and honestly reflect on events in their lives, often further rich learning opportunities (Marienau & Reed, 2008).

**Transformative potential of adult education**

Many researchers (e.g. Classen et al., 2008; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Yeoh & Annadurai, 2008) suggest that adult learning has the potential to enhance the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of marginalized and excluded groups, enabling them to enter and engage in participatory spaces--invited and created--with transformative potential. Indeed, central to Habermas’ view of change is that transforming the world must involve “not a revolutionary transformation of society, but the creation and protection of spaces within which a radical concept of democracy, as a process of shared learning carried out in and through communicative action, might flourish” (Fleming, 2002, p.127).
Since adults bring prior skills and knowledge as well as assumptions, emotions, and beliefs to new learning situations, adult educators advocate including time for teaching and learning as well as reflection on experiences (Marienau & Reed, 2008). Theorists (e.g., Cranston, 1992; Marieneau & Reed; Venter, 2004) believe that enhancing the development of self-awareness encourages change in self-perception and self-concept, based on the belief of the critical relationship between learners’ self-concept and learning (Cranston).

Transformation theory suggests that adults learn as a result of transforming frames of reference (Taylor, 2008) where “a frame of reference is the structure of assumptions within which sense perceptions are interpreted and by so doing, experience . . . created” (Fleming, 2002, p.1) and assumptions beliefs about reality that are taken for granted and usually unquestioned. Fleming contends that a more fully developed frame of reference is one that is more inclusive, more integrative of experience, and also more open to alternative perspectives. Thus, transformative learning is the process of becoming aware through critical reflection of the frame of reference in which an individual thinks, feels, and acts, an individual becoming aware of the origins of his or her history and culture, searching for a new more developed frame, and acting on the basis of the new frame of reference (Fleming, 2002; Freire, 1970; Kabeer, 2005; Mayo, 1999; Merrifield, 2001; Rowlands, 1997; Taylor, 2008). Promoting the capacity to reflect on their situation, to question, form opinions and express them, and then to act is the starting point to challenging exclusion and constructing citizenship (Kabeer, 2002; Merrifield): “the stirrings of a willingness to contest their devalued status on the part of subordinate groups marks the beginnings of their journey from subject to citizen” (p. 21).
Allied to the development of critical consciousness is a sense of agency and efficacy — the sense of confidence to act and of self-worth (Lalitha & Prasad, 2011). Kabeer (1999) describes agency as the process by which people who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices—those “that are critical for people to live the lives they want”—acquire such an ability (p. 437). Agency, therefore, is seen as the capacity of individuals to have control over defining their own life choices and to pursue their goals to improve their circumstances at both the personal and community level (Batliwala, 1994; Mosedale, 2005; Stromquist, 1995).

While some believe that agency not only extends the boundaries of action but also widens “the horizons of possibility” (Cornwall & Edwards, 2010, p. 3), what people imagine themselves being able to be and do, for others (e.g., Mosedale, 2005) the notion of agency is more limiting: “the process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have in the past been restricted . . . from being and doing (p. 252).

While mainstream empowerment discourse simplifies the process to a linear connection between choice, action, and outcome, choice is context-specific, depending not only on the broader social, cultural and political environments, but also on the circumstances of particular women. Thus, while education and participation in civil society are seen by many as playing a role in achieving positive outcomes, change in the lives of most marginalized people is incremental. Cornwall and Edwards (2010) argue optimistically, however, that “working within existing limits is often necessary to achieve small gains with the hope these may ripple out to bring broader changes” (p. 7).
Chapter Summary

Contemporary thinking conceptualizes citizenship as both legal status and active practice, a notion that views citizens as having capacity to exercise agency. Through participation within civil society spaces, citizens are seen as having opportunities to construct citizenship that builds a sense of self and allows them to recognize themselves as actors capable of making choices for change that satisfy their own needs and aspirations. Researchers suggest that adult learning is essential for the practice of democratic citizenship since the enhancement of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of marginalized and excluded groups has the potential to enable them to enter and engage in participatory spaces--invited and created--with transformative potential.

Of particular interest in this study is African adult learning that traditionally focuses on relevant and genuine issues and emphasizes collective aspects of learning, including concepts such as interconnectedness, community, and respect. This notion of interdependency focuses attention on trust and understanding, where relationships with others and respect for those relationship are the foundation of all information and knowledge. According to traditional African worldview, the ideal person is one who has the virtues of sharing and compassion, and solidarity is created through awareness of self in relation to others.

In addition to providing opportunities for learning, theorists contend that association with like-minded others creates a sense of community cohesion, crucial to the health of a democracy and core to the idea of civil society. While parent-teacher associations have historically been spaces where families have participated in their children’s schooling, there is growing recognition worldwide that parental engagement is positively associated not only
with children’s cognitive and social-emotion development but also with strengthening social cohesion and furthering overall community goals. In fact, some suggest that early childhood education and care settings have the potential to contribute to a participant democracy and active citizenship.

Although some contend that new spaces and opportunities emerging worldwide for citizen participation offer opportunities for learning and transformation, others argue that participatory spaces do not necessarily address inequities of power, access, and opportunity, a task they suggest should include government action since major social transformations or systemic changes have rarely been achieved by associations or small participatory spaces alone.
CHAPTER THREE: EDUCATION IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA
Echoes of the Past and Imaging the Future

... this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people’s talents and capabilities. (Preamble to the South African Schools Act, 1996)

To understand the context of this study in terms of the space—a pre-school in a South African township—and the participants, a brief historical perspective is important, with particular reference to both adult and young children learners. In spite of the new government’s emphasis on “the introduction of policies and mechanisms aimed at redressing the legacy of a racially and ethnically fragmented, dysfunctional and unequal education system”, the legacy of colonialism and apartheid lingers almost 20 years after the first democratic elections (Cross, Mungadi & Rouhani, 2002, p. 171). The reality for many South Africans is the country’s continuing unequal social structure, with inequalities still exhibiting strong racial, class, gendered, and spatial patterns established under apartheid (Marais, 2011; Spreen & Vally, 2010; UNICEF, 2006). In their analysis, Spreen and Vally (2010) suggest that although South Africa has an “impressive compendium of education policies recognized the world over” (p. 443), these reforms have failed to provide realistic solutions for the majority of South Africans, and a significant distance between policy and practice persists (Spreen & Vally; McKay, 2007; Spreen & Vally 2006). Agreeing with other policy analysts, Spreen and Vally (2010) conclude that despite a strong commitment by the democratic movement in the early 1990s to the provision of more equitable and just education, “elitist policies driven by neoliberal market ideology” (p. 438) continue to privilege the white minority and growing black elite.
A wealthy country by continental standards, South Africa is also one of the most unequal societies in the world, with the Gini coefficient\(^{21}\) of 0.63 in 2009 (World Bank, 2013); in fact, analysis suggests that inequality has been increasing since the fall of apartheid in 1994. In 2007, close to half of South Africa’s population of approximately 49 million lived in poverty with more than one-third unable to find steady waged work (Marais, 2011). Unemployment is highly racialized, gendered and geographically unevenly distributed. Of those unemployed, over 70% are under 35 years of age, with black women in rural areas faring worse in comparison to men and those in urban areas (Vally et al., 2008). While incomes of 49% of African household were less than R1,760\(^{22}\) a month, by comparison, only 2% of white households fell in that bracket (Statistics SA, 2008). South African women bear the burden of poverty: forty-five percent of female-headed households live below the poverty line, as opposed to 26% of male-headed households. The migrant labour system and urbanization have eroded traditional family structures, so poor, female-headed households are common. If women are able to obtain employment, often precarious and poorly paid with no benefits (Statistics SA, 2008), they have the double burden of having to work and carry out their traditional functions at home (McKay, 2007).

In addition to widespread poverty and unemployment, South Africa has high levels of crime and violence. Since many crimes fail to be reported or make police record, official statistics, in fact, undercount the number of crimes that are committed. Explanations for high levels of crime are the country’s ongoing political and socio-economic transition, the

\(^{21}\) Gini-coefficient, the most commonly used measure of inequality, varies between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality (one person has all the income or consumption, all others have none).

\(^{22}\) In February 2013 the Bank of Canada exchange rate was $1 CDN (Canadian dollar) = R 8.9 ZAR (South African rand).
connection between the country’s violent past, the impact of the proliferation of firearms, the growth in organised crime, changes in the demographic composition of the country through immigration, and the consequences of a poorly performing criminal justice system. Crime, however, does not affect all people uniformly; the likelihood of the average person falling victim to crime is strongly influenced by, among other things, his or her age, income, place of residence, and circle of friends and acquaintances. At greatest risk of becoming victims of interpersonal violent crime are the young, the poor, and township residents (Marais, 2011: Schönteich & Louw, 2001).

Exacerbating the situation is South Africa’s position at the centre of the global AIDS epidemic. In 2011 an estimated 5.38 million people—16.6% of the adult population aged 15 to 49 years—were living with HIV; this number includes almost one in three women aged 25 to 29 and over a quarter of men aged 30 to 34 (Statistics South Africa, 2011). An additional burden to society are an estimated 3.7 million AIDS orphans (Vally et al., 2008). Another approximately 150,000 children live in child-only households where older children, themselves vulnerable to abuse and to contracting HIV, are often compelled to leave school in order to work and to look after their younger siblings.

Aware of the political and ideological value of social protection for repairing state legitimacy and fostering political consent, social policy has been associated with interventions aimed at reducing poverty and providing some protection against destitution (Marais, 2011). As Marais claims: Social grants—Disability, Old Age, Child Support, Foster Child, and Care Dependency—“have turned out to be the single most effective anti-poverty tool deployed after 1994” (p. 3). In spite of the Finance Ministry’s contention that continued expansion of social grants is unsustainable, the number of grant beneficiaries increased
significantly after 2000 and then rose steeply after 2003 as eligibility was broadened. Initially targeting children up to the age of six, eligibility for the grant has been extended to 14-year-olds. In 2000, 450,000 children, most AIDS orphans, benefitted from the foster-child grant awarded to families and kin taking care of these children. The estimated 2.6 million recipients of pensions and social grants in 1994 increased to 5.85 million in 2003 and totaled 14 million in 2010 (Marais). Today, social grants contribute more than half the income of the poorest 20% of South African households, and more than six million children receive social grants (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

The Legacy of Colonialism and Apartheid

The implications of apartheid for education were far-reaching and persist in serving to entrench inequalities along racial lines. From the time the first school opened for slaves of the Dutch East India Company in 1658, education in South Africa was characterized by inequalities that intensified with policies implemented by the white Nationalist government in 1948. The separation of education along racial lines was a clear indication that those in power, the whites, perceived that they were superior to Africans, the majority of the population. The Bantu Education Commission of 1951 removed the control of African education from the Christian missions, private groups, and non-government organizations and placed it in the hands of the Department of Native Affairs. The commission reasoned that a different syllabus would be required to prepare Africans for their ‘special’ place in society (Davenport & Saunders, 2000). In 1953, Dr. Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, declared, “When I have control over native [Africans’] education, I will reform it so that the natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans [white people] is not for them” (Thompson, 2001, p. 191). Schools for African children began emphasizing tribalism,
obedience to authority, and rigid discipline; to make matters worse, they were overcrowded, poorly maintained and equipped, and staffed with un- or under-qualified teachers.

In 1976, an uprising in the township of Soweto spread to other townships when the South African government made Afrikaans the compulsory language of instruction in schools, and African school children protested about being taught in the language of the oppressor. During the protests, more than 600 hundred people, 138 of them children under the age of 18, died. For years, thousands of African pupils stayed away from school, depriving a whole generation of an education.

The apartheid master plan controlled--economically, socially, psychologically, and spiritually--the education of black South Africans, leaving African parents with two options: exposing their children to inferior Bantu education, or giving them no education at all. The lack of compulsory education, and the fact that the schools were sites of the liberation struggle, meant that many children did not attend or had disrupted attendance between 1976 and 1994, leaving many without education.

At the end of apartheid, schooling in South African was in a state of disarray. Beginning in 1994, the new democratically elected government of Nelson Mandela had the momentous task of implementing not only a new education act but also of building new schools and repairing those that had been vandalized. Another problem that needed attention was the lingering hostility towards government-provided education that had developed over the preceding 20 years (Davenport & Saunders, 2000).

Given South Africa’s authoritarian and violent past, the government of South Africa has since 1994 endeavoured to create a racially equitable government education system by making changes in school funding, teacher training, and curriculum at school, provincial, and
national levels. Based on an explicit commitment to education for democracy, the South African Department of Education’s goal is to create teachers who are democratic professionals, “expected to play a community, citizenship and pastoral role . . . and promote democratic values and practices in schools and society (Department of Education, 2001, p. 29). New governance structures to involve parents, teachers, and learners in more democratic forms of decision-making and school organization were also introduced. While post-apartheid education policy has emphasized the role of education in helping create a more democratic and peaceful society, 20 years after the first democratic elections huge inequalities persist, especially in schools located in townships and rural communities (Harber & Mncube, 2012; Spreen & Vally, 2006). Indeed, Spreen and Vally argue that lack of access to quality and relevant education to be a human rights issue since they believe “education operates as a multiplier, enhancing the enjoyment of all individual rights and freedoms where the right to education is effectively guaranteed, while depriving people of the enjoyment of many rights and freedoms where the right is denied or violated” (p. 354-355).

The Status of Adult Learners

Since the focus of this study is adults’ perceptions of their participation in their children’s pre-school and my interest in their learning in this space, consideration of the position of adult learners in South Africa at the time of this study is relevant.

In 1994, referring to the state of adult education in South Africa, McKay (2007) stated that “the literacy situation was still dismal” although the number of people who needed a basic education depended on who was counting and what yardstick was used to measure and define literacy; with 11 official languages, the difficulty of defining literacy was compounded (McKay). Government statistics show, however, that in 1996, 27% of adults
had no schooling at all and that 41% of the adult population had completed some, but not all, primary school, i.e., the first seven years of schooling (Statistics South Africa, 1996).

According to 2001 statistics, (Statistics South Africa, 2001), 4.7 million adults (16% of the total population above the age of 15) had no schooling and may be considered illiterate. A further 9.6 million (32%) had not completed primary school and were considered in need of compensatory basic education. There was also a gender difference in illiteracy: 41% of men and 58% women were considered illiterate with rates higher in rural than in urban areas. Only 17% of black adults completed Grade 12 compared to more than 40% white adults; similarly 5% of black adults had a university degree while almost 30% of white adults had achieved this level of education.

Since 1994, various formal and informal initiatives have attempted to redress past inequities; however, significant challenges persist in improving the level of education of black adults and women in particular. The new South African government formulated policies and legislative frameworks to support Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and affirm its role in the process of social change and development. Constitutionally enshrined as a basic human right to which every person has a claim, ABET was proposed as the foundation for justice and equality, integral to the core values of democracy (active participation), access (redressing historical imbalances), and development—a sentiment also expressed in all education and training legislation (McKay, 2007). Education and training programs were seen as contributing to the economic development of people by providing adult learners with a platform for further learning and the capacity to improve and develop of their own lives and the lives of those around them (ANC, 1994). However, low provincial budgets, lack of planning, infrastructure backlogs, and the exclusion of practitioners with
ability and experience were cited by the Education Rights Project (ERP) as contributing to the failure of ABET (SAHRC, 2004).

The shift from the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) emphasis on equity, redress, and basic needs to the stronger economic market orientation of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) has had a marked impact on the education system: specifically, the quality of education for all learners (Tikly, 2011). The success of the one side of GEAR—fiscal austerity—and the failure of the other side—efficient and effective delivery of public services—have exacerbated the plight of the poor and unemployed.

In addition, while the delivery of quality adult education depends on well-trained adult practitioners who play a critical role in addressing economic, political, and social problems specific to learners (e.g., health and HIV/AIDS, the environment, labour) in a variety of societal contexts—urban, rural, and informal—these adult educators generally lack recognition, and their status is poor (McKay). McKay draws attention to the decline in adult learners enrolled in basic educational programs and in the allocation of resources, and overall to continuing poverty and unemployment.

**The Status of Young Learners**

In South Africa, early childhood development (ECD) refers to “the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially” (Department of Education, 1995), a broad definition that involves policies and programs from several government departments. In this study, however, while programs and service for zero to four-year-olds are mentioned, the Reception Year (Grade R

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23 Prior to the mid-1990s, the term *educare* was used in South Africa.
or pre-primary), the year before the commencement of primary schooling that serves five-year-olds, is the educational context of this case study.

Poverty, unemployment, high crime and violence adversely affect large numbers of young children with approximately 68% of young children in South Africa growing up in conditions of abject poverty where household income is less than R350 a month (UNICEF, 2006). Furthermore, low levels of literacy among many primary caregivers make supporting their children’s early education difficult. Children raised in such poor families are most at risk of infant death, low birth-weight, stunted growth, poor adjustment to school, increased repetition, and school dropout. In 2012, UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children ranked South Africa 51st, behind countries such as Botswana, Namibia, Nicaragua, Jamaica, and the Philippines in its under-five mortality rate, a critical indicator of the well-being of children.

Until the end of apartheid early childhood education and care programs tended mostly to serve the children of the colonizing population; where programs for African children existed, they were provided by faith-based organizations, private and non-government organizations (Pence, 2004). Since 1994, the democratic government has taken steps to enshrine children’s rights into the Constitution; however, Marais (2011) contends that “the neglect of early childhood education is a major blind spot” as it attracts “a tiny fraction of the education budget” (p. 332). In 2001, estimates were that just over one million of an approximately six million children in the zero to six year age range were enrolled in some type of ECD provision (Williams & Samuels, 2001). In 2006, only 1.3% of children in the education system were enrolled in early learning programs (Department of Education, 2008).

Implementing laws and making children’s rights a reality have, however, been slow (Marais, 2011; Spreen & Vally, 2006). In addition, early childhood programs are “woefully
underfunded and under-resourced” (Marais, p. 298). Fewer than 30% of pre-schools receive any state support so survive on fees and private funding and by paying their staff very low wages (Marais). In fact, Spreen and Vally contend that within education in South Africa “social injustice remains pervasive” (p. 352).

Civil society advocacy

During colonial and apartheid times, when political and socioeconomic rights were denied to the majority of the population, awareness and demand for early childhood programs and services was not a priority at the community level, although most child-care services were started and maintained by the community. From the 1980s, however, a strong child rights movement, led by civil society including early childhood and development (ECD) organizations, arose in response to the denial of children’s most basic rights (Biersteker, 2010). In 2000, 83% of programs for children zero to four years continued to be community-based, with government departments contracting NGOs to provide training, material development, and research. Corporate and donor funding supported NGOs for direct service provision, training, capacity building and resourcing service providers for young children, particularly in urban areas (Biersteker).

The Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), a professionally autonomous body, was established in 1993 on the initiative of the mass democratic movement in order to begin developing education policy for a democratic South Africa. These policies were aimed at promoting the principles of non-racism, equity, democracy, quality education and lifelong learning (CEPD, 2010). The efforts of CEPD culminated in the ANC’s Policy Framework for Education and Training published in its first edition in early 1994, months before the first democratic elections. This document, drawing on the work of over 300 researchers, academics, and practitioners, was the foundation of the new government’s first White Paper
on Education and Training; and provided the framework for many of the new South Africa’s education and training policies (Biersteker et al., 2008).

At the same time, driven by the struggle for liberation and transition to democracy in 1994, the political climate provided an enabling environment for the expansion and development of ECD services in South Africa. Biersteker (2010) comments that civil society action alone would not have been enough to raise the profile of ECD since it was not on the agenda of any political group. Unnamed but “politically well-connected and astute” (p. 23) members of the ANC and United Democratic Movement, however, used their influence to ensure that, what was at the time termed, educare got on to the political agenda.

The South African Congress for Early Childhood Development (SACECD), a representative body formed in 1994, played a significant advocacy role in the policy development stage, and the National Educare Forum (NEF) with extensive local networks disseminated information and contributed to consultative processes. In 1997 as a response to the increase in community-based early childhood development centres throughout the country, the National Early Childhood Development –NGO Association (NECD-NGO Association) was established to provide training and support services for community-based ECD caregivers and teachers. With a human rights advocacy approach, the Association has a social infrastructure of ECD centres and caregivers throughout the country. Recently the government has also set up an ECD Stakeholder Forum as a communication vehicle for national representative bodies (Biersteker, 2010).

As the government pursues conservative macro-economic policies where cost containment is key, the right to education for poor and rural children is largely unrealized (Vally et al., 2008). Vally and his colleagues contend that new social movements that
continue a long tradition of resistance from below are creating “a groundswell of support for resistance” around continued poverty and inequity in post-apartheid education. For example, the Public Participation in Education Network (PPEN)—an initiative consisting of social movements, trade unionists, teachers, and academics—is committed to “reclaiming the public space of schools for community engagement, intergenerational learning, and reciprocal relationships for community engagement and social development” (Vally & Spreen, 2010, p. 127).

**Grade R: Public sector institutions**

In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is structured in three levels: the national department is responsible for policy and monitoring; each provincial department is responsible for funding and implementation of programs and service delivery; and provincially-led branches operate at the district level. The DBE has responsibility for Grade R which is being phased in as a first year of the Foundation Phase of public schooling—Grades R to 3 for children ages 5 to 8 years. Though the government’s intention is for Grade R to be available for all five-year-olds, it is not yet compulsory.

In the 1980s a number of reports commissioned by the government recommended bridging programs to improve school-readiness; in 1988 a two-year pilot bridging program was launched for children in Grade 1, and while no formal evaluation took place, Biersteker (2010) contends that this intervention may have prepared the ground for the introduction of a Reception Year.

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24 The Department of Basic Education (DBE) was formed in 2009 when the former National Department of Education was split into two: (1) DBE, responsible for all schools from Grade R to Grade 12 and adult literacy programs, and (2) the Department of Higher Education and Training. The vision of the DBE is of a South Africa where people have access to lifelong learning, education, and training, and contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous, and democratic South Africa.
Policy formulation for early childhood development (ECD) began as early as 1992 when the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) explored policy options for education in a democratic South Africa and included a reception year or pre-primary class for five-year-olds as well as a range of options for children birth to four. A follow-up World Bank/Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) study recommended that pre-primary alone would not be enough for the majority of young children and suggested an integrated approach with the implementation of programs for younger children in partnerships with government, NGOs, parents, communities, and the private sector.

With the advent of democracy in 1994 and drawing on the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) recommendations, the African National Congress (ANC) Policy and Framework for Education and Training Discussion Document recognized ECD as a starting point in the process of reconstruction and human resource development. While up to this time the favoured approach had been broader and community based, the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) committed government to providing ten years of free and compulsory schooling for every child, prioritizing a reception year located in public primary schools for five-year-olds over a more integrated approach that included programs for children zero to four years.

This commitment of the 1995 White Paper was followed by the Interim Policy for ECD (1996) that again took a broad integrative approach “to improve the life chances of young children”, an approach that “depends on and contributes to community development, and [believes] the education of parents should go hand in hand with the education of children” (¶ 47). Considered a priority for the 1996 National Programme of Action for Children, early childhood development was housed in the Presidency (Biersteker, 2010).
The larger framework for child-related policy is a comprehensive 1996 Children’s Act (Appendix A) which is aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by South Africa in 1996, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child adopted by the Organization of African Unity in 1979 and entered into force in November 1999. South Africa has also adopted the World Declaration on Education for All with implications for the provision of a wide range of services to support early development.

In 1998 the National Department of Education created a separate Early Childhood Development Directorate responsible for developing an ECD policy framework and planning and for mobilizing resources in support of large-scale provision of ECD. To assist with policy formulation, a three-year pilot project was formalized in a government-NGO partnership. From 1997 to 1999, the National ECD Pilot Project (NPP), focusing on a holistic integrated approach, investigated phasing in the reception year and the accreditation of teachers and training providers (Biersteker, 2010).

The pilot project contributed to the 2001 White Paper 5: Early Childhood Development that prioritized Grade R above other ECD programs and services and officially committed to establishing a national system of provision pre-primary schooling with the target of all five-year-old children having access to Grade R by 2010. While the favoured approach until this time had been broader and community based delivery, White Paper 5 proposed the goal was for 85% of children to attend Grade R at a public school. This policy document was controversial with both civil society organizations and provincial departments of education on the grounds that consultative processes had been absent. The government’s explanation was that “the Department had to shape policy in relation to what it felt capable of
providing and not necessarily what ECD wanted or wished to have” (Biersteker, 2010, p.154-155).

**Grade R curriculum**

The Grade R is a universal program curriculum that aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa and seeks to create a life-long learner who is confident, literate, multi-skilled, and with the ability to participate in society as an active citizen (UNESCO, 2006). The focus of the curriculum reflects the tenets of the 1996 constitution—social justice, healthy environment, human rights, and inclusion.

**Funding of Grade R**

While Grade R is part of the foundation phase of primary schooling, it is differently funded and staffed. In the case of primary schools that house pre-primary classes, provincial governments provide grants to School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to employ Grade R teachers, while grants to community-based ECD centres, as is the case in this study, are on a per-learner basis. Subsidies are poverty targeted, with Grade R children in the poorest 40% of schools receiving the highest per capita level of grants. In 2005/2006, the nine provincial governments allocated R489 million in grants to Grade R, funding that equates, however, to approximately seven times less than for a child in Grade 1. The Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding implemented in 2007 brought funding for Grade R into the formal government program with the goal of increasing per capital funding for Grade R to 70% of that for Grade 1. The implication of this funding lag is low Grade R teacher wages and limited support for teaching and learning resources.

Funding of Grade R in independent schools is not automatic; however, provincial governments will fund Grade R in independent schools if the service cannot be offered in a nearby public school, or if the department believes that the independent school is offering the
service in an innovative way that government believes deserves funding. Under this finance mechanism, teachers in the Reception Year of public schools are employees of the SGB. However, for purposes of quality enhancement and assurance, they are required to fulfill specific teacher training and provincial government registration.

**Implementation of Grade R**

Three types of Grade R are provided—in public primary schools, at community-based ECD centres, and in independent (private) schools—and all programs are required to be registered with the provincial department of education. The South African Schools Act has been amended to allow community-based sites offering Grade R to register as independent schools in an effort to establish quality control and integrate them into the existing subsidy system for independent schools.

Enrolment in Grade R in public schools has increased from 226,630 in 2000 to 487,500 in 2008 (49% of eligible children), and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) estimates that a further 200,000 children are accommodated in Grade R classes in registered community-based facilities. Provincially, access to Grade R varied widely from 20% in the Northern Cape to 75% in the Eastern Cape of the eligible child population. In the Western Cape, the province in which the site of this study is located, 30,830 of eligible children (34%) are enrolled in Grade R (Biersteker, 2010). Reflecting the new emphasis on ECD and to improve implementation of Grade R in the Western Cape, the number of early childhood development advisors was increased in 2008 from one per district to eight and foundation phase advisors from 25 to 49 (Western Cape Government, 2008).

**Challenges Implementing Grade R**

Before 1990 the majority of black ECD teachers were trained by NGOs and their qualifications were not formally recognized. Since 1995 accredited education and training
has fallen under the South African Qualifications Authority (Blom, Parker, & Keevy, 2007); now ECD qualifications can be obtained from a wide range of institutions: private, NGOs, colleges, and universities. While primary school teacher training is a four-year degree (SAQA Level 6), the minimum required to teach Grade R is Level 4 (equivalent to completion of high school). A large-scale upgrading to Level 5 is planned (Biersteker et al., 2008).

According to Biersteker and her colleagues (2008), “the roll out of Grade R is the largest-ever public commitment to ECD in South Africa” (p. 231). Samuels, Acting Chief Director for Curriculum and Assessment in the Department of Basic Education (DBE), responding to concerns regarding shortcomings of Grade R implementation, stated that “good practice, although limited, does exist” (CEPD, 2010, p. 23) but conceded that the challenge remains to boost quality. She also acknowledged that teacher training, particularly courses offered by NGOs, did not adequately prepare teachers for working in Grade R. Because of financial and human resource pressures in South African higher education institutions, Samuels believes the solution for implementation of quality Grade R is for NGOs and universities as well as government departments to work together (CEPD).

The decision to locate subsidized Grade R programs in public primary schools, where fees are minimal or nonexistent and feeding programs offered, has had a negative impact on community-based centres which rely on parent fees. Between 2000 and 2004, the number of Grade R children in public primary schools doubled with many being drawn from community-based centres. Since public schools offer no after school care, child safety and protection are issues (UNICEF, 2006). Another concern is that while locating Grade R in public primary schools is more convenient for departments of education, the tendency is
often a formal approach to the curriculum than community-based centres’ more holistic approach.

Chapter Summary

At the end of apartheid, schooling in South Africa was in a state of disarray. From the 1950s, the apartheid master plan controlled the education of black South Africans, leaving African parents with the option of exposing their children to inferior Bantu education or giving them no education at all. In addition, schools were sites of the liberation struggle with the implication that many children had disrupted attendance between 1976 and 1994.

Based on an explicit commitment to education for democracy, the new government has endeavoured to create a racially equitable education system. Committing to providing ten years of free and compulsory schooling for every child, policies have made changes to school funding, teacher training, and curriculum at school, provincial, and national levels. To redress historical imbalances and low adult literacy rates, the new government formulated policies and legislative frameworks to support adult education and training and affirm its role in the process of social change and development. For many reasons, these reforms have, however, largely failed to provide opportunities for black adults and women in particular.

Implementing laws and making children’s rights a reality has also been a slow process; approximately two-thirds of young children in South Africa continue to be adversely affected by poverty, unemployment, high rates of crime and violence. Studies in the early years of democracy recommended an integrated approach to early education and care with the implementation of holistic programs for younger children in partnerships with government, NGOs, parents, communities, and the private sector. The government, however,
prioritized a one-year Reception Year (equivalent to senior kindergarten in Ontario) with the goal of all five-year-old children having access to Grade R by 2010.

Thus, although post-apartheid education policy has emphasized the role of education in helping create a more democratic and peaceful society, almost 20 years after the first elections, continuing social economic and educational inequities are the reality for many adults and young children, especially in townships and rural communities.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH DESIGN

Each of us comes from somewhere, but that ‘somewhere’ casts a different shadow in each of our encounters with others (Neilsen, 1998, p.197).

My goal in this study was to explore through detailed, in-depth data collection that involves multiple sources of information, the complexities of a community’s perspective of their participation in a pre-school and then seek to understand whether this space—a pre-school in a township in a marginalized community—offers opportunities for participation in and enhancement of democratic life—the construction and strengthening of citizenship. Overall, is the pre-school contributing towards fulfilling the broader concept of serving local needs and fulfilling aspirations in this new democracy?

Theoretical Framework

Generally, studies that have attempted to evaluate evidence that citizen engagement makes a difference have failed to establish causal links between citizen participation and desirable outcomes (Gaventa & Barrett, 2010; Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Therefore, in order to examine the idea of meaningful participation in and enhancement of democratic life, I needed to make explicit what may be considered appropriate indicators. In addition, in this study that considers community perspectives, I needed to ask whose reality counts in deciding if changes have occurred and if so, which are meaningful and which not.

In Winter 2011, in a class with Dr. Bettina von Lieres that focused on citizenship learning and participatory democracy, I was introduced to Gaventa and Barrett’s 2010 meta-analysis of 100 case studies of citizen participation through community organizations, social movements, and spaces of formal participatory governance in 20 mostly low- and middle-
income countries in the South\textsuperscript{25}. Mapping over 800 observable effects of citizen participation ‘outside’ the formal electoral sphere, Gaventa and Barrett created a typology of four democratic and developmental outcomes of citizen engagement: construction of citizenship, practices of citizen participation, responsive and accountable states, and inclusive and cohesive societies. They discovered that citizen participation produces both positive and negative outcomes and that outcomes vary according to the type of citizen engagement and political context. Their findings reveal that positive outcomes in the category of constructing citizenship generally took place at the micro-level, in the claimed spaces of people’s associations and were built not through top-down training but through engagement in the process of participation itself. This typology, therefore, seemed to offer a sound framework on which to base my research questions and appropriate categories for assessing a community’s perspectives of outcomes of their participation in a pre-school in a South African township.

Based on Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) framework, I identified two categories to determine outcomes of participation in the pre-school in this case study: constructing citizenship and strengthening citizenship (Table 1).

\textsuperscript{25} Core research sites included Angola, Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Mexico, Nigeria, and South Africa as well as an additional 13 countries.
Table 1: Outcomes of Citizen Engagement (based on Gaventa & Barrett, 2010)

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<tr>
<th>Constructing citizenship</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td>Negative</td>
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<tr>
<td>- enhanced professional and personal knowledge and learning</td>
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<td>- reduced sense of agency; increased dependency</td>
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<tr>
<td>- greater awareness of the right and capacity to participate – agency</td>
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<td>- tokenistic or captured forms of participation</td>
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<td>- sense of efficacy</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengthening citizenship</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tr>
<td>- deepening networks and solidarities</td>
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<tr>
<td>- greater social cohesion across groups</td>
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<td>- lack of accountability and representation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- reinforcement of social hierarchies and exclusion</td>
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**Constructing citizenship**

The first outcome relates to the construction of citizenship, where positive outcomes of participation in a public space ‘outside’ one’s household include a sense of increasing knowledge, awareness of and capacity for participation, as well as a greater sense of efficacy—a belief and confidence in one’s ability. Kabeer (2005) notes the importance of citizenship learning that starts with the individual, transforming consciousness and constructing citizenship. Education and training provide members information about their rights and entitlements and gives them opportunities to reflect on and analyze their own situations located in class, gender and social organization and relate these to wider social inequalities (Kabeer, 2005).

For democratic theorists (e.g., Mansbridge, 1997; Pateman, 1970), a function of citizen participation is that it helps create and strength citizens themselves. Gaventa and Barrett (2010) add that an important impact of citizen engagement is the development of a greater sense of awareness of rights and empowered self-identity which serve to deepen action and enhance confidence for further participation. In my data, I looked for evidence of construction of citizenship that involves knowledge not only of key facts but also broader
understanding and awareness; personal skills and attributes, especially the art of engaging with others; and dispositions, deeply held values and attributes that underpin effective citizenship (Merrifield, 2001). Since learning or gaining citizenship is also a legal process and involves the development of citizens as actors, I examined my data for evidence of participants’ ability to access services and realize their rights, their conviction of their right to have rights. Aware that from silence to citizenship is not linear but often an iterative process, I looked for, too, for indications of small steps taken towards the construction of citizenship.

Since Gaventa and Barrett (2010) contend that outcomes in this category—constructing citizenship—may not always be positive, I was open to evidence of knowledge or awareness that was disempowering or humiliating, exclusive, tokenistic, coerced, or relies heavily on intermediaries (e.g., professionals, local elites).

Gaventa and Barrett conclude that construction of knowledgeable and empowered citizens is one of the most important outcomes of citizen engagement “because it serves as a tool with which other democratic . . . outcomes can be achieved” (2010, p. 32).

