

REDRESSING SCHOOL INEQUALITIES IN THE EASTERN CAPE, SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Education is a critical element in post-apartheid restructuring. In 1994 the ANC-led government inherited a racially divided and discriminatory education system to which the National Party had, in its early 1990s reforms, added elements of a market-driven system. National policies since 1994 have been rich in the political symbolism of equity and redress, but in practice characterised by acceptance of commodification and choice and very limited implementation of change on the ground.

This paper explores these themes using fieldwork carried out in the Eastern Cape. Provincial information is based on documentation and data supplied by the Provincial Education Department and the Examinations Centre, supplemented by interviews. Detailed research was carried out in and around Grahamstown, visiting fifteen schools ranging from exclusive private schools to those in townships, informal settlements and rural areas. Desegregation and redistribution are explored in relation to parental incomes, fees and school feeder areas; parental choice of schools and involvement in governing bodies; learner:teacher ratios and teacher redeployment; resource constraints, buildings and facilities, books and materials; relationships between schools and provincial authorities; examination results; and relations between resource-rich and resource-poor schools.

Provincial funding levels cover little beyond the salaries of approved numbers of teachers, leaving most other expenditure dependent on fee income and funds raised by other means. Class rather than race is now the main determinant of educational opportunity. For the poor majority the system offers neither equality of opportunity nor significant redress to compensate for the injustices of apartheid education. Some directions for changing policy and practice are suggested.

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Introduction*

Edgar Brookes, a prominent white South African liberal, memorably described apartheid education as 'the only education system in the world designed to restrict the productivity of its pupils in the national economy to lowly and subservient tasks, to render them non-competitive in that economy, to fix them mentally in a tribal world'.¹ Notwithstanding late-apartheid reforms, education remains a critical element of post-apartheid restructuring in South Africa, albeit a sector in which improvements will inevitably take time to bear fruit.

In 1994 the African National Congress (ANC)-led government of national unity inherited a racially divided and highly discriminatory education system described by Nelson Mandela (1990) as 'a crime against humanity'. Apartheid reforms in the 1980s led to major increases in expenditure on African education, and also, through funding of so-called 'own affairs' under the 1984 constitution, in educational spending on coloured and Indian South Africans.² The average white pupil nevertheless benefited from educational expenditure nearly four times as great as the average African pupil in 1994. Elements of a market-driven system were introduced in historically white schools in the early 1990s, ceding control to governing bodies of 'model C' schools to which the physical assets (and maintenance costs) were transferred, leading to the admission of small numbers of black pupils but at fee levels affordable only by middle-class parents. Nothing was done at that stage to address either the accumulated inequality of generations of unequal funding or the demand from black groups for a unitary education system for all South Africans.

A comprehensive survey of needs in the country's 28,000 schools revealed not only deep inequality but also the conditions of deprivation and extreme neglect in which the great majority of children continue to be educated.³ Education as a whole received over 20 per cent of all budgetary expenditure in the closing years of apartheid, a proportion which could not realistically be expected to rise significantly.⁴ Redistribution within the new, unitary system is therefore critical to attempts to implement the principles of equity and redress which were first enunciated by the reports of the independent National Education

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¹ E. H. Brookes, *Apartheid: a Documentary Study of Modern South Africa* (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 57.

² This paper uses the terms 'African', 'white', 'coloured' and 'Indian' in accordance with common South African usage. This does not imply approval of the policies with which they were associated, but acceptance that they remain, unavoidably, categories for analysis in South African society, and are indeed used as such by the present government. The term 'black' is used to refer collectively to Africans, coloured people and Indians.

³ South Africa, *School Register of Needs Survey* (Pretoria, Department of Education, 1997).

⁴ A. Lemon, 'Educational Desegregation' in J. Brewer, (ed), *Restructuring South Africa* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1994, pp. 100-101).

