UNDERSTANDING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF RURAL TEACHERS

A CASE STUDY OF A RURAL EDUCATION INNOVATION IN KWANGWANASE.

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the following key educational issues: the needs of rural teachers, the role of rural parents in education and the nature of support provided by non-governmental organisations. The literature on South African education, rural education and in-service education and training provides a theoretical framework for the evaluation of an education innovation which began in 1986 in KwaNgwanase, in the Ubombo Circuit of the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture.

The focus of the study is to show how an innovation can be adapted by rural teachers to suit their own specific needs. It is acknowledged that improving teacher support and school provision within a rural area in South Africa is only a small step in transforming an inadequate education context. It remains the role of the state to provide a meaningful system of education for all South Africans, but communities can, and should, play a role in deciding how this service can best be utilised.

The study suggests that aspects of the innovation has potential for replicability in other rural areas and may provide a strategy to address the need for appropriate in-service education and training for rural teachers.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Understanding the educational needs of rural teachers: a case study of a rural education innovation in KwaNgwanase.

Introduction

The focus of this report is a Mobile Library Project which has been operating in 8 KwaZulu primary schools in the Ubombo circuit since 1986. The project is based at a high school near KwaNgwanase, a dense rural settlement about 10 kilometres south of the South Africa/Mozambique border and 12 kilometres inland from Kosi Bay and the Indian Ocean. The region is isolated, impoverished and, somewhat ironically, idealised by those who have never lived and worked there. The natural beauty of the area, generically known as Maputaland, is often lauded but less is heard of the difficulties experienced by the local people of eking out a bare living. In the seven years since its inception the project under discussion has gone through many trials, some common to all non-formal projects (the difficulties of attracting and retaining project staff), some related to its specific environment (an ambiguous relationship with the national education organisation under whose banner it falls, local political disruptions, logistical problems) and some shared with all educational endeavours in South Africa (high teacher turnover, financial insecurity, curriculum irrelevance).

The educational deprivations described in the report are not unique in black education, but exacerbated by the harsh, rural context in which they occur. For those involved in educational, health, agricultural or development projects Maputaland is not just "Paradise under Pressure",[1] or "The Land of the Alcoholic Palms"[2] it is a veritable project graveyard. Yet, the Mobile Library Project has survived for seven years (not without difficulty) and it is the firm belief of this author that much can be learnt from its experience. The project has metamorphosised into a small, but resilient, example of a rural educational initiative. It is not

perfect, it may not be able to continue, but under the circumstances it is surprising that it prevails at all.

Rationale for the study

The initial aim of the Mobile Library Project was to encourage primary pupils to read fluently, independently and with enjoyment and to ensure that they had access to good quality reading materials. The materials are mediated by two project workers (both local people) and teacher-leaders in the participating schools. However, the vast majority of teachers in the area, and within the project, are un- or underqualified. The Mobile Library has been, for them, the only tangible form of support received, both professionally and personally. Thus, the key to the project's continued existence is held by a small core of ill-paid, untrained and neglected teachers. The whole picture of In-service Education and Training (INSET) for teachers in South Africa is a confused one which reflects the fractured nature of education in South Africa as a whole (Hartshorne:1987, Hofmeyr:1988). As a particular group within the broader teaching profession the context-related needs of rural teachers, as a specific target group, have rarely been articulated. Yet at least 60% of black schooling in South Africa takes place in rural areas (Hartshorne:1992). This, therefore, is a vital area and it is believed that the experience of the teachers in the Mobile Library Project may shed some light on a sorely neglected component of the education system.

Overview of the research report

Chapter One gives the broad educational context in South Africa, with particular reference to the black homelands. This chapter includes an analysis of the rural-urban relationship in South Africa. As the focus of this research report is the educational needs of rural teachers a brief overview of in-service education and training (INSET) in South Africa is presented.

In Chapter Two the local context of the Mobile Library Project (MLP) in KwaNgwanase is discussed and a history of the project is given. Project-related problems, highlighted by Lund and Nkabinde (1988), are stressed.

The fieldwork aspect is contained in Chapter Three and includes details on methodology, constraints and comparative data analysis. It is in this chapter that teachers' own needs and priorities emerge.

The educational needs of the MLP teachers are analysed in Chapter Four. The implications of their responses are discussed and recommendations are made as to how the MLP could be consolidated. The experience of a small-scale grassroots innovation, such as the one described and analysed in this study, could contribute to the development of appropriate INSET support for rural teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

Education in South Africa or "Bless my homeland forever".

Black education in South Africa has, since the implementation of the Bantu Education Act in 1953, progressed in a unwieldy and unsavoury manner. More than this, the ideological underpinnings of apartheid, and the motif of separateness taken to absurd lengths, begat a system of education which is neither systematic nor educational. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rural educational context, and yet, because notions of separateness have unwittingly been internalised, the problems of rural education have, until very recently, been overlooked, shelved or ignored.

Neglect of rural areas has been the result of state policy but it has unfortunately been echoed, by default rather than intention, by more progressive political and educational forces in South Africa. Hartshorne (1992:111) warns against perpetuating a new divide in South African society in which there are two kinds of citizens, urban and rural. As Lawrence & Paterson (1991) indicate, rural concerns should not be second-level concerns for their social, economic and political prospects are significant and inseparable from those of urban areas. Our thinking must expand to replace separation with inclusiveness and a fractured South Africa with what Hartshorne (1992:111-2) calls:

One South Africa, one society, one economy, one political system, one common future and one struggle to achieve it.

This means that there can be no straight dichotomy between urban and rural (Derman &

Poultney:1985, Deacon and Parker:1992, Hartshorne:1987i). A false definition that separates all that is deemed urban from all that is, by default, dubbed rural necessarily creates a rigid framework of separation which denies the political, social & economic interdependency of the two. In reality it a case of a relationship between the whole and parts, not opposition of polarities. Hartshorne (1987i) suggests that a more helpful definition is one of a continuum with extremities and commonalities in varying measures.

It is difficult, however, to advocate unity while separate homelands still prevail. They are a bolster to South Africa's powerful industrial and commercial sector and a useful 'sleeping partner' for the state in continuing political negotiations. These homelands, four independent and six self-governing, were never the outcome of genuine nationalistic movements but were a mocking parody of independence movements in the rest of colonial Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. The setting up of homelands enabled the state to sidestep its responsibility to care for all its people and provided a "comfortable and convenient rationale for neglect" (Hartshorne, 1992:112).

Since the Soweto uprising of 1976 education has elbowed its way to the front line of struggle and recognition is due to the crucial role played by urban school students in destabilising an illegitimate government, at great cost to themselves. Since 1976 increasing amounts of money have been thrown at urban schools by the state and a stream of private sector funded initiatives have emerged. However, the focus has remained largely urban, mainly due to the higher profile for companies and vested interests by the state in managing an unruly future urban work force.

For rural areas, nevertheless, the picture of neglect has endured uninterrupted. The South African government has consistently starved homelands of adequate development resources whilst turning a blind eye to useless expenditure on expensive buildings and trappings of

independence (such as 'international' airports) and boundless financial corruption within homelands. State policies of payments to homeland demagogues without adequate accountability or control have contributed to a picture of grave neglect of development in rural areas, particularly in terms of education. The illegitimacy of homelands has precluded them from receiving substantial international aid and their urban invisibility has limited private sector investment (Hartshorne:1992). Over 10% of the national budget has been handed over to homelands since their inception. This is the amount most developed nations spend on education alone.[3]

The urban-rural continuum

Some of the key indicators of urban or rural status are poverty/wealth (source and amounts of income), geographical position, level of services and general infrastructure (Bekker and Clark: 1990), population densities, employment opportunities and types of governance or administration (Ardington:1989; Krige:1989). The net result is that all form part of a loose framework, with many indicators being shared with areas more commonly identified as urban. When this is related to rural education the cumulative litany of deprivation is a depressing one. Factors include, inter alia, poor classroom facilities, inadequately trained teachers, limited school space, differential access to schooling, high drop out rates, limited parental support for education and minimal state fiscal input.

Of course, many of these problems are shared with South African urban black schools although the reasons may differ and thus it is vital to relate macro-symptoms of deprivation to a particular context. The notion of an educational urban-rural continuum is maintained by Smith (1984) when he speaks of an "isolated learning community". These may be found anywhere but are particularly prevalent in rural communities. Hartshorne (1987i) emphasises this point when he writes:

The essential problems and issues in rural education are no different from those in rest of South Africa, except that they are generally more extreme, more intractable because of greater poverty, greater isolation, feelings of dependency and powerlessness exacerbated by layers of bureaucracy and traditional authorities.

Newly-independent African countries placed great faith in the power of education as a panacea to economic and social deprivation (Nasson:1990; Hartshorne:1992). This grim realisation soon dawned that education is a sorting and streaming factor, not a transformative one (Bowles and Gintis:1976; Nasson:1990).