**Strengthening citizenship**

The second outcome of citizenship engagement that I looked for was evidence of the strengthening of citizenship: (1) deepening networks where a sense of inclusion of previously marginalized groups and (2) a greater sense of social cohesion, particularly important in contexts with historically high levels of inequalities. While Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) meta-analysis focused more on society-state relations, they identified the importance not only of the construction of citizenship—knowledge, awareness of and capacity for participation, and a greater sense of efficacy—but a sense of deepening networks and the awareness of cohesive communities where a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect exist. These researchers cite many examples of citizen participation contributing to challenging stigma
and developing dignity (e.g., the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa). While strengthening a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect are important at the individual level, they are “important more broadly as voices and issues previously hidden . . . come into view” (p. 45). Gaventa and Barrett’s contention that overcoming social discrimination can help create possibilities for more pluralistic and inclusive society is supported by de Tocqueville’s concept of ‘habits of the heart’—the civility of daily life—that make possible “dialogue across divergent, if not opposed, ideas and interests and a certain inner acceptance of equality” (Kabeer, Mahmud, & Castro, 2010, p. 10).

Gaventa and Barrett (2010) found some instances of citizen participation resulting not only in greater inclusiveness but also in enhanced forms of social cohesion in communities with historically embedded inequalities and strained social interactions between various groups. On the other hand, certain forms of citizen participation that they believe seemed well-placed to facilitate greater inclusiveness produced few to no effects.

A Qualitative Approach

For the purpose of this study I have chosen a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach as I attempt to uncover meanings others have about their world (Creswell, 2007). According to Merriam (1998), this mode of inquiry is appropriate when “discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied” (p. 1) are the focus of research. In addition, my study aims to address the need to recognize the authenticity of other worldviews, of voices emerging from the South (Crossley & Wason, 2003; Robins et al., 2008), especially those formerly silenced by repressive regimes. As Rust (1991) concludes: “We are witnessing a shift away from universal belief systems towards a plurality of belief systems” (p. 618).
As a researcher adopting a qualitative approach to research, I am concerned with exploring the meaning behind empirical observations, a tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on “observations undertaken in people’s natural settings, interacting with them . . . on their terms” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 9). My role is “not an objective, authoritative, politically neutral observer standing ‘outside’ and above the text, but . . . historically positioned and locally situated as an observer of the human condition” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Born and raised in South Africa and sensitive to power imbalances, I was respectful of difference and the multiple-perspective stories of individuals (Creswell, 2007) and at the same time acknowledged the subjectivity of my own interpretive lens.

To answer my research questions and to provide a detailed picture, I use a case study approach with elements from portraiture. A case study described by Merriam (2009) as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 43) is a design well suited to this study where the unit of analysis is an early childhood education setting in a South African township and the research topic parental and community perspectives of their participation in the pre-school. Case studies are appropriate for gathering data from multiple sources to provide a detailed picture of the case: the context, as well as organizational goals and systems and their interaction with individuals and networks of people (Creswell, 2007). In addition, case studies allow sufficient time to develop trust in the research relationship so that participants feel confident to voice their perspectives (Elfer, 2007).

Because detailed descriptions are essential qualities of qualitative accounts, elements of the methodology of portraiture are appropriate. As Lightfoot-Lawrence and Hoffman Davis (1997) explain in their seminal work, The Art and Science of Portraiture, the portraitist strives “to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of people . . . documenting
their voices and visions—their authority, knowledge and wisdom” (p. xv) believing that embedded in a unique case the reader will discover universal themes.

The Research Setting

City of Cape Town, Western Cape

In the City of Cape Town, like the rest of South Africa, there are vast disparities between the wealthiest communities’ comfortable first-world environments and the poorest, who live in conditions similar to the worst in developing countries (City of Cape Town, 2008\textsuperscript{26}). Because of apartheid’s racial and economic policies, the communities that make up the City of Cape Town remain largely racially separated as they were decades ago with poorer communities living on the periphery of the urban area.

Since 1996, the population of Cape Town has grown by 36%, with the number of black Africans showing the largest increase--89%. Of all migration into Cape Town since 1996, 45% was from the Eastern Cape\textsuperscript{27}, resettlement that began in 1988\textsuperscript{28} and has contributed to the creation of vast new settlements on the Cape Flats the sandy, low-lying, treeless plains between the Cape Peninsula in the west and the Hottentots Holland (mountains) further east. The unprecedented growth demanded rapid expansion of the City’s provision of clean water, drainage, refuse disposal, electricity, schools, clinics, housing, and other services. Daniels (2002), a South African scholar, contends that unequal access to

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\textsuperscript{26} The City of Cape Town Strategic Information Branch’s disclaimer states that information based on the 2001 census “should serve as a reasonably accurate population estimate but should by no means be regarded as the official 2008 population totals by census suburb. Assumptions regarding fertility, mortality, migration and prevalence patterns and future spread of HIV and AIDS were not made and these assumptions could impact the figures.”

\textsuperscript{27} Unless otherwise cited, statistics in this section are those provided by the City of Cape Town 2007 Community Survey designed to fill the gap in information between the 2001 Census and 2011 Census. The results of the 2011 census were not yet available at the time of my data collection.

\textsuperscript{28} In 1986, Pass Laws which restricted the right of blacks from travel, living, and working in white areas were repealed.
resources, the legacy of apartheid, makes township residents ill-prepared for the rigours of city life and vulnerable to exploitation and unemployment; others are more optimistic, seeing “a story of cultural survival, of strength and courage against all odds” (Otter, 2008, p. 256).

**The Township: Ezibeleni**

The site of this study, Lelethu Pre-Primary and After School Care, is located in the township of Ezibeleni on the Cape Flats about 50 kilometres east of the City of Cape Town and five kms north of False Bay, where the barren plains rise to the Hottentots Holland (mountains). The township is bounded to the north by a national highway, to the west and east by light industrial parks, and to the south by a new, racially mixed suburb.

With an estimated population of approximately 24,000, of whom about 3,000 are children aged zero to six years (City of Cape Town, 2008), the township in which the pre-school is located has until recently been a relatively homogeneous community, home to mainly amaXhosa families who have relocated from rural areas of the Eastern Cape, the country’s poorest province, to the Western Cape in search of a better life—education and employment. While classified as a formal settlement, some sections of the township have seen an increase of almost 70% in the number of shacks constructed, while in others as many as 2,000 informal structures have been cleared since 2002, making the population size difficult to estimate (City of Cape Town). The hostels built in this township in the 1980s for migrant farm workers are single-room homes for families who, almost 20 years after the promise, continue to wait for a house of their own.

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29 A pseudonym
30 A pseudonym
31 Formal settlements comprise subsidised homes have been built, mainly in townships on the outskirts of town and cities since 1994, replacing informal dwellings or shanties (Richards & Bianca, 2007).
32 Shacks are dwellings made of corrugated iron, particle board, and scrap metal, most often erected in the backyard of a formal dwelling.
Gone the valley forests and green rolling hills of the Xhosa ancestral lands in the Eastern Cape; in their place a mix of sea sand, soil and never-ending flatness. The rough, cow dung huts, which are cool in summer and warm in winter have been sacrificed for tin shacks that have made the extreme Cape seasons worse, while ancient radios their aerials struggling to catch a signal above the hills of home have been exchanged for taxi rank hi-fis. . . (Otter, 2008)

The main road into the township is lined with spazas, informal clothing stalls, single roomed shack cafes, and converted containers offering hairdressing services, cell phone sales, and small appliance repairs; billboards advertise beer and spirits and a national chain of grocery stores. On one corner of the entrance to the township is a refuse dump where garbage is sorted and collected weekly by the City of Cape Town, a service that also empties household bins. Residents pick through for bottles or anything of perceived value, toddlers play with discarded objects, and dogs scavenge for scraps of food. Further along the road, at the minibus ranks--the most usual form of transport for township residents--women sell fruit and vegetables, and at the end of the day meat grilled over coals in large metal drums. A small bakery operates from the front of a home. With limited choice and high prices in the township, most families do their shopping in one of the two neighbouring towns, traveling in crowded taxi or minibus about six kilometres each way.

Public buildings in the township include a high school, two primary schools, a municipal library—named after Hector Peterson, the first student killed by police in Soweto in 1976--with computers and internet access, a medical clinic, a government office where grants are applied for and collected by residents who do not have a bank account, and a

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33 A spaza is an informal convenience shop, usually run from a home to supplementing household incomes. These shops grew as a result of sprawling townships that made travel to formal shopping places difficult and expensive.

34 During the apartheid era, shebeens in the townships operated illegally selling homebrewed beer and alcohol and providing patrons with a place to meet and discuss political and social issues. Now legal, shebeens still form an important part of today’s social scene in the townships.
museum of which the residents are particularly proud that tells the history of settlement in this township. Besides these buildings are a number of churches, several of which run child-care programs, and one registered pre-school—the centre of this case study.

Figure 1: Ezibeleni Township – Age of Residents

The highest percentage of people in the township is the group 15 to 34 years old (Figure 1), a reflection of the movement of people into the Western Cape in search of work. More recently, an increase in 15 to 19 year olds reflects the trend for secondary school students from the Eastern Cape to relocate for the purpose of attending schools in the City of Cape Town (Small, 2008). While mothers keep young children with them in the township, anecdotal evidence for lower numbers of elementary school children points to the practice of sending 5- to 14-year-olds to be cared for care by grandmothers in the Eastern Cape, allowing parents flexibility for work.
Overall in the Western Cape, the percentage of people 20 years and older with no education decreased from 4% in 1996 to 2% in 2007, and those with a degree increased from 5% to 9%. As Figure 2 indicates, in Ezibeleni, on the other hand, 21% of residents reported no schooling, almost three-quarters (74%) completion of schooling between grades 3 and 11, and those with matriculation (school –leaving) less than 5%; one reported having a university degree (City of Cape Town, 2008).

Based on the 2001 census approximately 35% of adults in the township of Ezibeleni in which the study took place were employed, 47% unemployed, and 18% not economically active--at home with young children or too ill to work (Figure 3). City of Cape Town (2008) statistics reveal that 65% of people aged 15 to 65 in this township have no income and none earn over R6,400 a month (Figure 4). These figures do not, however, reflect income from social grants.
These statistics reveal the material reality of many participants in this study: the legacy of apartheid—poverty and socio-economic disadvantage—and now the scourge of HIV/AIDS and TB continue to place South African township communities at risk.


Lelethu Pre-Primary and After School Care

Lelethu Pre-Primary and After School Care, situated off the main thoroughfare into the township, is a brick structure, painted yellow and brown, with a corrugated tin roof. Built around a paved yard and surrounded by a barbed-wire fence, the school has locked gates at both front and back entrances. Through the mass of electric wires strung haphazardly from poles to houses and shack, the mountains rise majestically above the township. The sense of order and tranquility within the school are a stark contrast to the endless hustle of taxis and minivans, animals and people on the treeless streets of the township. The flower garden at the front gate of the pre-school is carefully tended, and the oak tree that offers summer shade thrives. A climbing frame and slide, erected and painted by fathers of children attending the school, and a sandbox with a shade canopy are the only play structures in the whole township, despite the large number of children under the age of twelve. The vegetable garden, fed with rainwater collected in a large plastic tank, becomes smaller with each extension of the school building and is now hidden behind the kitchen.

At the time of data collection, the school had five Grade R classrooms—three downstairs and two up—and a classroom for adults, all opening on to verandas that surround three sides of the courtyard. In addition, there are washrooms for children and adults, an industrial kitchen, offices, and a sick bay. The classrooms are furnished with brightly coloured plastic child-size tables and chairs; shelves around the room hold supplies, learning materials, and children’s lunch boxes. Bright posters of traditional isiXhosa children’s rhymes, children’s art, and agendas decorate the walls. The school is adequately equipped with learning resources for young children supplied by the Western Cape Education

35 A pseudonym
Department, made by teachers, and donated. Reading books for children, placed neatly in racks, are in short supply, but the few available are well used by children and their teachers.

From early in the day until late afternoon the door to the principal’s office is open, welcoming children, staff, parents and grandparents, and member of the broader community. Inside, the bright yellow walls display photographs of children, staff, and donors. A plaque is poignant tribute to a young Canadian volunteer who died in a car accident and in whose memory five bursaries are awarded each year to deserving children. Posters affirm the school’s vision and values, certificates and awards accomplishments; calendars are filled with notices of meetings and events. The neatly organized shelves hold rows of binders containing official documents as well as a record of the school’s history. On the principal’s tidy desk are a laptop, a cell phone, and piles of paper waiting for her attention. Off the main office are a smaller room where the school’s administrative assistant works and a sick bay where unwell children are kept comfortable until a parent, sibling, or grandparent arrives to take them home.

The adult classroom beside the principal’s office is also painted bright yellow. Tables and plastic chairs offer space for the many activities that take place in this space: literacy classes, professional development for teachers, skills development for women, personal development workshops for young women, and after-school activities for high school boys. The neatly organized storeroom of the classroom is stocked with supplies for projects. The walls are decorated with samples of work from the literacy class: hand-drawn sketches of kitchens and living rooms, with carefully printed isiXhosa words labelling furniture, appliances, and the belongings of modest homes. Traditional beadwork necklaces and samples from dressmaking classes are displayed on tables at the back of the room. On one
Data Collection

While I travel to South Africa frequently and have conducted research and visited the pre-school in this study over a period of eight years, data for this project were collected within the pre-school, in the local community, and ‘outside’ the township over the course of twelve weeks during three visits to South Africa: August and November/December 2011, and March 2012. My aim was to explore the community’s perspectives of their participation in this pre-school through stories of their varied experiences and to attempt to understand whether this space offers opportunities for their participation in and enhancement of democratic life.

To achieve my goal of observing, recording, and then interpreting the complexity and detail of a unique place and experiences, I employed a range of strategies to collect data from multiple sources: interviews and more informal conversations with individuals associated with the pre-school and members of the local and broader community; observations at the pre-school, in the township and at locations ‘outside’; my fieldnotes; and internal documents that included official Western Cape Education Department (WCED) policy, curriculum documents, and correspondence.

While I went to the field with an intellectual framework—a review of relevant literature, prior experience in this setting, and general knowledge of the field of inquiry—and a set of guiding questions, my personal history and educational background were embedded in my point of reference and guided my perspective and data collection. Lightfoot-Lawrence and Hoffman Davis (1997) contend that acknowledgement of presumptions—in the form of
memos, journals, and reflections—does not inhibit or distort clear vision, but rather make the researcher’s lens “more lucid, less encumbered by the shadow of bias” (p. 186).

**Interviews**

*Thursday, August 25, 2011*

I’m happy in the tiny counseling office situated off the verandah and the passage to one of the two washrooms in the pre-school. The window that lets in the morning sunlight and the yellow walls create a cheerful space, a contrast to the stories of hardship disclosed and heard within this room. A constant stream of pre-schoolers wunders by my door; the bolder children come in, are curious about my computer and ask for games; others smile shyly on their way in and out of the washroom. When I remind them to wash, they nod and show me damp hands.

Nolwando a mother of four arrives on time for her meeting with me. Dressed for the chilliness, she looks so elegant in a purple coat. The interview with Nolwando, who came in her brother’s place, went well. He lives next door to her and is very interested in his nephew’s progress at school; however, he was called in to work at a security company earlier than usual. From Eastern Cape, Nolwando is eloquent, thoughtful and gives answers I was hoping to hear.

Today, I felt I was a more effective interviewer than yesterday when I wondered whether what I thought I would find from participants was a reality, whether I was imaging that parents’ learning experiences at the school may have been transforming for them as well as for their children. What did I do differently? Did I ask the questions more clearly? Has this participant a better understanding of and ability to respond in English? Was I more explicit and were my prompts more effective? Has Nolwando had a better experience in this pre-school? Is she more perceptive and more confident than the participants yesterday?

The main function of the interviews was to provide an opportunity for discourse to move “beyond surface talk to rich discussion of thoughts and feeling” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 80) in an attempt to understand the lived experience of others and the meaning they make of the experience (Seidman, 2006). While much research has been done on schooling, little is based on the perspectives of students, teachers, administrators, parents, or school committee members especially in marginalized communities. My goal was to establish rapport with the participant early in each interview, building on a sense of mutual interest: young children, the pre-school, and the community. Open-ended questions solicited narratives of people’s experiences related to their participation in the pre-school. To elicit
depth of response, each interview was sufficiently long for me to establish rapport with the participant and to enable me to collect ‘rich’ data that are “detailed and varied enough to provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 110). Encouraging narrative in this study was particularly relevant since Africans have traditionally revered good stories and storytellers and today, as in the past, create stories as a way of making sense of their lived experiences, constructing self, creating and communicating meaning; in addition, narratives reflect the broad social, cultural, ideological and historical conditions in which they get told and heard (Chase, 2003). Lewis (2010) suggests, too, that in these stories of “trying to live well alongside the challenges and struggles” of the every-day, we may gain some insight since “story allows us to imagine the world otherwise” (¶ 4). While these stories do not lead to some object truth about the human experience, they open up “a multitude of human truths that are messy, richer and more informative in both their complexity and simplicity” (Lewis, ¶ 4).

My responsibility as the researcher, therefore, was to hold the space for the storytellers and their stories, to build relationship, a complex process between the researcher and participants where “access is sought and given, connections made, contracts of reciprocity and responsibility (both formal and informal) developed, trust built, intimacy negotiated, data collected, and knowledge constructed” (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis, 1997, p. 135). Never static, relationships needed constant renegotiation as we worked to develop a level of comfort, balance, honesty, and authenticity in our communications with one another (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis).

In developing relationships of trust and understanding, I listened for goodness—strength, resilience, and creativity—“a generous stance” that Lightfoot-Lawrence and
Hoffman Davis (1997) contend “opens up space for expressions of weakness, imperfection, and vulnerability” (p. 158). This search for goodness is embedded in relationships characterized by empathy that develops from knowledge of the participants’ world; however, not wanting to idealize stories, to impose my definition of good on the inquiry, or to assume a singular definition was shared by all participants, I attempted to identify and document each participant’s perspectives (Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis).

My questions were aligned with Gaventa and Barrett’s 2012 meta-study of outcomes of citizen engagement and participation, influenced by Belenky and her colleagues Women’s Ways of Knowing (2000) as well as Mosedale’s (2005) framework for assessing agency (Appendix B), and my own reading and prior research studies. Three versions of the interview guide were used with different groups of participants: one for the pre-school staff (Appendix C), another for parents and grandparents (Appendix D), and a third for members of the broader community (Appendix E). A short section was designed to gather basic biographical information from staff of the pre-school, parents, and grandparents. The interviews, with a sequence of themes to be explored as well as prompts for eliciting further information, were open and flexible enough to allow for follow up on responses given and stories told and for the order or form of the questions to be changed. While interviewing I made a concerted effort to observe the participant and to be aware of and sensitive to the way he or she was affected by and responded to different questions and then to record these in my fieldnotes. Most interviews took place in the small counselling room at the pre-school and with participants’ permission, all were tape recorded to capture full and exact quotations for analysis and reporting; many had children’s voices and laughter in the background. While I was in South Africa, I transcribed interviews, except for two that had severe background
interference and were transcribed, with the use of noise reduction software, on my return to Canada. This allowed me, when I was uncertain, to check facts with participants.

In all, 48 participants were interviewed (Table 2): staff of the pre-school, parents and grandparents of children attending the pre-school, volunteers, a local social worker, and several visitors to the pre-school; mentors and members of the School Governing Body; staff of the Metro East Branch of the Western Cape Education Department; and donors.
Table 2: Summary of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s role</th>
<th>Name (pseudonym)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview location: The pre-school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-school principal</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 senior teachers</td>
<td>Nomble and Mandisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 junior teachers</td>
<td>Mvumi, Ntosh, Noncedo, Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom assistant</td>
<td>Liliane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School secretary</td>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School cook</td>
<td>Doris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 student teachers</td>
<td>Zimkhitha, Mary, Nosi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 German volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 mothers of children attending the pre-school</td>
<td>Umama A to R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 father of children attending the pre-school</td>
<td>Utata A and B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 grandmothers of children attending the pre-school</td>
<td>Makhulu A and B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>Cindy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then-Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament</td>
<td>Mr. Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community development consultant from London, UK</td>
<td>Mr. Abdullah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview location: Town adjacent to the township</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent of two children who previously attended the pre-school and member of School Governing Body</td>
<td>Mrs Dyami</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview location: Homes ‘outside’ the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor and member of School Governing Body</td>
<td>Sonja, retired social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor and member of School Governing Body</td>
<td>Julia, political activist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentor and donor</td>
<td>Elsa, engineer and building contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer literacy teacher</td>
<td>Eloise, retired teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview location: Western Cape Education Department, Metro East Branch, Kuils River</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Advisor</td>
<td>Ms de Vries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Advisor</td>
<td>Mrs van Wyk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 donors – South Africans living in the UK</td>
<td>Peter, Renee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews with pre-school staff

Elizabeth, the principal and founder of the school, welcomed me formally to the pre-school at a parent meeting on a cold August evening, helped set up interviews with parents and grandparents, and generously offered me the use of the counselling room for interviews. I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix C) for the staff of the pre-school and let digressions and unexpected responses guide and enrich our conversations. Besides our more formal interview, Elizabeth and I had opportunities to talk each day I was at the school in August and November/December 2011 and again March 2012. I also had lengthy interviews of two to three hours as well as more informal conversations with each of the two senior teachers, Nomble and Mandisa, and observed in their classrooms at least twice a week during the twelve weeks I spent at the school. In addition, I interviewed the four junior teachers and observed them in their classrooms and in the playground. With Liliane the classroom assistant, Ncumisa the school secretary, and Doris the school cook, formal interviews took place but again we had opportunities to speak informally in the kitchen and as we watched children sitting on the veranda steps eating lunch. Members of staff were all eager to be interviewed and share experiences of their learning and participation in the pre-school. While most participants were fluent in English, two requested the services of a translator, a young amaXhosa woman and Ph.D. candidate in Linguistics at the University of Western Cape.

All staff at the school—the principal, two senior teachers, four junior teachers, the classroom assistant the school secretary, and school cook—are amaXhosa, originally from the Eastern Cape and isiXhosa speaking36 and range in age from the junior teachers in their mid-twenties to Liliane, the classroom assistant, in her late fifties. All but one member of

36 isiXhosa is the second most frequent home language in the City of Cape Town (Statistics South Africa – 2001 Census, 2011).
staff live in the township in which the school is located; Nomble, who considers her family middle class, lives in a racially mixed suburb close to the school. Three members of staff own homes in the township; a senior teacher, still on the waiting list for her own house, lives in a single room in a hostel; and five share homes with extended family and/or friends. Two are married, three widowed, and four single; all have between one and four of their own children living with them.

Elizabeth and the two senior teachers were educated in the Eastern Cape during the apartheid years and went to the Western Cape to join a partner or “to look for work”; all three have lived in the same township for between 21 and 25 years. During this time, they have completed early childhood education programs that qualify them to teach Grade R. The four junior teachers—qualified in the foundation phase—and school secretary, apart from visits to the Eastern Cape, have spent most of their lives in the Western Cape where they attended school after 1994. While all had some secondary schooling, none had completed grade 12. The classroom assistant and school cook had only a few years of primary education in the Eastern Cape, leaving school because their families were unable to afford the cost of uniforms and shoes required for school attendance; both have lived in the township for over 25 years.

I also interviewed three student teachers, two of whom were at the pre-school three days a week fulfilling the practical requirements of their early childhood education programs. Two of the young women had themselves been students at the pre-school in the early days when classes were still held in the ‘zinc structures’. Three young German women who were in South Africa for two months volunteering in the pre-school agreed to be interviewed although their spoken English skills were not strong.
Interview with parents and grandparents

I interviewed 18 parents—16 mothers and two fathers—and two grandmothers of children currently attending the pre-school. These interviews took place in the counselling room during the late morning as pre-school day ended or early afternoon, a time when parents and grandparents had either finished household tasks or were returning from work.

In interviews that lasted between one and two hours, I used a slightly modified semi-structured interview guide for parents and grandparents as for the staff of the pre-school and again let digressions and unexpected responses guide and enrich our conversations. The services of the translator were requested by two participants—one mother and one grandmother. While extending the length of the interview, the participants were grateful for an opportunity to participate in the research project, to voice their opinions, and to tell their stories. Again with participants’ permission, interviews with parents and grandparents were tape recorded. The day after each interview, children of participants took home handwritten notes thanking the parent for his or her participation in and contribution to my study.

Parents and grandparents interviewed are amaXhosa, all with roots in the Eastern Cape, except one mother who grew up on the goldfields in the Orange Free State. Of these participants, more declared married status than the school staff—48% compared to 22%; both grandparents are widows. While neither grandmother had more than two years of schooling, the parents, all in their twenties, have at least primary and some high school education; however, only two have school-leaving certificates and post-secondary education. Reasons for leaving school early were marriage, pregnancy, or “no money to continue” and the need to work. Some had come from the Eastern Cape as teenagers specifically for secondary-level schooling. Just over 40% of the parents interviewed were employed in
service-related positions as domestic workers or waitresses. Where both parents were unemployed, child grants and extended family members supported them and their children. Both grandmothers were unemployed at the time of their interviews but I heard during my time at the pre-school in March 2011 that one had been called back for seasonal work at a fish-packing plant on the coast some 100 kms from the township. Three mothers whose husbands had work as a labourer, taxi driver, and service centre attendant reported being “busy at home with young children”.

**Interviews with members of the broader community**

A wider range of perspectives was obtained through interviews with provincial government officials from Western Cape Education Department (WCED), members of the School Governing Body (SGB), as well as benefactors and donors both local and international.

Although extremely busy with the implementation of new curriculum that has replaced the post-1994 outcomes-based curriculum, the Curriculum Advisor and the Program Advisor, Foundation Phase/Early Child Development, of the WCED both agreed to meet me at their regional office. While the interviews were short—less than an hour each—the perspectives of these women who have worked with the pre-school staff from the time of registration were forthright and valuable.

I also met three members of the SGB at their homes and after they had responded to the semi-structured questions, we conversed more informally for a several hours. Besides serving as board members these women have since the pre-school’s beginning acted as mentors, facilitators, teachers, and trusted friends. The parent representative on the SGB, who lives close to the pre-school, was pleased for an invitation to meet, after work, for lunch
at a local seaside restaurant. Her insights and capacity for reflection and action within her community entertained me during our extended meal.

By chance, two major donors were visiting South Africa in March 2012 and agreed to have a telephone interview. In addition, one day, leaving the school, I met a distinguished-looking man who introduced himself to me as the Speaker of the Western Cape Provincial Parliament. Accompanied by a community development consultant from the City of London, the Speaker was showing the visitor what he perceived as exemplary evidence of a preschool that had served to strengthen the community. We spoke informally for about half an hour in the principal’s office.

**Dialogue**

Besides formal interviews, dialogue was an important source of information in this study. Because of existing relationships with some of the participants (e.g., the preschool principal, two senior teachers, support staff, and two mentors) and my trusted reputation in the community, dialogue produced more than mere factual knowledge; thoughts, feelings, and questions surfaced as we discussed and reflected the topic of my research (Park, 1993). At times, over a cup of tea in the kitchen, sitting in the principal’s office, or standing in the courtyard watching children play, informal exchanges with staff, student teachers, and volunteers afforded insights into their perspectives of participation in the preschool. At these times, the women were willing to share more personal information and discuss issues affecting them, such as family difficulties and petty jealousies within the community. With their permission and my promise of their anonymity, these data were also recorded in fieldnotes.
**Observations**

In an attempt to gain a perspective from the ‘inside’, I observed during the mornings in classrooms and watched the comings and goings of parents and grandparents, visitors, and people delivering goods and services; in the afternoons, I participated in adult, youth, and after-school programs. I also attended two parent meetings, one in August 2011 and another in March 2012; and a School Governing Body (SGB) meeting in March 2012. In November 2011, I participated in the pre-school’s annual weekend retreat where parents, members of the community, and the SGB assessed the activities of the past year and then planned and prepared a budget for the new school year that begins in January (Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal’s office</td>
<td>31 days from 7:45 to 9:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classrooms A, B, C, D and E and playground</td>
<td>25 days from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent meetings</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Governing Body meeting</td>
<td>one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-year assessment and planning retreat</td>
<td>2 days – Saturday and Sunday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Fieldnotes**

During observations, Brewer’s (2000) recommendations for researchers served to guide what I described and recorded in fieldnotes: acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships, and setting. I was particularly interested in people’s sense of their new knowledge and efficacy, their capacity to act and to claim rights. In addition, I paid attention
to and questioned whether individual and group decision-making processes and relationships within the school, the local and broader community had played a role in deepening social networks of an awareness of a cohesive community where a sense of inclusion, dignity and respect exist.

Qualitative researchers (e.g. Miles & Huberman, 1994; Lightfoot-Lawrence & Hoffman Davis, 1997) stress the importance the iterative process of data collection and development of themes. Thus, my analysis began early in the study. Following each interview, meeting, and observation, I wrote fieldnotes that in addition to Brewer’s recommendations incorporated direct quotations, as well as my feelings and reactions to the experience. In the late afternoons and evenings after I had left the pre-school, I typed these notes and reflections and began early interpretations and analysis of my data--speculations about meanings, connections, images, similarities and differences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Saldaña, 2009) --as tried to make sense of what I had experienced that day. Thus, coding was not merely labeling data, but the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis and interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen).

As I collected more data and wrote daily reflections, patterns and themes began to emerge, some anticipated and others that developed from insights drawn from my interpretive descriptions. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that writing fieldnotes helps move from empirical data to a conceptual level, “refining and expanding themes further, developing key categories and showing their relationships, and building towards a more integrated understanding of events, processes, and interactions in the case” (p.158-159).

**Document analysis**

Using documents as a data source has several advantages since unlike interviewing and observation, the presence of the researcher does not alter what is being studied. In
addition, documents may offer historical understanding and track change and development. Merriam (1998) argues that in qualitative studies, documentary data “can ground an investigation in the context of the problem being investigated” (p. 126). I analyzed a range of internal documents and visual materials filed the school office --reports, agenda, minutes, letters to parents, newsletters, and newspaper cuttings --as well as official Western Cape Education Department policy, curriculum documents, and correspondence. I paid particular attention to the school’s vision and mission and to a recently developed child protection policy (Appendix F), the response to high levels of violence against children and women nation-wide (UNICEF, 2006). I also visited the local museum and community library to gain a better understanding of the sociocultural and historical context of the school.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As previously noted, my approach was to begin analysis and interpretation at the same time as I was collecting data. On my return to Canada, my data analysis involved three stages. During the first stage I read my fieldnotes twice, adding further adding analytic notes in the margins and identifying key words and phrases. I then transcribed the two remaining interviews with the assistance of software that reduced excessive background distractions and listened to all interview recordings as I followed my typed transcripts. While I have facility with South African accents, in the case of some interviews, numerous replays were necessary until I was satisfied with the accuracy of each transcript. Reading each transcript twice, I added more analytic notes in the margins and considering key words and phrases. Through this stage, a list of possible **emic** codes that originated from the perspectives and words of

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An **emic** approach (sometimes referred to as ‘insider’ or ‘bottom-up’) takes as its starting point the perspectives and words of research participants. The strength of this approach lies in appreciation of the
research participants began to emerge. In the second stage, I re-read and added codes to
interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and documents. During the third stage of the analytic
process, I identified two major themes—categories—based on Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010)
typology of outcomes of citizen participation (described in the next section); a third
unanticipated theme—creating a safe place with strong foundations—emerged from the data
and was added as a major theme. I was, however, aware that the use of “borrowed
categories” may not be as exact or rich as those that emerge from the data (Glaser and
Strauss, 1967) and noted Bogdan and Biklen’s (2003) caution not to “jam . . . data into
conceptual schemes (p. 157). These major themes that reflect the purpose of the research and
are in effect answers to the research questions provided the basis for the outline of my
findings and writing of each chapter (Appendix G).

Ethical Considerations

As Stake (1995) observes, “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of
the world” and as such “their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 244)
during all interviews, observations, and other interactions with participants. Before
embarking on the study, I received an invitation from the School Governing Body that
expressed their appreciation of my interest in their pre-school and the community’s
perceptions of their participation.

The purpose of the study was explained at the parents’ meeting at which I was present
in August 2011 and again at the beginning of each interview. Participants were invited
verbally and then through a letter to participate in the study to share their experiences and
perspectives of participation in the pre-school. I informed each participant that he/she might

particularity of the context being studied, its respect for local viewpoints, and its potential to uncover unexpected findings concepts (Harvard Graduate School of Education).
at any time terminate the interview without consequence or decide not to answer a particular question or questions. After a review and explanation of the consent form, the participant signed, thereby consenting to be interviewed and acknowledging that he/she understood the purpose of the research as well as his/her rights. I assured all participants that findings would be appropriately used, as would their reporting and dissemination. Each participant was given a copy of the consent letter and sent a hand-written thank you note.

Elizabeth, the principal, gave permission for materials and documents useful to the study to be copied.

When I raised the question of remuneration for participants with Elizabeth, informing her that I had, on my ethics proposal stated there would be none, she insisted that paying participants was neither expected nor culturally appropriate. Relieved that she endorsed my decision, Elizabeth added that members of the community would be interviewed willingly, knowing that at some future time they may need to ask someone for help or information; *ubuntu*, Elizabeth reminded me.

**Limitations of Case Study**

The features of case study that provide the rationale for its selection also present certain limitations. While common criticisms concern the validity, reliability and generalizability, theorists (e.g. Punch, 1988) assert that properly conducted case studies, make a valuable contribution to knowledge.

“One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed and measured as in qualitative research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 202). While methods and procedures do not guarantee validity, I used strategies to check for
increasing the credibility of my descriptions, explanations, and interpretations. Triangulation, the collection of information throughout my study from multiple sources I believe helped reduce the risk of chance associations and allows “a better assessment of the generality of the explanation” (Creswell, 2005, p. 112). Repeated observations and multiple interviews, fieldnotes with reflections that noted hunches, feelings and speculations, as well as my sustained presence in the research setting helped rule out inaccurate conclusions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Stake, 2000). To strengthen the validity of my findings, I looked for discrepant data and alternative interpretations of the emerging argument (Maxwell, 2005) and solicited feedback from participants in the pre-school and members of the SGB about the data and my conclusions as evidence regarding the validity of my account. This, too, was a way of checking my own biases and assumptions since case study is criticized for its “lack of rigor in the collection, construction, and analysis of empirical materials that give rise to the study” (Hamel cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 52), a lack of rigour linked to the problem of bias-- the subjectivity of the researcher.

Because this study focuses on a limited group, where randomly selected participants were willing to be surveyed and share their stories at the time I was in South Africa, the sample may be biased, and I may not be able to say with confidence that these individuals are representative of the entire community. I hope, however, this case will provide useful information for answering my questions within the specific settings about this community’s perspectives of participation in democratic life and whether their involvement in this pre-school has resulted in change that satisfies their own needs and aspirations as well as constructing and strengthening citizenship in a new democracy.
Creswell (2005) cautions that “when gathering stories, researchers need to be cautious” about the distortion of data “because they rely heavily on self-reported information from participants (p. 484). To overcome misrepresentation, interviews were transcribed verbatim and precise language used in extensive quotes to overcome the problem of losing the voice of the participants in the narrative. Hearing multiple stories of parents and community members involved with the early childhood education and care programs helped ensure that reliable data were collected; transcripts from interviews served as counterbalances and cross-checks (Chase, 2003).