Policy Investigation in 1990-92⁵ and have been central to policy implementation since 1994. Initially the ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme did infuse significant new money into education, but since the introduction of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR) in 1996, the macroeconomic environment has inhibited the kinds of redistributive educational policies which the government still claims to promote.⁶

In the absence of fiscal capacity to enact new policy, Jansen argues that the state has no alternative to 'playing up the symbolic value of policy'.⁷ In these circumstances, he argues, 'the making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism to mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society. We search in vain for a logic in policy-making connected to any serious intention to change the practice of education "on the ground"'.⁸ It is not the intention of this paper to focus on the policy-making process or to critique national education policies, topics that have received a great deal of attention already.⁹ Rather attention is focused firmly on the realities of the situation in schools themselves, bearing in mind the observation of Chisholm and Fuller that 'the effectiveness of local schools will not magically increase if the policy agenda remains centred on symbols of opportunity'.¹⁰ Particular attention will be paid to geographical issues, in the recognition that apartheid, as an inherently spatial policy framework, created a very distinctive geography whose restructuring poses equally geographical challenges.¹¹

The next section of the paper focuses on national policies concerning the funding of schools and those elements of South Africa's quasi-federal system which influence the delivery of education. The focus then shifts to the Eastern Cape Province, beginning with a short description of key features of the geographical context in which the province seeks to apply national education policies. Problems and policies for educational delivery in the province are then addressed, drawing on extended discussions with the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECED) and the District Manager for the Grahamstown District. Two key indicators of the apartheid educational inheritance are then briefly considered. The final part of this section investigates the geography of examination

⁵ A. Donaldson, 'Reconstructing Education: Reflections on Post-Apartheid Planning, Systems and Structure' in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001, pp. 62-72).

⁶ J. D. Jansen, 'Explaining Non-change in Educational Reform after Apartheid: Political Symbolism and the Problem of Policy Implementation' in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001), p. 280.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.281.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.272.

⁹ See, for example, W. Morrow and K. King (eds), *Vision and Reality: Changing Education and Training in South Africa* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2000); T. Mda and S. Mothata (eds), *Critical Issues in South African Education – after 1994* (Kenwyn, South Africa, 2000); Y. Sayed and J. Jensen (eds), *Implementing Education policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001).

¹⁰ L. Chisholm and B. Fuller, 'Remember People's Education? Shifting Alliances, State-building and South Africa's Narrowing Policy Agenda', *Journal of Education Policy*, 11, p. 714.

¹¹ A. Lemon, 'Shifting Inequalities in South Africa's Schools: Some Evidence from the Western Cape', *South African Geographical Journal* 81, pp. 96-105.

performance, using raw data supplied by the provincial examinations centre in King William's Town and mapped on the basis of school districts for the years 1999 and 2001.

Research in specific schools is reported in the next and most substantial part of the paper. It was decided to focus on the secondary sector because of the opportunity to study schools still very much in post-apartheid transition: many students in these schools, especially in the older age cohorts, had experienced racially segregated primary education, perhaps with limited desegregation of white schools in the closing years of apartheid. The secondary sector also enables ready comparison of outcomes in terms of examination performance. Research on the primary sector is equally crucial, given its formative influence both academically and socially and hence its critical impact on the life chances of the poor.

The location chosen was the Grahamstown District, one of four districts in the ECED's Western Region.¹² The District Manager, Mr. Mgolodela, offered helpful advice in choosing a representative range of schools. The fifteen schools visited include private schools, former model C (white) schools, a former coloured school, African township schools in Grahamstown itself and the small coastal town of Port Alfred, and rural schools in Bathurst and Riebeeck East. The discussion continues with an analysis of the most important evidence emerging from the survey. The paper concludes by making some practical suggestions for more effective progress in widening opportunities for those currently disadvantaged so as to bring the delivery of education closer to realising the goals of equity and redress.

National Education Policies

Whilst South Africa retains a small but significant private school sector, the vast majority of schools administered by the various apartheid education departments have been recast as public schools with school-based governance structures and a financing system increasingly orientated towards site-based management.¹³ Personnel costs are publicly funded according to a standard formula based on learner:teacher ratios (LTRs). Disbursement of public funding for non-personnel costs is based on criteria that attempt to redress inequalities in existing levels of infrastructure and in relation to the economic capacity of the parent community. Critically, the South African Schools Act of 1996 enables schools to set user fees at a level acceptable to the school's parent community and encourages governing bodies to supplement public funding through school-based funding initiatives. Notions of equity and public right are thus reduced to basic provision rather than to comparability of quality across the whole system.

¹² Regional offices have since been abolished, and District Directors appointed for each district to carry out the functions of the former regions at district level.

¹³ C. Soudien, H. Jacklin and U. Hoadley, 'Policy Values: Problematising Equity and Redress in Education', in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001), pp. 78-91.