Yet education still can play a vital role in supporting and securing broader social shifts, even in a rural context. Education consists of a multiplicity of variables some of which may combine to produce the exact opposite of that which the whole was designed to create. As Morphet (1991:424) confirms, when speaking of the centralised rigidity of South African education:

> One consequence is that many of the most gifted creative and innovative educational thinkers abandon the system and find their way into projects...The real and best work in curriculum design and programme innovation...has, in the last decade, been done in the project field.

In no sphere have non-governmental organisations (NGOs) been more active than with teachers, providing for many the only form of professional, and personal, support available. Improvements in the quality of education depend upon the quality of the teacher. Beeby (1986) emphasises this:

Teachers are the front line troops of change and progress depends on their own education, motivation and freedom to innovate. (Quoted in Hartshorne, 1992:118-9)

This belief is at the heart of most non-governmental INSET work and has particular relevance for the Mobile Library Project.

Rural education in South Africa

In KwaZulu, for example, 98% of schools are community schools (Parker: 1989), meaning that the community carries the bulk of building and maintenance costs. Poor communities can only afford poor facilities and the cycle of poverty deepens. A similarly impoverished picture prevails in farm schools in the Department of Education and Training (DET). Yet at least 60% of black schooling takes place in rural areas (Hartshorne:1992). If, as has been indicated, rural areas are lagging behind it is important to remember that we are not talking about a minority, to be pacified later. In both qualitative and quantitative terms rural educational deprivation should be a major factor for a country looking to restructure and redress (Lawrence and Paterson:1991). The numbers of school-going aged children who do not attend is particularly high in rural areas (Ardington:1989; Deacon and Parker:1992). Black schoolchildren get a raw deal, rural ones suffering most. Black homelands get a raw deal, especially KwaZulu (Moulder:1991). What hope is there for black rural children in KwaZulu - surely the poorest of the poor?

Clearly, there is no simplistic urban-rural divide as a variety of shades and overlays reveal different emphases and degrees of deprivation.

Education & Development

Rural development, which emphasises notions of participation, sustainability and enablement/empowerment, may provide some hope (Mackenzie and Taylor:1992). The greatest of these for South Africa is self-empowerment in local communities (Tapson:1990). But there are dangers: rural communities are not homogeneous (Mackenzie:1992), interests may be contested (Tapson:1990) and it is easy, but perilous, to think that one voice speaks for all (Chambers:1988).

Concerning education and development a particularly thorny issue is the school curriculum. Schooling neither prepares children to be productive members of the community nor for guaranteed success elsewhere (Hartshorne:1992). For rural parents schooling is not a "self-evident paying proposition" (Nasson:1990).

A final caveat, relevant to this case study, concerns those who support development projects. There is a fine line between supporting an initiative and steering it. This is a warning which NGOs would do well to take into consideration, avoiding the dual traps of "patriarchy and naive populism" (Reynolds:1981 quoted in Wilson and Ramphele, 1989:286).

INSET in South Africa

For the purposes of this paper in-service education and training (INSET) is defined by Thompson (1981) as:

> The whole range of activities by which serving teachers ...may extend and develop their personal education, professional competence and general understanding of the role which they and the schools are expected to play in their changing societies.

INSET and development are not so very different. It is concerned with people's needs and

INSET and development are not so very different. It is concerned with people's needs and who decides how they should be met (Eraut:1971). Formal INSET provision in South Africa has tended to take the patriarchal path with centralised courses devised and conducted far away from the context in which teachers' daily work occurs. Non-formal INSET projects have, by and large, attempted to follow a constructivist paradigm whereby the teachers with whom they work play a vital role in the design, implementation and nature of project INSET work.[4] Support of teachers is ongoing, classroom-based and cooperative. However, the vast majority of NGOs are urban-based and, with a few notable exceptions, urban-focussed. The particular INSET needs of rural teachers is an area rarely addressed by either formal or non-formal INSET programmes.

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1.   Alan Mountain (1990) Paradise Under Pressure, Johannesburg: Southern Book Publishers.

2.   Reader's Digest Guide to South Africa (1986), Johannesburg: Reader's Digest Association of South Africa.

3.   SABC Agenda, November 15 1992.

4.   For a more detailed discussion of constructivism see Mehl M. (1987:32-4) "Understanding your pupils: A new dimension to INSET" in Ashley M. & Mehl M. (eds), INSET in South Africa, Johannesburg: Teacher Opportunity Programme.

CHAPTER TWO

Maputaland and the background to the Mobile Library Project

Kwa Mhlabuʼyalingana
Maputaland: "uMhlaba-yalingana" or "the earth which is flat."[5]

Maputaland is the name given to the region of approximately 8 000 square kilometres covered by the Ubombo and Ingwavuma magisterial districts of KwaZulu/Natal. The region is naturally bounded on three sides by the Ubombo Mountains (west), the St. Lucia estuarine system (south) and the Indian Ocean (east). The northern border is the political boundary between South Africa and Mozambique.

KwaNgwanase

The Mobile Library Project operates within a 15 kilometre radius of a dense rural settlement called KwaNgwanase, situated in the north eastern quadrant of Maputaland.[6] The economic base of the KwaNgwanase area has four elements: agriculture/fishing, tourism, migrant labour remittances & disability grants/pensions. Local job opportunities are scarce.

The population of Maputaland in 1992 is approximately 200 000 to 223 000.[7] As a result of extensive labour migrancy gross sex and age imbalances can be found with a male to female ratio in the area of 82:100 (Vandeverre et al, 1985:5). It is estimated that in KwaZulu as a whole over half of the population is under 14 years of age and nearly 60% are under the age of 20 (Mountain, 1990:93). This trend is clearly evident in the population of KwaNgwanase. The population of the KwaNgwanase area was 23 000 within a 15 km radius in 1985 (Vandeverre et al, 1985:5). Since then a good tar road, a severe drought and an influx of refugees from Mozambique has increased the population to well over 35 000.[8]

MAPUTALAND.

MOZAMBIQUE

Ponta Do Ouro
Kosi Bay
NDUMU GAME RESERVE
Shokwe
TEMBE ELEPHANT PARK
MANGUZI FOREST
KWANGWANASE
Makhawulani
Lando Channel
Banga Nek
LAKE NHLANGE
Lake Amanzimnyama
KOSI BAY NATURE RESERVE
Black Rock

Msunduzi Pan
Namaninl Pan
Bumbe Pan
Makane's Drift
Sukunin Pan
Mandlankunzi Pan
Ngodo Pan
Mhlolo Pan
Polwe Pan
Vyamithi
Sihangwane
Phelandaba

SWAZILAND
Border Cave
MOUNTAINS
Ingwavuma
Swangwungu Pan
Khungazini Pan
Mzinyeni Pan
Tele Pan
Mihikeni Pan
Nsimbi Pan

Ngwavuma
LEBOMBO
GWALIWENI FOREST

MANZENGWENYA PLANTATION
Manzengwenya

Island Rock

TRANSVAAL
Ngwana Pan
Nhlaniane Pan
Tshongwe
Mbibi
Mseleni
LAKE SIBAYA
Olabotini
Balemhlanca Pan
Pongolo

to Pongola 55 km

Jozini
UBOMBO
Ubombo
MAGASO PLANTATION
SIBAYI PLANTATION
BAZUAN
Shazibe

Mooseni
LAKE
SODWANA STATE FOREST PARK
Sodwana Bay
Jessur Point

Nhlonhlela Pan
GHOST MOUNTAIN
Mkuzi MOUNTAIN
MKUZI GAME RESERVE
NXWALA AREA
Nsumu

Lower Mkuzi

INDIAN OCEAN

Lislefdt's Rocks

Leadman's Shoal

Ikoza
MOUNTAINS
Msunduzi
Bayala

NATAL

Raven Point
Halley's Lakes

Mpinga

Isua Point
LAKE ST. LUCIA
Hell's Gate

Hluhluwe
Hluhluwe Dam
Hluhluwe

Cape Vidal

MAPUTALAND

	Legend
〰	Lakes
▤	Reserves
⠄	Swamps
▨	LEBOMBO ZONE
☐	PONGOLA ZONE
▦	SAND FOREST ZONE
▩	MOZI/PALM BELT ZONE
▬	COASTAL LAKE ZONE
☐	COASTAL ZONE

- - - - Forest Areas
——— National Roads
——— Tarred Roads
– – – Secondary Gravel Roads
- - - - Other Roads (Selected)
+—+ Railway Line
-·-·- National Boundaries

ORIENTATION MAP

Luanda
ANGOLA
NAMIBIA
Windhoek
BOTSWANA
SOUTH AFRICA
Cape Town
ZAMBIA
Lusaka
Harare
ZIMBABWE
Pretoria
Jhb
Durban
Maputo
MAPUTALAND
MALAWI
MOZAMBIQUE

to Empangeni 47 km

DUKUDUKU PLANTATION & FOREST RESERVE
Dukuduku
Mtubatuba
St. Lucia Estuary
Mapelane
Umlalazi

0	5	10	20	30	40

KILOMETRES

KwaNgwanase: A Project Graveyard

The path of rural development is one paved with disillusion and disappointment. KwaNgwanase is no different in this respect. As Vandeverre et al (1985:23) noted:

> This area has experienced a history of failed projects and unfulfilled development promises resulting in disillusionment among the community.