The question of generalizability centres on whether it is possible to generalize from a single case. I selected a single case precisely to understand the phenomenon in depth, not what is generally true of the many. What I learn about this particular case may be transferred or generalized to a similar situation: the idea that the general resides in the particular, that we can extract universal from the particular (Merriam, 1998).

While critics raise these questions about the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the case study that focuses on a single unit, Stake (1995) argues that it is the reader, not the researcher, who may transfer what is learned from a particular case to similar situations. Further, Flyvbjerg (cited in Merriam, 2009) holds that generalizations based on large samples are overrated in their contribution to scientific progress. Recently, arguments for the strength of qualitative studies are that they account for and include difference and paradoxes, acknowledging that there are no simple answers (Merriam, 2009).

**Chapter Summary**

The wider context of this case study is a country characterized by an inequitable socio-economic environment, the legacy of apartheid that exists almost 20 years after the first
democratic elections; the situation is mirrored in townships on the periphery of cities, in this case Cape Town. In the township that is the location of the pre-school in this case study, residents, some of whom were participants in this study, are affected by poverty, unemployment, crime, and health issues—HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis (TB).

Welcomed at the pre-school and conscious of my own history, I chose a qualitative research approach and selected a single case to explore and seek to understand the phenomenon in depth, arguing that what I learn about this particular case may be transferred or generalized to a similar situation: the idea that the general resides in the particular, that we can extract the universal from the particular. Data were gathered from multiple sources to provide a detailed analysis of the case—48 interviews, classroom and meeting observations, my field notes, and internal and external documents—as I sought participants’ perspectives of their participation in the pre-school in my attempt to understand whether this small space offered opportunities for meaningful participation in democratic life.

To examine the idea of participation in and enhancement of democratic life—the construction and strengthening of citizenship—I needed to make explicit what may be considered appropriate indicators. Gaventa and Barrett’s typology (2010) of democratic and developmental outcomes of citizen participation presented a framework on which to base my research questions as well as the basis for categories for assessing a community’s perspectives of their participation in a pre-school in a South African township. Aware that outcomes may not always be positive, I was open to evidence that in some instances of citizen participation, knowledge, and awareness may be disempowering or humiliating or may not result in greater inclusiveness and social cohesion.
CHAPTER FIVE: CREATING A SMALL SPACE

In this way, all things are formed.
Small joined with small, to make a greater,
and then a greater, and yet a greater,
to make a whole, where before naught existed.

In this manner, we build, from one person,
working with another, and another, and yet another.
Order, where before, was chaos.

We work together, toward a common goal.
Joining hands one with another, and then another.
In this manner . . . a community is formed.

We must not fear to depend on one another.
Be strong enough to let others depend on us.
Together we can soar, like feathers, tossed to the raging wind.
Such is the way that we must be.

(Newsletter, 2010)

In this chapter I narrate the story of the creation the pre-school--a small space in a South African township--that is the centre of this case study. During interviews, participants, particularly members of staff and their mentors made frequent and unanticipated references to the pre-school’s strong foundations: the vision of one woman to build a better future for young children and their families in her community; inclusion and participation of the local community; and the support of the broader community, of people from ‘outside’, in particular three mentors.

The inauguration of President Nelson Mandela on May 10, 1994, was a stirring experience for South Africans. After more than 40 years of apartheid, Mandela, incarcerated for 27 years by one of the world’s most heartless regimes, took the oath of office. In the closing words of his inaugural speech “that seemed aimed at all the alienated souls of Alan
Paton’s\textsuperscript{38} beloved country”, Mandela pledged that together South Africans would build a new society

\ldots in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow notion at peace with itself and the world (Sparks, 2003, p. 2).

This auspicious occasion signalled hope for many black South Africans, the culmination of years of waiting and surviving with grace, courage, and endurance.

**A Vision for Her Community**

Shortly after, in 1996, Elizabeth Mandla, an amaXhosa woman recently graduated from teachers’ college with early childhood qualifications, sensed the time was favourable for establishing a pre-school in her own community when educational reform was one of the new government’s priorities, and parents were beginning to demand the right to quality education, starting with their young children. She believed at this time of promised social change, education was central to the future well-being of her community but understood that the school she proposed to found needed to be an integral part of that community. According to Xhosa values held by Elizabeth, good relationships, starting with her local community and circling out to the wider community, would enhance social harmony and cohesion at this time of momentous change in South Africa’s history (Venter, 2004).

For amaXhosa, education, traditionally seen as an induction into society and preparation for life, takes place in the home and community where virtually all adults are potential teachers. Thus, education of the young is viewed as a communal responsibility, an integral component of social life, where the child’s moral and character training and sense of

\begin{footnotesize}
38 Alan Paton is the author of *Cry, the beloved country* (1948), a novel set in a tense and fragile society, where the breathtaking beauty of the nation’s natural landscape is tainted by the fears of its people; yet, the message is one of hope.
\end{footnotesize}
belonging are central. Traditionally education articulates a basic respect and compassion for others in society and seeks to promote social networks, norms, and trust that serve to increase individuals’ contributions to organizations and society (Muyia Nafukho, 2006; Venter, 2004). Since individuals are educated for the common good of the community, educational thought and practice are directed at fostering the development of compassionate people endowed with morals and virtues, such as kindness and generosity, courtesy and concern for others (Omolewa, 2007; Venter). While Africans’ ways of knowing have been transformed by outside influences, traditional education is intimately integrated with the social, cultural, occupational, artistic, religious, and recreational lives of people. Therefore, parents wishing to claim the rights of their children to education and to provide their children opportunities denied them during the apartheid years saw a pre-school as a benefit not only for their own children but for the community as a whole.

The idea of a pre-school in a disadvantaged community on the Cape Flats began with Elizabeth: “It was my idea; it came from me.” She recalled that during her two years at college--1994 and 1995--she had to go ‘outside’ her community to fulfill the practical requirement of the course, working once a week at a pre-primary school in “a predominantly white community.” At that time in her disadvantaged township, with an estimated 3,000 children aged zero to six years, there were “only crèches, with no foundation education--no pre-school, only child-minding” (Elizabeth). Recognizing the dire need for a pre-school, she was resolved to start a Grade R class in her community: “I cannot go back to the white pre-primary school. Let me start here in my community.” Elizabeth approached the principal of the local primary school and was given permission by the governing body of that school to use a vacant prefabricated classroom.
**Difficult years**

As Elizabeth began enrolling children, she approached the provincial authorities to request registration for her Grade R class and thus qualify for a subsidy. Elizabeth persisted, recalling that she went and sat in a government office every day for a month waiting for attention and an answer: “We kept asking for registration.” However, with the post-apartheid backlog at the primary and secondary levels, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) notified her it was not at that time registering pre-primary schools. By the beginning of the next year, 1997, 80 children were enrolled in Elizabeth’s Grade R class.

The fees paid by the parents of the pre-school children went directly to the principal of the primary school. “The money didn’t come to me; it was just for the primary school. There was no money coming to the Grade R class. I was just working for no return.” Without funding for a teacher’s salary, equipment, or materials, Elizabeth regularly walked 10 kilometres to pre-schools ‘outside’ the community to ask for “scraps of materials—donations of paper, crayons, and paint” (Elizabeth). “We used the big children’s furniture; we had no chairs suitable for our children. The classroom we used was not in good condition; when it rained, water ran down the walls” (Nomble).

Eventually, during 1997, WCED officials visited the school and informed Elizabeth that in order to be registered and qualify for a subsidy, there needed to be someone willing to be trained as a pre-school teacher. Elizabeth approached a woman in the community interested in working with young children and was joined by Nomble, whose “dream was to become a teacher of young children”. The subsidy intended for the student teacher was paid to the primary school and, as with the case of fees, was not passed on to the pre-school. In spite of receiving no stipend, Nomble remembers that she “seized the opportunity” to work with Elizabeth in the pre-school.
Although Elizabeth expected to be paid retroactively from the beginning of the 1997 school year, the Western Cape Education Department subsidy of R2 a day for 25 children of the 80 enrolled was not received until the end of the year; however, so determined were Elizabeth and teacher-in-training Nomble to provide pre-school education in their community that they continued to work without pay. Deciding the priority was to serve the children and families in their community, they chose to purchase materials for the classroom rather than receive salaries themselves. “We decided to work for no money but at least buy something for the children to play with” (Elizabeth).

In 1998, Elizabeth applied to the Department of Health for a food subsidy and received 75 cents a day for 50 of the 80 children enrolled in the pre-school. “You can’t say the subsidy is only for certain children. We cooked food and gave it to all the children. I can say it was tough” (Elizabeth). By this time, Doris had joined Elizabeth and Nomble as a volunteer to help with the cleaning and cooking a daily meal for the children on a Bunsen burner in a corner of the classroom. Elizabeth remembered that the prefabricated room at the primary school was “the classroom, the kitchen, the admin. office--everything was happening there.” With so many children accommodated in one room, Elizabeth and Nomble shared the classroom when the weather was fine, with “one in, one out with some of the children--just to have some space” (Elizabeth).

At the end of 1999, without warning or recourse, Elizabeth and Nomble were ordered to vacate the classroom at the primary school. Elizabeth recalled: “If the primary school wants their prefabricated classroom, then it’s beyond our control.” When she went to the Western Cape Education Department to report what had happened and to ask for help finding
an alternative space, provincial officials told Elizabeth she could find another space in community or “close the school and tell the children to go home” (Elizabeth).

The only accommodation available within the community was three Nissan huts—“the zinc structures”—corrugated iron buildings without electricity or insulation, where the children were subjected to the extremes of the Cape climate--freezing cold winters and swelteringly hot summers. Without running water in the buildings, Elizabeth obtained permission from the community leaders to use the two communal toilets and one cold-water tap a short distance away. Doris continued to cook on a burner in a corner of one classroom and to wash cooking utensils, plates, and spoons in basins of water carried in from the outdoor tap.

Because the huts were used by churches and other community groups on weekday evenings and during the weekend, the teachers had to pack up their resources after school each day and unpack every morning. “It was a real hassle every day” (Nomble). The teachers continued to improvise, using church benches for the young children to sit on and cardboard boxes as tables. To create an enclosed, safe play area for the children, protected from passing cars and taxis, the parents saved enough to buy materials for a fence that some of the fathers erected. Although both acknowledge the inconvenience and inadequacy of the accommodation, in Nomble’s words, she and Elizabeth were “discovering their dreams.”

With three classrooms and 80 children, another teacher was needed. Mandisa, who lived in the community, had done her practice teaching at the pre-school with Elizabeth and Nomble during 1998 and 1999 while at college studying for her early childhood education diploma. After graduating, Mandisa, a single mother with two sons, was “desperately looking
for work” so was thankful to be offered a position in her community, even though there was no money for a salary.

*A fortuitous meeting*

While she believed that “the school must start in the community, with the people”, Elizabeth explained that although she had early childhood education qualifications, neither she nor any other members of the community had any business skills; she acknowledged that to continue what she had started, she would need to “find somebody who’s an expert, who will help us to drive this, who will help us . . . to go about doing the right thing for this community” (Elizabeth).

Fortuitously, at a community meeting, Elizabeth met members of an inter-church group from ‘outside’ the community that was offering financial assistance to the local primary school. Elizabeth explained that when she saw Sonja across the room, her “instinct” told her that “this is the lady is going to help me and is going to join us.” Elizabeth approached Sonja and told her about the pre-primary school and explained that she needed help: “We are new in the business. We don’t know how to go about it. We want someone who is going to . . . help us to drive this initiative.”

A straightforward woman in her late sixties, Sonja, born and raised on a farm in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), had spent her working life as a social worker in Soweto. Afrikaans-speaking, she explains that her language lies at the heart of her identity and that being an Afrikaner has to do with being part of and loving Africa, “of living with all these people who . . . somehow made us who we are” (Sparks, 2003).

Recently retired when approached by Elizabeth, Sonja explained her reason for agreeing to become involved with the pre-school:
When I came here I didn’t know a soul because we were from Gauteng. I’m not a bridge player; I’m not a tea party person . . . I love Africa, and I love the people of Africa. I just felt I had been so blessed in my working years, and I had gained this wealth of information that I said when I retire I want to do something for my new community. . . I met Elizabeth by chance. I felt this [pre-school] was a community development project that did not belong to a church or some people who decided this was needed; this came out of the community.

Elizabeth admitted that she was at confused by Sonja’s philosophy of self-help but now values her “tough” approach:

We were not sure what this lady was saying. Today we clap our hands when we think of her. She’s . . . changed our lives, changed our families, changed our community. The very important thing is that she mentored us. She is a tough lady . . . . If she had used an easy method, the school may have vanished now.

Today Sonja is considered an integral “part of us”, and Elizabeth describes her first meeting with Sonja as “the beginning of a valuable friendship”.

**Broader Community Response**

Early in 2000, concerned about the unsuitability of the accommodation for young children in the zinc structures, Elizabeth called Sonja and asked her to work with them full time. “We had a vision of moving out of the old school, but we had no funds” (Elizabeth). With Sonja’s assistance, Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa learned to write letters of request--“. . . we wrote proposals all over the world”—asking different organizations and local government bodies for assistance; in time, offers of help came from numerous individuals and organizations (Elizabeth).

The first response was from the management of a luxury car dealership in the neighbouring town who had seen an article in the local newspaper and decided to take this
pre-primary school as their social responsibility\textsuperscript{39} for three years. This company repaired the zinc structures: broken windows and doors were replaced; power connected, giving the children lights and heaters on dark, cold winter days; and an electric stove and a small refrigerator installed. In addition, this company supplied enough food for one meal a day for the children. Nomble recalled that “when these people came, thing started to get better. They helped us for three years. With their help it was easier to save money for the new school,” and “true friendships were formed as we worked together towards ensuring the best for our children (Newsletter, January 2004).

In response to an article in a local newspaper an architect offered his services to the pre-school. Shortly after, Elsa a building contractor who had worked on projects in other townships read the request for help to alleviate “the appalling conditions for Lwandle children” whose pre-school at the time was housed in “zinc structures that were in poor condition” as well as swelteringly hot in summer and miserably cold in winter.

After her husband’s sudden death and a year spent reflecting on her future, Elsa, who had immigrated to South Africa as a young woman, resigned from her well-paying position as construction manager at a new post-secondary institution in Cape Town. After ten years, the work was no longer compelling; she admitted she had ceased to learn and grow and was bored with her daily routines. Elsa sensed the need to make a difference in a direct and immediate way, to serve and give back to the people whose country she loves. Not interested in material possessions—“I’m not a shopper or wanting fancy things”—she converted the lower level of her home with its magnificent mountain and ocean view into a holiday rental,

\textsuperscript{39} Social responsibility programs were initiated after 1994 as a means of redressing historical imbalances. Believing that businesses should not exist in isolation from the community in which they operate, their commitment was to make a positive difference to the lives of the disadvantaged.
cancelled all her insurance policies, and devoted her life to what she loves doing—“the construction of community projects in the townships.”

Elsa met with the pre-school staff who proposed buying land from the municipality and several containers that would be converted into classrooms. Without any pretence, Elsa was clear that she would work only under certain conditions: the group had first to “get organized”, register as a non-government organization (NGO), and then purchase the land designated for educational purposes from the City of Cape Town. She stood firm, too, on her position that purchasing and then converting containers into classrooms was not only a temporary but also expensive endeavour that she was not prepared to undertake. Elsa waited patiently for two years until the groundwork was in place.

Setting realistic goals

In the January 2004 newsletter, looking back, Sonja wrote: “As we grew, we allowed ourselves to dream . . . . We began to set realistic goals.” Looking to acquire either a permanent building or prefabricated classrooms, Elizabeth first approached the municipality for a property; she was informed that a parcel of land had been allocated for a pre-primary school and was available for lease. In the meantime, through fees paid by parents--at that time R40 a month--the School Governing Body (SGB) had managed to accumulate a surplus each year; this was saved in the school’s designated Development Fund with the goal of buying the land. Through further contributions from the parents, fundraisers organized by the parents, donations from the broader community, and the staff’s “willingness to stand back” (Elizabeth) and sacrifice salaries, the SGB was able to purchase the land for R12,000. “We didn’t want money for our personal things but to buy the land for the community at large. That’s fine! Let’s keep on volunteering” (Elizabeth).
In response to their proposals, an amount of R72,000 came as a gift from the Embassy of Ireland in Cape Town. The School Governing Body (SGB) decided to wait until they found another partner, somebody who could “join hands together” with them, before moving and expanding. At the same time, Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa continued to write articles in the local newspapers about the pre-school’s needs and letters requesting assistance.

In order to manage their finances, the SGB decided the new permanent structure would be completed in two phases. The first phase, an L-shaped building, included three classrooms each with a storeroom, a kitchen, and ablution facilities shared by the children and teachers. Elsa managed the contractors, negotiated discounts on the purchase of the materials, and monitored standards and progress. The German Embassy donated an industrial-style kitchen where meals could be prepared in a hygienic environment for the children. When phase one was opened on December 7, 2002, the entire building had been paid for.

Further responses to letters and requests for donations came from individuals and organizations in South Africa, the United Kingdom (UK), and Europe, with generous gifts from a Swiss group and Elsa’s contacts in Germany. Funds were deposited in the interest-bearing account specifically designated for the building—the Development Fund. “Everything was controlled; we were in control of that money” (Nomble). The SGB in consultation with parents and donors decided that a classroom specifically for adults was required to address increasing community requests for adult education. In 2004, work began on the second phase: a classroom for adult learners; another ablution facility; administrative offices with an attached sick bay; and a small counselling room. Again Elsa managed all building
construction providing her labour free of charge and materials at cost. As in phase one, upon completion the extension had been paid for in full; “nothing was owed” (Elizabeth).

To accommodate growing awareness of and demand for Grade R, a third phase was completed in 2009: a second storey with two additional classrooms. The pre-school now has space for 180 children. Again through donations and careful management, the school has no debts as a result of expansion. As Julia, a member of the SGB, noted: in this community, “an astonishing accomplishment.”

In 2011, at the suggestion of the regional office, the school submitted a lengthy application for the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) annual awards for teaching excellence. After a challenging interview process, the three senior teachers were invited to a ceremony for schools in their district. There, the pre-school team was awarded a certificate of excellence for Grade R, the best in the Eastern Metropole Region of the WCED. The team went on to win the provincial award; this pre-school was the only school for black children to receive an award in the Western Cape (Appendix H). The three teachers were then invited to the national teacher excellence event in Gauteng where although they did not receive an award, gained in experience, networked and were ‘treated like princesses” (Elizabeth).

As a result of this distinction, an overseas donor has provided funds for another second storey addition; a sorely-needed meeting space for pre-school and community events is under construction (November 2012). Yet another donor is sponsoring the construction of two more classrooms above the phase one classrooms; this will complete the second floor. Again Elsa is managing construction and making her generous contribution that she dismisses as “a drop of water on a hot stone”.


The plan is that by the time these classrooms are ready at the beginning of 2013, the two student teachers currently completing the practical requirement of their course at the pre-school and graduating in December 2012 will become the teachers in these new rooms that will house an additional 60 pre-school children. Interestingly, both young women live in the township and attended the pre-school in the early days when it was still located in the zinc structures.

**Mentors**

Three women in particular—Sonja, the retired social worker; Elsa, the building contractor; and Julia, a political activist—have drawn on their backgrounds, knowledge, and skills, as well as on their experience and networks to help establish a pre-school with strong foundations and a space where adults are welcome to participate and learn. Acknowledging that the process of founding an organization is neither easy nor linear, all three women rejected shortcuts, insisting on community participation and ownership from the beginning. With their understanding of African’s communal worldview, the importance of relationships and on-going education, these mentors collaborated to establish a place of learning where not only young children but members of the whole community have been included with opportunities for participation in this new democracy.

A common thread in these women’s stories is the desire to give back to the country they love at a time of their lives when interest in individual achievement and status are less pressing than earlier. In their Third Chapter, these women have transferred the skills and qualities honed in the past to new problems and situations and report finding their energy and pleasure undiminished as they allow themselves to be learners and teachers. They all

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40 Lightfoot-Lawrence (2009) refers to the Third Chapter as the time of life between fifty and seventy-five years.
expressed their wish to contribute to their community in new ways, to nurture and guide the next generation of South Africans in an active and generous way by bringing their wisdom and resources to new projects, by looking back and giving forward.\footnote{Lightfoot-Lawrence (2009) examines the way people between fifty and seventy-five years draw on past knowledge, experiences and networks to contribute to present and future generations.}

Drawing on their experience and conscious of the socio-cultural context of the preschool, these three women together with other adult educators skillfully weave Western principles of adult education with traditional Xhosa worldviews into their practice. Attuned to the purpose of African adult learning as the development of “the whole person, a lifelong learner who is cultured, respectful, integrated, sensitive and responsive to the needs of the family and neighbours” (Omolewa, 2007, p. 596), mentors and now the staff themselves organize learning experiences not only for those working within the pre-school but also for parents and other members of the community that are relevant and meet genuine problems or situations (Knowles, 1973; Marienau & Reed, 2008). Valuing African’s ways of being and doing, the adult educators and mentors at the pre-school provide a framework for their learners’ experiences, encouraging them to draw on their cultural practices and experiences as they negotiate new situations (Venter, 2004).

Besides profession and personal support to the pre-school staff and members of the community, these three women with their network of family, friends, and associates have been prepared to enter the township for regular and frequent meetings, a connection and journey many white South Africans are still reluctant to make either physically or psychologically. These gestures of inclusion and acceptance that include social events, mostly ‘outside’ the township at the homes of the mentors, have built the confidence as well
as a sense of dignity and respect in staff of the pre-school and other members of the community.

From their perspective, these mentors sensing support and kindness from the local and broader pre-school community, spoke of the exhilaration of being able to play a small part in making a difference in the new South Africa. On the other hand, the pre-school community respects Julia, Elsa, and Sonja as valued mentors who bring not only their past knowledge, but also their wisdom and experience to fulfilling a common goal, realizing a dream.

**The Pre-School Today**

“We are one world, and these children are our children, their destiny is our destiny. Each of us can make a difference” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

Since its beginning in a temporary portable, the pre-school program has evolved so that although Western in many ways, it preserves Xhosa language and culture. While teaching and learning materials are relatively limited in this pre-school, the daily schedule posted in each classroom, the physical environment, and programs are similar to those I have observed in other countries (namely, Canada, Russia, Malaysia, Ghana, and Australia). Adult interactions with children and children’s with each other, however, reflect Xhosa communal world view.

**School calendar**

The pre-school follows the same national calendar as all school in the nine provinces. The school year is comprised of four terms, each about 11 weeks, beginning mid-January and ending mid-December, for a total of approximately 200 days. The school holidays between first and second term and between third and fourth are each ten days; the holiday in the middle of the year is a month. In addition, ten public holidays fall within the school year.
Physical environment

In all, the school at the time of my research had six Grade R classes (equivalent to senior kindergarten in Ontario), each accommodating 30 five- and six-year-olds. One trained teacher is assigned to each of five classes; in the class with younger children or children with a developmental delay the teacher has an assistant.

Classrooms are approximately 500 square feet and take advantage of natural light with large windows opening on to the courtyard and, for security, smaller, barred windows on the opposite wall facing the street. Until a few years ago ceilings were not insulated, so classrooms were bitterly cold in winter; conditions are now more comfortable on frosty days. Just inside the door are small cubbies where children place a bag or backpack and, if they have one, an outdoor jacket in winter. Here, too, teachers place correspondence and notes for children to take home.

The physical environment has been planned for individual, small group, and whole group involvement that provides a balance between teacher- and student-initiated activities. There are enough of the brightly coloured child-sized plastic tables and chairs to seat all of the children at one time. These multi-purpose tables are used for small group language and math work as well as whole group art and crafts activities. Most of the space in the classroom is for children; a desk and chair for the teacher are in one corner. In front of the teacher’s desk is a carpet large enough for whole group activities.

Children’s artwork and instructional aids such as the alphabet, number lines, weekly and monthly calendars adorn the walls. Chart-sized, illustrated Xhosa rhymes supplied by the Western Cape Education Department are proudly displayed. When planning the school, teachers were adamant that there be adequate storage; each classroom has a storage closet.
running the width of the classroom where supplies from the Western Cape Education Department and donated teaching and learning resources are kept safely.

**Daily schedule**

The daily routine is posted in each classroom and although at times less strictly followed than in a Canadian pre-school, provides structure to the school day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00 – 8:00</td>
<td>Staff and children arrive; children play outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00 – 8:30</td>
<td>Children enter classrooms; greetings and prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bathroom routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:45 – 9:00</td>
<td>Circle time (whole group) – the day of the week, date, weather, news</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00 – 10:00</td>
<td>Small group teacher-guided literacy activities and child-initiated activities at centres (isiXhosa: ikona): book corner, dramatic corner, block corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>Outdoor play and bathroom routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 – 12:00</td>
<td>Whole group activities – art, crafts, play dough, colouring, drawing, puzzles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tidy up time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 – 12:30</td>
<td>Story time, rhymes, singing and dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Lunch is served in the classroom or on the veranda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children leave or stay for the after-care program that runs until approximately 3:30 pm.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Program**

Children arrive at the school between 7:00 and 8:00 am either alone or accompanied by a sibling on her way to the elementary school or dropped off by a parent or grandparent. Some children from the neighbouring township are delivered by taxi, paid for by parents. At 8:00 am teachers stand outside their classrooms, and the day begins with the teacher greeting the children warmly as they enter the classroom. Often parents drop their children off at the
classroom door and have an unhurried word with the teacher. When everyone is in the classroom and belongings in cubbies, the teacher and children stand on the carpet with heads bowed and give thanks for the food they are about to eat; the children respond with ‘Amen’.

The medium of instruction is isiXhosa although policy calls for “slow and well-planned introduction of the First Additional Language” (Cleghorn & Prochner, 2010), in the case of this pre-school, English. The emphasis is on listening to the teacher speak English and learning greetings, repeating frequently used words (e.g., please and thank you), responding to simple questions, singing simple songs, and performing action rhymes (Cleghorn & Prochner, 2010).

While the teacher is busy with a small group language or math activity, the other children are free to play at one of the centres, each labeled in isiXhosa (ikona). During my classroom observations, the teacher seldom intervened during free play. Beside the teacher’s desk is the Book Corner that consists of a shelf holding a small collection of well-used fiction and non-fiction books, a few in isiXhosa but most in English. Teachers reported finding culturally appropriate reading materials for this age group difficult to find. Few children seemed attracted to this centre during free time. In the far corner of the classroom is another carpet that demarcates an area for dramatic play. A kitchen play set with pots and dishes, dolls (mostly white), and a cupboard stocked with small blankets and dress-up clothes encourage children to interact through imaginary play. The Block Corner is adjacent to the Dramatic Corner which allows for large and small wooden blocks constructions to be used in pretend play. Shelves along one wall hold literacy materials in baskets: math manipulative materials, puzzles, paper, and pencils. On the back wall, shelving units hold art supplies: glue, scissors, crayons, markers, paint, and paint brushes.
Before and after school and during outdoor time, children play in the sheltered, paved courtyard. Tag is a favourite pastime as are traditional skipping and clapping games that mostly girls play. About once a week, Ncumisa, the school secretary leaves her computer to organize traditional games with the children, games she remembers proudly her grandmother in the Eastern Cape taught her as a child. On one occasion, I observed about 40 children engaged with Ncumisa in intricate group play. A few donated scooters and tricycles are well used by the children, most of whom have few toys at home. While the children play, educators observe, socialize with each, and make cell phone calls.

The school makes an effort to see that these children growing up in poverty, often without adequate nutrition, are fed during the program. Breakfast, usually a sandwich or samp (coarsely ground maize) and beans, is sent by parents. For children who have nothing, the school provides a bowl of porridge or a slice of bread. These children go to the kitchen, collect their meal, and then independently return empty plates and utensils. Each month, a family from ‘outside’ the community buys enough provisions so that each child has lunch; vegetables from the school garden supplement the mainly carbohydrate meal. Elizabeth plans meals according to the supplies that have been donated, and the food is prepared in the school kitchen. Teachers serve the children in their classrooms when the weather is cold and on the veranda in summer. Elizabeth informed me that for many children, this is their most substantial meal of the day.

Highlights of the school year are outings in the first three terms, Heritage Day, and Graduation. All trips are discussed and budgets approved at parent meeting. Although the pre-school is only about four kilometres from the ocean, few children ever visit the beach so playing in the sand, paddling, and ice cream make this a memorable day. Parents seldom
volunteer to accompany the children to the beach, but when the outing is to the aquarium and
historic places in Cape Town, parents, many of whom seldom go to the city, are anxious to
accompany the children. Heritage Day activities at the pre-school are planned by the parents
and community. Mothers and grandmothers donate traditional food and drinks that are sold,
women wear their traditional dress, and the fathers organize drumming and traditional games.
At a parent meeting I observed their excitement and pride as they came together to celebrate
their Xhosa culture.

After lunch, some children leave independently; others stay until a sibling or parent
comes to take them home. While teachers know each child’s routine, children are not hurried
but permitted to linger in the playground after lunch. In a community where people know
each other, parents reported to me in interviews that they called the school only if their
children were not home by 3:00 pm; otherwise, they perceived they were in a safe
environment with their own people.

**Interactions: Adult-child and child-child**

Most of the children are connected by their Xhosa culture that emphasizes
interdependence with obligations towards the community and their role and their place in it.
Within the context of this communal culture, the whole--the family and community--is
greater than its constituent elements--individual members; multiple classroom and
playground observations of adults’ interactions with children and children’s interactions with
each other supported this concept.

According to African conceptions of child development (Cleghorn & Prochner,
2010), independence and responsibility are expected; seldom did I observe the teacher
intervene either in the classroom or outside to manage children’s behaviour; there appear to
be no explicit school or classroom rules. On one occasion, the teacher in whose room I was
observing was called to the office just as the children were about to have breakfast. I watched
the children get their boxed meals from their bags, together give thanks, sit in a circle on the
rug, and eat quietly. Two children who had no meal from home went to the kitchen to get a
bowl of porridge. When minor accidents occur in the playground, a teacher will wait for the
hurt child to come to her. She will then comfort the child and send her back to play.

During circle time, with the teacher seated on a small chair and children on the rug,
little child-to-child interaction occurs. Teachers gently encourage children to speak or answer
questions but children mostly sit quietly, listening to the teacher, often responding with
laughter at activities and stories. While engaged in small group instruction, the teacher, aware
of the other children at centres, allows them to regulate their own and others’ behaviour.
Some interaction occurs between children seated at tables with the teacher during these
small-group literacy and numeracy activities. During large group activities, the teachers
expect children to sit at their tables and wait their turn when needing materials or assistance.
If children are disrupting others, the teacher quietly reminds them to pay attention.

The majority of children’s interactions with each other were social-conversational
with few relating to academic concepts. I witnessed various types of play in the classroom
and outdoors. In the dramatic corner, a favourite area of the classroom, socio-dramatic play
was observed as a child played with at least one other child in a way that involved creating a
dramatic situation and enacting roles in this situation, or attributing the roles to another
object, such as a doll. Dolls and the kitchen centre were particularly popular with boys and
girls. In cooperative play, children interacted with at least one other child in an outdoor game
or classroom activity; for example, playing tag or working together on a puzzle or building a
structure with blocks. I observed parallel play where a child played in a close proximity to
another child or children with either with the same materials or different ones. While the children interacted and conversed, they did not actually join their play together. I saw children in solitary play, alone and not interacting with peers. For example, one morning I observed a boy for about 45 minutes as he attempted to tie a doll on his back with a blanket, as a Xhosa mother would do with her baby. Each time he had almost succeeded, he looked at himself in the full-length mirror and smiled. On a few occasions, I saw a child engaged in onlooker behaviour as she watched another child or other children play but did not interact or contribute to the play situation. In an interesting instance, I observed a boy involved in unoccupied play as he wandered around the classroom, unengaged in play or productive behaviour, bothering other children. Although she was aware of the situation, the teacher did not intervene. At story time, when this boy was still being ostracized, he began crying. Again, the teacher ignored the behaviour. I noticed later the boy managing his own behaviour in order to regain acceptance of his peers; by lunch time, other children in the class were including him in their interactions.

In sum, while the physical environment is unlike many of the homes from which the children and their teachers come, the language is well known to most, and in many ways the pre-school reflects the social relations of the community and home (Cleghorn & Prochner, 2010).

Chapter Summary

During interviews and at meetings, frequent references were made to the pre-school’s strong foundations and participants’ perceptions of this space created in and by the community as ‘safe’. While traditional African life displays features of a civil society—namely, trust and reciprocity—in parts of Africa today, associations that express a collective
identity based on clan or tribe coexist with newer forms of association that have emerged in response to urbanization. Historically, women’s groups and associations in Africa, even in South Africa during apartheid, played an important role in civil society. More recently, research shows that grassroots spaces in civil society have strengthened African women’s voices and brought about some improvements in serving to address their needs at the local level although these organizations are often characterized by lack of capacity and resources.

The vision of one woman at a time of promised change, together with the dreams and aspirations of others in her community to improve the lives of people within her township has been supported by the local community and beyond. Since its inception a decade and a half ago, this space in a South African township has grown from a tentative endeavour in one room in a temporary location to an award-winning pre-school in a solid brick building that accommodates the learning needs of 180 young children as well as those of adults in the community; from one recently-trained teacher who worked for no pay but had a vision for her community to a staff of twelve, six of whom have teaching qualifications and are paid regularly; from a woman who had no business skills to a team that holds itself to the highest standards of governance and accountability to all participants—young children, parents, members of the local community, mentors, provincial government officials, and donors.

In particular, three women from ‘outside’ the community were an integral part of the long and often difficult process of establishing a pre-school with strong foundations. With their appreciation of Africans’ communal worldview, the importance attributed to relationships, and the value placed on lifelong education, these three women have worked through the years with the staff of the pre-school and many members of the local community
to establish a place with strong foundations where not only young children but members of
the whole community have had opportunities to enhance their learning.

Researchers argue that small, grassroots groups that provide communal space, where
members know each other, are connected to each other, and feel a responsibility for one
another, are key to civic life because they encourage involvement by disenfranchised groups
to confront barriers that limit equal participation and distribution of public benefits. Indeed,
participation in social, cultural, and political life has increasingly been viewed as a
fundamental human and citizen right and as way of deepening democracy – of constructing
and strengthening citizenship.
Dreaming is not only a necessary act . . . it is part of human nature, which within history, is in permanent process of becoming (Freire, 1992, p. 90).

In this chapter I address specifically answers to the questions: How has this small space--an early childhood education and care centre in a marginalized community in a transitional state-- supported adult learning? Have learning opportunities, a sense of agency, and a sense of efficacy enhanced community members’ capacity for democratic participation? To this end, I investigate adult learning that was reported to be occurring through many avenues and was observed at different levels of analysis. At the organizational level, senior staff expressed confidence that their learning had enhanced their capacity to manage and lead the school; among the pre-school staff accounts of formal and informal learning as well as sense of agency that has transformed their professional and personal lives were reported.

Organizational Learning

Acknowledging that she was new to the business of running a pre-school, Elizabeth was receptive to learning how to set up, manage, and lead the organization. The mentors related that their intent was to help build, slowly and step by step, a basic structure for governance and accountability.

