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THE EXTENT OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROVISION IN THE GRAVELOTTE COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Community education has driven change in societies for time immemorial. The successes of educational services in influencing socio-economic issues in societies across the globe are captured through empirical studies. The purpose of the study was to investigate the extent to which community education is provided in the Gravelotte community. A qualitative, interpretive case study approach was employed in this study and data was collected through individual interviews, document analysis and participant observation. The sample consisted of ten participants who were purposively selected. The study adopted the Human Capital Theory. The study found that community education provision in the Gravelotte community is significantly positive. Several graduates from the TVET college can find employment and some of them start their businesses. The ABET centre in Gravelotte Primary assists mine workers to earn better salaries. There is evidence of success in the provision of basic primary education, an ABET centre is fully operational and the TVET college in Phalaborwa is fully operational. The study concludes that the absence of a sedentary school in the area hampers the excellent provision in linking primary education to secondary school education. However, the study recommends that the community establishes a secondary school.

Keywords: Community Education, Impact, Provision, Stakeholders, Socio-economic Issues.

BACKGROUND

The provision of community education as a tool for socio-economic development cannot be overemphasized. Without entering a debate over international terminology, which has been widely discussed in other works (Bourn, 2014; Fricke et al., 2015). South Africa has gone through a variety of attempts in applying education for societal reforms and development. The implementation of community education services happens for a variety of reasons hence the capital investments of the government in education services. In his words, Nelson Mandela said, "*Education is the tool through which one can change his circumstances*". It is pivotal for community stakeholders to hold the government responsible for the provision of education in rural communities like the Gravelotte community.

Education in any society holds the epitome of channeling the strength in guiding development. It is for that reason that this research study was done in the area of Gravelotte. In anticipation for development the community should be provided with quality education. The number of learners who drop out from school is enormous. The cause of dropouts is lack of infrastructure in the local community which then forces learners to travel long distances. The

provision of quality education is seen as the reason most learners stay in the school system for much longer.

“Focusing on educating girls and women is one of the most efficient ways to combat poverty and improve economic growth in developing countries” (Ostby et al., 2016). *“Gender equality is also an important dimension and goal in the 2030 Agenda. Providing educational opportunities for women is therefore both a prerequisite and a driver for successful development”* (UIL, 2016). According to recent figures, *“the gap between girls and boys globally is down to 1% in primary and secondary education. However, the majority (57%) of illiterate youth globally is still female”* (UIS, 2017). *“Discrimination against girls and women in education is more due to the unwillingness of public authorities to act and less a consequence of capacity, for example, bureaucratic quality and financial resources”* (Ostby et al., 2016).

“The fundamental governing principle for a community education system must be to enable access to educational and training opportunities and further to the level of basic education achieved by any school-leaver irrespective of race, gender, or social and economic circumstances” (HESA, 2011). Community education should be accessible to all. The National Policy on Community Colleges (DHET, 2015; DHET, 2014) states that *“Community Colleges as community education programmes must be flexible in the programmes they offer, which should cater for the wide range of needs of adult learners and be driven by priorities of the communities they serve”*. Community education is therefore of utmost significance hence this study took the direction to determine how the Gravelotte community experiences its provision.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question for this study is: Which are the community education programmes provided in the Gravelotte community?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Gravelotte community is a small area with mixed racial groups. The majority of black people in the area are migrant workers. The local mine and farming areas are an attraction for uneducated people and fewer graduates. The provision of community education in an area like this is at a risk of collapse if not given attention. The problem is that farm workers do not require any qualification for employment. In the mine laborers are only given a health check before following a short training on serving in the mine. In a situation where there is very little demand on education, possibilities are that the community may be neglected and not receive better services alongside the provision of basic education and Further Education and Training (FET) facilities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

“Human Capital Theory (HCT) is one of the most commonly used economic frameworks in educational research and policymaking” (Netcoh, 2016). This study is anchored on the Human Capital Theory. This theory explains that *“investment in education increases one’s efficiency and access to the labour market”*. According to Reynolds & Weagley (2003) cited by Tawiah (2017). *“Human Capital is defined as an individual’s knowledge, skills, and productive abilities.”* Studies done by Psacharopoulos (1985) and Tawiah (2017) reveal that *“investment in education has led to increased productivity and this has brought about economic growth”*.