Informal interviews with members of mission personnel who have been involved in the KwaNgwanase area for nearly 40 years cite example after example, mostly but not exclusively agricultural, of projects which have not survived: coconut plantation, rubber plantation, handicraft production, rice project, agricultural cooperative, marketing of indigenous plants as muti, indigenous tree saplings, adult education, creches, school-feeding schemes.[9] The project obituary is a long one. In all cases the projects were potentially viable and could have made a major difference to a people long isolated, neglected, exploited and forgotten. But they were not able to do this.

The reasons are twofold: to a large extent logistical problems predominate, particularly those related to the distribution and marketing of local goods. The tar road, completed in 1985, did help but, ironically, it made it easier for outsiders to reach KwaNgwanase (such as second-hand clothes dealers) and the traffic was, to all intents and purposes, one-way.

The second reason is more tentative. The isolation is not only geographical but also psychological. No amount of infrastructural improvements are likely to lessen this. Without exception all projects were the brain waves of people who, staying to live and work in the area, had had enough experience of the world on the other side of the mountains to see

opportunities. For the inhabitants it is difficult to see beyond daily hardships. Couple this with a community internally-riven by differing political, economic and social pressures and aspirations and the sorry fate of many a project makes more sense. This point is perhaps best summed up by Lund and Nkabinde (1985:8):

... for people who live there [KwaNgwanase is] a place of poverty, of suspicion, where politics is dangerous. Development efforts present a risk as well as a resource to be contested and coopted by one side or another.

The corps of philanthropists who initiated most of these projects invariably got burn-out and disillusioned after a year or two and returned to recuperate in the city. After their departure the natural order, one of distrust, disempowerment and disorder, prevailed. This provides a constant lure for new philanthropic outsiders, and another cycle continues.

History of the Mobile Library Project[10]

In 1985 I, too, was an inspired outsider burning with developmental zeal. While teaching at Star of the Sea High School (Star) the gaps in the reading and language abilities, in standard 6, of pupils from the nearby primary schools was evident. Thus, I began working, in a voluntary capacity, with standard 5 pupils from five of the primary schools, developing worksheets and sharing basic communicative language teaching methods with the teachers. Books and materials were few and had to be taken from school to school, and in this way the mobile library concept was born. In time, the initiative became a full-time project, supported by READ and sponsored by the Genesis Foundation (US) and became fully operative in 1986. It is based at a Star of the Sea High School (Star), one of two high schools in KwaNgwanase. Thus the three main protagonists are READ, Genesis and Star.

A national organisation, with its head office in Johannesburg, READ is an independent, non-profit making, non-racial education trust funded by the private sector. From lowly beginnings in a few Soweto schools it now operates in all major urban areas in South Africa. READ's objectives are, inter alia, to improve language competency, to encourage independent study and to enrich the education experience of pupils, teachers, and the community at large (READ Annual Report: 1991). READ does not undertake basic literacy or numeracy, although it may support other groups which do this. The relationship with READ is a complex one and will be discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

The Genesis Foundation is an American foundation based in Rhode Island, which focuses upon primary, secondary and adult basic education in rural areas of Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa. With an annual budget of approximately US$ 1 million Genesis has made 483 grants to 145 schools and other educational agencies in Southern Africa since its inception in 1982.

Star is a well-resourced establishment, largely due to continued support from the Genesis Foundation, which has funded a number of specialist buildings and classrooms since 1983. Star's matriculation results are exceptionally good with pass rates of 98% - 100% and in 1989 Star produced the top black matriculant in South Africa. The school is sited and closely linked to an active Catholic mission which has been very supportive of refugees from Mozambique.[11] Thus Star - both school and mission - is well-known and respected in the community.

The Mobile Library Project (MLP)

The target group: The MLP works with teachers and pupils at 8 primary schools in and around KwaNgwanase. Numerically this adds up to 87 teachers and 4709 pupils from sub-

standard A (SSA) to standard 5. The teachers are local, mostly unqualified and unsupported.[12]

The materials: In addition to well-selected English language books the READ organisation has a sophisticated materials development component and the MLP makes use of a variety of these. As far as possible, cross-curricular materials are used and much emphasis is laid on developing childrens' confidence and competence through drama activities. READ materials are visually attractive, practical and durable.

The project staff: The library adviser is Deborah Ntsele, a local woman in her early forties who has been involved since the project's beginning in 1986. She is not a qualified teacher and in fact only managed to obtain her matriculation certificate recently. But Mrs. Ntsele is well respected in the community, playing an active part in a variety of local committees and church activities. The project teachers, themselves mostly un- or underqualified, do not seem to have a problem with the fact that she is on a par in terms of lack of official qualifications. Her biggest advantage is that, being local, she knows how to organise things locally without treading on toes. She has children in two of the project schools and is respected in her capacity as a supportive parent as well as library adviser. Her biggest disadvantage is the fact that she cannot drive.

Ambrose Qwabe is officially employed as the project's transport officer but he is ambitious to learn more about the educational side of the job in order to be of more use. Mr. Qwabe acts as the major communication link between the project and the schools, going personally to each school when need arises. He is exceptionally competent and handles many of the vehicle maintenance and repair jobs himself.

The programme: Now that the schools have book stocks and materials the mobile part of the MLP is actually the project staff. Visits to schools occur weekly, during which time Mrs. Ntsele has been trained by READ to work with teachers and with pupils in class. Children are familiarised with the books as sources of learning and enjoyment and teachers learn how to promote pupil reading habits, making use of drama and visuals. In the first three years the MLP was primarily designed to benefit pupils. The role of teachers was a secondary, facilitative one. Between 1988 and 1992 a gradual change has taken place whereby teachers perceive concrete benefits for themselves too. Thus a greater number of teacher workshops and meetings are scheduled.

Project-related problems

In the course of the last seven years a number of problems with the MLP have come to light. These include the danger of dependency, the relationship with the national NGO which resourced the project and staffing difficulties. In 1988 with these in mind Genesis asked outside evaluators to examine the project in order to:

> Assess the value of the MLP to the primary school students and teachers it serves and the quality of service provided by READ Natal. Also to make recommendations on the project's possible continuation plus explore alternatives for future management.[13]

The task was assigned to Francie Lund (social researcher) and Thokozile Nkabinde (library consultant) of the Centre for Social and Developmental Studies in Natal three years after the MLP had begun.

The possible danger of creating dependency was a major concern of the funder. Continued external funding could result in a project unable to function unassisted and would carry too

much of what should rightfully be the state's responsibility. On this point Lund and Nkabinde (1985:36) concluded:

> The project would become too expensive if it simply continued doing what it is doing now. Sponsors would be justified in withdrawing if after a further three years no substantial new progress had been made.

READ became involved with the project at the behest of the funder, Genesis. The distance between Johannesburg and KwaNgwanase created enormous difficulties. These continued even when READ Natal took over. Concerning MLP staff, it has always been difficult to find suitably qualified local people, or to attract outsiders to do this kind of work. In its seven year history the MLP has had three coordinators (up until the beginning of 1991) and is now run by a library adviser and an assistant. After the first year, when I was the coordinator, the project was taken over by one of the primary principals, Mr. Jubilee Tembe. Mr. Tembe remained until the end of 1988, when he decided to move on to further his studies. He was replaced by Japhet Ngubane, a well-qualified teacher and trained community worker. Unfortunately, Mr. Ngubane's political interests alienated many of the more conservative teachers. In an urban setting, one's non-professional activities are usually one's own business, and rightly so. However, in a small, fractured rural community it is more difficult to separate the professional person from his/her political stance. The unfortunate theft of the four-wheel drive vehicle added to the problems. Without a vehicle the 'mobile' part of the MLP was grounded. Frequency and quality of school visits suffered as a result. Mrs. Ntsele continued as far as possible to keep the momentum going, resourcefully making use of the few informal taxis in the area. The fact that the project is still in existence is largely due to her quiet determination to maintain equilibrium.

Mr. Ngubane resigned in 1990 and Mrs. Ntsele was asked to take over the running of the

project, supported by Mr. Qwabe. There was concern that she was not qualified to take over the job but she has proven that, in terms of experience, determination and effectiveness, she is more than capable of doing the work. As an active community member and a concerned parent her particular 'qualifications' are, perhaps, especially apt.

Thus, the MLP shares many of the difficulties common to rural areas. In spite of these Lund and Nkabinde (1988) strongly recommended its continuation on the grounds of its unique potential to benefit rural pupils. Since 1988, however, the project has shifted its emphasis from pupils to teachers. Before 1988 the MLP teachers were a somewhat unreliable means to a worthwhile end (pupil progress). It had been assumed that teachers would be motivated to help pupils achieve the desired goal. This assumption proved misleading. For teachers to help pupils better their own needs had to be addressed <u>first</u> in a meaningful and supportive way. Although mechanisms for teacher input in the design and implementation of the MLP had been in place since 1986 teachers only took up the challenge after 1990. Five years is, perhaps, a long time for this to happen. The MLP was fortunate that Lund and Nkabinde (1988) recognised the different pace of rural initiatives and recommended further funding for the project. This, combined with the MLP's staffing difficulties, created time and motivation for project workers and teachers to divert control away from outsiders, away from the supporting NGO and away from maverick community members. There was no coup; necessity became opportunity. Thus, by 1992 the teachers have taken more ownership of the MLP with the result that teacher development has become the critical fulcrum on which pupil progress depends.