Philosophy of mentors

The philosophy of mentors, expressed clearly by Sonja in her first meeting with Elizabeth at the chance meeting at the township primary school, has been that they would bring their expertise to help those involved with the pre-school do things for themselves “because if I do things for you, everything will vanish when I’m not here” (Sonja). Sonja’s
approach in particular has been to walk the path together with all members of the school community and to be a counsellor, guide, and role model:

You can only go in as an ‘outside’ person and maybe give guidance, maybe a listening ear, but you cannot tell them what has to be done, how it has to be done. You can give guidance, but... you’ve got to allow it to evolve (Sonja).

Sonja contends that her role and those of other mentors has been to support Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa through the years, and as they became confident in their abilities to expect them to assume more and more responsibility. “I don’t prescribe. I sow seeds, water and nourish them, allow them to germinate and become their ideas, and then let them make things happen” (Sonja).

Elsa’s philosophy, too, is that “help must lead to self-help” and that a community needs to take ownership of its project. She reported with satisfaction that recently Victoria asked her to buy supplies, and parents, so proud of the pre-school, volunteered to re-paint for the new school year. Elsa is candid about her passion for building projects and that she wants nothing to do “with running the show”.

**Mentoring strategies**

With her background in social work and community development, Sonja was aware that storytelling and metaphors are an essential part of traditional African communal life, so understood from the outset that members of the school staff learned “not just through talking; their talking is picture talking” (Sonja). For example, to stress the importance of building an organization strong foundation, Sonja used the analogy of building the pre-school to the development of a baby:

When I started with them I said: Remember a baby cannot crawl until it can sit; it cannot sit until it can roll over. I said that’s the same with anything you do; you’ve got to go through each stage before you can do the next stage. If
you don’t do that stage, you can’t get to the next stage. . . If you build a house without foundations, it falls down . . . but the foundation’s not visible.

“The business of running a school”

Elizabeth, Nomble and Mandisa—recalled sitting for hours on the floor of one of the zinc structures with a large sheet of paper in front of them to “think through the business of running a school” by asking and answering questions such as: “What are we doing? Who do we serve? What do we need to put in place? What do we have time to do?” (Julia).

Influenced by Sonja’s work, Julia’s experience as a political activist, and new educational policy that charged schools with the promotion of equality, equity and democracy (Ministry of Education 2001), together they developed through many hours of discussion and reflection a vision and mission for the pre-school based on Xhosa values and democratic principles--social justice and equity, mutual understanding and respect, appreciation of the value of human differences, participation and empowerment to think and act--that now guide all decisions at the pre-school (Appendix I). Later, a Child Protection Policy (Appendix F), based on a comprehensive national child protection framework, was developed by the staff of the pre-school and their mentors and introduced at a special ceremony in March 2010 (Newsletter June 2010) to protect children at the pre-school and in the community from violence, exploitation and abuse.

Initially Elizabeth did not understand the meaning and significance of a ‘budget’, so volunteers from ‘outside’ the community arranged workshops on managing finances and accountability (e.g., giving receipts for school fees, keeping invoices and proof of payment) (Julia). After several years when the three senior teachers had basic knowledge, an accountant volunteered one day a week for a year to work with the staff on keeping the school’s finances in good order.
Always a contentious matter, school fees have been charged from the school’s inception. Initially, the monthly R2, a randomly decided-upon amount, collected by Elizabeth went to the primary school. However, for the past 15 years parents have been integral in decision making around setting fees and understanding that to sustain the growth of the preschool, they agree periodically to fees being raised. To supplement fees, parents organize fundraising events three times a year. Working continuously, Elizabeth has earned the confidence and respect of her impoverished community and, in spite of financial hardship, families, valuing opportunities offered by the pre-school to their young children, find money for school fees.

**Pedagogy and resources**

In the early years of the pre-school, in addition to limited business experience, mentors, although themselves not teachers, observed the inexperience of the teachers as well as the paucity of teaching and learning materials. Before the first Grade R curriculum was available to pre-schools, mentors searched for appropriate programs for pre-school children, translated them from Afrikaans into isiXhosa, and then sitting around the kitchen table in the home of one of the mentors helped the teachers with pedagogy. Using their networks, mentors “begged for resources from pre-schools in ‘outside’ communities” (Elizabeth), and together with the teachers made basic manipulatives and learning materials for the young children.

Senior members of the pre-school staff are constantly challenged to think critically about the pre-school, their roles, and the organization. At the 2011 end-of-year meeting, Sonja, reminded them that although they had done evaluation and planning annually for 13 years, they still needed to reflect on the purpose of the exercise by asking: “What are we
actually doing?” She explained: “We don’t want to be on autopilot! We need to think about things and not just do them out of habit” (Sonja).

**School Governing Body**

Post-apartheid education policy that introduced legally defined individual rights and responsibilities into schools mandated that each school have a governing body comprised of parents and members of the community. Schools were charged with promoting equality, equity, and democracy and providing spaces for active citizen participation (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The School Governing Body (SGB) of this pre-school now officially includes the principal Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa representing the school; Mrs. Dyami, the parents; and Sonja, Julia, and Eloise, the broader community; however, meeting that take place monthly are attended by all the pre-school staff, interested parents, student teachers, adult educators, and volunteers. The parent representative, Mrs. Dyami, takes responsibility for signing official documents in Cape Town and is trusted for “advice in difficult situations”; for example, after a burglary in October 2011 she was called to help decide on a solution to ensure security during the end-of-year holidays-- a period when the township is quiet with many people away in the Eastern Cape. Trusted by members of the pre-school staff and respected in the community, Mrs. Dyami is also responsible for coordinating the parent-of-the-year award.

While the meeting is chaired by the principal, I observed that members from ‘outside’ have significant influence over the direction of proceedings and discussion, especially concerning on-going financial and legal matters on the agenda; for example, at the meeting I attended, Elizabeth reported on the school’s “financial insecurity” and that there would not be “enough money for all expenses this month”. Hearing this, Sonja urged teachers to collect
school fees that are due monthly and asked about plans for fund raising. Not succumbing to pressure, Mandisa replied firmly that she would have an answer about proposed fund-raising event at the next meeting, saying: “I don’t want to argue [discuss this matter further]”.

Now confident to interpret a lawyer’s letter about a long-standing land transfer issue, Elizabeth asked Julia “to wait” while she had completed her update. Interestingly, when Elizabeth and Mandisa sensed being interrupted and pressed, they asked explicitly and confidently for their opinions and suggestions to be heard; respect for their requests was given immediately.

**Leadership Learning**

For senior staff, learning to manage the business of the pre-school and taking a leadership role in the community was not straightforward, but over the years, through on-going learning, the principal and two senior teachers are now respected members of the community, confident in their own knowledge, abilities, and skills.

**Apprenticeship: Mutual trust and understanding**

Whether intentionally or not, initially mentors from ‘outside’ and now the three senior members of staff themselves use an educational model--apprenticeship learning--that resonates with Africans who in traditional settings learn through informal and non-formal channels rather than through formalized organizational structures and facilities as in the West (Fordjor et al., 2003; Ntseane, 2006). Traditionally, teaching takes place during a long period of apprenticeship during which the learner submits himself and devotes his service completely to the teacher in a relationship of mutual trust and understanding (Omolewa, 2007).
Similarly, Sonja and other mentors from ‘outside’ used apprenticeship as a method for teaching leadership skills. In the early days of the school, behaviour was modelled, allowing learners to observe performance of an activity by experienced person; then the experienced person shared knowledge, skills, and experience with newer members. Next, role playing allowed learners to try the activity while articulating their thoughts about what they planned to do and why, and after the activity, reflecting about what they did and how it was different from the expert’s performance. To minimize risk at this stage, while at the same time allowing learners to approximate the real experience, the role model provided scaffolding which took the form of modeling tasks and coaching (Rogoff, 1990).

Mentors described the importance of role-playing in the early days of the pre-school shortly after the end of apartheid as teachers learned to provide leadership within the community and manage professional relationships with bureaucrats and members of the ‘outside’ community. When either business or relationship challenges arose at the pre-school, Sonja, Julia and other mentors role played solutions with the three senior teachers. For example, while the pre-school was still located in the zinc structures, Elizabeth received a bill for electricity even though the buildings were not hooked into the grid at the time. After lengthy discussion and analysis of the issue, mentors and teachers then role played until they were comfortable to themselves deal with the utility company. Mentors insisted on never giving answers—“We never did things for them”; they allowed the teachers to discover solutions for themselves, all the time encouraging them: “Of course, you can do it!” (Julia).

At the next stage, scaffolding and other support gradually decreased as learners’ abilities increased. At the 2011 end-of-year evaluation and planning meetings, the competence of the three senior teachers was acknowledged and commended. Sonja remarked
that her “three adopted daughters are flying, but whether they keep flying is up to them. They have left the nest; the responsibility has been passed on.” Always the realist, however, she cautioned the leaders of the school that people would judge them more harshly because of their recent success in the teacher excellence awards and urged them not to rest on their laurels:

The taller the tree, the more wind it gets. The higher we go, the more that is expected of us. Do we want to climb the ladder? It’s your choice. Your team is only as good as your weakest member; take care of the weak spots. Where are we going, no matter how good we were in the past? It’s not that we make mistakes, but it’s how we deal with those problems. Our challenge is how to make the school even better. As the team gets bigger, it gets tougher. We all need to ask: What is best for the school, not me personally? Do I need to stay or go? (Sonja)

Sonja also reminded staff of the principles on which the school was built and asked each one to reflect on what she had done each day to fulfill the pre-school’s core values--commitment, dedication, and perseverance--encouraging them not to “give up on the school or your personal values.”

In the apprenticeship model, self-directed learning takes place as learners’ competence and self-confidence increase, adapting where necessary, working on their own, and receiving assistance only on request. Mentors currently spend less time at the pre-school but make themselves available when needed for advice. Now the three senior members of the pre-school staff relate what they have learned to every-day situations and express confidence in their knowledge, abilities, skills, and their ability to act as mentors and role models for parents, other members of staff, and their extended Xhosa community.

**Team building**

The predominant model for teaching and learning has been the workshop. As Julia commented: “We workshopped and workshopped team building” The women from ‘outside’
do not wish to be viewed as depositors of knowledge\textsuperscript{42} but involved in the act of teaching and learning where all participants have an opportunity to offer comments, questions and ideas. Mentors believe the success of the school and leadership role that staff of the pre-school play within the community has been the team approach that they encourage, guide, and model.

... it’s teams within teams within teams. The staff as a whole is a team; they are part of a bigger team of the parents; the parents are part of a community which is a team. I’ve tried very hard to make sure they understand you can never work in isolation. A team leader is only as good as her followers, and the followers are only as good as the team leader (Sonja).

While encouraging teamwork, mentors emphasized that since they themselves were not amaXhosa, they always “let them [the teachers and members of the community] relate the idea [of teambuilding] to their own culture” (Julia). Understanding the dynamics of teams and groups, Sonja has nurtured the unique strengths each member brings to the senior team: Elizabeth, “the absolute diplomat”, Nomble, “the bright, articulate attention-grabber”, and Mandisa, “the evaluator, the one that sits and listens quietly” and then gives a thoughtful opinion (Sonja). In an interview, Elsa remarked that personal growth of the three senior members of staff is “incredible”, and Elizabeth once “a quiet mouse” is now “a strong, independent woman prepared to face the world.”

Mentors contend that people coming from ‘outside’ the community now see “a beautiful building, strong leadership, effective teachers, and healthy children learning” (Julia). All members of the school team attribute the school’s strength and achievements to the sound foundations on which it was built “right from the beginning” (Julia). Believing that change is not linear, but a long, often slow and circuitous process that requires patience

\textsuperscript{42} A notion based on Freire’s banking model where the teacher is viewed as holding knowledge and the learner a mere receptacle; those privileged with knowledge have power over those who are acquiring knowledge.
and dedication, gives members of the school community a measure of hope and optimism for the future (Elizabeth, Sonja, Julia).

Elizabeth: A role model

Elizabeth’s poised and confident stature befits her position as founder and principal of a pre-school that has recently won a provincial award for excellence in Grade R education, the only school for black children to achieve such success. As she manages days filled with young children, teachers, parents, and many administrative tasks, I am in awe of her accomplishments. Since our first meeting about eight years ago when I visited the school with a donor, Elizabeth’s increasing knowledge and sense of efficacy are apparent. With this confidence, she acts tirelessly in the best interests of not only the pre-school but her local and the broader community.

Always welcoming and graciously generous with her time, Elizabeth has over the years come to trust me as a colleague in education and as someone who understands and values her accomplishments, background, and worldviews.

In response to my question about her perceptions of the way this pre-school has changed the way she thinks about herself, the pre-school, and her community, Elizabeth acknowledged that working with adults in the community is often challenging even though she herself grew up in poverty in a remote village in the Eastern Cape and understands hardship. She reflected that through her professional and personal learning in this small space, she has come to understand her capacity for compassion for others experiencing difficulties, for imagining what they may become, and for being a role model. “I didn’t know that there is a positive side, is a kind side of me where I see the future in that person, not seeing what is happening now”. Elizabeth gave examples of her patience and sense of efficacy in managing difficult situations:

The parent is coming and saying, ‘I don’t have money, so I won’t be able to pay the fees for my child, so I just want to take my child home.’ Or the parent is just coming with an angry situation. So what now I’m doing is I don’t react in a negative way; I always react in a positive way in order for the parents to make sure that the child is getting the good education from us.
Elizabeth was explicit about her intention to be a respected mentor to and role model for parents, and for imparting to parents the importance of pre-school education; of respecting their children, the pre-school, and all who work there; and for setting a good example for their children:

I want for the parent to see and to learn that if you want your child to have a future in life, you have to behave yourself in a positive way. In order for the child to learn from you, you must be a role model. . . And also you have to make sure whatever is happening, you put your child’s education first, or your child’s future first which is education. I always try to understand [parents’] bad reactions or behaviour that was not good . . . until the person respect the school, respect the child who is here, respect me and the other teachers and what we are doing.

Reflecting on her role as an educator and role model and drawing on her own life experiences and learning, Elizabeth is constantly aware of her need to think critically about the way she works with adults to improve not only their own lives but also their community.

If you’re working in your community, you will be able to learn each and every day, ‘Oh! Ja! This has to be changed. I have to change the way I’m thinking because if I’m thinking in a different way, this will help my community to uplift their standard or to be aware of different things--the education of their children or the education of themselves. Because people can be well educated . . . or be in good positions, but there are things they don’t understand, or they haven’t experienced or haven’t changed, or they are not aware with how to work with others, how to behave yourself, how to help other people to gain more strength or more knowledge in different aspects of life. My life experiences, together with my experience in work situations help me a lot in helping others in the community.

Elizabeth related a story of a particularly difficult situation that arose with parents who were unable or unwilling to pay arrears in school fees. In the presence of their child, they lost their tempers; however, Elizabeth believes she demonstrated compassion, sound judgement, and commitment to be a role model and to protect the child. Members of staff who witnessed this incident see Elizabeth as their role model and expressed their admiration for Elizabeth’s self-control and patience. One teacher confessed she would have “chased the
parents away” if she had been in the same situation (Nomble). Elizabeth, too, expressed a sense of efficacy when she recounted that the parents had returned to apologize for their unacceptable behaviour and requested that their child remain as a student at the pre-school.

Elizabeth spoke about the wholeness of human relationships, compassion, and generosity; core Xhosa values she proudly upholds in her position as principal of the preschool. While valuing her capacity and generosity to see the potential of people, in conversations about parents who are perceived to be taking care of their own needs while neglecting those of their children, Elizabeth stressed that fundamental responsibilities are linked to every individual or group right and that everyone is obliged to give back that which is received so that others may benefit. Parents who place their own needs over those of the children are seen as abandoning their obligations not only to their children, but to the community, too.

Besides being perceived as a mentor, a role model, and a respected leader by members of her own community and by many beyond the township, Elizabeth is acting as a mentor to the principal of a high school in the Eastern Cape where the Department of Education is in crisis and the central government has taken over the running of the department after allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Working with this principal, parents, and the local community, Elizabeth is confidently passing on the knowledge, skills, and expertise that she herself has acquired over the past decade in a small space in a Western Cape township. She now takes pride in looking back and giving forward to a community in her rural homeland.
Pre-school Staff Learning

For the pre-school staff, in addition to realizing their dreams to work with young children in their own community, many described learning in this space that had enriched both their professional and personal lives. Teachers and learners in this context understand that education is not mere instrumental or technical knowledge but includes the emotional, the aesthetic, the cognitive, the spiritual and the moral aspects of personhood (Grenham, 2012).

Realizing dreams

Besides Elizabeth, other members of the community had dreams and aspirations; several members of staff voiced their dream for a pre-school for the young children in their community and the role they imagined they would play in accomplishing this goal. As Nomble articulated:

Sometimes you have a vision of yourself, the path you will take, and the role you will play in your community. I only had a dream to work with children, but I didn’t know my potential until I started in this school, until my hands were on it.

However, for most of the women who are now early childhood educators, the path to fulfilling aspirations and becoming qualified was circuitous. For example, Mandisa, while recovering from open heart surgery and the loss of her first child in a bus accident and at the time employed as a domestic worker, had a vision of a better life for herself and her two young boys. “I knew where I was going. I said to myself, ‘I don’t belong in the kitchen any more. I’m going to work very hard to go to college. I’m going to work with children’” (Mandisa).

A classroom assistant, an older woman, recounted how purposeless her life in the township had seemed before she became involved with the school.
Before when I was at home, any time I wanted to wake up, I just woke up, cleaned the house, sat down, did nothing. It was not good for me because I couldn’t think beyond what I could do; I couldn’t dream of the future” (Liliane).

This woman, who has for more than twenty years lived and raised a family in the township, now perceives her life as having worth as she herself learns and works with children. “Now I am here, my mind is just open. That also helps me with life; I wake up early . . . and am here at the school because of the children”.

A student teacher in her early twenties, a former student of the pre-school who was seriously ill as a child, works four days a week at the pre-school to fulfil the practical requirements of her college course. While aspiring to become a nurse one day, in the meanwhile, she is “happy to have a second chance and to experience things in life . . . to be in school, to learn how to work with children” (Zimkhatha).

**Professional learning**

Teachers’ professional learning is on-going through formal, non-formal\(^{43}\) and informal\(^{44}\) channels. While the three original teachers were educated in rural schools in the Eastern Cape during the time of apartheid, further education was not easy as “money was a problem”, so they worked “very hard to pay the college fees” (Mandisa). The four younger teachers attended high school in the Western Cape after 1994 although none completed the equivalent of Grade 12. After their involvement in the Girl Power program (discussed in Chapter Seven), they completed post-secondary studies on a part-time basis together with demanding practical requirements. All four are now accredited early childhood educators.

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\(^{43}\) Non-formal education describes learning to acquiring further knowledge or skills by studying voluntarily with a teacher who assists their self-determined interests by using an organized curriculum, (Livingstone, 2001).

\(^{44}\) Informal education describes learning where teachers or mentors take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to an intentionally-organized body of knowledge in more incidental and spontaneous learning situations (Livingstone, 2001).
having achieved National Qualifications Framework (NFQ)\textsuperscript{45} Early Childhood Development (ECD) Level 5 which qualifies them to teach Grade R. The principal has almost completed her Bachelor of Education through the University of South Africa, and one of the teachers has just begun studying towards an undergraduate degree.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) provides on-going workshops and training sessions for teachers and over the past five years administrative and leadership support for the principal. For example, in 2011, in preparation implementation for the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) at the beginning of the 2013 school year, the staff spent 28 hours in October and November 2011, often on Saturdays, in intensive training with their WCED Program Supervisor that focused on literacy and numeracy. Eager to be better teachers, one commented about the training: “CAPS helps us a lot with teaching the children better” (Mandisa).

\textbf{Informal learning}

More informal learning takes place when members of the broader community offer enrichment workshops to the staff on, for example, ways of improving literacy or teaching music to young children. As needs have arisen in the administration of the school, mentors have organized relevant workshops and seminars (e.g., budgeting; writing letters and proposals; setting an agenda, running a meeting and taking minutes). Now, the staff of the pre-school themselves organize and deliver professional development workshops to which they invite early childhood educators from other township communities.

Apart from formal and informal professional development, the teachers collaborate and “share with each other” so that their “learning is on-going” (Nomble), evident at the end

\textsuperscript{45} As outlined in the \textit{South African Qualifications Authority Act} (1995), the main objective of the National Qualifications Framework was to create an integrated national framework for learning achievements.
of the day when teachers often congregate in Elizabeth’s office or the kitchen to reflect on
the successes and challenges of the day. Nomble explained that in sharing professional
knowledge and skills, the staff at the same time learn from the process of sharing.

Learning ‘outside’

Besides professional and informal learning that takes place at the pre-school, each
member of staff expressed appreciation for opportunities for personal development at venues
‘outside’ the community. In this township, constructed hastily during the dying years of
apartheid to appease demands for urban housing, opportunities for leisure-time activities,
especially for young women are limited. Apart from the local municipal library, the streets
and shebeens are the only public gathering places.

Mandisa expressed genuine appreciation for the mentoring and friendship of others
from ‘outside’ the community who organize workshops that focus on topics such as team-
building and conflict resolution, domestic abuse, and effective communication.

The other things that help us a lot is to be involved with other people . . . who
always come and encourage us, knowing that there is no money but that the
work we are doing at the end will bring rewards (Mandisa).

Several members of staff spoke of positive experiences at week-end camps that are
held usually once a year depending on the generosity of donors. Leaving on Friday evening
after school and returning on Sunday afternoon, up to twenty women—school staff, student
teachers, parents, and members of the local and broader community—spend time together in
a peaceful rural camp site about an hour’s drive from the township. For many this is the only
occasion they ever have to enjoy time away from the daily responsibilities of family and
work. The holistic schedule that includes good meals, rest, and workshops, as well as
recreational activities is carefully planned by the pre-school staff in collaboration with
mentors from ‘outside’. In group activities participants focus on enhancing their team-
building, problem solving, and communication skills; individually, through self-reflection, they develop a self-awareness and confidence to better manage their personal, spiritual, and work lives.

After her first camp experience, a student teacher related her sense of learning and belonging: “It was wonderful! They celebrated for me, so I had the most amazing 21st birthday!” She spoke of personal growth and gratitude for having been included in the event:

We opened up inside our hearts, what’s there inside our hearts. I found this helpful because I’m not such a person who like to talk if I get hurt. I just like to keep it inside of me, just be quiet, so I did learn a lot there (Zimkhitha).

A sense of efficacy: “These things boost you”

All members of the school staff expressed an enhanced sense of efficacy from their on-going learning and experiences in the pre-school. The teachers expressed confidence in their ability to communicate more effectively with and instil in the community an interest in and understanding of the importance of the foundation phase for young children and the after-school program for primary-age children (Nomble, Mandisa, Mvumi, Ntosh, Noncedo, Alice).

Several members of staff and parents referred to this pre-school as a safe place, a place of peace and healing (Nomble, Ntosh, Ncumisa, Umama D, Umama F, and Umama G). In this space where because they feel physically and psychologically safe, they perceive opportunities for coming to terms with life, to gain strength, and in many cases to heal. Each member of staff interviewed expressed her sense of strength drawn from shared learning and problem-solving with peers. In times of personal difficulty, they found solace in working

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46 In South Africa, one’s 21st birthday is as significant an event as one’s 16th birthday in Canada.
with young children in their community. One teacher spoke of the pre-school as a “life-preserving place” (Nomble) and another of “the children giving me help, even if I have stress or something that I can’t easily forget that is bad in my life; I can forget it while I am here and continue with what is positive” (Liliane). A senior teacher whose personal life has been plagued with difficulties, described the comfort she gets from being at the pre-school.

At difficult times . . . when my house burnt down and then when I lost my husband, I had come to the school . . . and sit there and watch those little ones playing there. I could come in the counselling room if I need to cry. Then afterwards I feel better (Nomble).

Generally, in interviews and through informal conversations with the staff of the pre-school, a sense of personal and professional growth and of being in control of their lives emerged. A sentiment expressed by several, one teacher stated: “I am confident now!” (Mvumi). Speaking of her professional and personal learning, particularly in workshops and seminars led by people from ‘outside’, Mandisa expressed her sense of efficacy and willingness to wait patiently to reach her goals:

These things boost yourself; they make you so brave because you know you’re doing this even if there’s no money but in the end there will be something – person and professional growth (Mandisa).

Another teacher conveyed feelings of her sense of efficacy in both her professional and personal life, difficult as they are:

It has changed me. Working in this community and in this school, it’s given me a sense of what I can do—my potential and what I can do for the school. And then you know you have some strength or some potential, even more than you think (Nomble).

Gained through her experiences in the pre-school, a young student teacher’s sense of optimism about the future pervaded our exchange. She perceives the opportunities afforded children by good teachers in the pre-school will prepare these children for a better future.
“They are the future of South Africa maybe one day one of them will become president or a doctors or something like that”. This young woman is confident, too, that her learning is preparing her to be a good parent in the future. “When she is talking, I won’t ignore her, just say, ‘No, go play outside’. Or maybe if the child cries and wants something, I can help: ‘What do you want?’ Don’t just shout at the child, ‘Stop crying . . . and making a noise!’ So when I was here, it helped me” (Zimkhitha).

Mandisa: “I’m not the same person”

Mandisa, a slight woman with quiet intelligence, is an accomplished and respected teacher who has overcome many obstacles besides poverty: open heart surgery with ongoing check-ups, the loss of her first child in a bus accident, and divorce. Although her name has been on the list for a house in the township since the late 1990s, she still lives in a single room in subsidized government housing and shares ablution facilities with ten other families. Here, she raised her two sons, one of whom now attends university.

When questioned whether she perceives herself as changed though her involvement with the pre-school, Mandisa smiled and expressed shy amazement at her own professional and personal growth. “I’m not the same person. I’m not that Mandisa who came before; I think I changed a lot”. She narrated that as a young married woman she had been reserved and withdrawn when she first arrived from the rural Eastern Cape in this township in the Western Cape. After ten years of saving wages earned as a domestic worker and while raising two young boys, she entered college. Although her English skills were weak, she “loved the ECD [early childhood development] course”, interacting and learning with colleagues.

Now part of the core team at the school, Mandisa teaches a Grade R class in the morning and manages youth and adult learning programs in the afternoon. Recently a representative from the school was invited to address a congregation ‘outside’ the community that had given generously in terms of their expertise, time, and resources to the pre-school.
When Elizabeth asked Mandisa to speak on behalf of the school, Mandisa, although diffident, had agreed to the challenge: “We work as a team, so I must try it because I know everything about the school”. Recalling the particular Sunday, Mandisa explained that she had rehearsed with a woman from the church before the service began; her mentor advised her not to focus on her carefully prepared script but “to speak from the heart”. Mandisa recounted proudly that her talk to a congregation of several hundred people had been well received: “I felt good... I didn’t just read line by line; I just keep on talking”.

Mandisa also recalled that at the end of previous school year she had been awarded a certificate for professionalism by the School Governing Body. In deciding on the award, members of staff were interviewed and feedback from colleagues collected. Again, Mandisa was modest and somewhat surprised by the recognition afforded her by her peers. “I couldn’t believe when I got it because I was not expecting it. I was just working. I didn’t know people recognize me like that so I can get the award. But I was glad”.

“The school belongs to the community”

As reported to me across in many interviews and observed in numerous activities, the staff in this pre-school share a common philosophy and theory of change—a communal worldview, the importance of relationships, and the value of lifelong learning—that tends to espouse harmony and collectivity in contrast to the Western emphasis on a more individualistic and competitive orientation towards life. The community and belonging to the community are part of the essence of traditional African life; the individual is born into the African community and is always part of that community; “whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to
the individual” (Mbiti cited in Venter, 2004). Indeed, Gyekye (1996) contends that, according to African moral thought, the highest good is the welfare of the whole community.

In addition to the vision of one woman and subsequently others to improve learning opportunities for young children in their community, members of staff have welcomed participation of parents and members of the local and broader community at each stage of the pre-school’s development. “I believe that the success has been that every step Elizabeth took was with the community” (Julia). Together they have worked towards a common goal and believe they have created a place with strong foundations where all members of the community are welcome to learn. From the pre-school’s inception, the understanding was that “even if we have a beautiful school but don’t have community involvement, it won’t be successful” (Mandisa).

Explaining the place of the pre-school in the community, one of the senior teachers stated:

This school is a small part of the community, but it is an important piece of the whole. Since we are open for everyone to come in, even for those community members who don’t have children in this school, because we do have various activities that they are all welcome to attend . . . They are all benefiting from the school (Nomble).

The school staff believe the community now understands the importance of the foundation phase of education and its benefits for young children. Formerly there were only crèches in the township where the children “just played and were cared for” (Nomble); however, the opening of this pre-school school was seen as “a major, major benefit for the community. As you see, it [the pre-school] is growing so quickly because of the demand of the community. The parents now see the value of pre-primary education” (Mvumi).
Constructing Citizenship through Participation

As Gaventa & Barrett (2010) argue, engagement in civil society is itself a way of constructing a sense of citizenship. In this study, data gathered in interviews and through observations show evidence of the development of increased knowledge and an enhanced sense of awareness of rights and self-identity as the staff of this pre-school begin to recognize themselves as actors. This sense of capacity to exercise agency—control over defining one’s own life choices and pursuing goals to improve one’s own circumstances at both the personal and community level—enhances their sense of efficacy and confidence for further participation. Fleming (2002) argues that “more participation produces individuals with more democratic dispositions, who are more tolerant, more sensitive to reciprocity, better able to engage in moral discourse and judgment”, and more likely to examine their own choices—“all qualities conducive to the success of democracy” (p.167).

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I explored the pre-school staff’s perceptions of their participation in this space considered by many as ‘safe’. Adult learning was reported to be occurring through many avenues and was observed at different levels of analysis. At the organizational level, senior staff expressed with confidence that their learning had enhanced their capacity to manage and lead the school; among the pre-school staff accounts of formal and informal learning were reported as well as sense of agency that has transformed their professional and personal lives. Besides fulfilling their dreams of teaching young children and contributing to strengthening their community, many expressed a sense of purpose and confidence to make decisions that affected their own lives.
Through education and the development of critical consciousness, researchers argue citizens acquire knowledge and skills that enable them to participate in civil society. As seen in data collected through multiple interviews and observations, adult learning is perceived by the pre-school staff as having enhanced their knowledge and skills, as well as their capacity to enter and engage not only in their community but beyond. For senior staff, learning to manage the business of the pre-school and taking a leadership role in the community was not straightforward, but through on-going learning, the principal and two senior teachers now perceive themselves as respected members of the community, confident in their own knowledge and abilities. Each member of staff interviewed expressed her sense of strength drawn from shared learning with peers. In this space where because they feel physically and psychologically safe, the pre-school staff focus on enhancing their learning; here they have broadened their understandings of themselves, the assumptions that society operates by, and the ways in which the world works.

The staff of this pre-school displayed qualities of and perceive themselves as actors--‘makers and shapers’--rather than passive beneficiaries--‘users and choosers’. This sense of agency has extended the boundaries of what they imagine themselves being able to be and do. In their growing sense of awareness of their situations, they are redefining and extending what is possible for them to be and do in situations where they have in the past been restricted (Mosedale, 2005). The transition from apartheid brought optimism and promises of change--dreams of possible futures, and despite the lingering legacy of apartheid, many participants in this study expressed their confidence in education as the way out of poverty and oppression and their resolve to wait patiently since they believe the future is theirs.
Although some studies indicate that democracy and development are difficult to achieve without strong associational life in small spaces, others caution that participation does not necessarily produce more equitable outcomes. Rather than drawing a straight line from participation to outcomes, I argue that engagement of staff in this pre-school has strengthened the practices and efficacy of participation and is itself a way of constructing a sense of citizenship and increasing the knowledge and sense of awareness necessary to achieve it.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CITIZENSHIP LEARNING
PARENTS’ AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A space in which they broaden their understandings of themselves, the assumptions that society operates by, and the ways in which the world works (Giroux, 1997).

Tuesday, 23 August 2011

Yesterday a south-westerly brought a sudden change—cold rain and howling wind—but this morning is a glorious winter day; the sun is shining, the air clean and crisp, and the mountains to the east draped with low-lying clouds. Later in the morning, the rocky peaks will be etched like a child’s cut-out against a brilliant blue, rain-washed sky.

The township is quiet: municipal workers sort and bag garbage at corner of the main road, women hang out their laundry, toddlers play close to the front gates of their homes, and dogs wandered aimlessly across the road. Young men saunter towards the highway apparently in no rush to arrive wherever they are going. Although there is little traffic, occasional taxis and minibuses travelling fast on narrow streets, swerve to dodge children, potholes, and animals.

As I drive up to the front gate of the school, I am struck by the neatness and sense of tranquility -- a stark contrast to the sprawling dreariness of the township. The buildings are newly painted, the flower garden is carefully tended, and the oak tree that offers shade to the children during the scorching Cape summer is thriving. Nomble sees me at the gate, runs to greet me, and escorts me over the office. A quiet hum of children busy in their classrooms fills the courtyard; a few teachers wander in and out of the kitchen hoping for a quick cup of tea. Elizabeth, the principal, is at her desk; another warm welcome is followed by customary inquiries about the wellbeing of our respective families.

A mother, elegant in her long warm skirt, fuchsia jacket, and matching hat, comes into the office, confident and smiling, to pay her child’s school fees. A father on his way to work drops by the office with a front door key for his six-year-old son because the child’s mother would return only later in the day, and the little boy needed to get into their house; the neighbours would see that the child was safe until his mother returned.
While the previous chapter investigated adult learning at the levels of the organization and the pre-school staff, in this chapter the level of analysis is parents and members of the local community. I explore specifically the perspectives of parents and members of the local community, inquiring whether this small space—an early childhood education and care centre in a marginalized community—has supported their learning, and enhanced their sense of agency and capacity for democratic participation; in fact, played a role in constructing citizenship. Seen as valued and respected partners, parents and grandparents reported that through participation in their children’s pre-school they had been offered opportunities that had fostered learning as well as a sense of efficacy. Members of the local community also reported changes in their capacity to participate in a new democracy through their learning in this space.

While Elizabeth’s vision had initially been for a pre-school that would attend to the learning needs of five- and six-year-olds as well as after-school care for primary-age children within her own community, soon parents and older women, followed by young women and high school students in the community, perceiving this a safe space, came with requests for opportunities to enhance their own knowledge and skills.

In North America, school-family-community partnerships tend to be top-down, directed by the school for parents; however, for many in this pre-school, parental participation has grown naturally from a sense of mutual obligation and respect. In accordance with Xhosa tradition, the school staff focuses on building strong relationships with parents from the time enrol their children in the pre-school. As Nomble noted: “We invite the parents to the school because education is all about the child, the parent and the teacher”. From its inception, the pre-school staff has communicated to parents that they are
capable partners in their children’s educational experiences. On-going opportunities for learning about child development and pedagogy and for enhancing parenting skills are provided to young parents who now find themselves in an urban environment, removed from traditional roots and family support.