The Human Capital Theory focuses on “*capacity building premised on the perception that there is always an economic return on investment in education*”. In the case of the Gravelotte community in Limpopo, South Africa, there is a capacity building for individual learners. Schools are given Norms and Standards allocations every year to work towards the provision of education. The amounts are distributed according to the economic status of the community as determined by the government. One of the schools in the community is classified as Quintile 4 school whilst the other is at Quintile 1. The difference is that “*the school in Quintile 4 is permitted by law to collect school fees whereas the other school is regarded as a no fee school*”. They do not charge school fees. “*Such an investment seems to provide returns in the form of individual skills acquisition, benefits of literacy programmes and its application for economic success and accomplishment*” (Tawiah, 2017). The ABET center operating in Gravelotte Primary school is funded by the department of education. The supervision of work is done by the Namakgale circuit manager and all resources are funded by the local school and the circuit office.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A case study design was used for this study. The study of human behaviour was carried out descriptively using qualitative approach. “*Case study as a qualitative design has been conceptualized by Shuttleworth (2008); Zucker (2009); and Anderson (2010) for use in the study of human behaviour*”. Data was collected using in-depth individual interviews, documents analysis and participant observation. It is based on inductive reasoning to achieve an in-depth understanding of participants’ point of view, collecting data in natural settings, long-term immersion by researchers in the field, thick and rich description of the studied phenomenon and concern with process. Furthermore, the use of non-random, purposeful sampling makes the researcher the primary data collection instrument. The data was thematically analyzed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data obtained using the in-depth interviews, document analysis and participant observation were analyzed by identifying, coding and categorizing information based on the research question. According to the NDP (2030), “*South Africa needs an education system with the following attributes:*

- *High-quality, universal early childhood education.*
- *Quality school education, with globally competitive literacy and numeracy standards.*
- *Further and higher education and training that enables people to fulfill their potential.*
- *An expanding higher-education sector that can contribute to rising incomes, higher productivity and the shift to a more knowledge-intensive economy”.*

The participants were asked to respond to the research question, “*Which are the community education programmes offered in the Gravelotte community?*” This is the manner in which the participants responded to the question:

Participant KP2: “*I am aware of the schools in the area which are Gravelotte Primary and Leseding Primary. There is an ABET center at Gravelotte Primary school. We had initiated to assist the community with a secondary school which did not materialize due to financial constraints. The community of Gravelotte has in the past mentioned their desire for a secondary school as it appears in their IDP and we have never met that need”.*

Participant KP3: *“I know there are two primary schools namely Gravelotte Primary and Leseding Primary. I know the ABET center exists in the community and I also know that there is a need for a secondary school in the Gravelotte community”.*

Participant KP4: *“I am aware of the centres of education in the area since I am directly involved with the teachers who are members of the teacher union within those schools. The schools are Leseding Primary School and Gravelotte Primary School which hosts an ABET centre”.*

The participants in this study mentioned the education programmes offered in the Gravelotte community. There are two primary schools which are Leseding Primary and Gravelotte Primary. There is an ABET center operating within Gravelotte Primary School after hours from 14H00 to 16H30 Mondays to Thursday. The programmes provided are localized and accessible as reflected in the collected data. There is anonymity on issues of the educational programmes offered in the Gravelotte community.

However, one of the participants interviewed in this study, who works at the TVET College said, *“We as the college are not doing enough to make ourselves visible in the communities”* (Participant KP5, male). The participant feels that the college is not doing enough in terms of marketing itself and creating a link with the community education centers in the area. According to the participant mentioned above, this could be due to the distance between the college and the community which is about 60km away from the town.

The minutes of the Namakgale Circuit Management team has the following matters as discovered in the documents analyzed.

The circuit manager indicated that the schools in Gravelotte community are Leseding Primary School and Gravelotte Primary School who were monitored as a cluster in the last year. He will further visit all the schools as he did in the year 2019.

Furthermore, the researchers noted how participants mention the ABET center operating at Gravelotte Primary and observed the examinations of ABET Level 4 being administered in the school. The examinations were conducted by the Namakgale circuit officials. The center has enrolled adult learners who are taught after school when the primary school learners have left the premises. The department of Education in Limpopo recognizes the need for adult learning in the Gravelotte community.

The data collated from interviewing participants in this study point to the need for a secondary school. The minutes of the community with EXXARO mine at the Gravelotte hotel dated 22 May 2018 supports the view of the participants:

During the Community engagement in January 2018, the Gravelotte community identified that they need a secondary school.

The study revealed that *“the status quo in the provision is different to what the South African Schools Act (SASA) asserted to, that a new schooling system will redress past injustices in schooling provision”.* (Republic of South Africa, 1996:65). Furthermore, there is evidence from the analyzed documents on education in the Namakgale Circuit, that there is no secondary school in the Gravelotte community. An extract from the minutes of a meeting held on the 09th July 2018 is presented as evidence.