5.   Mountain A. (1990:32), Paradise.

6.   The term 'dense settlement' is taken from J Graaff (1992:30), "Hard prospects for the rural homelands" in New-Look Mathlasedi, 11, 1. He defines it as "rural villages and informal settlements with populations of more than 5000. Although these populations may be geographically living in rural areas they must be regarded as effectively urban since they are dependent for their income on urban sources - not from agriculture but from commuter/migrant remittances, or pensions and disability grants.

7.   Figures vary depending upon what population growth rate for KwaZulu is used. Vandeverre, Apsey, Robinson and Associates (1985:5), in their unpublished survey report entitled KwaNgwanase: Development of a Service Centre work on the figure of 2.8% compared to Mountain's estimate of 3.1% to 3.5%, one of the highest growth rates in Africa. (Mountain,   1990:93).

8.   Accurate figures are hard to obtain. This figure was arrived at using the annual growth rate of KwaNgwanase of 8% between 1976 - 1984 (Vandeverre et al, 1985: 5).

9.   Informal interviews with Servites Friars, September 1992.

10.   Other education projects in KwaNgwanase are the Career Information Centre (CIC) Mobile Resource Unit and the KwaNgwanase Science Teachers' Project. See Gray, B (1992) "The KwaNgwanase Science Teachers' Development Project", research in progress, University of the Western Cape.

11.   KwaZulu does not accord them refugee status making systematic support difficult. This was confirmed during an informal interview with a United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) representative at Star in September 1992.

12.   There is some overlap in schools between the KwaNgwanase Science Teachers Development Project and the MLP, but those involved in the latter tend not to be the science teachers, a limiting factor for both enterprises.

13.   Lund and Nkabinde (1988:2) Evaluation of rural school-based mobile library project, Durban: Centre for Social and Development Studies.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology, fieldwork and data analysis

Methodology

Due to the distance between Durban and KwaNgwanase (960 kilometres for a round trip) research planning had to be carefully, and economically, worked out. In order to ensure that this "one-shot" approach would be as fruitful as possible the questionnaire design evolved in stages. The first stage included input from the READ Natal coordinator in Durban. This preliminary questionnaire was then presented for discussion with the two project workers in KwaNgwanase. Both were keen to add a number of questions which they particularly wanted addressed and one item, concerning salaries, was rejected. The new version was opened up for debate at a special meeting with project teachers representing all eight project schools. This was very fruitful and teachers picked out the items which they felt would be most useful and sought clarity on phrasing and terminology where misinterpretation may happen. It was decided that the questionnaire would consist of closed questions in English. Possible responses to questions were generated by this group. The advantage was that with this approach at each school there would be at least one respondent who understood the questions clearly and would be able to help colleagues if required. This had an unseen disadvantage too; in one school 4 out of 5 respondents gave identical responses to every question! The final questionnaire was reproduced in Durban and disseminated by the project workers during school visits in the course of three weeks.

Sample

There are eight primary schools in the project, representing 17% of all primary schools in the

KWANGWANASE: LOCATION OF MLP PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

MOCAMBIQUE

NDUMU GAME RESERVE

NDUMU

KOSI BAY

SWAZILAND

KWA-NGANASE

INGWAVUMA

INGWAVUMA

LAKE KOSI

INDIAN OCEAN

LEBOMBO MOUNTAINS

PONGOLO

NORTH

PONGOLAPOORT DAM

JOZINI

P.O MBAZWANA

SODWANA BAY

UBOMBO

MKUZE RIVER

NKUZE

MKUZI GAME RESERVE

KEY

————	MAIN ROADS
———	OTHER ROADS
+++++	RAILROADS
—·—·—	DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
—··—	INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES
▓▓▓▓▓	RIVERS
/////	MOUNTAINS
△	HOSPITALS
○	SCHOOLS (secondary)
P	POST OFFICE
★	STAR OF THE SEA HIGH SCHOOL
■	M.L.P. PRIMARY SCHOOL

0 5 10 15 20 25
k i l o m e t r e s

Map adapted from Vandeverre, Apsey, Robinson and Associates (1985)

Ubombo circuit (8 out of 47). In total there are 87 teachers at these 8 schools, though not all are directly involved with the MLP activities. Questionnaires were then only completed by those teachers with direct experience of the project (36 out of 87 or 41%). Seven out of eight principals completed the questionnaire; the eighth principal was on maternity leave. Not all schools have a post for vice-principal which may explain why there were only three vice-principals in the sample.

Constraints and limitations of the study

There was insufficient time to structure a detailed observation of the project in action, although this would have been preferable. Otherwise, the most obvious constraint is the fact that only teachers were approached to give their perspectives. Input from pupils and parents would have been valuable too but was rejected due to time and language constraints. The fact that the questions were all in English could also have been a constraint, although every effort had been made to ensure that teachers understood the questions in the questionnaire.

The views of three previous project coordinators have been incorporated. Unfortunately, the fourth one (coordinator: 1989-90) is overseas and his views had to be gauged from the correspondence between himself and READ Natal during his period as coordinator.

Researcher bias is always a problem, particularly when one is so familiar with respondents. In order to minimise this questionnaires were delivered and collected later by the project team.

Fieldwork:

The questionnaire (See Appendix A)

The questionnaire sought biographical data, professional data and school data. Teacher turnover can be estimated by tracing when teachers joined the MLP. Teacher migratory patterns are also indicated. The main core of the questionnaire aimed to find out how the project was already helping teachers, and pupils, and what else could still be done in this regard. Problems and suggestions were canvassed and teachers were ask to rank the different aspects of the project's work in order of perceived value.

Data analysis   (Refer to Table 1 over leaf)

Biographical data

In the sample of 36 teachers, 23 were female (64%) and 13 male (36%). Cross-tabulations between gender and rank revealed that all but three (87%) of the women were at the bottom rung, assistant teacher level. Six of the thirteen men (46%) were principals, with one male vice-principal. Only one woman was a principal (4%) and two were vice-principals (9%). This sample is, then, a fair representation of the gender/rank picture in rural (and possibly urban) education.

Concerning age groups, the majority fell into the 26-30 age group (36%) with a further 11% being even younger (20-25). There was a relatively high proportion of teachers in the 41-45 category (19%) with 5 (14%) being aged 31-35. Four teachers (11%) were aged 36-40 and the remainder (9%) were aged between 46 and 55 years.

Cross-tabulations between age and rank show that the youngest principal is aged 31-35, with four in the 41-45 category and two aged 46-50. The young principal is male and in fact was the coordinator of the project between 1987 and 1988. The only female principal is in the 41-45 age group.

TABLE 1: COMPOSITE TABLE SHOWING (BY SCHOOL) THE RANK, GENDER, AGE-GROUPS, QUALIFICATIONS AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF MLP TEACHERS IN 1992.

RANK	GENDER	AGE GROUP	QUAL.NS.	YEARS	SCHOOl
P:	male	46-50	PTC	16+	1
V-P:	female	51-55	Std 8	16+	1
AT:	female	26-30	PTD	2-3	1
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	2-3	1
AT:	female	20-25	MATRIC	2-3	1
P:	male	41-45	PTC	16+	2
V-P:	male	26-30	MATRIC	6-10	2
AT:	female	36-40	Std 8	6-10	2
AT:	male	26-30	MATRIC	<1	2
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	4-5	2
P:	male	41-45	MATRIC/STC	11-15	3
V-P:	female	36-40	Std 8	16+	3
AT:	female	41-45	MATRIC	6-10	3
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	4-5	3
P:	male	41-45	PTC	16+	4
AT:	female	26-30	PTD	2-3	4
AT:	female	31-35	PTC	6-10	4
AT:	male	20-25	MATRIC	2-3	4
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	6-10	4
P:	male	46-50	MATRIC/PTC	16+	5
AT:	female	36-40	Std 8	6-10	5
AT:	female	36-40	Std 8	4-5	5
AT:	male	26-30	MATRIC	2-3	5
AT:	male	20-25	MATRIC	2-3	5
P:	female	41-45	PTC	16+	6
AT:	female	31-35	Std 8	11-15	6
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	2-3	6
AT:	female	31-35	MATRIC	11-15	6
AT:	female	26-30	MATRIC	<1	6
P:	male	31-35	MATRIC/PTC	11-15	7
AT:	female	26-30	STD	6-10	7
AT:	male	26-30	MATRIC	4-5	7
AT:	male	41-45	Std 8/PTC	11-15	8
AT:	female	31-35	Std 8	11-15	8
AT:	female	20-25	MATRIC	4-5	8
AT:	female	41-45	Std 8	11-15	8

NOTE: P = PRINCIPAL
V-P = VICE-PRINCIPAL
AT = ASSISTANT TEACHER

On the questionnaire there were four possible rank options: privately paid teacher (PPT), assistant teacher, vice-principal and principal. No teachers regarded themselves as PPTs, due to a recent circular (April 1992) from the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture (KDEC) which said that there would no longer be any PPTs in KwaZulu. Thus, 73% (26 teachers) marked themselves down as 'assistant teachers' - a generic term for all teachers who do not hold a more senior position, such as vice-principal or principal. Most of the assistant teachers were female (20 out of 26). Seven respondents (19%) were principals and three (8%) were vice-principals. Not shown on Table 1 is the fact that 94% of respondents were Zulu first language speakers, with one Sotho speaker and one Thonga speaker. Most teachers (64%) were local (from the Ubombo circuit) with 17% from other KwaZulu circuits. Six teachers originated from urban areas.