When the school started in 1996, Grade R for five- and six-year-olds had only recently been introduced to the South African school system, so, as one of the teachers related, “Parents didn’t actually know what to expect” and were confused by the difference between Grade R and Grade 1 (Nomble). As the school grew, the staff understood the importance of inviting parents to participate in the pre-school and of informing parents each year of classroom and outdoor activities, excursions, fundraising, and meetings, “so they know the why and how of everything that is going on in this school” (Nomble). Thus, parents are given the rationale for every classroom activity, outing, and fundraising project because as one of the senior teachers explained, “We open our heads for them” (Mandisa).

From their perspective, parents sense they are welcome at the pre-school and their participation is valued. A parent acknowledged that she had, at the beginning of the school year, been uneasy leaving her five-year-old daughter at the pre-school while she went to work so “had to know everything” that happened during the day. At first, she admitted that she would come to the school gate but “didn’t know how to approach the teachers”; however, she is “more comfortable now” (Umama A). About her relationship with the teachers, she commented with satisfaction: “Yes, they welcome our questions. We are working hand-in-hand. They teach me about my child, and I teach them about my child” (Umama A).

Multiple channels of engagement—monthly meetings, formal parent-teacher meetings and more informal school and classroom visits, correspondence, and opportunities
to volunteer—foster parents’ understanding of pre-primary education and specific knowledge of the program and provide opportunities to participate. Aware that the development of the child is augmented by parents’ understanding of and response to the child’s basic needs in terms of learning, affection, nutrition, and health care, the principal and teachers take every opportunity to educate parents. In interviews, many parents reported enhanced knowledge and sense of efficacy, a belief in their ability to parent more effectively, to assist in their children’s learning, to improve and contribute to the school and their community, and to participate and claim their rights in this new democracy.

**Parents’ Formal Learning**

*Wednesday, 24 August 2011*

> When I arrive at the school at 6:00 pm, parents, mostly mothers and grandmothers, bundled up against the chilly, damp evening, are assembled in the adult learning room. While some of the younger women wear jeans, others are dressed in traditional shweshwe skirts, and to ward off the damp evening chill, most have on traditional headgear—cloth wound around the head and tied to one side in a large bow.

> Elizabeth, Nomble and Mandisa sit at a table at the front of the room; a chair in the centre is reserved for me. The meeting begins on a solemn note with a prayer and singing of the national anthem, Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika (God bless Africa): the harmonizing, crescendos, and diminuendos bring memories and tears. As the meeting progresses, a constant stream of late-comers, women with multiple duties and responsibilities, arrive. By the end of the meeting I counted more than sixty adults in attendance—parent, several with babies asleep on laps, and school staff, with most of the young teachers perched uncomfortably on low tables at the far end of the room.

> Elizabeth welcomes me and gives me an opportunity to explain my study and invite participation. Elizabeth elaborates, and together we answer questions, stressing confidentiality, participants’ right to withdraw at any time without penalty, or to omit a question they wish not to answer. The offer of the services of a translator for those who preferred to be interview in isiXhosa brings nods of approval. Slowly and somewhat diffidently, several parents and two grandmothers rise to their feet, volunteering to be interviewed and stating the time that suited them to meet with me. Pleased with the response, I wonder in reality how many will come at the agreed-upon time. Living in a township comes with so many unknowns and demands, especially for women. I’m hoping that word-of-mouth

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47 Popular with amaXhosa women, shweshwe, deriving its isiXhosa name from the swishing sound it makes when the wearer walks, is indigo printed cloth introduced to South Africa by German missionaries in the late 19th century.
will bring forward more participants. After the meeting, Elizabeth suggests giving me names of a few people who may not have had a positive experience participating in the school. I will follow up with these people and request an interview, possibly at a place away from the school.

I thank the parents and commend them for the sacrifices they are making to send their children to Grade R, thereby establishing a sound foundation for future learning. Again, stoic nods of approval.

Upon registering their child at the pre-school, parents are informed of parent meetings and the importance of attendance. At a meeting at the beginning of each year, teachers explain to parents of the philosophy of early learning and define stages of the child development, making clear their goal of preparing children for the next level of schooling.

At parents’ meetings we share as much information about the school with them because we can’t work together if we are separated. We have to include them; they have to know what is happening at the school. For everything we do, we have to explain to the parents (Nomble).

At this first meeting of the year, teachers tell to parents about “our kind of learning because we want them to understand that children learn through play, that it’s more informal than big school”. For example, teachers explain that children may return home with sandy, muddy, or wet clothes, so parents need to understand the importance of learning through play. “The parents must know the outcomes of this kind of play and what we expect from the children as far as learning is concerned” (Nomble). Parents are also made aware of the school’s expectations of them, as parents, to foster their children’s development and learning at home. At this meeting, the reason for school fees and fundraising is also explained since “the parents sometimes have a problem . . . they don’t understand why we ask for money” (Ncumisa).

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48 In South Africa, preschool children, their parents, and teachers often refer to elementary school as ‘big school’.
Educational trips play an important role in enriching the curriculum for children who seldom leave the township except for trips to their families’ traditional homes in the Eastern Cape, often these days to attend a funeral. Most parents, unable to afford outings, are eager for their children to have opportunities they themselves never had as children. At a meeting, several mothers (Umama D, Umama J, Umama L, Umama M, and Utata A) expressed appreciation to the staff for explaining the educational value of outings and their relevance to the curriculum.

I learn something for example when children are going out for an educational trip, we are told what they are going to do because they are going to see the things that they learn from the classrooms . . . to see . . . a lion. Because most of the parents can’t take the children to where they can learn those things, we get a lesson first to know why they have to go out (Umama J).

Now living in an urban environment so different from their traditional roots and far from their extended families in the Eastern Cape, several parents interviewed expressed appreciation for parenting advice offered at meetings:

A lot of us parents are not educated, but Elizabeth talks to us about respecting our children. She makes us sensitive to our children and tells us to speak decently in front of them and to respect them because they learn from us (Utata B).

In the past, many of the children in the pre-school were cared for by stay-at-home grandmothers who had been able to attend meetings regularly; however, most working parents reported attempting to attend these meetings. “I do attend the meetings when I’m off [work]” (Umama C). “I try to attend the meetings; I come with the other parents” (Umama F). “Sometimes it’s me and sometimes it’s my wife who attend meetings” (Utata B). Other parents, returning from work late, with young children to care for household duties to attend to, find attendance difficult. However, most send formal apologies and come by the school at
a time that suits them to talk to the principal, or they call “to find out what is going on because they don’t want to stay behind [be uninformed]” (Nomble).

Elizabeth estimates that 80% of parents attend meetings; “it’s just about 20% we’re struggling with”. The parents who attend “follow the decisions; they support us fully”. A student teacher, impressed by the number of parents attending meetings, commented that even on a cold, rainy day many parents made an effort to be at the pre-school “because they want their children to get education that they didn’t get – the parents didn’t get” (student teacher, Mary). Parents who do not attend meetings are approached when they come to the school or are seen in the community. Some of these parents are satisfied with decisions, but others disagree, contending they would have made a different decision had they been at the meeting. “It means . . .  it is not in support” (Elizabeth). Despite excuses, perceived as lack of interest, the principal and teachers encourage these parents to attend the next meeting.

Another formal venue for parent participation is one-on-one sessions where their child’s classroom teacher reviews the child’s work and has an opportunity to explain the process of continuous observation and assessment. “You can’t just give the child a progress report to take home because the parent won’t understand the codes, so you have to sit down . . . and explain the coding that you used” (Nomble). Observation sheets and teaching strategies are clarified, and parents’ questions answered. If the child is not developing according to expectations, the teacher asks the parent to work on specific tasks with the child at home. Nomble explained that the child’s progress is the joint responsibility of the parent and the school, that they need to collaborate:

I will personally call the parent and sit down without the child, so the child must not lose confidence. It must be confidential. So I explain everything to the parent, and we plan and work out how we can help the child – what is the role of the parent at home and what is our role at school. Then maybe after
two weeks we can meet together to see if this is working, or if we have to change.

Nomble’s opinion is that most parents today are aware of their children’s right to education: “They are interested and fully responsible about their children’s education.” While in the past more grandmothers were responsible for young children but asked few questions of the staff, today’s young parents, aware of their rights as citizens in a democracy, hold the pre-school accountable.

Before those old ladies used not to ask those kinds of questions because they trusted us. Even if we called them in, they said, ‘You know better than us. I’m fine with this’. But now we have to explain it properly because they are all democratic, know their rights and need explanations of what their children are doing (Nomble).

**Parents’ Informal Learning**

Apart from more formal meetings in groups and one-on-one, parents perceive that they are welcome at the pre-school, that they “get a very good response from the teachers” (Umama E) when they pay informal visits to the school or volunteer to help clean and maintain the school. Some parents visit the classroom simply “to look how the child goes” and to “learn what my child is learning” (Umama C). Feedback from teachers “tells me how my child is coping” (Umama E). Others who cannot attend the monthly meeting “come for feedback to find what my child’s doing”. Yet other parents come by the school or call if there is a problem; for example, children returning home late or lost clothing. All those interviewed reported satisfaction with the school’s response to their questions and concerns. As a father commented: “If there’s something wrong, they will tell you; they cooperate” (Utata A). A mother reported that she has no hesitation in going to the pre-school “to talk to the teacher and the teacher will listen” (Umama D).
Parents are also welcome to help in a classroom at any time and to ask questions regarding the children’s learning. Unfamiliar with early learning pedagogy, they ask questions such as the following: “Why are you painting instead of writing? Why are you playing with play dough; I don’t understand why you are doing this? Why are you tearing paper because it’s too messy?” (Mvumi). Teachers then take these opportunities to talk to parents about early childhood pedagogy, about expectations and learning outcomes.

The principal related that when at parent meetings she asks for volunteers to help clean the school and tend the garden, many parents who are not employed will “raise their hands” and offer assistance. The teachers acknowledge the willingness of parents to help their children and the staff at this school “in any way they can” (Elizabeth). In interviews, several parents laughed when I inquired whether they volunteered on school outings. Indicating they trusted the school staff, the mothers replied, laughing: “No! I don’t know how!” (Umama P). “No! It’s too crazy” (Umama K).

Building strong relationships with parents extends beyond formal and informal meetings to written communication. Each quarter—in March, June, September, and December—a formal report documenting the child’s progress is sent home “to tell parents exactly where their child is, the progress of the child up to that stage” (Elizabeth). The parents are then called to come in to meet with the teacher who explains the assessment.

One of the junior teachers explained that correspondence informs parents of school activities: “We always write a letter to the parents, if we have events or an outing; we always involve the parents. When we are going to do things at the school, we always inform the parents” (Ntosh). Letters of a more personal nature are also written to parents. Expressing his satisfaction with the way the school communicates with parents, a father, said:
What I like is that if there’s any change, they write the letter. When they come from school, I take the bags, and my child will say, ‘Dada, here’s a letter’, and I read it all. The teachers will say they want to see me. There’s good communication” (Utata A).

Since most parents now have cell phones, contacting them is simpler than in the past, and as Nomble explained: “Because the children are small, we can’t just pass messages through them, so we have to call the parents for the meeting”.

**Parents’ Enhanced Confidence and Self-Efficacy**

Many parents described and were appreciative of the opportunities to learn through their participation in the pre-school. Besides increased understanding of the development and learning of young children and their enhanced sense of efficacy in their supporting role at home, parents also demonstrated evidence of making choices and of being aware of and claiming rights. While many parents and grandparents of children in the pre-school also expressed positive outcomes of their participation in the pre-school, for others the experience was not as positive, as discussed later in this chapter.

**Understanding young children**

Because Grade R has only recently been widely implemented in the South African school system, parents from the time the school started have asked to learn what their children are learning. When questioned whether their involvement in the pre-school had changed the way they thought about young children, parents were gratified with their enhanced understanding of ways young children learn and develop. Through their involvement with the pre-school, parents and grandparents perceive they are more knowledgeable and more secure in ways to help their children succeed. A grandmother expressed satisfaction that “the teacher explained the progress of the child, what his needs are, and how I can help. So that is why I understand now” ((Makhulu B). One young parent
related that she was teaching her own parents to read and write so that they would be able to help her child write his name. Understanding the importance of fine motor development from her learning at the pre-school, a parent reported that she now looks at blocks and puzzles in stores and buys educational materials when she can afford these items. Yet another parent, understanding the idea of learning through play, exclaimed: “Now I know why my child comes home with paint on her hands!” (Umama P).

From her learning at the pre-school, another parent now aware of and recognizing the development of her older child in primary school, experiences a sense of efficacy as a parent:

Before I used to help her with the homework but now she is a little independent because she would come from school and do her homework and then after that will show me and say, ‘Look! This is my homework, and I have finished it.’ So . . I have learned more that children can do good things when they are at school. And they can be independent when they are older (Umama D).

**Working together at home**

Regardless of their own level of education, all the parents interviewed in this study recognized collaborating with the school, showing interest in, and working with their children at home as a valuable activity and contribution to their children’s future educational success. As one parent commented:

At home you must also try to learn with the child, not just when he’s coming to the school. When he comes back from school, he mustn’t just throw the school bag down. You must say, ‘What’s going on today? What are you doing in school?’ You must also come [to meetings] when the teachers are explaining (Umama M).

A young mother indicated that she was well informed of her child’s learning because she “asks lots of questions” and remarked with confidence that she had finished high school
and was therefore able to help her child: “because I have my matric, I can help my child” (Umama A).

Recounting his deprived childhood in the Eastern Cape, a father spoke positively about his collaboration with the school in extending his child’s learning.

She likes writing at home, and I watch her. She must see the same things at home [as she does at school] so that she can grow up . . . I did not have the things at my home; my father died when I was a young boy (Utata A).

A barely literate grandmother (Makhulu A), explained with confidence and satisfaction the ways her family is involved with her grandson’s learning at home:

Yes, we’re doing a lot of help him at home because whenever he wants to he’s doing drawings and writing and reading. Sometimes when he is watching TV, he sees the letters of his name; he will say, ‘Those are the letters of my name.’ . . . We help him with the numbers because sometimes he isn’t correct.

The mother of six children is aware of her child’s progress as she takes an interest in his learning and speaks frequently with the teacher.

When he comes home, I say, ‘I want to see your work today. How was it your work today at school?’ He puts his books in front of me; I open the book and look what is happening. Yes, I know all the time what he is learning (Umama K).

Besides being encouraged to help their children with school work, several parents conveyed that their participation in the pre-school had educated them to be a better parent. As Umama K told me: “Yes, I’m very happy now that I can bring all my kids here to this safe place. I know I’m a good mother.” Another parent also considered her learning as contributing to making her a more effective parent:

Because the children are at school in the morning, I have time to work with them and also socialize with them when they are at home. I can see when

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49 Matric is the abbreviation for matriculation, the national school-leaving examination taken at the end of Grade 12. A student who passes receives either a Senior Certificate (i.e. completion of high school) or a Senior Certificate with Matriculation Endorsement (i.e. eligibility for university entrance).
there is something wrong or if everything is fine with my children (Umama D).

Yet another parent said she had learned “a lot” about her child from her involvement in the pre-school and admired the way, following Xhosa tradition, that respect for adults is taught to children. This helped her as a parent reinforce these behaviours at home.

**Exercising choice**

In a society plagued with violence, the safety of children in the townships is a pressing concern for many parents. Stories of young boys being abducted in townships closer to Cape Town were told by several participants but could not be verified although extensive inquiries and internet searches were conducted. Several parents related that their decision to register their children at this pre-school was based on their need for “a place for the child to be safe and also to get an education” (Makhulu A).

Parents interviewed were forthright about other reasons for registering their children in this pre-school where they have to pay fees, attend frequent meetings, and become involved in fundraising. A sense of agency, their capacity to make choices, was apparent in the responses of many parents to my question concerning their motivation for sending their child to this pre-school when there are alternatives in their community. Most participants voiced their intention to offer the best pre-school education to their children in order to prepare them for future learning success. Umama D, an articulate young mother of two, contended that she wanted her children “to have a good foundation before she goes to Grade 1” so tells them “to learn for the big school”. Another mother based her decision to send her children to pre-school on the belief that “if you go Grade 1 and have not been to the pre-school, it’s going to be difficult” (Umama M). Umama K, the mother of six children all of whom have attended this pre-school —“a record, all my six kids here”— was without
doubt that this pre-school prepares children well for primary school. Another, pleased with her decision told me: “My child is learning very, very well. He is a clever boy!” (Umama G).

Other parents, with aspirations for their children, believe that giving their children a quality pre-school experience will prepare the children for future careers: “Now you can think about the career of the child. If you want to be a teacher, you can . . . If you want to be a builder, you can see now he like to play with the blocks” (Utata B).

**Contributing ideas**

A grandmother (Makhulu B) expressed self-assurance that her participation in and contribution to the pre-school were valued and valuable. She believes her responsibility as a grandparent and member of the community is to play her part in the pre-school. “Because my grandchild is here, I have to follow what he is doing at school and what the school is doing for him. Whenever the school has meetings, I have to come because I want to add my ideas”.

**Claiming rights**

Teachers commented that young parents, many of whom they suggest are employed, play an active role in the pre-school compared to grandmothers who in the past stayed home to care for young children; instead of trusting the staff to run the school, young parents expect to be involved (Mandisa; Nomble). Through increasing awareness of their own rights and those of their children, these parents demand quality pre-school education. “As you see, the school is growing so quickly because of the demand of the community. The parents now see the value of pre-primary education” (Mvumi). Although when the pre-school started soon after the first democratic elections, parents did not actually know what to expect, they now understand their right to ask questions and to hold the school accountable. “They know their children’s rights. They know that their children have to go to school. They know what kind of teaching is being given to their children. They know what they want” (Mandisa).
Parents with young children are aware of their eligibility for social services and claim their rights to health care and the child subsidy. An unemployed father whose wife works reported taking his children to the public health nurse for regular check-ups when they were infants. Other parents related taking their children to a doctor in the neighbouring town or to the nurse at the clinic in the township where they perceive they receive good, free care. For families who qualify, a monthly child subsidy of R250 is available and although small, supplements often meagre family incomes. Some parents reported that they had no problems in claiming child subsidies; others persevered in spite of inefficient bureaucracy.

Many parents reported opportunities for formal and informal learning offered by the pre-school. Their understanding of young children and awareness of the goal of the pre-school to prepare children for future learning they believe gave them skills to work with their children at home and to parent more effectively. Parents also perceived that they through learning they had gained confidence to make choices about their children’s education, contribute to the school community, and claim their rights.

**Local Community Members’ Learning**

The final level of analysis is members of the local community many of whom I interviewed also reported changes in their capacity to participate in a new democracy through their learning in this space that they perceive as both physically and psychologically safe. While older participants in the study referred indirectly to the restrictions and humiliation of legislated segregation, those under the age of twenty-five appear to have little recollection of a time before democracy; for all, however, inequities in social, economic, and educational opportunities remain their reality.
In the early days of the pre-school, mothers and grandmothers whose children attended the pre-school perceived a change in the lives of their children; they experienced the progress of their pre-school children, but sensed they themselves were being “left behind . . . staying at home doing nothing” (Elizabeth). As Nomble corroborated: “They had the desire for education to be passed on to them; they wanted to acquire skills.” Although Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa at that time were unsure how they would help these women or what programs they could implement, they agreed to be mentors to those with needs greater than their own. When youth in the community observed adults participating in learning activities at the pre-school, they too asked to be included in this space in their community.

**Phakamani: Community women**

In 2002 Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa called a meeting to ask the mothers and grandmothers what knowledge and skills they wanted and needed. Thus, “Phakamani (Xhosa: stand up and do it yourself) was born” (Nomble) and became a branch of Women for Peace, a well-established organization in the Western Cape. Over the past few years, however, the organization has encountered financial difficulties, and Phakamani now operates independently: “There has been a break down, so we’ve got our own branch” (Mandisa).

Phakamani’s vision is to provide the women of this township opportunities to learn and develop skills that will help them improve the quality of their lives as well as those of their dependents and members of their community (Newsletter 2004). “Any women in the community are welcome to attend and learn; it’s not only parents of the children who are attending the school” (Mandisa). Over the years the women have embarked on numerous projects (Table 4).
Table 4: Phakamani Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sewing</td>
<td>A formal training program is in place: Women earn credits towards their own sewing machine and are then able to work from home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beading</td>
<td>An on-going income-generating project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Garden</td>
<td>Produce from the garden, taken care of by a grandfather, supplies vegetables for the children’s meals. Rainwater tanks conserve water for use during the dry summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy &amp; Numeracy</td>
<td>Valued by the women, these classes not only improve their conversational and reading skills but give them an opportunity to grow in confidence as they share personal concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Cooking &amp; Catering</td>
<td>Practical sessions and lessons on budgeting and nutrition have proved popular. A group now caters for functions at the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Development</td>
<td>Workshops: Understanding child development; self-esteem; money management; self-improvement; personal care and hygiene; AIDS awareness; spousal and child abuse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending a Helping Hand</td>
<td>The women extend friendship and help to those in even greater need than themselves both in their own and the neighbouring community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At a series of meetings attended by interested mothers and grandmothers in 2004, an action plan and the foundations on which the organization should be developed were discussed and decided upon. A subsidy expected from the Department of Health was cancelled, but despite initial feelings of despair, the women were determined to continue on their own, using whatever resources they could find (Newsletter, June 2004). Sonja conducted personal development workshops for 12 months, using one of the classrooms in the zinc structures after the children had left for the day. “Phakamani took place every afternoon. They were so eager to acquire skills that on hot, hot days they sweated inside; on
cold days they froze” (Nomble). Later, although they had no equipment and few materials, the women began learning to sew and do beadwork as they sat on mats on the floor with their instructors and mentors and worked in winter by candlelight because there was initially no electricity.

As the women acquired equipment—a sewing machine, scissors, etc.—and material (fabric), they embarked on a number of projects. Although instructors from ‘outside’ were eager to lead workshops, the concept of train-the-trainer became the solution—an easily accessible person who understands the learner and speaks her language (Newsletter, June 2004). Gradually the quality of the items made by the mothers and grandmothers reached a level that made income generation possible, with both the project and the individual women benefiting.

When planning phase two of the new school, the decision was made by the School Governing Body and accepted by the parents to build a multifunctional room that would provide for the educational needs adults. By the end of 2004, the adults’ classroom was completed, and Phakamani had its own premises, available for women in the community at all times.

In 2005, a support group in a neighbouring town, recognizing Phakamani’s work in the community, approached Nomble and asked the group to run a sewing course for which they would receive financial support. The planning and development of this course placed a financial burden on the group, but all involved were determined to remain faithful to the goal of Phakamani: to empower the mothers to make a difference in their homes and community. Once trained, the women would be able to apply these sewing skills, “earn a machine,” and
“put their effort and hard work to overcome their daily struggle to survive” (Newsletter, June 2005).

Recently, through the EcoSchool program, the school obtained two 1,000-litre water tanks that fill up with run-off from the school roof in winter; the water is used in the dry summer months for trees as well as the flower and vegetable garden that is tended by a grandfather under the auspices of Phakamani. The vegetable are used in soup for the children’s lunch.

The Phakamani group meets formally once a month and the project team meets annually. With the school staff, the Phakamani team evaluates the activities of the past year and draws up a proposed plan for the following year and this plan discussed with all members prior to implementation. At the 2005 end-of-year evaluation session, the decision was made to give the women more responsibility by appointing a leader for each project. At this time, as a result of stringent control and accountability, Phakamani had built up a reserve of R5,600 (over $1,000 Canadian) and for the first time presented a budget.

“Learning to think creatively”

Mandisa, now the coordinator of Phakamani, considers that women’s involvement in this group, open to any woman in the community, has “changed their lives in a positive way” and that the women feel stronger because they can do things for themselves. She mentioned, in particular, the project where thirty women from the community had received training sponsored by a sewing machine company. Once women had successfully completed a number of items, they were given a machine “so they can start something from their home”. Several of these women now run dressmaking and tailoring businesses from home. Another successful project was a gardening course given by a local non-government organization where women were given seeds and manure to start gardens at home. Evidence of these
gardens, splashes of summer colour in the drabness of the township, is apparent as one drives from the main road to the pre-school.

For Phakamani women, all new learning--from literacy and numeracy programs to income-generating projects and workshops on raising awareness of conditions that oppress, alienate, and marginalize them--has been perceived by the participants as relevant and instructive. For example, after a workshop on domestic abuse, one participant was heard to exclaim: “You mean we don’t have to put up with that!” (Mandisa). A woman related she was pleased she was able to fill in government forms with her name, address, and signature when before she had relied on her teenaged daughter. Both illiterate when the Phakamani program began, Doris and Liliane are the most active students in the literacy class where they are learning to read, write, and speak English. Because of frequent trips to the Eastern Cape for family responsibilities or funerals, class attendance for several other women in the literacy program is sporadic; some older grandmothers have moved back to the Eastern Cape where they themselves have started women’s groups based on the Phakamani model. The students appreciate Mama Eloise, a retired elementary school teacher, who “is giving them knowledge”. The older women, long denied unbiased news of the world, reported appreciating discussions of world events--now seen on television--with their adult educators.

Liliane expressed thankfulness for the sense of independence and confidence she has gained being part of the women’s group: “Phakamani helped me a lot”. Although she earned a small income from sewing at home before she joined the group, Liliane believes she has learned many skills through her training with Phakamani. In addition, she is proud of her developing imagination: “Phakamani helps me to think creatively. . . When I see on TV or
something someone is wearing, something nice, even if I don’t have any patterns, I just do
that. I think creatively; I can combine colours”.

_Doris: “So my plans are now in place”_

In response to my question about ways her experience in this pre-school has changed
the way she thinks about herself, Doris, a widow with three children, illiterate with few
employment prospects before her association with the pre-school, told me before she joined
Phakamani, she had little confidence or understanding of how to improve her situation. “I
was at home, not working, doing nothing. I thought about doing something for myself, and
my children, and my family, but I didn’t know how to go though, how to do it”. Since
becoming a member of the women’s group, being hired as the school’s cook, and learning to
read, Doris expresses her sense of control over her own life and the lives of her children. She
feels confident in her ability as a mother and as a provider for her children. “So life was
worse then, but now . . . whenever I want to do something, I know that I’m going to do that”
(Doris).

Doris, too, is confident in her developing skills and competence in caring for the
community’s children, including neighbourhood toddlers who join the line of children in the
after-care program waiting for their afternoon snack:

Each day I cook breakfast for 180 children. I’m washing the dishes and
cleaning up. . . In the afternoon I prepare after-school sandwiches for those
who are coming from the primary school. We think we have 50 children, but
we always have the small ones come [from the neighbourhood].

_Girl Power: Young women 18-24 Years_

Another gap that was causing concern was the lack of opportunities for young women
between the ages of 18 and 24 in the community. Dropping out of school and finding
employment possibilities limited, many soon gave up in despair. Perceiving the pre-school to
be a safe place within the community and voicing their resolve to prevent unwanted pregnancies and avoid HIV/AIDS infection, a group of young women approached Elizabeth asking for further education and life skills development. The three experienced teachers, having been in similar positions themselves, wanted to help these young women (Newsletter, December 2005).

Under Sonja’s guidance, a pilot study was implemented during which workshops were run by mentors and teachers from the pre-primary school. The results were so encouraging that the school community decided to proceed with the project. Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa, with three additional members of the community, were trained as facilitators to conduct a series of 24 workshops for a group of 20 young women, beginning in February 2006. Girl Power was the name chosen by the young women themselves for their group.

Today four of the young women who participated in the program went on to obtain early childhood teaching qualifications, volunteer at the pre-school. They have since been hired as teachers at the pre-school, and another member of the original Girl Power group is the school secretary; every one of the other young women who participated in the first Girl Power program is now employed. The pre-school continues to offer space where young women have opportunities to learn and be mentored.

*Girl Power: A sense of optimism*

On a personal level, the four junior teachers—Mvumi, Ntosh, Noncedo, and Alice—conveyed, almost with a sense of incredulity, that having passed NFQ Level 5, they were now proud to be qualified Grade R teachers making their contribution to their community. Speaking on behalf of the group, Mvumi expressed the importance of their involvement in Girl Power:
Before we worked at this school, we never knew how much we could do. Before Girl Power, we had no work and no hope for our future. We are strong and can help our children and our community. Now we are proud of ourselves and what we can do. At this school we work hand in hand, so we are all stronger.

_Ncumisa: “I’m happy now!”_

_Ncumisa, now the school secretary, also teaches traditional Xhosa games to children in the after-school program and works with the high school boys’ glass bead making project. She related positive experiences in the Girl Power group where she appreciated workshops that developed her personal skills and a sense of confidence._

_At a school function Ncumisa’s mother confided in me stories of her daughter’s troubled adolescence. An angry and out-of-control school girl, Ncumisa became pregnant at 15 so had not completed high school. Although her mother helped raise the child, Ncumisa had limited opportunities for further education or employment—“no money to go to the school, no work” (Ncumisa). Elizabeth, the pre-school’s principal, lives on the same street as Ncumisa’s mother, and knowing of the young woman’s circumstances approached her and asked her to volunteer. Soon after, when Girl Power came into being, Ncumisa joined the program. Enjoying the company and support of other young women in the group, the learning, and an improved sense of self, Ncumisa persevered for two years as a volunteer, part-time cleaner, and was then employed on a permanent basis. Now, five years later, after being sent by the school to several computer courses, she recounted with pride that she has “learned my computer” and is “the school secretary”. In this capacity, she was coached for a whole year by a retired accountant and is now confident in her administrative skills: “Now, if the auditor comes here, I manage to talk [about] the books, accounting, finances” (Ncumisa)._
Besides satisfaction and pride in her work, Ncumisa told me of the transformation of her personal life. Through her learning at Girl Power and weekend camps, she has come to terms with her family’s difficult past.

I had anger; now it’s better. My whole family was always fighting. Then I always had no love for my child, no love for my family, for anyone. Always I want to stay alone; I don’t want to talk to anyone. But now I forgive. Now I’m better. We don’t fight now.

Ncumisa now considers herself a “better mother” to her 12-year-old daughter who excelled in primary school was accepted at a local, well-respected high school. Recently Ncumisa began attending church and is a member of the choir. Her sense of forgiveness and peace extends beyond herself, the pre-school, and her family to the whole community. As Ncumisa told me proudly: “The people in the community give me respect now”.

**Phandulwazi: High school boys**

When the older brothers of the pre-school children and those in the after school program observed the activity in the adult training room, they asked to be involved in constructive projects. Phandulwazi (Xhosa: understanding) was then formed and takes place after school. Initially under Nomble’s guidance and now Mandisa’s, a youth program for 12-to 18-year-olds boys was started with the assistance of a local artist from the ‘outside’ community. Beginning in 2005, the boys were taught to screen print on fabric and were later introduced to glass bead-making and photography. Printed place mats and bags and beadwork items are commissioned or sold to visitors to the pre-school, with half of the proceeds going towards the purchase of more materials and the other half into the boys’ personal savings accounts. In 2010, donors sponsored two boys who showed potential and interest in jewellery-making for a course in Cape Town. Two of the boys from the original
group are now at university, one is an apprentice mechanic, and another works with the current group of high school boys.

**Reduced Sense of Agency**

While agency is seen as the capacity of individuals who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices or to have control over defining and pursuing their goals to improve their circumstances at both the personal and community level (Batliwala, 1994; Mosedale, 2005; Stromquist, 1995), several participants in this study expressed reduced sense of agency through participation in this space and generally as citizens in an emerging democracy—feelings of misunderstanding, humiliation, and frustration.

**Misunderstanding**

Teachers contend that parents face a reduced sense of efficacy when, lacking an understanding of early learning, they are disappointed with the pre-school and their child’s achievements. Misunderstanding the philosophy of education through play in a pre-school setting, some parents expect their young children to be reading and writing by the end of Grade R. As a junior teacher explained:

Some parents don’t understand what to expect from the little ones. When a child finishes at the end of the year, parents expect their children to be doing the things that older children are doing, like writing their name. They ask: ‘Why can my child not write his name.’ We then explain that they should expect their child to be able to do this when he goes to grade 1 (Ntosh).

Other parents see no value in paying for their children to attend pre-school, confusing early childhood education with child care, just “a crèche where they just sit; they do nothing” (Nomble). While the teachers encourage and invite parents through community outreach to send their children to the pre-school and the school offers bursaries to the most needy families, for many in the township their lives are suffused by a sense powerlessness and
incapacity to make decisions. As related by a participant, some members of the community, sensing a lack of control over their lives, resent the teachers who in their eyes have well-paying employment but do not appear to work hard. They perceive “the teachers are lazy and don’t do a good job” in spite of having the benefit of well-paid employment (Nosi).

**Bureaucracy: “A different story every week”**

Participants at all levels—the school principal, the School Governing Body, parents and members of the local community—narrated frustration with inefficiencies and lack of accountability of bureaucrats in municipal, provincial and state government departments; however, most persevered until they perceived they had achieved their goal.

In the early days of the pre-school, Elizabeth’s experience with a local government permitting department involved her sitting in an office on a bench every day for almost a month as she waited for attention. Eventually tired of her persistence, bureaucrats listened to her and resolved the issue. At the School Governing Body (SGB) meeting in March 2012, an on-going problem with land transfer documentation was raised. While an agreement had been drawn up two years previously, the government housing trust, demanding further payment, had refused to sign. An ‘outside’ member of the SGB suggested having lawyers settle this long-time problem with the City of Cape Town in court; Elizabeth disagreed, arguing the matter was being resolved by a donor. Besides expressed reluctance to escalate the issue, Elizabeth sensed negative reactions to a dispute from the community.

While pre-school staff relationships with their program supervisors at the regional office of the Western Cape Education Department are strong and respectful, the monthly subsidy\(^{50}\) from the finance office is often, for no explicable reason, late, causing hardship for

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\(^{50}\) Currently the school receives a subsidy of R9 (approximately $1 Canadian) a day for each child for each day he or she attends school.
everyone involved with the pre-school. In 2012 the subsidy was two months in arrears with
the result that the teachers could not be paid; frequent visits to the regional office and
numerous telephone calls eventually settled the matter.

Regarding subsidies for children registered in the after-school program, Elizabeth
reported that although she submitted all documentation on time, the Department of Social
Development regularly lost or misplaced claims. Apparently the school’s file had recently
been transferred to another office and Elizabeth reported that a more efficient person was
now responsible for their file.

In another example of inefficient bureaucracy, Mandisa one of the senior teachers
was unable to be included as a member of the team for the teacher excellence awards as her
registration with the Council of South African Teachers was pending “because of an
administrative malfunction”.

Several parents recounted the frustrating process of claiming a child subsidy or
applying for a birth certificate. A discouraged grandmother (Makhulu B) reported that she
was told “a different story every week” by the bureaucrat in charge of her grandchild’s birth
certificate file; however, she expressed determination to claim the rights of this child to a
name and an official school number so that he could be legally registered.