There are two primary schools in Gravelotte, Leseding Primary and Gravelotte Primary. Gravelotte Primary used to fall under the Lulekani Circuit but now it’s under Namakgale. No secondary school is nearby, and learners must travel long distances to attend a secondary school. Some learners use the transport that is provided for by the department.

The study discovered that learners are transported by buses to get secondary school education in other areas about 60km away from the community. The implications of this are “*insufficient sleep, which is recognized as a serious health risk by the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, who report that many young people do not get enough hours of sleep*” (Owens, 2014:34). This situation puts a lot of pressure on learners to wake up earlier than is expected of them. Furthermore, the study established that there is a general awareness about educational activities and programmes in the Gravelotte community as evidenced in the interactions between the school community and the local community. The schools put out posters and flyers about admissions and advertised posts in the walls of local businesses. It is further supported by the statement of Participant KP7 who responded to the question by saying:

“We currently don't have a secondary school in the area, but the community has engaged us, and we are busy coordinating the documentation to erect a school together with EXXARO mine”.

Although there is a significant drive to address the need, the researcher however observed from the engagements at meetings and interviews conducted that there is a significant gap between the words and actions. The municipality's drive to address the matter leaves a lot to be desired as attested to by their move of spending the allocated funds which were earmarked for developing a school to other projects after a fall out with the department of education as reflected in a letter to stakeholders dated 30th July 2018 (extract from the letter):

The mine, together with the Ward Councilor has conceded to the decision to forgo this plan in place of other community projects identified during the consultations held.

The plan mentioned above in the letter was the construction of the secondary school. This matter makes one wonder to what extent the commitment to the NDP (2030) is taken when 10 years to 2030 and 26 years after democracy there is a community without a secondary school. Learners must travel long distances as observed to access post-primary education.

Clancy (2001:65) argues that “education's fundamental role in ensuring social inclusion is related to the role that it plays in the process of status attainment and reward configuration in society, with higher levels of educational attainment being associated with declining prospects of unemployment.” With this narrative, it is notable that a secondary school would provide a much-needed boost in the community as attested to by Participant KP6 who said,

“We could be offering bursaries to secondary school learners so that they can study towards engineering and the skills required in mining”.

The provision of education is driven by policy as attested to by Rubenson & Desjardins (2009). Furthermore, the key role of the public education policy is to reduce the structural and individual obstacles for participation in community education. The study further found out that education in the Gravelotte community is not free and it is not accessible by the standards as set out in the millennium goals. The education programmes are offered in two distinctions.

One of the primary schools in Gravelotte community charges a fee, and the other is a no-fee school. The provision of education to society happens under organized systems as it should also happen in the Gravelotte community. Nussbaum (2006) argues that education is intimately connected to the idea of democratic citizenship, and the cultivation of humanity. The researcher concurs with Nussbaum (2006) that missing out on quality education the residents in this area will miss essential capacities such as critical examinations of oneself and one's traditions, the capacity to reason logically, correctness of facts and accuracy of judgment.

The circuit manager when asked on the provision of community education programmes indicated that he is fully aware of the education programmes that happen in the community of Gravelotte, *“There are two primary schools which are under the department of education and I give them monitoring and support together with the ABET center”*. According to data collected from all the key participants, there is consensus that in Gravelotte there is no high school which creates an imbalance for continual educational activities. Learners travel longer distances to access secondary school education which is detrimental to community development because some of them drop out of school.

One of the participants in the study pointed out that:

“Our learners travel long distances to secondary schools unmonitored and this may result in misbehavior and lead to teenage pregnancies” (Participant KP2, female).

On the other hand, the lack of a secondary school deprives the local community of a much-desired community center as most schools are used for other activities after school hours. The secondary school could host community meetings and related developmental projects. In other communities, vegetable gardens are planted in secure areas like schools and churches.

“Students learn best when they can connect what happens in school to their cultural contexts and experiences, when their teachers are responsive to their strengths and needs, and when their environment is identity safe” (Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013”32). In this case the Gravelotte learners are exposed to a home that is far from their schools, which disconnects them leading to failure and drop out as attested by Participant KP1 who said:

“Our children do not cope and ultimately drop out of school before completing grade 12”.

The implication of dropping out of school is detrimental to the learners’ education progress and social wellbeing. Some of the experiences that influence their behaviour may be acquired in the long distance travelled as they go to school. Osher et al., (2018) express that *“the development of the brain is an experience-dependent process. Possibly the travelling of these learners could provoke a lot of good initiatives and survival strategies”*. The level of support through family structures will be required for these learners to succeed. They may develop positive or negative traits which ultimately leads them to dropping out of schools before the actual purposed term.