Professional data

Teacher qualifications

This section is dealt with separately as there are many different aspects to it. The first is the need to clarify exactly what is meant by a qualified teacher in South Africa. Until the De Lange commission in 1981 black teachers with a standard 8 and a two years Primary or Secondary Teachers' Certificate (PTC/STC) were recognised as qualified (Hartshorne: 1992). However, this picture changed after 1982 when a qualified teacher had to have a matriculation certificate and a three year primary or secondary teachers' diploma (PTD/STD). Since 1982 many teachers, who were formerly regarded as qualified, found themselves in a new category of underqualified teachers. Thus, for the purposes of this report the term 'qualified' teacher refers to those with a matriculation certificate plus a three year diploma (M+3) or higher; 'underqualified' refers to those teachers with a two year teaching certificate and either a standard 8, or a matriculation (M+2) and 'unqualified' refers to those teachers with no

professional qualification at all.

Table 1 above reveals the variety of qualifications held by the sample group. It is worth noting that the only three people with M+3 (and therefore officially qualified) are females who describe themselves as assistant teachers. Their years of experience do not compare with, for example, the corps of principals who, though lacking M+3, have many years of experience behind them. There seems to be a greater correlation between rank and years of experience (certainly for males) than between rank and qualifications. The original category of PPT would cover particularly those teachers with only a matriculation certificate (17 out of 36) and includes one vice-principal and two women with 6-10 years and one with 11-15 years experience.

In the MLP teachers' sample the official qualification status of teachers was as follows:

TABLE 2: MLP TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

DESCRIPTION	QUALIFICATION	F	%
UNQUALIFIED	Standard 8 only (JC)	8	22%
UNQUALIFIED	Matric only	16	44%
UNDERQUALIFIED (M+2)	Matric & PTC	2	6%
UNDERQUALIFIED (M+2)	Matric & STC	1	3%
UNDERQUALIFIED (JC+2)	PTC	6	16%
QUALIFIED (M+3)	PTD	2	6%
QUALIFIED (M+3)	STD	1	3%

NOTE: M = Matriculation certificate
JC = Junior Certificate (standard 8)

It is interesting to compare the qualification levels of MLP teachers to those of other teachers in the Ubombo circuit as a whole, using the same criteria as cited above:

TABLE 3: MLP TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS COMPARED TO UBOMBO CIRCUIT AS A WHOLE. [14]

MLP TEACHERS: 1992		UBOMBO CIRCUIT: 1991	
Unqualified	= 66%	Unqualified	= 62%
Underqualified	= 25%	Underqualified	= 18%
Qualified	= 9%	Qualified	= 20%

Thus it can be seen that in all three categories the teachers in the MLP are slightly worse off than their colleagues elsewhere in the circuit. What is even more significant is the picture which emerges when the Ubombo circuit as a whole is compared to other circuits in KwaZulu. To illustrate this I have selected an initial comparison between Ubombo and two other rural circuits:

TABLE 4: TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS IN THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT AS COMPARED TO TWO OTHER RURAL CIRCUITS IN KWAZULU. [15]

UBOMBO CIRCUIT:		NONGOMA CIRCUIT:		NKANDLA CIRCUIT:	
Unqualified	= 62%	Unqualified	= 48%	Unqualified	= 56%
Underqualified	= 18%	Underqualified	= 14%	Underqualified	= 27%
Qualified	= 20%	Qualified	= 27%	Qualified	= 17%

Again it can be seen that, in terms of relative teacher qualifications, Ubombo Circuit is surely the poorest of the poor and the MLP teachers give evidence that KwaNgwanase teachers are 'poorer' still. [16]

It would be incomplete to limit comparisons to rural circuits alone and so the Ubombo circuit was also compared to two urban KwaZulu circuits:

TABLE 5: TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS IN THE UBOMBO CIRCUIT AS
COMPARED TO TWO URBAN CIRCUITS IN KWAZULU.[17]

UBOMBO CIRCUIT:		UMLAZI N.CIRCUIT:		KWAMASHU CIRCUIT:	
Unqualified	= 62%	Unqualified	= 2%	Unqualified	= 2%
Underqualified	= 18%	Underqualified	= 44%	Underqualified	= 45%
Qualified	= 20%	Qualified	= 54%	Qualified	= 53%

The starkest contrast is between the proportions of unqualified teachers in each area (62% compared to 2%). Juxtaposing this against the respective numbers of qualified teachers one can suggest that qualified teachers are more likely to gravitate towards urban circuits (and more able to do so fruitfully). Rural areas are not attractive to teachers. The schools are ill-equipped and the only chance of furthering one's studies are via distance education. Distance education, such as that offered by Umlazi College of Further Education and the Primary Education Project (PREP)[18] is a complicated, often contradictory, component of the broader education spectrum. The higher numbers of underqualified teachers in the urban circuits suggests that these teachers have opted to come to or to stay in town to upgrade themselves, seek more opportunities and enjoy better facilities. It is worth noting that, even in the urban circuits where more facilities and opportunities to study are available, only just over half of the teaching core could be said to be officially qualified.

Teaching experience

The data on qualifications only give half the picture for, with most teachers, it is the amount and quality of teaching experience which is a better indicator of a teachers' classroom effectiveness. As Table 1 shows there was a wide spread of experience ranging from less than one year to sixteen years and more. A small proportion had been teaching for one year or less (2 out of 36 or 6%) compared to 22% with 2 to 3 years' and 14% with 4-5 years' experience. The largest number (58%) of teachers had been teaching for 6 years and longer (19% for 6-10 years, 22% for 11-15 years and 17% for 16+ years). What KwaNgwanase teachers may lack

in official qualifications they make up for in terms of experience. The relationship between rank and experience may indicate that experience is more highly valued in rural areas.

School data

School enrolments

School enrolments ranged from 325 to 1163 with a total of 4709 pupils and a per school enrolment average of 589. Pupil enrolment, teacher:pupil ratios and teacher sample data are contained in the following table. Note that the number allocated to each school (1-8) is the same as in Table 1:

TABLE 6: COMPOSITE TABLE (BY SCHOOL) SHOWING ENROLMENTS, TEACHER NUMBERS AND TEACHER:PUPILS RATIOS IN THE 8 MLP PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

SCHOOL	ENROLMENT	TEACHERS	SAMPLE	T:P RATIO
1. Star CP	600	11	5 (45%)	1:55
2. Mahlungulu CP	430	10	5 (50%)	1:43
3. Emasakeni CP	407	8	4 (50%)	1:51
4. Thengani CP	850	16	5 (31%)	1:53
5. Mnyayiza CP	390	8	5 (63%)	1:49
6. Manguzi LP	1163	19	5 (26%)	1:61
7. Esibonisweni CP	544	10	3 (30%)	1:54
8. Hlomula CP	325	5	4 (80%)	1:65
Totals	4709	87	36 (41%)	Avg = 1:54

The average T:P ratio is slightly higher that the average for all KwaZulu primary schools (1:53) and is well above the average for other homelands. Average class sizes (numbers of pupils in one classroom at one time) does give some idea of classroom:pupil ratio:

TABLE 7: CLASSROOM:PUPIL RATIOS IN MLP PRIMARY SCHOOLS

AVERAGE NO'S OF PUPILS PER CLASSROOM	FREQUENCY	%
51-60	8	22%
61-70	7	19%
91-100	7	19%
81-90	5	14%
71-80	4	11%
41-50	2	6%
31-40	1	3%
121	1	3%
< 20	1	3%
TOTALS:	36	100%

Only one teacher is fortunate enough to be working with the luxury of 20 pupils or less in a class; the physical condition of that classroom is another factor altogether. There are only four respondents (11%) within the World Bank's limits of 1:25 to 1:50.[19] The remaining 86% are far above all recommended limits, with one teacher having as many as 121 pupils in her classroom at one time. Constraints such as classroom overcrowding are very real and likely to demoralise even the most motivated teachers.