School Fees

For many parents, another source of misunderstanding and frustration was the matter
of school fees that Spreen and Vally (2006) contend have “rendered abstract the idea of
education as a right” (p. 352). “Many parents don’t understand why we ask for money. If the
parents do not attend the meetings, they don’t understand why we ask for money” (Ncumisa).
Where citizens have been promised and now expect free schooling, being required to pay for
this pre-school that is registered with the Western Cape Education Department is confusing and for many not possible. At a meeting I attended, Elizabeth addressing the matter of school fees, with authority but immense respect and empathy, encouraged those parents who were in arrears to pay what they owed. As I observed the assembled parents, few emotions were visible, but I wondered how they felt, knowing most had few resources of their own and limited avenues of support.

A teacher related a case of a child whose mother, embarrassed that she could not afford the school fees, did not send the girl to pre-school, although her brother continued to attend. The girl was cared for by neighbours while the mother worked but from time to time came to look longingly over the school gate, so the teacher called to encourage the mother to allow the child return to class.

Now it’s been weeks she’s not coming to school. Then one day I saw her here at the gate because she wanted to come to school. The mother don’t want her to come to school. Money is the problem . . . she do owe the fee. But I tell the other students in my class to say the teacher miss her; she must come to school, even if she come in the break time, that she must come and we will open the gate for her (Nomble).

Some of the school staff have their own interpretation of why parents do not pay fees. Although some parents come to the school principal claiming financial difficulties, Liliane perceives this is merely an excuse since, living in a tight-knit community, people are aware of others’ financial situations:

We know because we stay [live] in this community that they can afford to pay the school fees. We know their children are getting the social grants, so they should be paying the school fees, but they don’t pay, and so they don’t worry about that. The problem is they don’t want to pay the school fees (Liliane).

Liliane added that many parents neglect to contribute everyday supplies they are asked to donate at the beginning of each year. Contending that “they can do that because
most of them are working and most of the children are getting the social grant”, Liliane deemed the “parents have a problem”. In her position as a grandmother, Liliane told me with conviction that if the parents of her grandchildren neglected their duty—paying their children’s school fees--she would take charge and see that the situation was amended.

Many of the teachers were complimentary of the principal’s patience in dealing with parents who neither pay fees nor contribute supplies, especially those parents who are believed to be able to afford the cost of sending their children to the pre-school. Voicing the sentiment of all members of the school staff, Liliane stressed:

We want the children in this community to come to his school and be educated, so that is the reason why we do not say the child must go away if the parent is not paying, the parent is not contributing with anything”

_Humiliation: “I want to pay for my child”_

**Tuesday, 30 August 2011**

_Dressed up for the interview, this grandmother who is probably in her late fifties wears with pride her traditional shweshwe print dress and doek (head scarf); her face is unlined but sad. She tells me she lives in a house—as opposed to a shack—with her four adult children, only one of whom is working, and five grandchildren, one an orphan. Because he has no birth certificate, this child’s grandmother is ineligible for the monthly social grant of R250._

_Oh! The hardships so many of these people endure. She relates her efforts to obtain a birth certificate for her orphaned grandchild, a six-year-old attending this pre-school. Worried about his well-being and safety, she attempted to enrol him in several local pre-schools but at each was refused because the child had no papers which meant that the school would not qualify for the daily government subsidy provided for children registered in Grade R. This pre-school agreed to take him._

_Raising an orphaned grandchild, a grandmother recounted humiliation at being unable to pay the pre-school registration fee, even though most of the child’s school fees are covered by a bursary, and she volunteers whenever the school requests help._

_Up until now I have no problems with the teachers, no problem with my child, but I have a slightly problem because I feel that I have deserted the things that I should be doing for my child. I am expected to pay an amount of R50 for registration. The whole school fees is going to be paid by the school on the_
This grandmother’s (Umkhulu A) story provides a painful illustration of the lack of control she has over certain aspects of her life: her inability to fulfil what she perceives as her responsibility to her grandchild and the pre-school, her sense of humiliation.

Chapter Summary

In sum, interviews parents’ and members of the local community’s indicated increased learning and an enhanced sense of agency—outcomes of their participation in this pre-school. While involvement is not always easy, for many, the impact of engagement has been the development of a greater sense of awareness of rights and an empowered self-identity which has served to deepen action and enhance confidence for further participation. While most participants viewed their participation as positive, for others participation in civil society has been frustrating and humiliating.

As with the pre-school staff, adult and youth learning was observed and reported to be occurring through many avenues. Parental participation has grown naturally for most from a sense of mutual obligation and respect—ubuntu. Expected to attend monthly meeting, pay school fees, and participate in fund-raising events, parents interviewed reported their ongoing opportunities for learning. Through their increased knowledge of child development
and the concept of early learning through play, parents expressed confidence in their ability to help their children learn at home, to parent more effectively, to claim their children’s rights, and to contribute the school community. They also expressed a sense of agency—their capacity to make choices, to express ideas and opinions, to become involved in decision-making at the pre-school, and to claim their rights and those of their young children. In addition, most parents voiced a sense of efficacy for choosing to provide a safe pre-school learning experience that they believe contributes to their children’s future educational success.

Parents, other adults and youth in the community displayed qualities of and perceive themselves as actors with confidence they have the capacity to make informed choices and to claim their own and their children’s rights. As with the pre-school staff, this sense of agency has extended the boundaries of what they imagine themselves being able to be and do, and despite persisting inequities, many expressed their confidence in education as the way out of poverty and oppression. As reported in interviews, members of the community—adults and youth—perceive that their participation and learning in this space—in literacy and numeracy programs, income-generating project, and personal development workshops—has changed their lives, giving them a sense of independence and confidence, a new purpose in life.

Again, rather than a linear connection between citizen participation and desirable outcomes, I argue that engagement of parents, other adults, and youth in this pre-school, together with their increased learning, sense of agency, and enhanced confidence are a way of constructing a sense of citizenship. While mobilizing marginalized communities often presents challenges, studies worldwide show that the greater the community participation in
early childhood care and education programs, the greater the impact on building citizenship and community, strengthening social cohesion, and furthering overall community goals.
CHAPTER EIGHT: STRENGTHENING CITIZENSHIP

Constructing more inclusive forms of citizenship is an iterative process that goes beyond the domain of quick-fix policies and touches on changes in individual identity and consciousness (Kabeer, 2002, p. 21).

In this chapter, I explore a further outcome of citizen engagement—evidence of strengthening citizenship—that relates to deepening social relations and to building an inclusive and cohesive society. I searched specifically for answers to the following questions from the community’s perspective: How has this small space played a role in deepening the social and professional networks of a previously marginalized group? Have expanded networks helped create a greater social cohesion, where a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect exist? While Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) meta-analysis focused more on society-state relations, they identified the importance not only of the construction of citizenship—knowledge, awareness of and capacity for participation, and a greater sense of efficacy—as an outcome of citizen participation, but also a strengthening of citizenship – a sense of deepening social networks and an awareness of cohesive communities. They argue that strengthening a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect are important at the individual level, and “important more broadly as voices and issues previously hidden . . . come into view” (p. 45). Further, Gaventa and Barrett contend that overcoming social discrimination can help create possibilities for more pluralistic and inclusive society, for enhanced forms of social cohesion in communities with embedded inequalities and strained social interactions between various groups. On the other hand, certain forms of citizen participation that they believe seemed well-placed to facilitate greater inclusiveness produced few to no effects.
For amaXhosa, education of the young is viewed a communal responsibility, a fundamental component of social life. In addition, traditional education assumes a basic respect and compassion for others in society and seeks to promote social networks, norms, and trust that serve to increase individuals’ contributions to organizations and society (Muyia Nafukho, 2006). Thus, since the early days of the pre-school, a sense of the importance of building relationships of inclusion, trust and reciprocity, and working in teams within teams—“we work together all the time” (Mandisa)—has permeated interactions. Beginning within the township community, the pre-school community has forged bonding social relationships within the township; then reaching out to individuals and groups in the broader community has created bridging social relationships; and linking with people entirely ‘outside’ the community, including connections to individuals and institutions, has leveraged a wider range of resources than are available in their local community.

**Bonding: “Without the community we won’t be successful”**

In response to my questions to pre-school staff and parents concerning a sense of trust within their community, participants agreed that because of their shared Xhosa values, generally a sense of community cohesion, that neighbours would help if and when needed, exists. As Elizabeth explained: “We are coming with that background, that culture of looking after each other”. Even beyond their immediate neighbourhood when visiting or shopping in the surrounding townships, many reported a sense of community and offers of assistance “if there is something that is happening”—a theft or an accident—where “people are asking ‘How can I help you with that? Are you all right?’” (Nomble).
Elizabeth related a recent example of the way the community came together to solve a problem with local youth based on traditional views of communal responsibility for children.

Young boys that are doing burglaries in houses or stealing the telephones of other people. So nobody’s going to be able to walk in the streets because you are afraid of these boys and in your houses you are afraid of the boys that will come and take whatever you have.

Our “culture says that even if your child is wrong, you have to say as a parent, ‘My child was wrong’ in order for the child to be right at the end. Because one’s [one person’s] child is everybody’s child”. Unable or unwilling to rely on the police, Elizabeth called a community meeting “where the people, us as parents, voiced out that we’ve got a problem with these children because now they are above [beyond] the limit”. The community’s solution was for the residents of each street to look after each other and deal themselves with the offending youth so that they amend their ways.

Whenever there is a problem in a house, everybody has to wake up and go to that house. They have to sort that problem. Catch the youth and call the police or whatever way you can do. That was ended because people can just walk and not worry. These children have heard about it (Elizabeth).

In this way, they believe, the whole community has been made safer.

*The pre-school: An integral part of the community*

Considering the pre-school an integral part of this community, the pre-school staff are conscious of the importance of continuously reaching into and building relationships within their community, believing that “even if we have a beautiful school, but don’t have community involvement, it won’t be successful” (Mandisa). Their sense of confidence in their ability to make a difference and create a stronger, cohesive community through the establishment of this pre-school was apparent in interviews and more informal conversations
with staff. For example, in a conversations with Nomble, she stressed pride in and ownership of their grassroots endeavour:

We want our people to see that we can make a difference in our community. We are here working as women, and we know we are going to be successful because we are not going for someone ‘outside’ who is going to come in to tell us, ‘No. You must do this and this and this.’ We know if someone comes in, she or he is going to help us, but we mustn’t fold our hands waiting for someone to tell us what to do. We are doing it ourselves.

For this reason, the pre-school staff and others connected to the school, work on strengthening social relations within their community:

We have our connections in the community. We do lots of talks at the school, and we go out to the people. We can’t expect them to know about what we do if we don’t reach out to them. So there are reach out programs for the community to know that something is going on here. So from that knowledge, they hear of us because people are talking that something good is happening. They talk about their experiences to other people, so they are hearing from other people, so other people are coming (Nomble).

The staff related that they continually encourage members of the community and their children to participate in learning at the pre-school, contending all benefit from enhanced knowledge that has the potential to transform their perspectives on the world:

Since we are open for everyone to come in, even for those community members who don’t have children in this school, because we do have various activities that they are all welcome to attend. We have boys from the big school whose parents don’t have children at the school, but they come after school. We have Girl Power girls; they don’t have children at the school; they are still young but they are benefiting from the school. So each and every activity that is happening at this school, it just throws out to the community, so the community is part of, a piece of this school (Nomble).

*Pre-school children: An integral part of the community*

In addition to the pre-school itself, the pre-school children, too, are considered an important part of this predominantly Xhosa community. Using a puzzle metaphor, Nomble acknowledges that each child is valued both at the pre-school and within the community:
For us, each child is an important part of the group--like pieces of a puzzle, each child is important part of the picture. If you are missing one piece of the puzzle, the puzzle is incomplete. Each and every one is different and has strengths. If you observe them as a group, you see them as just kids. But when you work with them and interact with them, then you see that these kids are different. This one is good at something else and this one is good at another thing, and they are all needed in the group.

**Pre-school staff: A sense of belonging**

From early days, the pre-school staff reported having worked not only on sharing knowledge (as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven) with each other but also on building professional and personal relationships with each other, understanding that although a community project may not be easy), the rewards for them personally, for young children, and for their community are significant (Elizabeth; Elsa). Within the pre-school, a sense of belonging and being an important part of the whole community was evident from the perspective of two former students, now student teachers at the pre-school. Zimkhitho told me: “My mother knows Elizabeth [the principal] because we stay [live] on the same street; we’re next-door neighbours” (December 2011). As a child attending the pre-school, Zimkhitho had been hospitalized with tuberculosis; Elizabeth, concerned about her, would often ask after her progress (August 2011). Nosi, the other student teacher, and her five siblings have attended the pre-school, including her youngest brother who is presently a student. With a sense of pride in belonging, she said: “They know us here. This school is so beautiful” (Nosi).

**The parents: “We know our children are safe”**

Because of their shared background, most parents conveyed during interviews their trust in the women in the pre-school to care for their children and to provide a quality foundation education, an opportunity denied them. As Doris remarked, “The people are happy because they know where we come from, and their children are safe. Since we started
the school, people are happy because they see the progress of their children when they go to the primary school”. Mandisa reinforced this sense of the community knowing the teachers, their feelings of trust and confidence in the pre-school: “The parents in our community know us very well. If the parents send their child to our school, they know the child is going to get something there—quality education; there is progress”.

Each year, however, the school staff need to demonstrate to parents of newly enrolled children their ability to care for them and to look after their possessions. A junior teacher reported that some parents were hesitant to allow their children to participate in the first outing of the school year.

When we took the children to the beach, the parents of the little ones were complaining that their children could not go because they were afraid of for the safety of the children and their shoes\(^5\). But during the year they understand us and get to trust the teachers” (Ntosh).

The notion of the school being a place of safety was raised by many participants. Parents spoke of their fear of their children being stolen. A student teacher reported warning the young children in her class to be vigilant after dark and to stay indoors:

If you see it’s night, starting to be dark outside, you must tell your mother mustn’t send you outside because maybe someone steal you. People outside are not like innocent people. You can still be stolen by that person who go make you his wife because you are still young. So when it’s dark, you must be at the house (Zimkhitha).

While extensive research revealed no concrete evidence, Nomble, in response to my inquiry, related that in October 2011 three boys aged five or six years in townships closer to Cape Town had been stolen by a Nigerian sangoma--traditional healer--who needed specific body parts for medicine.

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\(^{51}\) A number of parents expressed concern that their children’s clothing and shoes, in particular, be taken care of at the pre-school. This possibly goes back to the apartheid years when children without uniforms and shoes were turned away from school. Elizabeth recounted that because her mother could not afford shoes for her, she had worn her grandmother’s old shoes, so eager was she to attend school.
Some members of staff suggested that a few parents, thoughtlessly, “bring their children here because they don’t want to look after their children; they just drop their children here without anything” (Doris). Seeing their children’s development and progress, several parents, realizing their negligence, have changed their attitude and followed the school’s example of caring for their children (Mvumi, Noncedo, Elizabeth, and Nomble). Elizabeth related that one parent said: “I am very sorry. I will now make sure I am looking after this child well because you are also looking after my child well”.

**Shared decision making**

As observed at several meetings, shared decision making, often around contentious issues, also plays a role in deepening understanding and relationships among the pre-school staff, parents, and members of the local and broader community. For example, at the annual end-of-year evaluation and planning weekend I attended in December 2011, I observed members of pre-school staff, members of the School Governing Body, and mentors reflect on the activities of the past year, examining and analyzing the strengths and shortfalls of each program and initiative. Considering the good of all, they then set their own profession and personal goals and made decisions for the following school year (Appendix J).

**Saturday, December 3, 2011**

The venue for the pre-school’s annual planning and evaluation meetings, held on a brilliant, Cape summer weekend, is an eco-educational centre in a nature reserve on the slopes of the beautiful mountain overlooking False Bay. Only half-an-hour’s drive from the pre-school, this place offers a cool, peaceful contrast to the busy, dusty streets and haphazard buildings in the township. The bright classroom, decorated with posters of indigenous birds and butterflies and reminders to ‘save our forests’, looks out on a grove of ancient oak trees and beyond to a carpet of purple indigenous flowers that wrap the base of the mountain. The gentle breeze through the trees is a sharp contrast to eye-smarting, dusty wind that unsettled the township for the past few days.

Towards the end of the afternoon, Elizabeth’s, Nomble’s and Mandisa’s experience and expertise were evident; the rest of the group was slumped back in their chairs exhausted. At 5:00 pm a minibus arrived to transport everyone back to the township.
Sunday, December 4, 2011

Nomble, up since 5:00 preparing breakfast, lunch, and afternoon tea for the group, picks me up just after 7:30 am. Two accidents delay our drive up to the nature reserve where we find everyone from the school sitting patiently and chatting cordially as they wait for breakfast. The student teachers pass a note back and forth and giggle with the junior teachers. Ntosh is wearing a traditional shweshwe dress and head scarf; Doris, too, has on a traditional skirt, and Liliane traditional headgear. The others are all stylishly dressed in summer outfits, constantly checking cell phones. Sonja hasn’t arrived yet, so I anticipate that the eleven of us present may be on our own for the planning session for the year ahead.

After breakfast--Corn Flakes, fruit, and sweet tea, a welcome change from traditional mielie meal, --the group holds hands as Liliane, the oldest member of the group, begins the session with a prayer whispered reverently.

Today discussion switches from isiXhosa to English and back, with younger teachers and assistants preferring their mother tongue. Good-natured banter ensues as the young teachers check Elizabeth’s 2011 calendars and find both full. The discussion is dominated by Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa. I notice that today, in Sonja’s absence, all cell phones remain switched on, different from yesterday’s ban. Doris yawns, exhausted from yesterday’s session, and Nolwando squeezes lip gloss from a gold-coloured tube and applies it carefully. She then becomes intent on writing with a green pencil, copying what Mandisa has written on the flip chart. Ncumisa cracks her knuckles. Mvumi leaves the room—her peers joke about her whereabouts.

As Sonja arrives, obviously unwell, people appear to be more engaged. More English is spoken; Doris naps in her green plastic chair. Immediately Sonja assesses the situation and suggests that rather than working as a whole group, people break into three teams made up of a senior teacher, a junior or student teacher, and an assistant or staff member so that everyone engages in the process and all items on the planning agenda are covered.

Sonja leaves, so I take a more active role, taking time with each team, offering suggestions and answering specific questions. As the day goes on, my ear for isiXhosa sharpens, and I encourage people to continue their discussion, decision-making, and planning in their mother tongue. I am impressed with everyone’s attention to detail and unwillingness to rush in order to finish even though it’s Sunday afternoon and another busy week begins the next day.

During the last activity of day on the Saturday of the evaluation and planning meeting (December 2011), participants were divided into groups and asked to draw a shield; divide it into four; illustrate their response to the following questions, one in each quadrant; and then create a slogan: “How would you like the school to look? What would you save? What thing do you treasure most? What one more thing would you do if you had only one chance?” As groups worked together, I observed everyone contributing their ideas openly in a place where
there appeared to be a sense of trust and non-judgement: a safe space. During the debriefing the participants’ sense of community and belonging was evident; their sentiments for the preschool were shared through metaphors. Liliane explained in isiXhosa that her group is proud that the school is clean and well cared for; at the school a light shines brightly on everyone where before there was no light, knowledge moves one forward; and teamwork is key: “The hands of the weaker are held by those who are stronger.” Echoing Sonja’s mantra, Liliane’s team’s slogan was “a solid foundation means a strong structure”. Nomble’s group also illustrated the preschool as a place of light, a place of healing. “They [the community] see a change, a light at the school that has come from darkness. When you are thirsty you go and drink at the school: a symbol of a healthy place”. This group depicted the school as a fruit tree with big branches and strong roots surrounded by green grass. “The beautiful fruit symbolizes knowledge that has made us strong; branches mean sharing; fruits are the benefits people leave; green grass is the need for others around us to make us stronger”. Their slogan, reflecting their viewpoint, was “perseverance leads to success”.

Through frank discussion on challenging issues, relationships of trust in the preschool community are extended. For example, at the end-of-year meeting, Sonja expressed her discomfort with the composition of the School Governing Body: “the imbalance of representation”, namely three women from ‘outside’ making decisions for parents. When she asked the whole group if they should resign, Elizabeth, replied she was satisfied with the current process whereby “the school representatives on the committee [Elizabeth, Nomble, and Mandisa] take everything [all discussion and decision making] to the parents. Sonja suggested that “the school take the ball and run if they feel ready”; she did, however, insist that if that were the case, someone from ‘outside’ would need to co-sign cheques. While
there was no immediate response, nor one expected, I saw people deep in thought; an idea that needed time for reflection and further discussion.

When the subject of fees arose later in the day, Sonja was adamant in passing responsibility to the whole group, in fact to the whole community:

Fees must be paid; otherwise the school will have to close. That’s the reality! You can only spend what you have. If the fees don’t come in, you don’t have it to spend. It’s no good for the parents to agree to fees and then not pay. You can only solve this problem with the parents. They need to know how important you are in the lives of their children. You are going downhill . . . fast. You need to come up with a solution. You could get a job at the primary school tomorrow but will you be a better person? Will you grow personally? Will you have the privileges?

Sonja reminded the group that when the pre-school started Elizabeth, Nomble, Mandisa and Doris worked for nothing and asked: “Are we now spoilt?” Before leaving for the day, she repeated firmly: “I am not willing to take responsibility for this”; a sombre silence filled the room. In the middle of the afternoon, Sonja feeling unwell excused herself and as she left, Mandisa, on behalf of the group, thanked Sonja sincerely: “You are always there for us.”

With a sense of respect and responsibility to members of their community, most members of staff and parents reported that they also participated in other groups, particularly churches of various denominations, church choirs, funeral societies, and stokvels52. Mandisa described her role as a Sunday School teacher and involvement in her church at the national level. She expressed confidently that she had facilitated a workshop for participants from the whole country in recognition of which she had received a certificate.

52 Stokvels are syndicates that serve as rotating credit unions, where members contribute money to a central fund on regular basis. Each month a different member receives the fund and uses the money for her own payment or investment purposes. These clubs serve a social purpose; for example, organizers hold parties on Sunday afternoons where women eat, sing, and dance.
The church is like a school with the head and the committees. We have a syllabus, and we follow the curriculum. The teachers are working together; one is the leader. We facilitate workshops for the other teachers.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the staff of the pre-school welcome parents’ participation in their children’s education and invite their involvement in decisions concerning the operation of the school. Referring to parents’ inclusion in decision-making, Mandisa explained that parents want their children to have opportunities they were denied.

When planning an educational outing, parents often decide on a more expensive option and are prepared to pay more “as long this is a better outing as far as education is concerned, as long as they [the parents] are going to get quality education for their children”. I observed a decision made in a traditional, consensual manner where after much discussion, banter, the opinion of an older woman finalized the matter to the satisfaction of all present.

**Wednesday, 24 August 2011**

At the meeting, parents are informed of the cost of each trip, have opportunities to ask questions and to make comments. Parents appear to be at ease participating with the decision making. One mother notes wryly that on an outing the cost was not limited to the price of admission since her children always asked for chips, yoghurt, and ice cream when they were out—much laughter! Another parent asks why the school would even consider going back to a local zoo when all the children would learn about, again, is wild animals when the unit they are studying is ocean life; the remark provokes much good-natured laughter. The humourous interjections, friendly banter, and animated discussion continue for some time. Can this be attributed to the fact that in a largely homogeneous community much is understood about the other? After a lengthy discussion, Elizabeth asks for a decision. A grandparent stands up and voices her opinion that the aquarium is a better choice even though the cost is almost double that of the local attraction. People have time to comment and then a decision made. I am surprised at the consensual nature of the process—no show of hands—democratic or traditional? As we leave, I ask Nomble if some parents may feel that their voices have not been heard. She replies that this is their traditional way of making decisions, a process that considers the good of all.

Elizabeth explained that the school is accountable to parents who pay fees as well as to the Western Cape Education Department that provides subsidies for each child attending the pre-school. Thus, at the first meeting of the year, the pre-school’s budget is presented to parents for their approval:
They need to know where there money goes to. Even when we explain at the beginning of the year that the school fees are so much, then we have to explain the percentages. Oh! That money goes for educational equipment for the classrooms, x amount for outdoor equipment, x amount for excursions, x amount of money goes to salaries, and so they need that accountability.

Several staff narrated that grandmothers, who in the pre-school’s earlier years had been responsible for their grandchildren’s care, had not questioned the budget; however, they sense that today’s parents are more confident to participate, ask questions, and offer their opinions (Liliane; Ncumisa; and Elizabeth). For example, recently there was disagreement over a proposal to raise school fees based on inflation. Elizabeth confirms: “These parents are more aware now.”

At the end of the year, the parents decide which children at the pre-school are most worthy of being awarded one of the twelve bursaries given by overseas donors. While most families in the community live in poverty, parents consider the circumstances of those encountering extreme difficulty. So they are not seen as having a bias, the staff play no part in this decision-making process. An example of a bursary recipient is an AIDS orphan being cared for by his grandmother an older unemployed woman who lives in a house with ten others, only one of whom is employed (Makhulu A; Sonja).

The pre-school community is committed to fundraising events a year, with each classroom that includes parents and staff responsible for one (Newsletter 2004, 2009, 2010). Over the years, staff have discovered the most effective ways raising funds in a community where disposable income is severely limited (Sonja). At a parents’ meeting I attended in August 2011, animated discussion and enthusiasm revolved around ideas for the community’s participation in the celebration of Heritage Day, a national holiday in South Africa. Parents eagerly volunteered to donate traditional Xhosa dishes and drinks for sale,
and proposed wearing traditional dress and organizing traditional games, dancing, and singing.

**Community outreach**

With their sense of communal responsibility, the staff at the pre-school and members of the community reach out to those in even greater need than they themselves (Elizabeth, Mandisa, and Nomble). In their own and neighbouring townships, fires are a constant risk in the townships; during summer, searing heat and wind fan flames that spread rapidly through wooden shacks; in winter, paraffin lamps overturn, destroying properties and lives. In times of crisis, blanket, clothes, and food baskets are hastily packed and delivered either on foot or by taxi. Families living in already-overcrowded dwellings open their homes to those in need.

With the AIDS epidemic come the deaths of many younger men and women with a traditional Xhosa burial in the Eastern Cape the second Saturday after the person’s death. At these times, the community supports the family of the deceased with gifts of money and food; many will travel ten to twelve hours from the Western Cape, at considerable expense, by bus to the Eastern Cape to attend funerals of family, friends, and even township acquaintances.

In the past, Elizabeth reported reaching out to help families in the community infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. For a few years, a counsellor visited the pre-school regularly to help parents and other members of the community deal with grief and other social, emotional and economic implications HIV/AIDS was having on them and their families. When government funding for this service ended, Elizabeth recognized that while she could listen to parents and others in the community, she was unqualified to help so linked them to other professionals associated with community groups. “We talk with them, and then we refer them to the social worker [‘outside’ the township] because we’re not qualified to
counsel them. We talk to the parents, comfort them, and get them professional help”
(Nomble).

**A community’s respect**

The pre-school staff perceive that the pre-school and they themselves are respected and appreciated within their local community.

The whole community is looking to us as a school, even more [favourably] than the primary school. When the children go home, they talk about their school, their teachers. Sometimes when you walk up the street, you hear somebody greeting you. That person doesn’t know you. ‘Hello! Are you the one that is at the school? I have heard from my child you are there, and my child is so happy.’ I am grateful for this school for our community (Liliane).

Ncumisa, the school secretary considers the pre-school as “part of our community” and inclusive, particularly of those in need. Even parents who cannot afford the school fees are welcome: “If the mothers who have no money come to Elizabeth, she says the children can come to the school and get the scholarship”. In addition, Ncumisa is gratified that food prepared for children in the after-school program is shared with neighbourhood children and toddlers.

Overall, along with a sense of the pre-school belonging to the community, I perceived, in this township where resources are scare, a respect for the pre-school and its property:

They do want their children to come and learn, so they don’t come in here and break in, take stuff or something like that. They think the school is a part of the community and belongs to them because it’s helping their children (Zimkhitha).

For example, in 2005, the school was broken into, and a computer and audio-visual equipment were stolen. While the police were informed, they replied they could do nothing. Upset, Elizabeth called Julia who advised Elizabeth “to call a parents’ meeting because this is your school”. At the meeting the following evening, Julia explained what had happened:
They were all very sombre about it. Little was said, and they went away. The next morning every last bit of that equipment was at the front gate covered with a plastic tarpaulin. There was nothing missing; the whole lot was back. As a community thing, it was astonishing.

**Bridging Social Relationships**

While the pre-school offers members of the township, both children and adults, opportunities not only for the learning but also for deepening networks within their own community, there was evidence of interest, participation, and investment—in terms of funding, expertise, and passion—in pre-school extending beyond the local community. Interestingly, staff and other members of the township community refer to predominantly white communities as ‘outside’. I question whether this is a matter of habit or if the legacy of years of restrictions and the humiliation of legislated segregation and oppression has left a lingering sense of exclusion.

As described in Chapter Five, Elizabeth, within two years of starting the pre-school, created links to individuals and groups ‘outside’ her community, thus extending her own and her community’s access to additional resources. Elizabeth realized that to fulfill her dream of establishing a pre-school in her community she would need help from members of the broader community. Mentors and local businesses provided not only knowledge, skills, and material resources, but also served to expand the social networks of the pre-school staff, parents, and members of township community. Invitations to social events at the homes of mentors, opportunities to speak to local congregations that support the pre-school, and requests for assistance from other adult education centres have for many helped to create a greater sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect particularly for staff of the pre-school (Nomble, Elizabeth, Liliane, and Alice).
Linking Relationships

With growing confidence through participation, enhanced knowledge, and sense of agency, members of the pre-school community, with the support of mentors and adult educators, developed linking relationships with others entirely ‘outside’ the community: officials with the Western Cape Education department, donors, and volunteers, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Western Cape Education Department (WCED)

From the time of the pre-school’s registration, the staff have developed valuable and open relationships with officials from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) Eastern Metropole regional division (van Wyk; de Fries; and Elizabeth). While independent, the pre-school receives a subsidy from the WCED and follows the national curriculum for Grade R. Department officials visit regularly and provide on-going professional development to the teaching staff. In addition, the manager of early childhood leadership and administration has mentored and advised Elizabeth through the years. The curriculum advisor has worked with the school for 14 years acknowledged that though considered “an at-risk school in a vulnerable community, . . . they [the staff] have come so far” (de Fries).

The school’s 2011 provincial award for excellence in Grade R education served as recognition and acknowledgement from the ‘outside’ community of the determination of this ‘at risk’ community to provide quality education for their young children (WCED, December 2011). Immediately after announcement of the award, three WCED officials visited the pre-primary school to congratulate the staff on their achievement--the regional manager, Dr. Pieterse; Mrs. van Wyk, Curriculum Advisor ECD (Early Childhood Development); and Ms de Vries, IMG ECD (Institutional Management and Governance, Early Childhood Development)-- an acknowledgement much appreciated. At an official celebration in
November 2012, officials from the education department were welcomed by the whole community as guests of honour.

Donors

The efforts of members of the local and broader community in this space have inspired the generosity of many donors, large and small. The largest, Children of the Universe Foundations (CUF), a UK charity founded by a wealthy South African family, provides on-going support to several schools and training centres in the Western Cape, including the pre-school in this study. Donations from this charity range from gifts of winter clothing for the children to the funding of bursaries and to support for large-scale extensions to the school building. Through donations to CUF the pre-school has expanded to accommodate the learning of young children and adults: in 2008, an extension included a room for adult learning, and currently, a hall and two new classrooms are under construction with occupancy scheduled for March 2013 (Peter; Renee).

Overseas’ volunteers

During my March 2012 visit, I met three German students volunteering at the pre-school. Later, Mandisa, quite matter-of-factly, told me that the students paid an agent in Cape Town to find them suitable volunteer positions where they would learn about South African culture; the school, however, received no monetary compensation. Mandisa remarked wryly that “they [the volunteers] benefit more than the school” but that “it did not matter” as there were so many other people involved in the school who contributed so much of their time and expertise. There seems to be a constant stream of visitors and volunteers; I am conscious of this and try to minimize my demands on the school staff.

53 Source: http://www.cuft.org/cuft.html
Fractures in the Community

For many, especially senior staff of the pre-school—Elizabeth, Mandisa, and Nomble—participation is perceived as having played a role in deepening social relations and a growing sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect; however, many participants in this study hinted at social discord both new and continuing—an erosion of traditional values, changing gender roles, mistrust of recently-arrived others in the township, and an on-going sense of exclusion, lack of power, access, and opportunity.

Erosion of Xhosa Values

In interviews, participants, particularly the staff of the pre-school, expressed a sense of a strengthening of citizenship through their participation in this pre-school; at the same time they hinted at being conscious of an erosion of traditional Xhosa worldview among younger members of their community (Doris, Elizabeth, and Liliane). The staff of the pre-school admitted that in their close-knit community, there are no secrets. “Because we are staying [living] in this community, we know everybody” (Liliane). Whereas in the past, people “lived for the good of the whole community, now the individual matters very much” (Elizabeth). For example, Elizabeth related changed attitudes to traditional ways of disciplining children in their community. Traditionally, children’s misdemeanours were acknowledged by the parents so children would learn from their mistakes.

People don’t want to kill [harm] the child; they want the child to learn good things. So that is our culture, our tradition strong in those years before 1994. Each one would know that even if my child has done wrong, I have to talk to the people and tell them and to apologize and not to hide my child and protect my child but to expose [emphasis in original] my child in order for my child to learn more good things.
Recently, however, Elizabeth maintained that children claim their rights, and parents claim their children are protected by those rights.

But now after ’94, people have got rights [emphasis in original], and children have got rights [emphasis in original]. Now if my child has done something wrong, I will protect my child because my child has got rights. Even the child will protect himself or herself because of those rights. When you protect the child doing a bad thing, that child will be continuing doing that up until their old age or up until that age the child is going to be in jail or in prison. Um . . . but that’s what is happening now because people are protecting their children in whatever way even if the child has done wrong.

**Changing gender roles**

Several participants also hinted at their perception of changing traditional gender roles. Speaking of younger parents, Elizabeth contended that “they just look after themselves; we are now living in a selfish society”. She explained that traditionally the Xhosa wife was responsible for ensuring harmony within the extended family, but she is now perceived as more concerned with herself and her individual needs.

In the past, you have to make sure that the whole [emphasis in original] family is united, even if they have some problems. But now, people want to be an individual [emphasis in original] -- nobody around the husband, just the wife. What is happening is the wife is just looking at [after] herself, only at her individual self, not looking after the child, not looking after the husband, just after her (Elizabeth).

Elizabeth gave the example of parents using the children’s social grants for material possessions and clothing for themselves while neglecting their children’s basic needs. While the mothers “like to dress up and buy things for themselves - good things”, their children are “not decently clothed, not well looked after with the lunch boxes”.

Elizabeth argues that young women are aware of their human rights assured after 1994, but that these are opposed to traditional Xhosa values regarding responsibilities in marriage where women have defined and specific roles and are always subordinate to men:
These people explain democracy in a wrong way. They want their rights but are not responsible. The young adults are abusing the rights that they have saying a marriage must be 50-50. It’s not like that in our culture; it’s 60-40. And that is good for us because it’s giving that respect. But now the wife doesn’t have respect for the husband.

While in the past, taking care of children was the responsibility of mothers, today fathers are expected to play a greater role.