Research suggests that *“students are more likely to attend and graduate from school, attach to learning, and succeed academically when they have strong, trusting, supportive connections to adults, including at least one intensive relationship with a close advisor or mentor” (Noguera et al., 2015).* The study discovered that there is a lack in that area within the Gravelotte community of creating an intense relationship between the learners and their communities, since they must travel by bus and are never around to interact with the locals where the schools exist.

Furthermore, Osher & Kendziora (2010) have discovered that *“depersonalized contexts are most damaging when students are also experiencing the effects of poverty, trauma, and discrimination without supports to enable them to cope and become resilient”*. Furthermore, they assert that *“unless mediated by strong relationships and support systems, these conditions interfere with learning, undermine relationships and impede opportunities for youth to develop skills to succeed.”* Hence the implications of the lack of a secondary school in the area are detrimental to the socio-economic development of the Gravelotte community.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights that *“education settings are places where young people develop many of the social and emotional*

skills needed to become resilient and thrive” (OECD, 2015). The lack of a secondary school in the Gravelotte community denies these learners an opportunity for ownership and a space to explore their talents. The local community has engaged the department of education and the municipality to build a secondary school. When interviewed the municipal representative said:

“The community has been asking us for a secondary school and it has been a while now and we seem to be failing them in that area” (Participant KP2, Female).

The stakeholders within the community have been engaging the department of education in pursuit of the building of a secondary school as reflected in the minutes dated 09 July 2018 (Minutes attached).

The community and the department agreed to the need for building a secondary school. However, few learners in the local community are in grade 7. There are 16 learners in grade 7 at Leseding Primary School and 31 learners at Gravelotte Primary School. The 31 learners in Gravelotte Primary are 20 learners from as far as Nkowankowa Township and Mariveni village and 11 from the local community. The 20 learners in grade 7 travel by bus to the former model C primary school in Gravelotte. The learners in Leseding Primary are few to constitute a reasonable number to start a secondary school without these travelling learners and these may be the reasons for the delay.

SUMMARY

The Gravelotte community situated in Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality of the Limpopo Province consists of a small town and several households within its vicinity. There is a community library that is not being used adequately. In the nearest primary school, there is an ABET center which gives learning for levels 1 to 4 of South African Qualification Standards, but only a few people register in this center. According to the center manager, only a few level 4 adult learners enroll for studies each year since its inception in 2011. The community does not have a secondary school, but learners still travel by bus to do their secondary education in nearby villages about 50km away. Some of the learners that pass grade 12 do not continue with their studies. In the years 2012 and 2013, learners passed grade 12 and most of them remained in the community without progressive movement towards achieving higher education qualifications. This contrasts with the report according to the community survey conducted in 2016 which established that across population groups, there was an increase of persons attending at an educational institution from 1996 to 2016. *“The number of black Africans attending an educational institution increased from 10, 5 million in 1996 to 14, 8 million in 2016. The Indian/Asian population had the lowest increase from 300 775 in 1996 to 323 986 in 2016. The number of white persons attending an education institution decreased from 980 474 in 2011 to 965 374 in 2016”* (Community Survey, 2016). The people in the Gravelotte require an improved provision of education to combat poverty, inequality and for good social wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

The study on the provision of community education programmes in the Gravelotte community was successfully done and indications are that there is reasonably a good indication of positives in the provision. The primary school education is provided in two forms. Firstly, there is one primary school with no mandatory school fees where learners are taught from grade R to 7. Secondly there is a school that charges a mandatory school fee at the same levels grade R

to 7. The area has an option of ABET classes which are offered at Gravelotte Primary School. The absence of a sedentary school in the area hampers on the excellent provision in linking primary education to secondary school education. There is a TVET college almost 60km away from the community in the town of Phalaborwa. This provision requires enhancement if the goal of the National Development Plan is to be realized. A link in educational programmes should be created for a more collaborative approach to dealing with the social wellbeing in rural and urban areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has the following recommendations:

1. Further research should be done to investigate the ability of TVET colleges to interact with local communities to debate solutions on educational challenges. The community structures have indicated the gap which can be filled through deliberate interactions. The TVET College can establish a forum locally to provide marketing and interactive collaboration with locals to recruit learners who may drop out of mainstream education. They may be able to pursue technical skills.
2. It is important to further investigate how education structures and business can be made to work in collaboration. In a community where the business community has no proper unity with the schools, there is a lack of strong tie to addressing socio-economic issues. Business forums and private institutions should be encouraged to support the provision of educational programmes.

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