Four out of the eight schools had been involved in the MLP since 1986. Two more joined in 1987 and the other two in 1990. It is reflective of a troubled time in the project's history that no schools (or new teachers) joined in 1988. One school dropped out completely in 1989. Teachers were also asked when they first personally became involved in the MLP. Since 1986 seven of the original ten teachers are still in place (19% of this sample), six new teachers (17%) joined in 1987, and a further 17% in 1989. Eight new teachers (22%) became involved in 1990 with a further 11% in 1991 and 11% again in 1992. The need for the MLP to train a steady number of new teachers each year gives some indication of the instability of the teaching force in the area. But at three schools the teacher turnover has been remarkably limited and the principal and teacher-leader have continued with the project for seven years.

One principal has been constant since 1986. At one school there has been a strong team of principal and three teacher-leaders which has achieved excellent results at the school. This school even got a mention in READ's (1991:3) annual report! One school, however, has been badly hit by teacher turnover.

Project-related data

Due to the closed-coded nature of the questionnaire the responses are fairly general. However, it is worth noting that all the options were generated by project teachers themselves during the meeting before questionnaire content was finalised. In all cases multiple responses were possible and so percentages will not add up to 100%.

How is the project helping teachers?

Most respondents (78%) said that the MLP helped them by making teaching easier and more fun. Almost two-thirds of responses indicated that the project had helped teachers themselves to improve their English usage and increase their vocabulary. Twenty-one respondents believed that the MLP did not only help teachers with English teaching but also with other subjects as well.[20] In a poorly resourced region it is interesting that only 50% of respondents felt that the provision of books was of particular help to teachers and only 4 commented on the value of the teaching aids which the project offers.

How else could the project help teachers?

Responses to this item were varied. Two thirds felt that more frequent visits would be helpful, indicating the importance of human contact to break down teachers' isolation in remote rural areas such as KwaNgwanase (Woods:1992). Twenty-three teachers asked the project to give

them more skills in introducing a lesson - a basic skill taught at college which few of the sample teachers would have acquired. Clearly the MLP has a teacher support and training role to play too. Twenty-four teachers felt they needed to learn how to get more out of the textbooks which are prescribed at school.[21] Twenty-two teachers also felt they needed help in explaining new words, both for their own benefit and for that of their pupils. Although all eight schools are well-provided with dictionaries the desire for human interaction is still prevalent. A further 61% of respondents added that they needed the MLP's help with increasing their own knowledge, for their own professional and personal growth. Twenty-one teachers indicated that they would appreciate more books (although none specified as to what kind).

How is the project helping pupils?

The majority of respondents (86%) felt that the use of drama and story-telling helped improve pupils' confidence, enjoyment and language skills. A further 75% believed it helped English pronunciation. Many (75%) noted that pupils were learning to use books on their own and that they were able to read with more fluency and confidence. Vocabulary of pupils (as well as teachers) was heightened (72%) and the books were such that pupils could relate what they had learnt to their own experiences (69%). It was evident that pupils' communicative skills were also enhanced (56%).

How else could the project help pupils?

Most respondents (81%) felt that a larger book stock was required. For 64% the fact that there did not seem to be a specific period in the time-table set aside for project activities was a problem. Eighteen teachers (50%) commented that their schools would benefit by having proper libraries, rather than portable book boxes.

What problems have teachers had with the project?

Not surprisingly, given the classroom:pupil ratios cited above, most teachers (83%) felt that the major problem was class size. Others (56%) reiterated the (apparent) lack of an official library period on the time-table as a problem. Many (53%) felt that their limited knowledge about libraries and books made helping pupils difficult when the MLP team were not present. Finally, the fact that not all teachers at a school were involved was cited as problematic by 36% of respondents. Teachers need intraschool support too.

What advice would teachers give the library advisers?

Three-quarters of respondents felt that the project team should endeavour to visit all classes when they come to the school - usually they focus on one class at a time. This has major implications for the time-management and organisation of the project in future. The amount of teacher turnover at these schools means that MLP staff must constantly offer workshops for new teachers, according to 72% of respondents. One interesting piece of advice was shared by 69% of teachers - the MLP should try to reward both the best and the most improved pupils in each class regularly. The need for human interaction was emphasised when 67% of teachers requested more visits from the MLP team. One respondent felt that more efforts should be made to involve the community at large.

Has the project helped or hindered teachers with the whole syllabus?

This item was included at the request of the MLP staff. It relates again to the manner in which the school syllabus tends to be regarded as separate, unrelated components. Although most teachers (72%) felt that the MLP certainly did help with the whole syllabus (not just language teaching) nine respondents indicated that they thought it did not, indicating that they had not

been able to make any cross-curricular links with the materials. An overwhelming majority (94%) felt that the MLP did not interfere with classes or hinder teachers in finishing the syllabus. There were two non-responses.

Rank order item: most valuable aspects of the project.

In this item respondents were asked to prioritise the various aspects of the project. These consisted of: book supplies, drama in class, drawing/painting in class, competitions, involvement of all teachers at the school, library training for teachers, meetings, teacher workshops, school visits, story packs, story-reading and telling activities, teaching aids and the vehicle. The last item, the vehicle, was gauge whether the MLP could operate without it. It is an expensive part of the operation and any alternative ways of organising the project would therefore be financially advantageous.

There was a problem with coding of these items as 14 respondents (39%) indicated that all aspects were equally important, and they therefore did not prioritise. Therefore only 61% of teacher responses (22 out of 36) can be analysed. The first three priorities, in order of selection, are presented fully here.

i)   FIRST CHOICE

The item most often cited as first priority was the vehicle. This makes sense when one realises that 7 of the 9 respondents who said this are teaching at schools only accessible on foot or with 4-wheel drive. What is less understandable is the fact that 2 of the 9 respondents are teachers at one of the most accessible schools, being located only a few hundred metres away from the main tarred road to KwaNgwanase. For all these respondents the vehicle seems to be a tangible symbol of communication and important in breaking down MLP teacher isolation.

Other first-choice priorities were, in order, workshops, books, the involvement of all teachers and (equally) library training for teachers and school visits. Two respondents added community involvement and meetings with parents as vital.

ii)   SECOND CHOICE

As second choice most respondents prioritised book supplies followed equally by the vehicle, library training for teachers and school visits by the MLP team. Next priorities were story packs and competitions (equally) and finally meetings and the involvement of all teachers at the school (also equally).

iii)   THIRD CHOICE

Of equal importance as third choice were teaching aids, library training for teachers and school visits. Close behind were (equally) workshops, book supplies and story packs, followed by drawing/painting and drama (equally).

The data presented above indicate how far the MLP has shifted since 1988. Teachers have begun to see it as something which benefits them as well as their pupils and participate enthusiastically. Instead of dismissing it as "extra work" the MLP makes the work of these rural teachers easier, more enjoyable and more challenging.

14. KwaZulu DEC (1992:58) <u>Annual Report 1991</u>, Ulundi.

15. The definition used here to describe these circuits is one which incorporates geographical isolation, poor service provision and infrastructure and minimal employment opportunities. Personal experience of all three circuits further convinces me that these circuits are all, predominantly, rural in nature, location and infrastructure.

16. All comparative circuit figures taken from KwaZulu DEC <u>Annual Report 1991</u>, 1992.

17. Umlazi North and Kwa Mashu circuits were chosen as they are within the Durban Functional Region (DFR) and Durban is the most urbanised area of KwaZulu.

18. PREP is a distance learning course in the theory and practice of reading and writing instruction for teachers.

19. Moulder J (1991:5) <u>Facing The Education Crisis: A Practical Approach</u>, Johannesburg: Heinemann.

20. READ materials are particularly strong on emphasising cross-curricular connections where possible. Thus an English lesson may incorporate aspects of science, geography and health education through use of theme-based texts and materials.

21. It is worth noting that at many schools teachers rarely have access to a copy of the school syllabus. Instead they rely heavily on a prescribed text accompanied by a prescriptive step-by-step teachers' manual. The texts and guides have therefore taken the place of a syllabus (which, ironically, is usually far more flexible than teachers realise). The teacher's loss is the publisher's gain.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions: What lessons have been learned?

This case study of the Mobile Library Project has highlighted a number of issues which relate to the needs of rural teachers in KwaNgwanase, and may have relevance for the provision of INSET for rural teachers in general. The first point concerns the beneficiaries of the MLP. Initially, the purpose was to enable pupils to read good quality books and learn how to be more fluent and confident in English. Although this is still an element, this research indicates that the teachers, as mediators of the READ materials, have managed to adapt the materials to suit their own needs too. In Chapter Three teachers repeatedly emphasised the role the MLP plays in helping them to improve their own skills and offering support through regular visits and training workshops. The second aspect relates to the staffing of the project. There are strong indications that roles for rural parents need not be confined to out-of-school meetings and financial matters. In KwaNgwanase (and perhaps in other rural areas) official qualifications appear to be less valuable, in practical terms, than broad experience and genuine interest. Rural people, given appropriate support and motivation, are able to "help themselves" although their actions are likely to be adapted to the context in which they live. This may not fit in with urban expectations. There is still an important role to be played by external support organisations, like READ. Not all parents would be willing, or able, to follow the example of the MLP project workers. Indeed, the MLP staff would have been unable to play this valuable support and development role with teachers without READ's training and material back-up. However, the nature of that secondary back-up role is one which needs careful negotiation.