Before, in my culture, it’s the mothers who have to make sure that their children are well looked after. Now it’s the fathers who are looking after their children. The father always will wake up and clean the child and make breakfast and take the child to school. The mother even if she’s working or not working, she will look after herself and not look after the children and their father (Elizabeth).

Liliane reiterated that young mothers rely not only on their husbands but also on their own mothers to look after their children. She argued that “in our culture it’s not like that”: in the past, the father supported his family by working while his wife used money responsibly to care for her husband and children. Today, “if you have a daughter or daughter-in-law at home, she’s not going to take care of the children. You will, as the grandmother, have to take care of the children”.

According to the Elizabeth, a number of parents who do not attend meetings at the pre-school have no excuse because that are not employed; Elizabeth’s explanation is that they lack responsibility for and interest in their children’s care, learning, and general wellbeing.

They don’t come because they are less responsible for their children [than the grandmothers]. Because if you say you forget about it, how important is it? Because when you read the child’s letter that says you are called at the meeting at the school, you have to know that on that day, at that date, at that time you have to be there (Elizabeth).

When asked for her thoughts on reasons for changing cultural values, Elizabeth, without hesitation, replied that besides people claiming new rights, western influence through
media, especially television, was responsible. Seduced by unrealistic expectations of suburban life, young people are rejecting their traditional communitarian values for western materialism and individual pleasure.

Our children want to imitate what’s happening in other cultures, and they don’t want their own culture. It’s living in a city also has an effect; now that we’re all here, our children are living the city life. Because for them, they want the easiest way to get things and do things (Elizabeth).

Elizabeth was passionate in her belief that democracy has had “a slightly negative impact on our culture because people started to move away from their traditions, from the good values that we had to democratic claiming of rights”. She contends that while younger people claim their own rights, they demonstrate little respect for their elders or for the rights of others.

You have to know that each person has got rights, so I’m not going to work for my rights only for me . . . my rights whatever the rights of the others because if I’m . . . stamping on the rights of the others, it’s not right.

Elizabeth argued, too, that “it’s not been all good because it appears now that it is only women who have got rights”. She acknowledged that while in the past women had frequently suffered abuse, they now have rights but men have few options when they themselves are abused.

But now if they go to the police station and report their abuse, the police will just laugh at him and say, ‘No! No! There is no such thing. A man cannot be abused by a woman, so it is just something that is going to pass by.

Elizabeth raised a further issue that was hinted at by one of the fathers-- Utata B--interviewed: the powerlessness and apparent hopelessness of many men living in townships in post-apartheid South Africa.

It’s like men are no longer allowed to be strong. It leads to some of the problem because the men will say, ‘I’m just nothing because my wife she says I’m just nothing. So I’m nothing in my house, I’m nothing anywhere. So . . . there’s no hope for me.
Interestingly, Mandisa, who asserts with confidence that her culture is central to her being—“knowing that where I come from is very important”--displays independence as well as close adherence to tradition. After an early marriage, rather than following tradition by living in her husband’s family home in the Eastern Cape, Mandisa was determined to pursue her dream of further education and working with children: “Before I got married I knew that I would work for myself. I’m not going to let anyone say, ‘No! You’ve got to stay at home’”. Mandisa moved to the Western Cape, learned to speak English and Afrikaans, found domestic work, saved up enough to pay fees, and attended college. Proud of her independence, Mandisa, now divorced, reflects on her decision to break with tradition. “My husband divorced me, leaving me to raise two children by myself. Now my sisters tell me I am a good girl; they ask me where I would be if I stayed home with my in-laws.”

Despite her decision not to accept the customary role of a wife and her determination to make a life for herself and her children, Mandisa recently paid for her older son’s “traditional circumcision in the Transkei” when he turned 18 and is now saving for her younger son’s initiation into manhood. For this reason, she maintains that she needs to be patient and postpone further studies until these traditional ceremonies have taken place. “I know I have a diploma, so I can go for a degree, but not now; I must be calm [patient].”

Some participants expressed satisfaction with changing notions of home life in the townships, with less rigidly defined gender roles. The grandmother (Makhulu B) pointed out that life in the rural area Eastern Cape was different from that in the township. ‘At home’ boys are taken care of and taught by their fathers and girls by their mothers; when children return from school, boys go out into the veld54 to herd animals while girls work with their mothers in and around the house. The grandmother ‘rejoiced’ that “in the towns, the cities,

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54 The term *veld* is used to define wide open rural spaces, in particular those covered in grass or low scrub.
it’s good because you have enough time for all your children”(Makhulu B) and that she had
time to socialize with her children and grandchildren and that both boys and girls could be
taught the same household skills. “The boy has to do everything like washing dishes, clothes,
and ironing, like the girls. So it’s much, much better, and it’s good they are learning more
here in the cities”. Similarly, a student teacher related with pride that she and her brothers
were equally happy sharing household chores whether washing dishes or cleaning a car.

**Xenophobia: “But remember the ubuntu feeling”**

Following mention of xenophobia in a conversation about the sense of trust within the
township, Elizabeth elaborated that over the past five years people from other African
countries—‘foreign people’--had moved into the community and that “they cause a lot of
problems”. In an interview a father voiced his concern, too, about Somalis who have “little
shops here inside the community” (Utata B) where he claimed they were not only selling
drugs to high school students but also to children at the primary school. In addition, he
alleged that these young people were being used to sell drugs to others.

At a community meeting, while opposed to violence, public opinion was that the
‘foreign people’ should “go home or to move from our community” (Elizabeth). Utata B
argued that since the local community supported their shops, these people needed to
contribute more to the community in order to be accepted. Elizabeth, however, was
compassionate, understanding the difficulties in their home countries that had forced ‘other’
Africans to flee to South Africa. Referring to incidents of violence in 2008, she expressed
unease about their treatment in other parts of the country.

It was just a bad thing when most of the country started to fight with them and
kill them and move them by force because these people don’t want to go back
to their homes because they know what is happening there (Elizabeth).
**Nosi: “What difference does it make?”**

Eighteen years after the end of apartheid, evidence of blatant racism still exists, as narrated by a young Xhosa woman, a student teacher at the pre-school. As the interview proceeded, her shyness faded, and she openly expressed pleasure and pride in her ability to converse with me in English. As Nosi became more at ease, I perceived a mounting sense of anger and frustration with her limited choices as she looked to do something more meaningful than “just sitting at home doing nothing”. One evening, she recalled, she and her friends had seen a poster looking for strippers, but while contemplating applying, she had ‘thankfully’ seen another advertisement, one for an early childhood development course at a local college, where she is now enrolled.

As she became more relaxed, Nosi told me about a confrontation she and her friends had with a group of young white people outside a club in Cape Town late one evening; they insulted Nosi and her friends with “the ‘k’ word” before driving off in a luxury car. This young black woman’s humiliation, anger, and bitterness were palpable as she related the incident.

When I asked if she voted in the local, provincial and national elections, Nosi replied that she did but asked rhetorically: “What difference does it make?” While she sensed that her family’s situation may be somewhat improved since 1994 with her mother receiving a subsidy for the younger children in the family as well as an allocation of free 60 litres of water a month, I sensed Nosi’s feelings of frustration at the inequities in her life in this new democracy, where promises and aspirations remained unfulfilled.

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55 In South Africa, the ‘k word’ is as derogatory as the ‘n word’ in the United States.
Chapter Summary

While Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) meta-analysis focused more on society-state relations, they identified the importance not only of the construction of citizenship but of strengthening citizenship through a sense of deepening social networks and the awareness of cohesive communities where a sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect exists. Therefore, in this chapter I explored whether a sense of deepening citizenship was an outcome of participation in the pre-school.

Since education of the young is viewed as a communal responsibility by amaXhosa, from the early days of the pre-school, the importance of building relationships of inclusion, trust, and reciprocity has permeated all interactions both within the community and beyond. The pre-school staff perceive that the pre-school and they themselves are respected and appreciated both within the township and with individuals and groups ‘outside’ the community. Of significant value to pre-school staff is their sense of inclusion as well as the respect afforded them by members of the local and broader community in professional development activities and social events. Previously excluded, many expressed a growing awareness of self-respect through the recognition by others of their intrinsic worth and feelings of solidarity through identifying with others and acting with them to achieve a common goal.

Overall, participants in this study, particularly the three senior teachers, perceive that through their participation in this pre-school their social networks have been strengthened within the township and extended into the broader community. They believe that historic inequalities and strained social interactions are slowly being overcome, creating possibilities for enhanced forms of social cohesion. For many, especially staff of the pre-school,
participation is seen as having played a role a growing sense of inclusion, dignity, and respect. Many of the same participants, however, hinted at the ‘bifurcated’ nature of citizen rights in this post-apartheid state where civil rights often conflict with customary claims and obligations (Kabeer, 2002; von Lieres, 2005). In addition, enduring inequities, the legacy of an authoritarian past, are suggested by participants in this study as excluding them from the full rights and benefits associated with citizenship and belonging.
CHAPTER NINE: THE PROMISE AND REALITY

The full meaning of liberation will not be realized until our people are freed from oppression and from the dehumanizing legacy of deprivation we inherited from our past (Mbeki’s Inauguration Speech, 1999, cited in Sparks, 2003, p. 263).

Scenes from graduation day November 2011 at Lelethu Pre-Primary and After School Care at the beginning of this dissertation embody elements of a community’s participation in an early childhood education and care program: a celebration of the contributions and achievements of members of the local and ‘outside’ community--pre-school children, staff, parents, other members of the local community, mentors, adult educators, and government officials. For the moment, the hardships of township life were forgotten as a community came together with a sense of the importance of the individual contribution to the whole, a sense of mutual responsibility and obligation, an expression of a culture and attitude more powerful than individualism, duty, or time. In singing the new national anthem Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika (God bless Africa), the gathering joined together to voice heart-felt hope for and commitment to the future: “for freedom in South Africa, our land”.

This qualitative research study was designed to explore the perceptions of parents and members of the community in a South African township of participation in their children’s pre-school. Extant research shows that the greater community participation in early childhood care and education programs in local planning, delivery, and evaluation, the greater the contribution of these service to a wide range of social, economic, and educational goals for children and their families, especially for vulnerable families (OECD, 2010). In addition, to furthering overall community goals, this phase of education and services is being
recognized as increasingly important in strengthening social cohesion (Ball et al., 2002; Ramphele, 2002).

This case study extends our understanding, through the perspectives of parents and community members, of the ways a pre-school within a marginalized community offers opportunities for adults to participate in an emerging democracy. Using Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) typology as an organizing framework for measuring outcomes of participation, I observed and heard participants’ reports of increased knowledge and learning, enhanced awareness of the right and capacity to participate, and a sense of efficacy—an overall sense of citizenship in a new democracy. In addition, I observed the role staff, parental, and community participation played in deepening social networks and developing a cohesive community. While this study found generally that this pre-school offers opportunities for meaningful participation in civil society that Cornwall and Edwards (2010) argue is important for the construction and strengthening of citizenship, aware that not all experiences may be positive, I was sensitive to participants’ expressions of a sense of reduced agency—feelings of misunderstanding and frustration—their perceptions of an enduring social and economic inequalities and exclusion.

**Constructing Citizenship**

This study adds evidence to the scholarship on small, grassroots groups where like-minded people join together in common pursuits, spaces that researchers argue are key to civic life because they encourage involvement by disenfranchised groups (Edwards, 2004a; Fine & Harrington, 2004; Kabeer, 2002; Robins et al., 2008). In these created spaces, where members know each other, are connected to each other, and feel a responsibility for one another, theorists contend individuals collaborate openly for common interests often without
the infrastructure or resources that comprise larger organizations. Findings of this study support literature (e.g. Classen et al., 2008; Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Yeoh & Annadhurai, 2008) that suggests adult learning in small participatory spaces offers possibilities for marginalized and excluded groups to enhance their knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Indeed, central to Habermas’ view of change is that transforming the world must involve the creation and protection of spaces within which democracy might flourish through a process of shared learning (Fleming, 2002, p.127).

A created space

In 1996, at a time of momentous change in South Africa’s history, Elizabeth Mandla, an amaXhosa woman recently graduated from an early childhood teachers’ college, believing that education was central to the future well-being of her community, started a pre-school. According to Elizabeth’s traditional values, good relationships, starting with her local community and circling out to the wider community, would enhance social harmony and cohesion.

While Elizabeth’s vision had initially been for a pre-school that would attend to the learning needs of five- and six-year-olds as well as after-school care for primary-age children within her own community, she soon recognized her own need for business skills and leadership training. As the pre-school grew, parents and older women, followed by young women and high school students from the township, perceiving this a safe space created in and by the community, came with requests for opportunities to acquire the needed knowledge, abilities, and skills to improve their lives (Dewey, 1916; Ntseane, 2006). While older participants in the study referred indirectly to the restrictions and humiliation of legislated segregation and oppression, those under the age of twenty-five appear to have little
recollection of a time before democracy; for all, however, inequities in social, economic, and educational opportunities are their reality.

School staff

Through enhanced knowledge and skills, pre-school staff all expressed an awareness of themselves as actors with a sense of confidence and self-worth, and a belief in their right and ability to participate, supporting Kabeer’s (1999) notion of agency as the process whereby people who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices—those “that are critical for people to live the lives they want”—acquire such an ability (p. 437). Agency, therefore, is seen as the capacity of individuals to have control over defining their own life choices and to pursue their dreams and vision to improve their circumstances at both the personal and community level (Batliwala, 1994; Mosedale, 2005; Stromquist, 1995). As Kabeer (2005) argues, however, that having a sense of citizenship is one thing, but translating that into effective and sustaining change is another; agency includes the ability not only to imagine one’s situation but also to mobilize for change, often “an iterative process (Gaventa & Barrett, 2010, p. 33).

From the school’s inception, Elizabeth the pre-school’s founder and principal, although a qualified early childhood educator, recognized her need for further knowledge and practical skills for managing and leading the school. She acknowledged her need to “find somebody who’s an expert, who will help us to drive this, who will help us . . . to go about doing the right thing for this community” (Elizabeth). In a chance meeting, Elizabeth met a woman from ‘outside’ the community; her “instinct” told her that “this is the lady is going to help me and is going to join us.” Sonja was approached by Elizabeth and agreed to help although from the beginning insisted on community participation and ownership. “I felt this [pre-school] was a community development project that did not [emphasis in original] belong
to a church or some people who decided this was needed; this came out of the community” (Sonja). This principle of self-help and community ownership is supported by earlier South African studies that advocate for using, as far as possible, the skills of community members so that early childhood care and education programs benefit not only children but also families and communities (Atmore et al., 1994; Ramphele, 2002).

For Elizabeth, learning to manage the business of the pre-school and to take a leadership role in the pre-school and the community was not straightforward. Over the years, Sonja and other mentors have helped build, slowly and step by step, a basic structure for governance and accountability. Attuned to the purpose of African adult learning as the development of “the whole person, a lifelong learner” (Omolewa, 2007, p. 596), mentors and adult educators organized learning experiences that were relevant and met “genuine problems or situations” (Knowles, 1973; Marienau & Reed, 2008). Mentors, thus, provided a framework for their learners’ experiences, encouraging them to draw on their cultural practices and experiences as they negotiated new situations (Venter, 2004).

Through on-going learning and constant support of mentors, particularly Sonja, the principal and two senior teachers now express confidence in their ability to act as leaders, mentors, and role models for parents, other members of staff, and their extended Xhosa community. For example, Nomble related the way her learning in the pre-school has changed her:

Working in this community and in this school, it’s given me a sense of what I can do--my potential and what I can do for the school. And then you know you have some strength or some potential, even more than you think.

For the pre-school staff, in addition to realizing their dreams of working with young children in their own community, all described learning in this space that has enriched both
their professional and personal lives. Despite experiences of poor quality and in most cases incomplete schooling either in the rural Eastern Cape or a Western Cape township, all seven teachers, including the principal, are now accredited early childhood educators. Their ongoing learning takes place through professional development provided by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and by teachers collaborating and sharing with each other and with colleagues in other townships.

Several participants expressed their capacity to imagine change and to envision a brighter future. An older woman, now a classroom assistant, recounted how purposeless her life in the township had seemed before she became involved with the pre-school and how she now has the capacity to imagine the future:

Before when I was at home, any time I wanted to wake up, I just woke up, cleaned the house, sat down, did nothing. It was not good for me because I couldn’t think beyond what I could do; I couldn’t dream of the future” (Liliane).

There is evidence, too, of people individually or in groups finding and using their voice and then acting on decisions that affect their lives. For example, when the school was looking for support from the ‘outside’ community, they wrote, with help from a mentor, letters to the local newspaper. The response was overwhelming: offers from a local car dealership to sponsor repairs to the old school and a meeting with the woman who would eventually build the new school. On another occasion, women at the pre-school—teachers and members of Phakamani—voiced their disapproval of disrespectful behaviour towards elders that was part of an afternoon television soap opera series but felt incapable of making a change. A mentor encouraged them to take speak up and take action—“You have a voice. Write to the television station” (Sonja). To their astonishment, the program was suspended
and future episodes refrained from disparaging older people.

Members of the pre-school staff and members of the township community have had opportunities to question their taken-for-granted beliefs about reality with possibilities for transformation, for opening and acting on alternative perspectives, for imaging a better future (Fleming, 2002; Freire, 1970; Mayo, 1999; Taylor, 2008). Reflecting on their situation, questioning, forming opinions and expressing them, they then have confidence to act. Instructors and mentors, committed co-learners and guides from the local and broader community, have continually challenged not only individual’s beliefs and values, but also the values of the changing society in which they all now live. For instance, members of Phakamani, denied access to unbiased news during the apartheid years, related with pleasure opportunities to discuss, with their instructors, world events seen on television or heard on radio. This capacity to reflect critically on one’s situation Kabeer (2002) argues is the starting point to constructing citizenship and challenging exclusion: “the beginnings of their journey from subject to citizen” (p. 21).

**Parental participation**

Compared to North American models of parental involvement (e.g., Epstein 2001; Wantz & Messner, 1994) that tend to be top-down where the school defines the roles of parents, students, and the school, this pre-school genuinely attempts at grassroots participatory democracy that Borg (2001) claims has the potential to bring substantial changes to individuals and their communities. Several studies study suggests that the traditional image of schools as places where community members’ roles are prescribed needs to be transformed to the notion of the school as a learning centre that belongs and responds to the needs of the community (Borg, 2001; Wantz & Messner).
In this pre-school, in accordance with Xhosa tradition, parental participation has grown naturally from a sense of mutual obligation and respect. From the pre-school’s inception, the staff have communicated to parents that they are respected and capable partners in seeking to enhance the children’s educational experiences. Pre-school staff focus on building strong relationships with parents from the time they enrol their children, inviting parents to participate “because education is all about the child, the parent and the teacher” (Nomble). On-going opportunities for learning about child development and pedagogy and for enhancing parenting skills are provided to young parents who now find themselves in an urban environment, removed from traditional roots and family support. About her reciprocal relationship with the teachers, one mother commented with satisfaction: “Yes, they welcome our questions. We are working hand-in-hand. They teach me about my child, and I teach them about my child” (Umama A).

In interviews, many parents reported enhanced knowledge and sense of agency--confidence in their capacity to make choices and to claim their rights and those of their young children in this new democracy. In addition, most parents expressed a sense of efficacy for providing quality pre-school learning experiences that would contribute to their children’s future educational success. Through their learning of child development and the concept of early learning through play, parents also expressed confidence in their ability to parent more effectively, to help their children learn at home, to claim their children’s rights, and to contribute the school community.

**Community participation**

From the pre-school’s inception, the understanding was that “even if we have a beautiful school but don’t have community involvement, it won’t be successful” (Mandisa). Therefore, participation of not only parents but also members of the local community has
been welcomed and apparent at each stage of the pre-school’s development as all worked towards a common goal of creating a place with strong foundations where all members of the community are welcome to learn.

As the pre-school grew and its program gained the confidence of the community, mothers and grandmothers, young women and men, recognizing their lack of education, approached the senior teachers. Thus, various programs grew organically in this space: Phakamani with the vision of providing the women of the township opportunities to learn and develop skills that will help them improve the quality of their lives as well as those of their dependents and other members of their community; Girl Power for young women; and Phandulwazi for high school boys.

Members of Phakamani believe their involvement in this group and new learning—literacy and numeracy programs to income-generating projects and workshops on raising awareness—has “changed their lives in a positive way” (Nomble); the women expressed feeling stronger because they can do things for themselves. Several older women expressed thankfulness for the sense of independence and confidence, the new purpose in life from being part of the women’s group. As Doris remarked: “So life was worse then, but now . . . whenever I want to do something, I know that I’m going to do that”.

Four of the young women who participated in the Girl Power program now have early childhood teaching qualifications and have been hired as teachers at the pre-school and a fifth is the school secretary. The study supports the notion that new knowledge and ideas may change consciousness and self-image. Speaking on behalf of the group, Mvumi expressed the importance of their involvement in Girl Power, their sense of incredulity and also satisfaction in their ability to contribute to their community.
Before we worked at this school, we never knew how much we could do. Before Girl Power, we had no work and no hope for our future. We are strong and can help our children and our community. Now we are proud of ourselves and what we can do. At this school we work hand in hand, so we are all stronger (Mvumi).

When the older brothers of the pre-school children observed the activity in the adult training room, they asked to be involved in constructive, after-school activities. Screen printing and glass bead making soon became income-generating projects, benefitting both the program and the boys personally. An outcome of their participation in the pre-school, encouragement, and knowledge was increased confidence to pursue further education. Two of the boys from the original group are now at university, one is an apprentice mechanic, and another works with the current group of high school boys.

As reported to me across in many interviews and observed in numerous activities, the staff in this pre-school share a common philosophy—a communal worldview, the importance of relationships, respect, and reciprocity. The community and belonging to the community are part of the essence of traditional African life; the individual is born into the African community and is always part of that community. In this space, members reported knowing each other, feeling a responsibility for one another, and collaborating for common interests.

Nevertheless, within small groups, status and reputation situate each member within “a network of power, influence and action” (Fine & Harrington, 2004, p.349). On one hand, groups in which both youth and adults participate may be seen as a model of civic engagement where ideas of justice, equality, and respect are translated into members’ conceptions of the good society. On the other, literature suggests that less than positive relations based on beliefs and assumptions about the other undermine constructive collaboration (Pattniak, 2003; Robinson & Fine, 1994). In this case study, young parents who
do not participate in the pre-school are seen by members of the school staff as neglecting their responsibility to their families and children (Elizabeth). While these parents possibly value teachers’ competence and authority in terms of pedagogy and content, they may perceive that teachers do not respect their changing values, and once negative perceptions occur, feelings of alienation and incompetence may develop, discouraging young parents further from participating in this space (Robinson & Fine). Since I was unable to contact any non-participating parents for interviews, future research may seek the insights of parents who do become involved in this pre-school.

Outcomes of participation in this pre-school were not always positive; several parents in this study expressed reduced sense of agency through participation in this space—feelings of misunderstanding and frustration. The issue of school fees was particularly contentious for parents who believed their children had a right to free education. While not related to the pre-school matters, parents’ frustration with bureaucracy was reported in several interviews, not only by parents but also by members of the pre-school staff.

**Strengthening Citizenship**

In this study, in addition to many participants’ overall sense of themselves as active citizens in this new democracy, findings suggest for some deepening networks and the sense of a cohesive society where a sense of inclusion and trust exist—the strengthening of citizenship. For other participants, a sense of the erosion of traditional Xhosa values and worldview and continued social and economic exclusion were evident.

For amaXhosa, education of the young is viewed a communal responsibility, a fundamental component of social life. Thus, since the early days of the pre-school, a sense of
the importance of building relationships of inclusion, trust and reciprocity, and working in
teams within teams—“we work together all the time” (Mandisa)—has permeated
interactions, beginning within the township community—bonding social relationships—and
later reaching out to individuals and groups ‘outside’ the community—bridging and linking
social relationships.

Because the township’s relatively homogeneous population, there is, on the whole, an
inherent sense of cohesion and trust in each other. Most parents reported that they can depend
on the women in the school to care for their children and to provide a quality pre-school
education. As Doris the school cook remarked, “The people are happy because they know
where we come from, and their children are safe”. Mandisa reinforced this sense of feelings
of trust and confidence in the pre-school: “The parents in our community know us very well.
If the parents send their child to our school, they know the child is going to get something
there—quality education; there is progress.”

In response to my inquiry, participants agreed there was mostly a sense of community
cohesion, that neighbours would help if and when needed. As Elizabeth explained: “We are
coming with that background, that culture of looking after each other.” Even beyond their
immediate neighbourhood, when in the surrounding townships, many reported a sense of
community and offers of assistance (Nomble).

Now that the pre-school is well established, staff believe the pre-school and they
themselves are respected and appreciated as an important part of the whole community:

The whole community is looking to us as a school, even more [favourably]
than the primary school. When the children go home, they talk about their
school, their teachers. Sometimes when you walk up the street, you hear
somebody greeting you. That person doesn’t know you. ‘Hello! Are you the
one that is at the school? I have heard from my child you are there, and my
child is so happy.’ I am grateful for this school for our community (Liliane).
As proposed by researchers (Cornwall, 2002; Ferreira & Roque, 2012; Gaventa, 2006a), this study suggests that participation in decision making may be viewed as a way of deepening democracy. In addition, empirical studies show that the greater the community participation in early childhood care and education programs in local decision-making—planning, delivery, and evaluation—the greater the impact on strengthening social cohesion and furthering overall community goals (Ball et al., 2002; Ramphele, 2002).

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) legislates stakeholder participation in school governance and advocates that the school community own their schools and take responsibility for the education of their children in order to benefit both the school and the community it serves. In the case of this pre-school, shared decision making, often around contentious issues, has played a role in deepening understanding and relationships among the staff of this pre-school, parents, and members of the local and broader community. As I observed on several occasions—at a parents’ meeting and the annual evaluation and planning meeting—decisions are made that consider the good of all, rather than individual preferences. For example, parents approved a more expensive outing for children because of its educational value, disregarding the implication that parents would need to bear the cost not covered by the pre-school’s field trip fund.

As well as building relationships within their own township communities, pre-school staff, parents, mentors have perceived the importance of social ties that span cleavages of race, language, and class, relationships with the ‘outside’ community. As Putnam (2000) argues through these bridging social relationships individuals may “transcend . . . social and political and professional identities to connect with people” unlike themselves (p. 41).

Acts of participation have helped create confidence for further engagement in their
own and also the broader community. Such confidence building often involves overcoming fear. Mandisa, a senior teacher, articulated her sense of confidence and agency gained through her workshops and seminars at the pre-school. “These things boost you; they make you so brave”. The pre-school staff now consider themselves informed citizens with the capacity to participate in democratic life, as ‘makers and shapers’ rather than ‘users and choosers’ (Cornwall, 2002, p. 16).

Gestures of inclusion and acceptance that include social events, many ‘outside’ the township at the homes of the mentors, have built the confidence as well as a sense of inclusion and trust among staff of the pre-school and other members of the community. From their perspective, mentors believe that their participation may help build understanding and empathy among individuals historically, socially, and economically separated through deeper understanding of the humanness of ‘other’ South Africans. Further, sensing support and kindness from the pre-school and local community, mentors spoke of the exhilaration of being able to play a small part in making a difference in the new South Africa.

In addition to deepening networks within their own community and with members of the ‘outside’ community, Elizabeth understood the importance of linking social capital—developing relationships with people entirely ‘outside’ the community, including vertical connections to institutions that would enable leverage of a wider range of resources than are available in the community.

In 2000, concerned about the unsuitability of the pre-school’s temporary accommodation in “zinc structures that were in poor condition”, the three original teachers, under the guidance of mentor Sonja and Julia, learned to write letters of request to local newspapers. The first response from the management of a luxury car dealership in the
neighbouring town took the pre-primary school as their social responsibility for three years, repairing the buildings, installing power, and providing a stove and refrigerator. This relationship Nomble recalled was “thing started to get better, and “true friendships were formed as we worked together towards ensuring the best for our children” (Newsletter, January 2004). Soon after an architect and then a building contractor read the requests for help in the newspaper—the beginning of long-lasting relationships of inclusion and trust between staff of the pre-school and the wider community.

The efforts of members of the local and broader community in this space have inspired the generosity of and created links with many donors, large and small both in South Africa, Europe, and the UK. Donations range from gifts of winter clothing for the children to the funding of bursaries and support for large-scale extensions to the school building. Through emails and newsletters, these relationships with donors that foster a sense of dignity, respect and inclusion are seen by people in this community as important links with the outside world. Relationships are also formed with student volunteers from Germany and the UK; however, as Mandisa remarked wryly that “they [the volunteers] benefit more than the school” but that “it did not matter” as there were so many other people involved in the school who contributed so much of their time and expertise.

The local City of Cape Town councillor, a resident of this township and supporter of the pre-school, frequently sends visiting dignitaries to observe an organization he perceives has served to strengthen his community. For example, in March 2011, I met the then-Speaker of the Government of the Western Cape with a community development consultant from the City of London, impressed with the accomplishments of the pre-school in this disadvantaged
community, was visiting the pre-school with the intention of using it as a model for community development in his jurisdiction.

In 2011, after being awarded a certificate of excellence for Grade R in the Eastern Metropole Region of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the three senior teachers were invited to the national teacher excellence event in Gauteng. Although they did not win the national award, Elizabeth spoke the value of the experience and looked forward to future success for the pre-school at the national level. She expressed confidence in their competence as teachers and in their capacity to network with other educators. Besides, she told me with pleasure, during the three-day event they were “treated like princesses” (Elizabeth).

Hints of discord

While evidence of deepening networks and the development of a cohesive society where a sense of inclusion and trust exist--the strengthening of citizenship--was reported and observed, some participants revealed their sense of an erosion of traditional Xhosa values and worldview especially among younger members of their community. As Harber and Mncube (2012) suggest “reconciling the contradictions of the collapse of apartheid (a good thing) with the breakdown of traditional values (a bad thing) (p. 157)” has been difficult. Elizabeth claims in the past people in their close community where there are no secrets “lived for the good of the whole community, now the individual matters very much”. For example, she related that having rights has changed attitudes to traditional ways of disciplining children in their community. Whereas in the past, children’s misdemeanours were acknowledged by the parents so children would learn from their mistakes, since 1994 she argued that children claim their rights, and parents claim their children are protected by those rights.
Several participants also hinted at their perception of changing gender roles. Speaking of younger parents, Elizabeth contended that “they just look after themselves. We are now living in a selfish society.” While in the past, a wife was responsible for ensuring harmony within the extended family, she is now perceived as more concerned with herself and her individual needs, an attitude opposed to traditional Xhosa values regarding responsibilities in marriage where women have defined and specific roles and are always subordinate to men.

Elizabeth was passionate in her belief that democracy has had “a slightly negative impact on our culture because people started to move away from their traditions, from the good values that we had to democratic claiming of rights”. She contends that while younger people claim their own rights, they demonstrate little respect for their elders or for the rights of others. Elizabeth argues, too, that “it’s not been all good because it appears now that it is only women who have got rights”, raising an issue hinted at by one of the fathers interviewed: the powerlessness and apparent hopelessness of many men living in townships in post-apartheid South Africa. When asked for her thoughts on reasons for changing cultural values, Elizabeth, without hesitation, replied that in addition to claiming rights, western influence through media, especially television, was responsible. She contends that, seduced by idealistic expectations of suburban life, young people are rejecting their traditional values for western materialism and individualism.

On the other hand, several participants expressed satisfaction with changing practices in township home life, where gender roles were less rigidly defined. A grandmother ‘rejoiced’ that she had time to socialize with her children and grandchildren and that both boys and girls could be taught the same household skills, and a student teacher related with
pride that she and her brothers were equally happy sharing household chores whether washing dishes or cleaning a car.

Following a conversation about a sense of cohesion and trust within the township, several participants mentioned xenophobia in relation to ‘foreign people’ from other African countries who had over the past five years moved into the community and “cause a lot of problems”. A father alleged that Somalis who have “little shops here inside the community” (Utata B) were selling drugs to primary-age children in the township and that high school students were being used to sell drugs. Elizabeth, however, was compassionate, understanding the difficulties in migrants’ home countries that forced them to flee to South Africa, and referring to incidents of violence in 2008, expressed unease about their treatment in other parts of the country. With her capacity for forgiveness, Elizabeth related feeling for the humanness of these people, their connectedness, and herself diminished when others are humiliated, tortured, or oppressed. At the same time, however, she sees the need to protect the youth of their community from the alleged bad influence of ‘other’ Africans.

**Actors in a New Democracy**

As reported and observed, this small space, a pre-school in a South African township, has indeed for many played a role in constructing citizenship through opportunities for meaningful participation in and enhancement of democratic life: for learning and a sense of agency to claim their rights and the capacity to make decisions that affect their lives and those of their children. For many, too, the pre-school had offered opportunities for strengthening of citizenship through deepening networks and the development of a more cohesive community where a sense of inclusion, dignity, and trust exist.
As Gaventa and Barrett (2010) discovered, citizen participation produces outcomes that vary according to the type of citizen engagement. In addition, I suggest that outcomes differ according to the intensity, frequency, and level of complexity of participation as well as to the disposition, values, and assumptions of the participant. Rather than conceiving of meaningful participation in the form of a ladder--a hierarchical approach that lacks consideration of horizontal accountability and deems control of decision-making as the pinnacle of involvement—this study conceptualizes participation in terms of a nested structure based on frequency, intensity, and complexity of involvement. As discussed in Chapter Two, issues of power are inherent in community participation (Cornwall, 2002; Gaventa, 2006); however, in this pre-school community, influence appears to be conceived as embedded in a web of relationships and discourses which affect everyone and decision making was observed as shared by community members and their networks in multiple ways (Gaventa, 2006). While some participants hinted at community perceptions of teachers’ influence as a negative trait, most expressed views of power as individual and community capacity and agency for positive action.

Three senior teachers form the core group with their passion and engagement energizing and nurturing the local and broader community. Outcomes of intense and constant involvement in the pre-school since its early days for Elizabeth, Nomble and Mandisa, the three senior members of staff, have been significant. Their sense of increased knowledge through organizational and leadership learning, their awareness of and capacity for participation, as well as a greater a belief and confidence in their own ability was both reported and observed. In addition to a sense of recognition in both the local and broader community and “their capacity to identify with others and to act in unity with them”
(Kabeer, 2005, p. 7), these women perceive their ability to exercise some degree of control over their lives. In addition, the senior staff have also benefitted materially; they have professional qualifications and unlike 65% of people aged 15 to 65 in this township a regular income (City of Cape Town, 2008). Through their participation in this pre-school they have strengthened social capital within the local community, as well as having developed ties with heterogeneous communities that span cleavages of race, class, and language to connect socially and professionally with people unlike themselves (Putnam, 2000). Based on Xhosa values of respect and reciprocity, the three senior teachers strive to create a balance among constituencies; however, endeavouring to include all participants, these members of senior staff risk being overwhelmed by the demands on them from the wider periphery.