Who benefits from the MLP?

Responses to the rank order item were reanalysed according to how often each item was cited overall:

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TABLE 8: ASPECTS OF THE MLP REGARDED AS MOST VALUABLE BY TEACHERS
(OVERALL FREQUENCIES)
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ITEM	FREQUENCY
LIBRARY TRAINING FOR TEACHERS	18
WORKSHOPS	18
BOOKS	17
VEHICLE	15
SCHOOL VISITS	14
INVOLVE ALL TEACHERS	11
STORY-READING	10
MLP TEACHER MEETINGS	9
STORY PACKS	7
COMPETITIONS	6
DRAMA	5
DRAWING/PAINTING	2
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	1
MEETINGS WITH PARENTS	1

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At the top of the list are, jointly, library training for teachers and regular teacher workshops (with back-up workshops each year for new teachers). It would seem then that, although teachers value the project for what pupils can gain from it their prime concerns are related to their own very real needs for basic training and continuous back-up support. Books, as the major concrete resource of the MLP, are also close to the top of the list. Not only are they a resource for pupils but also for teachers themselves (as indicated in Chapter Three). The vehicle, for reasons already mentioned, ranks high, closely followed by school visits by MLP staff. Collaborative involvement of all teachers at a school is considered important as an extra support for teacher-leaders.

Respondents accord value to story-reading activities. This aspect, combining drama, music, visual aids and active teacher involvement was cited by Lund and Nkabinde (1988:21) as a highly beneficial part of the project. A key facet of READ's overall strategy, story-reading appears to translate well in the rural context.

Story packs are good quality materials developed by READ around a particular story book. Teachers use these to practice their story-telling and story-reading skills and pupils usually dramatise and perform their favourite stories. Children also produce drawings and paintings which may be used to illustrate the play, or to decorate classrooms. Where possible pupils receive small rewards or incentives (such as pens) when teachers feel they deserve credit.

A look at Table 8 reveals the extent to which teachers regard the MLP as a resource and benefit for themselves, over and above the stated aims of helping primary school pupils. In fact, the pupils' needs are way down towards the bottom of the list! This point highlights the INSET role of the project which has assumed greater prominence as the MLP has developed. Hofmeyr and Pavlich (1987:75) capture this well:

> The fundamental assumption that underlies INSET world-wide is that by improving the quality of teaching, the quality of education that pupils receive is improved.

The MLP has shifted its focus. Without minimising the role the MLP has played for pupils it is clear that for teachers to be part of the whole process of educational enrichment they must first feel enriched themselves. Sarason (1990) recognised this when he noted that:

> For schools to do better than they do we have to give up the belief that it is possible to create the conditions of learning when those conditions do not exist for educational personnel (quoted in Fullan:1991).

Therefore, although it is not an original point, one of the major findings of this research report is a confirmation of the notion that people are only able to implement change if they understand the ideas involved and if those ideas have meaning and value for them (Ngcongo, 1987; Hartshorne, 1987ii; Hofmeyr & Pavlich, 1987; Hofmeyr, 1988; Gray, 1988).

The manner in which the MLP teachers have highlighted the collaborative, tangible 'human backing aspect' of the project supports Hartshorne (1992:279) in his assertion that good INSET operates where teachers are and only with their full involvement and participation.

As a result of his work with the KwaNgwanase Science Teachers Project Gray (1992:6) asks the "very big" questions about rural INSET which have been unvoiced, until now:

> How can (rural) teachers in the field be effectively supported? How do you do it in a way that: empowers teachers in the process, makes it as independent as possible on outside resources, makes it teacher-driven, is realistic, possible, feasible and sustainable in rural areas and can be institutionalised?

I believe that the MLP goes some way towards answering some of Gray's questions. The support aspect for teachers is a complex one. The respondents who cited the vehicle as the most important aspect of the MLP in Chapter Three implied that human contact at the school with people who are interested and able to help on a routine, regular basis was vital. The vehicle itself represents for teachers a very real commitment to continuation of this kind of support. The MLP has been institutionalised within the project schools since its early days (Lund and Nkabinde, 1988) and certainly this has meant that there is less danger that it would, like many other projects in the area, simply fizzle out. Even if there were no vehicle and no project team, the basic resources (books, story-packs) would still be available. However, I

would argue, it is the determination and commitment of the project workers at the local level which have put the spark to the wood.

The empowerment aspect of the MLP has come to light slowly. The initial programme, with its strong emphasis on pupil benefits (and the resultant non- or limited cooperation of some teachers) has been modified. The MLP always has worked at the local pace of things. I believe that it has modified READ materials and the READ modus operandi to include, and ultimately empower, the MLP teachers who found the initial 'high-powered' approach alienating and disheartening. Gray, above, believes that such initiatives in rural areas should be teacher-driven. While agreeing wholeheartedly with this, the experience of the MLP suggests that substantial parental input, in the form of the two project workers, could place rural education project activities on a new and exciting plane. I know of no educational initiative (urban or rural) in which the role of parents is an in-school, concrete and supportive one. Normally parental input is confined to fee-paying, fund-raising and out-of-school committee work. From the evidence collected this unique aspect has been the key element in ensuring participation and ownership of the MLP.

Gray highlights the fact that rural teacher INSET should be possible, feasible and sustainable. The MLP has proved itself on the first two grounds. The third, sustainability, is more difficult. As of 1993 financial support is likely to be reduced. Concerning the expense of the project Lund and Nkabinde (1988:36) commented:

> ...on the basis of considerable experience with other educational and development projects, that relative to what is produced (and not produced) by other projects, the MLP is one of the least expensive projects...come across.

In fact, compared with other mobile library provision seen by one of the evaluators, this one is

unique in that it has survived (unlike Lesotho), the books are obviously being used (unlike the public library service in Botswana) and it could be replicated as a model, even in its present uncertain state. That uncertain state has changed since 1988. The work of the MLP is due to be replicated in 1993. The eight schools who have participated so far will now be part of a support network, while the project workers will focus on eight new schools. The costs per pupil have actually decreased since 1988 (from R50 per pupil to R13) as the project has expanded to cover all primary pupils (from SSA to standard 2) in the 8 participating projects.

But the sad, hard truth of the matter is that in financial terms the MLP is unlikely to ever be self-sufficient. Parents simply could not afford to pay the running costs of the project, although, in 1992, Mrs. Ntsele conducted a survey of parents and found that they would be willing to contribute up to R1 per child per annum, an indication of the perceived value of the project at local levels. An important strategy in this regard will be greater financial support from the KDEC. Project teachers, and the MLP staff, have indicated a determination to approach the Circuit Inspector, and Ulundi if necessary, to secure some financial support from the KDEC. Whether successful or not, this challenge has unified the teachers and galvanised them to stand up to distant (and nameless) authorities for an innovation which seems, to them, to be worthwhile. This, surely, is what rural empowerment is all about. How ironic it would be if the MLP joined the project graveyard.

Ukulola icelemba wakho or "Sharpen your axe".

In informal discussions with one of the project workers the MLP was likened to the act of sharpening one's axe before beginning to cut wood.[22] If you do not sharpen your axe first the amount of wood which you gather will be considerably less than if you do. The speaker emphasised the fact that the MLP is not a dramatic instant-change project. It is, he said, a project which concentrates on doing solid background work as a foundation for more

innovative things later. I interpret this, and the teachers' plan of action with the KDEC, to be a case of what Mackenzie and Taylor (1992:2) quoting Molyneux (1985) call strategic significance. The authors differentiate between community actions which could be regarded as simple coping mechanisms in that they meet the practical needs of everyday life and strategic actions which challenge social structure through a reconstruction of class, gender or power relations.

An important part of the strategy is the fact that the MLP teachers are being supported, not by external education experts, but by committed parents who, it must be noted, have their own motivation for working in the project. For Mr. Qwabe and Mrs. Ntsele the MLP offers them the rare opportunity of staying in their own area (as opposed to joining the corps of migrant labourers) and taking responsibility, with teachers, for the education of their children. This aspect of the project is a highly unusual one. The MLP staff constitute a vital means of communication (using the vehicle) and support (using the project materials and activities) for teachers. It must be remembered that the present project team took over the MLP by default. They have strengthened their positions - in spite of lack of formal qualifications - with the teachers, the funders and READ. This illustrates how members in a rural communities can draw on their own resources and gain access to resources ostensibly controlled by others. In so doing the whole MLP has shifted and evolved. It is this shift which necessitates a discussion of READ, in its role as supporting NGO of the project.

Relationship with READ

On the positive side, READ materials and training are excellent. the fact that the two project workers have been able to achieve so much with only READ training behind them testifies to this. However, the history of the MLP and READ partnership has been a stormy one. Lund and Nkabinde (1988:25) commented:

There is a vast distance between READ and the project area, and we do not mean only a physical distance. READ has an organisational culture which sets it apart from many other change organisations even in cities: it is urban, it is sophisticated and sharp, it is businesslike. It is committed to effectiveness and to changing things fast.

To a large extent READ was brought in at the funder's request, without really having the opportunity to decide for itself whether it was fundamentally prepared to work in such an extremely impoverished area. Annual reports since the project's inception indicate the ambivalence with which READ regards the MLP. Although always mentioned in the Natal section it is not placed in the 'rural project' category. READ's rural project, where materials, books and training are tested on farm schools, is located within comfortable driving distance from Pietermaritzburg (READ Annual Report, 1991: 24). This 'rural' project began after the MLP was already operational and seems to indicate a differentiation in rural terms between easily accessible rural and rural which is too rural altogether! This notions of degrees of 'ruralness' seems to fit in with the urban-rural continuum theory already discussed in Chapter One. Ownership too appears to be a two-way street in this kind of demanding project and, perhaps because of the way in which it was initially involved, READ has never indicated a sense of partnership with the MLP. I would suggest that this aspect relates to the difference between steering and support of an initiative. The distance between READ Natal and the MLP meant that both had to change expectations. In the first five years of the MLP the steering and support components were both external. By 1992 the project workers and teachers are steering the project and articulating the kind of support required themselves.

READ is an organisation with a strong urban bias. As Lund and Nkabinde indicated above, READ is highly centralised, sophisticated and high-profile. The MLP is slow-moving, beyond the reach of efficient communication technology and far removed from even the READ rural materials centre! The comments by one of the former coordinators are enlightening in

this regard:

> READ is not geared to operate in a rural setting like Kosi Bay. It is highly centralised which does not allow it to participate in any (local) people-oriented decision based setting. It is not structured to 'work itself out of the job' and READ staff members are not geared to work and stay for extended period in rural areas.[23]

The viewpoint of READ Natal, in Lund and Nkabinde (1988), is that while they value the MLP it makes disproportionate demands on staff and does not come up with new ideas of its own. In the seven years of the relationship many lessons have been learned. I would agree with Ngubane that READ is not geared for such work. It is a great pity that the opportunity to use the MLP as a centre for rural materials development has been missed. However, the isolation of the MLP, though frustrating for the staff, may prove to have been the fillip for the project to take on its own identity, quite different from any other READ project.

Recommendations

Future contact between READ and the MLP should be renegotiated, giving READ the chance to do what they do well (materials and training) and allowing the MLP team of project workers and teachers to strengthen the network of project schools and begin to develop materials of their own. Financial control has remained with READ, an initial requirement of the funder. This has created a lot of extra work for READ (made more time-consuming by the distance between the two) and has meant that the MLP project workers and teachers cannot make informed decisions about new directions for the MLP (such as local materials development). Star of the Sea High School personnel could be approached to help with the financial administration of the project by training the MLP staff to budget, balance books and handle their own affairs. The KwaZulu DEC has benefited from the work of the MLP and READ for

a long time. It is now timely that this should be recognised and financial support from the KDEC (particularly salaries for the project staff) should be forthcoming. READ Natal has generously indicated a willingness to help raise funds for book stock. Raising the costs of running the vehicle is a task for the project teachers and staff to learn about taking some of the responsibility for the project themselves. The R4000 which parents are willing to contribute will certainly help. The present funder may be willing, in the short term, to contribute to any of the above-mentioned areas should a temporary shortfall be experienced.

Serendipity and determination have played major roles in the MLP. Time has allowed significant metamorphoses to develop and for the important processes behind the project, those of empowerment, participation and ownership, to take shape and direction. No longer so isolated MLP teachers have learnt that by supporting each other, within and between schools, they themselves constitute a vital resource. Acknowledging the sense of urgency which surrounds education in South Africa it must be emphasised that change is a social process "not an event or a delivery date" (Fullan:1982).

The Mobile Library Project is, I believe, a significant part of that overall social process. If a project can work in KwaNgwanase, among the poorest of the poor, there is a good chance it will work in other rural areas. It has taken seven long years for the MLP to strengthen and develop. I believe that time has been well spent for pupils, and above all, for teachers. It may take time to sharpen an axe, but that time makes a real difference if the firewood is to burn all night.

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22.   Ambrose Qwabe, informal interview, 18 October, 1992.

23.   Japhet Ngubane, MLP correspondence, November 1990.

APPENDIX 1.

GENESIS/READ MOBILE LIBRARY QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. We hope that this research will enable us to learn more about both the benefits and the problems of the Library Project. If you do not understand any question please ask Mrs Ntsele to help you. Be as honest as you can in your responses. Kindly circle the answer which applies to you.

QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS COLUMN.

1. GENDER (SEX)

MALE	FEMALE

2. AGE GROUP

20-25	41-45
26-30	46-50
31-35	51-55
36-40	56+

3. WHAT IS YOUR FIRST LANGUAGE?

ZULU	THONGA/TSONGA	XHOSA	ENGLISH

Other:.....................

4. RANK:

PRIVATELY PAID TEACHER (PPT)
ASSISTANT TEACHER
VICE-PRINCIPAL
PRINCIPAL

5. WHAT KIND OF SCHOOL DO YOU TEACH IN?

LOWER PRIMARY
HIGHER PRIMARY
COMBINED PRIMARY

6. WHAT IS THE TOTAL ENROLMENT AT YOUR SCHOOL FOR 1992?

   ....PUPILS

7. ON AVERAGE, HOW MANY PUPILS ARE IN ONE CLASSROOM AT ONE
   TIME (TEACHER:PUPIL RATIO) ?

Less than 20	41-50	71-80	101-110
21-30	51-60	81-90	111-120
31-40	61-70	91-100	121+

8. WHERE DID YOU DO YOUR SCHOOLING (WHAT CIRCUIT)?

   ....

9. WHAT ARE YOUR QUALIFICATIONS? Please put a tick in
   the box beside each item which applies:

STANDARD 6			STC	
STANDARD 8			PTD	
MATRIC			STD	
PTC			DEGREE	

10. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING (HOW MANY YEARS)?

1 YEAR OR LESS			6-10 YEARS	
2-3 YEARS			11-15 YEARS	
4-5 YEARS			16+ YEARS	

11. WHAT STANDARDS DO YOU TEACH?

SSA			STD 3	
SSB			STD 4	
STD 1			STD 5	
STD 2				

12. WHEN DID YOUR SCHOOL FIRST JOIN THE LIBRARY PROJECT?
    Circle the year which applies:

1986	1988	1990	1992
1987	1989	1991	

13. WHEN DID YOU PERSONALLY FIRST BECOME INVOLVED IN THE LIBRARY PROJECT? Circle the year which applies to you:

1986	1988	1990	1992
1987	1989	1991	

14. IN WHAT WAYS HAS THE LIBRARY PROJECT HELPED YOUR TEACHING? Tick the items which apply and add other ways if necessary:

By providing us with books	
By improving my English	
It helps with other subjects	
By increasing my vocabulary	
By making teaching easier	
OTHER:........................	

15. IN WHAT OTHER WAYS COULD THE LIBRARY PROJECT HELP YOU?

By getting more information from the text books	
By explaining new words	
By giving new skills to introduce a lesson	
By increasing my knowledge	
By providing more books	
By visiting us more often	
OTHER:...................................	

16. HOW HAS THE LIBRARY PROJECT HELPED YOUR PUPILS?

By learning to use books on their own	
By getting new vocabulary	
By getting knowledge out of their experience	
By improving pronunciation	
By reading fluently and confidently	
By helping them to communicate with others	
By enjoying stories and drama	
OTHER:	

17. IN WHAT OTHER WAYS COULD THE LIBRARY PROJECT HELP
    YOUR PUPILS?

By supplying us with more books	
By giving us book boxes for each class	
By designing proper libraries	
By ensuring teachers have library periods	
OTHER:....................................	

18. WHAT PROBLEMS HAVE YOU HAD WITH THE LIBRARY PROJECT?

Too many pupils in one class at one time	
No library periods in the timetable	
Some teachers are not involved	
Teachers do not know enough about libraries	
OTHER:....................................	

19. WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO THE LIBRARY ADVISERS?

Continue visiting our school	
Plan workshops for new teachers	
Visit all classes at school	
Reward the best/most improved readers	
OTHER:....................................	

20. DO YOU THINK THE LIBRARY PROJECT:

Helps you with the whole syllabus	YES	NO
Stops you from finishing the syllabus	YES	NO

21. PLEASE TELL US WHICH ASPECTS OF THE LIBRARY PROJECT
     WHICH YOU CONSIDER ARE MOST VALUABLE. Put a number
     1 in the box beside the item you regard as MOST
     valuable, then number 2 beside the next valuable
     item etc.

                                          WRITE NUMBERS
                                               HERE

Book supplies	
Drama in class	
Drawing/painting in class	
Competitions	
Involvement of all teachers in the school	
Library training for teachers	
Meetings	
Workshops for teachers	
School visits by the library advisers	
Story-packs	
Story-reading/story-telling activities	
Teaching aids	
The vehicle	
OTHER:....................................	

22. WHAT IS THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF YOUR SCHOOL?

     ....
     ....
     ....
     ....
     ....
     ....

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.   I LOOK FORWARD TO
SEEING YOU ALL AGAIN SOON!

CECILY SALMON

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