Other members of staff who participate frequently in multiple capacities also perceived professional and personal outcomes of their participation in the pre-school as positive. These women all articulated a sense of confidence to act and of self-worth (Lalitha & Prasad, 2011). Mostly denied the ability to make strategic life choice in the past, they now sense they have the capacity to define their own life choices and to pursue their goals to improve their circumstances at both the personal and community level (Batliwala, 1994; Mosedale, 2005; Stromquist, 1995). Besides being recipients of respect and trust within the township, the pre-school staff have opportunities—although more limited than those of the three senior teachers—for recreational and social activities ‘outside’ the township for strengthening citizenship. As with the senior members of staff, these teachers also receive monthly salaries.

Since Grade R is a one-year program before children enter Grade 1, parents’ participation while invited and valued is more limited. Although parent meetings are well
attended--reported as 80%--many parents have family and work responsibilities, as well as health issues, that make intense and frequent participation difficult. For more active parents, besides perceptions of increased understanding of the development and learning of young children and their enhanced sense of efficacy in their supporting role at home, they also demonstrated evidence of making choices and of being aware of and claiming rights. Less active parents reported participating occasionally when involved in a specific activity (e.g., meetings with the teacher) or having something specific to contribute (e.g., a donation to Heritage Day celebrations). Parents’ participation in decision-making the pre-school, observed at meetings in relation to budgeting and programming, is viewed by them as their responsibility as a parent and member of the community. Apart from a member of the School Governing Body and the few who attend weekend camps, parents are rarely included in social events ‘outside’ community; their interaction with the broader community is limited to events at the pre-school.

Adult educators from outside the community are peripheral participants who described having a personal interest in and sustained connection to the pre-school; they are, however, less engaged and play a minimal role in decision making. Many reported positive experiences through their participation in the pre-school and a sense of inclusion within township community. Government officials, sponsors and donors, while playing an important role in the pre-school, are outsiders who interact with the community occasionally to receive or provide a service without being members themselves.

Although separated by race, class, and geography, the participation of three particular mentors has through the years been intense and frequent. While they have always advocated for community ownership of the pre-school, in the early years the staff looked to them for
guidance and leadership. The mentors continue to play a role on the School Governing Body although the staff appear to set the agenda and run meetings. The current relationship between the mentors and senior staff is perplexing: Do old hierarchies endure or is this a group of strong women working together for a common cause? At the end-of-year planning meeting the senior staff were observed being admonished by a mentor about the school’s precarious financial position and the consequences of not collecting school fees from parents. At the same meeting, the mentor voiced her uneasiness with the fact that three women from ‘outside’ the community were members of the SGB making decisions for the pre-school. While the influence of their participation has been significant, the mentors all reported their satisfaction from the role they play as citizens of the new South Africa.

Although outcomes of participation were for many positive, evidence of negative outcomes were also apparent: signs of fractured connections within society—the perceived erosion of tradition Xhosa values as well as enduring humiliation, lack of respect, and exclusion. A father (Utata B) confident that this pre-school offered his child opportunities for future success, expressed his sense of powerlessness, the lack of control over and hope for his own life. When asked if she voted in the local, provincial and national elections, Nosi a student teacher replied that she did but asked rhetorically: “What difference does it make?” Frustration with her sense of exclusion from broader society and her lack of opportunities was palpable.

**Conclusion**

Evidence suggests that citizen participation at the local level does contribute to the construction and strengthening of citizenship. The findings of this study support the argument that healthy associational life is essential to the health of a democracy and core to
the idea of civil society (Cornwall & Coelho, 2007; Edwards, 2004a; Fleming, 2002) since it is in voluntary organizations that citizens carry on their conversations regarding the common good and address barriers that stand in the way.

As Young (1989) contends, however, participants’ legal status as members of this new democracy does not necessarily equate to the enjoyment of all rights and obligations associated with membership. Since addressing inequities of power, access, and opportunity are preconditions for societies that are democratic, my contention supported by many scholars (Edwards, 2004a; Naidoo & Tandon (1999); Trentmann (2004); Wiesen et al, 1999) is that the task should include government action since major social transformations or systemic changes have rarely been achieved by associations or small participatory spaces alone. However, while the state is the only organization with the authority to uphold the basic rights of all citizens, given the pressures of equity and redress on one hand and macroeconomic strategies on the other (Spreen & Vally, 2006), it appears, at present, incapable of leading change.

Others argue that a requirement of democracy and citizenship is for citizens not only to exercise the right to participate but to struggle in order to guarantee rights, monitor state institutions, and hold them accountable. Cornwall is emphatic that “to be an active citizen is to become a political subject, aware of his/her rights and power to struggle for them” (Dagnino, 2005, p. 8). In the case of South Africa, researchers contend that civil society has a critical role to play in advocacy and in mobilising for change (Spreen & Vally, 2006; Tikly, 2011). Vally and his colleagues (2008) believe that for real change pressure must come from the mobilization of new social movements “to continue the long South African tradition of democratic engagement from below” (p. 7).
While democratic promises of equity and access have for many not yet been fulfilled, Sparks’ (1990) observation before the first democratic elections is still evident. In townships surrounding large cities, groups form mutual support networks based on earlier rural relations and traditional values to offer support and strength:

. . . despite the terrible rending of the whole fabric of African society in the townships Africans’ tradition of communal loyalty and social obligation survives and that when one gets close enough, one sees. . . the complexity and subtle texture of traditional African social organization . . . the elements of grass-roots democracy, the balance between communal, family, and individual rights, and the pervasive spirit of mutual obligation and respect, the spirit of ubuntu (p. 21).

Despite the lingering legacy of apartheid, many participants in this study revealed remarkable sense of purpose and efficacy. Their comments and stories told during interviews and in less formal conversation reflected their historic resilience to hardship, determination to overcome obstacles, and to hope for a better future. Their deeply held belief is that success in any endeavour will ultimately result from sacrifice, hard work, and resilience, even in the face of major obstacles. All pre-school staff and many parents believe passionately that education is the way out of poverty and oppression, that knowledge and survival go hand in hand (Dei, 2008). As one parent articulated about children in the pre-school: “They are the future of South Africa.” Embedded in the culture of struggle, participants expressed their determination to seize new opportunities to continue to participate in their community and to delay gratification in the pursuit of this objective. Many imagine future opportunities, that anything is possible, and expressed their resolve to wait patiently since the future is theirs: “in the end there will be something” (Mandisa). Indeed, they understand that working within existing limits is often necessary to achieve small gains with the hope that these may ripple
out to bring wider changes. Long-term optimism appeared to go hand-in-hand with short-
term realism, fostered by largely unchanged daily living conditions.

If we understand “the messiness and contingencies of everyday political life and
social relations” (Robins et al., 2008, p. 1084) and that democracy is not a set of institutional
designs but a concept with elements of promise and “constantly under construction, then to
support the notion of deepening of democracy, we need to imagine what democracy might
become from the perspectives of citizens in the global south (Robins et al., 2008).

**Significance of Findings**

The findings from this case study make several contributions to the current literature.
While extant literature explores the effects of pre-school programs on children’s
development and on quality of families’ lives, this study adds to understanding that parental
and community participation in early childhood settings contributes not only to community
development but has a broader potential for providing people “with opportunities to realize
inclusive, active citizenship” (Cornwall, 2003, p. 28), in fact for constructing and
strengthening citizenship in a transitional state.

Findings also enhance theoretical knowledge and educational practice of parental and
community participation in their children’s pre-primary schooling. Specifically, this project
helps close the gap in the scarcity of research, from the perspective of participants, on the
realities and complexities of associational life in a non-western community, in this case a
pre-school in a South African township. Here, the voices of marginalized individuals relate
their participation in the context of their local history, culture, tradition, and values.

Little previous research was found on benefits of parent engagement for marginalized
parents in a transitional state, what these benefits might be, how they might occur, or how
parents, families, and communities may be strengthened by them. From an educational perspective, these findings could inform parent engagement practices, continuous improvement frameworks, and intersectoral initiatives.

Extensive searches revealed scant literature on the role of individual mentors in community projects in South Africa, an area of interest for future research. While social responsibility programs were initiated after 1994 as a means of redressing historical imbalances, these were managed and funded by businesses in local communities. Although evidence in this case study shows that the relationship made a positive difference to the preschool and that “friendships were formed” (Nomble), the program lasted only three years. This project, therefore, helps close the gap in the scarcity of research around the role of mentors in community development projects in South Africa, an area of interest for future research.

In addition, research on participation of disadvantaged communities in democratic life has implications for policy and practice in other communities in fragile or emerging democracies and transitional states. Through an investigation of programs and practices that contribute towards fulfilling the broader concept of serving local needs and aspirations, the preschool and programs in this case study may be seen as a resource for other policy makers, program designers, managers, trainers, and supervisors to better equip them with a variety of practical strategies, success stories, and visions of excellence in early childhood education. In addition, this preschool presents a potential model for parents and members of other marginalized communities to create opportunities for participation in democratic life, for constructing and strengthening of citizenship.
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Appendix A: The Children’s Charter of South Africa

- Children should be treated the same, no matter what their colour, race, sex, language or religion.
- Children have a right to a name and nationality.
- Children have a right to a loving and caring family, a proper home, clothing, and healthy food.
- Children have a right to free, equal, non-racist, non-sexist education.
- Children have a right to good health care and medical attention and should be protected from drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol.
- Children have a right to be taught about sexuality, AIDS, human rights, child abuse, and how to protect themselves.
- Children have a right to be protected from abuse, neglect, labour, and violence.
- Children have a right not to be held in prisons or police cells.
- Children have a right to have a say in all matters which affect them.
- Children have a right to practise their own religion and culture.
- Children have a right to be placed in safe and secure ‘families’ when they are orphaned, abandoned, refugees, or exiled.

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/teachers/devrights/devcountry.htm
Appendix B: Framework for Assessing Agency (Mosedale, 2009)

If constraints to action are loosened, then possibilities for agency are increased, and vice versa, if possibilities for action are increased, constraints have loosened. In assessing agency, at both the individual and collective level not only possibilities for action but action taken need to be taken into account.

- Have women’s views changed?
- Have their feelings about themselves changed (self-confidence, self-worth, potential)
- What can women do now they wanted to do but could not do before?
- How have women worked together to achieve this?
- Did external assistance contribute? If so, how?

Ways Women’s Agency Has Changed Constraints to Action

While any positive change is valuable in itself, only when improvement comes about as a result of individual or collective action that agency would be the appropriate term to use.

- What actions did women take individually or collectively to challenge constraints to action?
- How did the women support each other and learn from each other’s actions?
- How did women resist such constraints either overtly or covertly?
- What opposition did women encounter?
- To what extent and how was opposition overcome?
- How secure are women with their newly expanded freedoms of action?
- What action, if any, do they intend to defend their improved position?
Appendix C: Interview Guide for Pre-School Teachers/Members of Staff

Location of interview: Date:

1. When and why did you become involved with this early childhood education and care centre?

2. What is/was your role regarding parent involvement?
   - Do you speak to the parents about their children’s learning? Where? When?
   - What happens at parent meetings? What subjects are discussed? How many parents attend? Why do some not attend? How do you encourage parents to attend?
   - Do parents help you in the classroom or on school trips or the office?

3. How has your experience in this space changed the way you think about yourself, the children, the pre-school, and your community?
   - Do you feel that your participation is valued? Do others listen to your ideas? Are your ideas acted on?
   - Have you changed the way you think about children and the pre-school through your involvement with the pre-school?
   - Have you changed the way you think about the community though your involvement with the pre-school?

4. Did you face any problems with parental involvement? What were they? How did you deal with them?
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Parents/Grandparents

Location of interview: ________________________________ Date: ________________________________

1. When and why did you become involved with this early childhood education and care centre?
   - Did someone invite you to participate? If so, who?

2. What is/was your role?
   - Do you speak to the teachers about your child’s learning? Where? When?
   - Do you attend parent meetings? How often? Do you learn at these meetings? If so, what?
   - Do you help in the classroom or office or on school trips? Tell me more?
   - Are you a member of the School Governing Body?

3. What have you learned through your involvement with the pre-school?
   - Do you know what your child is learning? Do you help your child? (children’s learning)
   - Have you learned how to care for your child better through your involvement with the pre-school? (parenting – health, socio-emotional)
   - Do you know the government services available to you and your family? Are they easy to access? If not, what is your approach? (parenting - financial)

4. How has your experience in this space changed the way you think about yourself, your children, the pre-school, and your community?
   - Do you feel that your participation is valued? Do others listen to your ideas? Are your ideas acted on? Do you participate in the community in other ways? (e.g., faith-based, commercial) (self)
   - Have you changed the way you think about children and the pre-school though your involvement with the pre-school?
   - Have you changed the way you think about the community though your involvement with the pre-school?

5. Did you face any problems in your involvement with this pre-school? What were they and how did you deal with them?
Appendix E: Interview Guide for Members of Broader Society

Location of interview:       Date:

1. When and why did you become involved with this early childhood education and care centre?

2. What is/was your role on the SGB/in the community?

3. What changes, if any, have you seen in the children, staff, parents, and the wider community during your involvement with the pre-school?

4. Has your experience in this program changed the way you think about yourself, the pre-school, and the community? If so, how?

5. Did you face any problems in your involvement with the school? What were they? How did you deal with them?
Appendix F: Child Protection Policy

Lelethu Pre-Primary will endeavour to uphold and honour its role as caregivers and educators by encouraging and recognizing parents value as active partners and team members on the care and education of children; ensuring that every staff member, parent, caregiver, volunteer, student who is involved with the school knows and understands this policy and is bound by it; using every opportunity that arises, as well as creating opportunities, to spread the ethos of the right of our children to protection through the community of Ezibeleni.
Appendix G: Data Coding System

Legend:

| Codes derived from Gaventa and Barrett’s (2010) framework for outcomes of citizen engagement and participation. |
| Codes derived from the participants’ perspectives (interviews, conversations, and meeting) and researcher observations and fieldnotes |

Creating a safe place
an opportune time – the end of apartheid
dreams and aspirations
“strong foundations”
the community and pre-school “working hand in hand”
mentors from ‘outside’

Constructing citizenship
  ▪ knowledge
    pre-school staff
      leadership and organizational learning
      professional learning
      personal learning
    parents of pre-school children
      valuing education
      preparing children for future success
      learning about child development and early childhood pedagogy
      parent education
      awareness of rights/services – claiming rights
    adult and youth learning – community women, young women, high school boys
  ▪ awareness of and capacity for participation
    metaphors of partnership and teams
    parents’ participation in the pre-school
    working with children at home
    fundraising
    decision-making
    problems associated with participation - disappointment and frustration
  ▪ sense of efficacy
    pre-school staff
    parents – mothers, fathers, grandmothers
    mentors

Strengthening citizenship
  ▪ deepening networks
    pre-school staff
    parents and pre-school staff
within the community – those in need, church groups, funeral societies
with the ‘outside’ community - government, mentors, and volunteers
- development of cohesive communities; sense of inclusion, dignity, respect
  *ubuntu*
  sense of trust and partnership – pre-school staff, parents, community, ‘outside’
  community

  *xenophobia*
  youth sense of exclusion – shattered dreams
clash of values
gender issues
Appendix H: The WCED Announces the Top Teachers in the Province

Education Update, December 2011, Issue 11

The team is led by Nomaweza who is an outstanding leader and visionary. She was later joined by Somikazi, who was equally passionate and also prepared to teach without a salary. They shared a common dream as they wanted to start a pre-school for children who come from a disadvantaged community. They were later joined by Petra.

The school is named “the school of miracles” in Lwandle. From one Grade R classroom, Umnqophiso Pre-primary has expended to five Grade R classes and one pre-Grade R class. The school is seen as an integral part of the community.

The staff work closely in partnership with the parents. They use various projects and programs to address specific needs within the community. This also saw the birth of Phakamani which is a training program for adult learning and skills development.

From humble beginnings as domestic workers, these ladies persevere to improve their professional development, thereby attaining greater achievement for the learners.

Nomaweza will complete her B.Ed. Degree in Foundation Phase this year; Nomble has started this year, and Mvumi has enrolled to begin in 2012-13.
Appendix I: Vision, Values, and Principles

*Vision:* Lelethu Pre-Primary School and After Care Centre is valued for the role it plays in building a better future for its pupils, parents, and community.

*Values:* The values underpinning education at Lelethu are designed to make parents and the community aware of the importance of foundation education and of culture to our children. We revere the family and respect all knowledge and learning.

*Principles:* The school will work with all children, families and communities irrespective of their ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or social status. The school will establish partnerships with parents and the community at large, including the province, sponsors and donors, experts and trainers, and the School Governing Body.
IN-HOUSE FUNDRAISING  CUSTODIAN: NONCEDO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and organise three fundraising events:</td>
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<td>o two for the pre-school</td>
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<td>o one for Phakamani</td>
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<td>Change day-to-day tuck shop operation</td>
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<td>01-02-2012</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Notify parents</td>
<td>09-02-2012</td>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
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<td>Organize the event</td>
<td>14-02-2012</td>
<td>Staff</td>
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<td>Dates of the events:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Flying &amp; Little Angels</td>
<td>09-03-2012</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>o Jelly Tots &amp; Butterflies</td>
<td>10-03-2012</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>o Ladybirds &amp; BBs</td>
<td>23-03-2012</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organise venue, tickets, posters, pamphlets and invitations</td>
<td>02-03-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check and sort the items for selling</td>
<td>02-03-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check costumes</td>
<td>02-03-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present to committee</td>
<td>07-03-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Notify parents</td>
<td>15-03-2012</td>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Organise activities</td>
<td>17-04-2012</td>
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<td>o traditional dance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Print invitations and send out</td>
<td>16-04-2012</td>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent meeting (ask parents for help)</td>
<td>08-05-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Put up posters and issues pamphlets</td>
<td>23-05-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando,</td>
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<td>Organise the items for selling</td>
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<td>Mandisa &amp;</td>
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<td>Date of the event</td>
<td>16-06-2012</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
<td>01-08-2012</td>
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Mini-bazaar and Concert (Pre-school)

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<td>Organise venue, tickets, posters, pamphlets and invitations</td>
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<td>Check costumes</td>
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<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<td>Present to committee</td>
<td>07-03-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<td>Notify parents</td>
<td>15-03-2012</td>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
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<td>Organise activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Print invitations and send out</td>
<td>16-04-2012</td>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Parent meeting (ask parents for help)</td>
<td>08-05-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Put up posters and issues pamphlets</td>
<td>23-05-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando,</td>
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<td>Organise the items for selling</td>
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<td>Mandisa &amp;</td>
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<td>Date of the event</td>
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### IN-HOUSE FUNDRAISING (continued)  
#### CUSTODIAN: NONCEDO

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<tr>
<td>Heritage Day (Phakamani)</td>
<td>▪ Draw up a detailed plan (posters, pamphlets, tickets, invitations)</td>
<td>24-07-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Start practising activities</td>
<td>26-07-2012</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Present to the committee with a wish list</td>
<td>01-08-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Present to parent meeting</td>
<td>07-08-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ List of needs and items for selling</td>
<td>24-07-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Start practising - activities</td>
<td>26-07-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Send out invitations</td>
<td>03-09-2012</td>
<td>All</td>
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<td></td>
<td>▪ Organise costumes</td>
<td>07-09-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Put up posters</td>
<td>14-09-2012</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Prepare the classrooms</td>
<td>21-09-2012</td>
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<tr>
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<td>▪ Feedback to the committee</td>
<td>10-10-2012</td>
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Because the decision was made that this would be a Phakamani fundraiser after the planning had been done, some revisions to include Liliane and Phakamani will probably be needed.
### SEWING PROJECT

**CUSTODIAN: LILIANE**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To develop sewing skills</td>
<td>• Encourage more women from the community to participate in the projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To involve the community and volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To enhance our self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To create pride in our work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To interest people for ‘outside’ in Phakamani’s activities</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dolls</td>
<td>Check the machines</td>
<td>23-01-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread baskets</td>
<td>Do shopping</td>
<td>26-01-2012</td>
<td>Liliane, Mandisa &amp; MMvumi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joy bracelet bags</td>
<td>• Bias binding</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Material for joy bracelet bags</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Sewing cotton</td>
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<td>• Shiny ribbon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pins</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sort materials</td>
<td>03-02-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Mandisa</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Project starts</td>
<td>06-02-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Ladies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report to monthly committee meetings</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
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### LITERACY PROGRAMME: CHILDREN (For the love of reading)

**CUSTODIAN: MANDISA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To promote children’s literacy skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To test the programme in two classes this year: Mandisa and Nolwando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To measure the programme’s effectiveness against a control group</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Literacy Programme</td>
<td>Contact the person who will be running the programme</td>
<td>06-12-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present a plan to the committee</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LITERACY PROGRAMME: ADULTS

**CUSTODIAN: HELOISE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
To improve communication skills
To promote reading, writing and numeracy skills
To encourage new participants
To build self-confidence and extend learning for teachers and students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy Programme</td>
<td>Check supplies and resources</td>
<td>16-01-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make a list of needs/requirements and present a budget to the committee</td>
<td>16-01-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage new participants to join programme</td>
<td>16-01-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present cost to the committee</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shopping for programme according to list</td>
<td>15-03-2012</td>
<td>Liliane &amp; Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEloise has given notice of her absence; the programme will resume on her return</td>
<td>Every Thursday at 13:15</td>
<td>HEloise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide feedback to the committee</td>
<td>Dates as set</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AFTER CARE PROGRAMME

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>Evaluate previous responsibilities and amend if necessary to determine the role of the persons on duty</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide a copy of the signed agreement for each staff member and place the original in their personnel file</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set up a roster and display on office notice board</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate existing program and draw up a new program with possible new activities:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| o traditional dance  
| o music  
| o sport  
| o art competition  
| o Girl Guides |
| Advertise and make after care programme known in the community |
| Ensure posters and handouts are distributed, including to new parents |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare enrollment forms (ensure they are complete and correct)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make copies of enrollment forms and place in file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inform parents registering their children of the programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms to be completed, signed by parents and filed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocate children to classes according to age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o 6 to 8 years &amp; 9 to 12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff prepare for their sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme to be followed at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily register to be completed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Routines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback at every committee meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09-01-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09-01-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Routines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ncumisa &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ncumisa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**COOKING AND BAKING**

**CUSTODIAN: NCUMISA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ▪ To improve cooking and baking skills  
▪ To learn to make healthier meals with available supplies  
▪ To learn to budget according to income  
▪ To share ideas about healthy eating | ▪ Organise three cooking lessons for 2012:  
  o two with Rosemary  
  o one with Elbie |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Planning with Instructors | ▪ Planning meeting  
▪ Contact Rosemary and Elbie  
  o to confirm willingness and availability  
  o to set dates  
  o to agree on lesson format and content | 15-03-2012 | Ncumisa & Nomble |
| Participants & Fees | | | | |
| Planning | ▪ Agree with participants and set fee for non-members  
▪ Determine ingredient needs and a budget  
▪ Present to the committee for approval  
▪ Submit a request to the Church for assistance  
▪ Purchase goods | 02-2012 | |
| Day of lesson | | 6 weeks prior to the date set for the lesson  
Day before lesson | |
| Feedback | ▪ Prepare venue for lesson  
▪ Monitor equipment | At least one hour before lesson begins | |
| | ▪ Feedback to the committee | Ongoing | |
**GIRL POWER**  
**CUSTODIAN: MVUMI**  
**WHY?**  
- To give girls and young women in the community opportunities to develop personally, socially and emotionally  
- To gain in self-esteem and confidence  
- To provide mentors and examples of successful women for girls and young women in the community

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**  
- Begin a new group by recruiting a new group of young women from the community  
- Staff organise the program and act as facilitators

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<th>WHO</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Select and set a date  
- Invite past and potential participants to a planning session  
- Hold the planning session  
- Write up an action plan  
- Present the proposed action plan to the committee  
- Begin the program  
- Feedback to the committee | | 02-2012 | Mvumi, Noncedo & Staff | |

**JOY BRACELETS**  
**CUSTODIAN: MVUMI**  
**WHY?**  
- To share with parents and the wider community the values of the school in a practical way

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**  
- Continue joy bracelet project

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Incorporate the values daily in the learning programme  
- Share the full story in the classroom setting as a lesson once a term  
- Encourage the wearing of the bracelet  
- Build in a reward/appreciation for those who wear the bracelet | | On-going | All | |
### ROLE OF VOLUNTEERS  
**CUSTODIAN: ELIZABETH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - To ensure a meaningful experience for everyone  
- To ensure that all clearly understand the role of volunteers  
- To minimise any misconceptions between volunteers, staff, committee and parents | - Clarify roles and communicate roles  
- Communicate regularly to the committee about volunteer involvement |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Approval & Contracts | - Names and details of volunteers to be submitted to the committee for approval  
- Distribute the contract that incorporates a role description to volunteers | On-going | All | |
| Wish List | - Create a wish list for volunteer involvement  
- Identify items/tasks that volunteers can assist with in the classroom and/or for the children in 2012  
- A presentation of the above to the committee | | | |
| Recognition | | | | |
| Feedback | - Certificates of recognition to be submitted to the committee in a timely manner  
- Feedback to be submitted at each committee meeting | | | |
### EVALUATION AND UTILISATION OF RESOURCES

**CUSTODIAN: ELIZABETH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ To ensure existing resources are effectively and appropriately used</td>
<td>▪ Identify and evaluate all existing resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ To be selective in addressing needs</td>
<td>▪ Use all resources responsibly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ To ensure staff and children care for and value resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ To give unused resources to others for whom they may be more relevant and/or useful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and evaluate all existing resources</td>
<td>Each staff member to make a list of the contents of their storerooms</td>
<td>09-02-2012</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15-02-2012</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15-02-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15-02-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>07-03-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>As agreed</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Check needed against all items stating use thereof</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All items that could be used are to be kept safely</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anything that is not in working order should be set aside for removal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A report on the submitted to the committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Implementation of committee decision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### OUTINGS

**CUSTOMER: NTOSH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To enrich the children’s classroom learning</td>
<td>Select relevant and fun destinations for outings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To expose the children to the resources in the broader community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ntosh &amp; Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Identify places</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Ntosh &amp; Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Select dates – one a term</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oversee the budget</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval</td>
<td>Present suggestions to staff and committee meetings</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Ntosh &amp; Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent meeting and distribution of indemnity forms</td>
<td>09-02-2012</td>
<td>Elizabeth &amp; Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Send out notices to parents</td>
<td>22-02-2012</td>
<td>Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback to staff and committee</td>
<td>07-03-2012</td>
<td>Ntosh &amp; Ncumisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BEADWORK AND PHANDULWAZI

**CUSTOMER: MVUMI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To give youth in the community opportunities to develop personally, socially and emotionally</td>
<td>Begin a new group by recruiting a new group of young men and women from the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To gain in self-esteem and confidence</td>
<td>Encourage staff to organise the program and act as facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To provide mentors and examples of success for young men and women in the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop young people’s entrepreneurial skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruit new boys and girls</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise a planning session</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write up an action plan</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present the proposed action plan to the committee</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present the proposed action plan to the parents</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start the program</td>
<td>06-02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Cluster Meetings

**Custodian:** Nolwando

**Why?**
- To network with other schools
- To keep current with WCED initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster Meetings</td>
<td>Present to the committee</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up sessions depend on WCED schedule</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Staff and Committee Meetings

**Custodian:** Nolwando

**Why?**
- For the committee
  - to make decisions about the operation of the school
  - to provide feedback to the committee on school activities
- For staff
  - to coordinate on-going activities
  - to provide feedback on school activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meetings</td>
<td>Create a plan of monthly meetings for the year</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post a list in the office</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notify staff of meetings each month</td>
<td>First Wednesday of each month</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee Meetings</td>
<td>Create a plan of monthly meetings for the year</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post a list in the office</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notify committee members of meetings each month</td>
<td>First Wednesday of each month</td>
<td>Nolwando &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bible Study

**Custodian:** Nomble

**Why?**

**What can we do?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td>HOW</td>
<td>WHEN</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>EVALUATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study</td>
<td>▪ Prepare a programme</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td>Nomble &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Present to the committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Present to the parents</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Select and set dates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Send out invitations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**CURRICULUM**

**CUSTOMDIAN: NOMBLE AND NTOSH**

**WHY?**

▪ To comply with new WCED requirements and expectations

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**

▪ Diligently implement the new CAPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Curriculum</td>
<td>▪ Incorporate new CAPS in classroom planning</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Nomble, Ntosh &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Depending on WCED notification, present to the committee</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Check and evaluate as existing programme</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Make amendments when necessary</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Follow up with WCED</td>
<td>As required by WCED</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TEAM BUILDING**

**CUSTOMDIAN: NOMBLE**

**WHY?**

▪ To build community
▪ To build a strong team
▪ To understand and appreciate each other’s strengths and challenges
▪ To problem-solve
▪ To spend time together away from the pressures of the school

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**

▪ Commit to organise a team-building workshop

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<th>WHAT</th>
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<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Building</td>
<td>• Draw up a detailed action plan and select a date</td>
<td>03-2012</td>
<td>Nomble &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Present to the committee</td>
<td>07-03-2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organise and design invitations</td>
<td>04-2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Finalise and agree on invites</td>
<td>04-2012</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Distribute invitation</td>
<td>04-2012</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Actual date of the event</td>
<td>04-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MEALS ON WHEELS

**CUSTODIAN: NOMBLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To provide meals for the pre-school children</td>
<td>• Be appreciative of the service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To provide meals for children in the after-care programme</td>
<td>• Communicate the need for meals to be delivered on time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide regular feedback to Meals on Wheels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meals for Pre-School and Primary Children</td>
<td>Check and evaluate the existing menu</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td>Nomble &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggest and make amendments to the menu where necessary</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present the menu to the committee meeting</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present the menu to the parents meeting</td>
<td>02-2012</td>
<td>Nomble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree on and finalise the menu</td>
<td></td>
<td>Nomble, Vil,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with Meals on Wheels (staff kitchen)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR

**CUSTODIAN: MANDISA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To challenge staff to reach beyond normal expectations</td>
<td>• Acknowledge excellence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To encourage innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To enhance self-pride and confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remind staff of the award</td>
<td>Remind staff of the award at the first staff meeting of the year</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Give feedback to the committee</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT</td>
<td>HOW</td>
<td>WHEN</td>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>EVALUATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday School Programme</td>
<td>Contact the person who will be running the programme</td>
<td>06-12-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present a plan to the committee</td>
<td>01-02-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM CUSTODIAN: MANDISA**

**WHY?**
- To promote children’s knowledge of the scriptures
- To promote Christian values

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**
- Organise and run a Sunday School program
- Communicate news of the programme to the community
- Encourage parents to enrol their children

**WHAT** | **HOW** | **WHEN** | **WHO** | **EVALUATION**
---|---|---|---|---
Food Garden | | | | |
- Check garden tools and make a list of what we have | | | | |
- Check with the gardener about plants, seedlings and manure | | | | |
- Make a list of needs | | | | |
- Take the list to the committee | | | | |
- Report to staff meetings | | | | |
- Report to committee meetings | | | | |

**FOOD GARDEN CUSTODIAN: MANDISA**

**WHY?**
- To educate children and parents on the value of growing vegetables
- To use Eco School funds responsibly

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**
- Continue with the food garden

**WHAT** | **HOW** | **WHEN** | **WHO** | **EVALUATION**
---|---|---|---|---
Food Garden | | | | |
- Check garden tools and make a list of what we have | | | | |
- Check with the gardener about plants, seedlings and manure | 18-01-2012 | | |
- Make a list of needs | 07-03-2012 | | |
- Take the list to the committee | | | | |
- Report to staff meetings | On-going | | |
- Report to committee meetings | On-going | | |
# Everyone’s Birthday Custodian: Mandisa

**WHY?**
- To get together on an informal basis to have fun
- To get to know each other better
- To bond as a larger team

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**
- Continue with birthday get-togethers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning for the Year</td>
<td>Make a list of birthdays for the year</td>
<td>01-2012</td>
<td>Mandisa &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Birthday: Planning</td>
<td>Set the date, time and venue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare an invitation list</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Send out invitations – email, telephone, by hand</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalise numbers attending</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decide on refreshments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit requests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day of the Event: Preparations</td>
<td>Set out tables and refreshments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make sure ablutions are in order</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organize parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback to the committee</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

---

# School Library Custodian: Noncedo

**WHY?**
- To expose children to a variety of reading materials
- To encourage a love of books and reading
- To encourage children to look at and read books
- To provide shared resources for staff
- To take care of resources

**WHAT CAN WE DO?**
- Take inventory
- Organise books according to a few categories
- Organise a sign-out procedure
- Take care of books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>Check the books we have and revise the existing list</td>
<td>19-01-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign-Out</td>
<td></td>
<td>19-01-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Ncumisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Organisation and Care
- Set up a sign-out book (name of borrower, title of book, date taken, date returned)
- Sort and pack books:
  - fiction
  - non-fiction
  - big books
  - staff resources
- Organise a box for books needing repair
- Repairs books where possible
- Sort books to be discarded
- Present new organisation at staff meeting
- Report to the committee meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set up a sign-out book</td>
<td>26-01-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort and pack books: fiction, non-fiction, big books, staff resources</td>
<td>26-01-2012</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Ncumisa, HEloise &amp; Volunteers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise a box for books needing repair</td>
<td>Once a term</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Mandisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs books where possible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort books to be discarded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present new organisation at staff meeting</td>
<td>March meeting</td>
<td>Noncedo &amp; Mandisa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to the committee meeting</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Feedback
- Encouragement and advice to non-participating staff members
- Clarify roles of mentors and mentees
- Work through the guidelines and expectations with those wishing to commit:
  - mentors
  - mentees
- Contact former mentors and prayer warriors and confirm continued commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUSTODIAN: ELIZABETH</td>
<td>WHAT CAN WE DO?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHY?</td>
<td>Continue with programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve mutual understanding between ourselves and our mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To share with all the value and benefits of participating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To improve our communication skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To develop greater self-confidence</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### MENTORS AND PRAYER WARRIORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement and advice to non-participating staff members</td>
<td>On-going and as needed</td>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allocate new mentors and prayer warriors as needed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link mentor and mentees according to needs/guidance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Organise an introduction session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide support to mentors</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide regular feedback to mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain regular feedback from mentors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure all mentors and prayer warriors are on the mailing list</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite mentors to get-togethers and other events</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ECD FORUM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To network with other EDC providers</td>
<td>Attend meeting regularly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECD Forum</td>
<td>Attend meetings</td>
<td>According to schedule provide</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report to staff meetings</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Report to committee meetings</td>
<td>On-going</td>
<td>Mandisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NEWSLETTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To report on the school’s activities and successes</td>
<td>Prepare and send out a newsletter twice a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To acknowledge the value of the work of all involved in the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To communicate with parents and with wider community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To communicate with donors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To keep a record for the future</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>
### PARENT OF THE YEAR

**CUSTODIAN: ELIZABETH AND NCUUMISA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY?</th>
<th>WHAT CAN WE DO?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ To acknowledge the efforts of a parent during the year</td>
<td>▪ Continue with Parent of the Year award</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ To value parent involvement on the school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT</th>
<th>HOW</th>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>End-of-year graduation 17-11-2012</td>
<td>Elizabeth &amp; Ncumisa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>