Legally, no child can be excluded from a state school because his or her parents are unable to pay the fees. Parents qualify for a reduction if the household income is less than thirty times the annual fee. Sayed criticises the assumption of middle-class benevolence as naïve: most parents do not want to ‘subsidise’ children of poorer families, and schools themselves are inclined to minimise the number of families paying reduced or no fees.¹⁴ They do this by delineating geographical feeder areas to the school and otherwise controlling the admissions process. Whilst there is an obligation to admit children for whom the school is the closest to their home, the widening of the school’s feeder area tends to increase the number of applicants from whom it can choose. Language or other admissions tests are prohibited in terms of the Schools Act, but the onus for determining who is exempt from fees is placed on governing bodies and the absence of any monitoring system permits schools to ‘screen out’ those who are unable to pay. Some schools require proof of living in an area such as electricity bills or rent statements, which can exclude children of domestic workers or sub-tenants. Insistence on dealing with biological parents may also exclude many African children who are cared for by grandparents or other relatives.¹⁵

The playing field from which schools start in the competition for the most ‘desirable’ learners is not remotely level: schools bring to the process reputations based on previous performance, facilities and staffs inherited from the apartheid period, and their geographical location. Parents naturally seek access for their children to what they consider to be the best schools they can afford within the bounds of cost and geographical distance. The outcome is described by Soudien et al. as ‘the commodification of provision’ in which ‘consumer choice thus eclipses social redress and reconstruction’.¹⁶

The Role of the Provinces

South Africa’s post-apartheid constitutional dispensation devolves considerable responsibilities to the nine provinces created in 1994, of which the Eastern Cape is one. In education, policy development and co-ordination remain central government responsibilities, but the management and financing of school education is devolved to the provinces. This has led to a situation where central policy aspirations come into conflict with the administrative and resource constraints of provincial governments, with many ‘unfunded mandates’ – policy commitments embedded in national legislation that provinces lack the financial or human capacity to implement – such as the reduction of learner:teacher ratios without any concurrent increase in resources to pay teachers’ salaries.¹⁷ The central government is often unable to

¹⁴ Y. Sayed, ‘Post-apartheid Educational Transformation: Policy Concerns and Approaches’ in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001), pp. 250-270.

¹⁵ T. Mda, ‘Integrated Schooling’, in T. Mda and S. Mothata (eds), *Critical Issues in South African Education – after 1994* (Kenwyn, South Africa, 2000), pp. 43-61.

¹⁶ C. Soudien, H. Jacklin and U. Hoadley, ‘Policy Values: Problematising Equity and Redress in Education’, in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town press, 2001), p. 84.

¹⁷ South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), *South Africa Survey 1997-1998* (Johannesburg, SAIRR), p.486.

change the speed and direction of policy implementation in the provinces, since this would require stepping over the fine line between national powers and provincial competences.

The problem of administrative capacity is partly derived from the apartheid inheritance and the nature of administrative restructuring after 1994. Devolution of functions and staff from the centre to the new provincial governments would in itself not have been unproblematic, but in South Africa the situation was complicated by the existence of both the 'own affairs' structures of the tricameral parliament and the ten former black 'homelands', four of which were supposedly independent states and the other six self-governing in many respects, including education. The Eastern Cape has a particularly complicated inheritance, as its new provincial administration was faced with taking over functions and staff from all the following units of apartheid government: the Cape Province (white education), the Department of Education and Training (African education outside the homelands), Ciskei and Transkei (both formerly 'independent' homelands: Figure 1), the House of Representatives and the House of Delegates (coloured and Indian education respectively, responsible for 7 per cent and less than 1 per cent respectively of the Eastern Cape population). This complex administrative restructuring was not helped by the low calibre of some of the staff involved, especially in the former homelands.

In 1997 the director general of public service and administration published a report on provincial governance which revealed that three provinces – the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and the Northern Province – were on the verge of collapse. The national government threatened to impose section 100 of the constitution, which gives it power to take over devolved functions from a province if these are not being carried out competently. In the event the Eastern Cape was rescued with a one-off grant, subject to the implementation of mechanisms to improve financial control and management. The problems identified included grossly inadequate financial, information and human resource management systems, chronic shortages of skilled staff, a lack of discipline and the prevalence of fraud and theft in many departments.¹⁸ National departments were asked to formulate proposals to assist their provincial counterparts in overcoming these problems. In budgetary terms provincial education departments have typically experienced 'a full cycle of expansion, over-expenditure, curtailment and restoration of fiscal balance', leading to organisational disarray, poor services and depressed morale.¹⁹

Schools have, as a result, suffered setbacks in personnel management, curriculum reform, the construction and maintenance of buildings and the provision of learning materials. One episode will serve to illustrate the uncertain environment in which schools have to function. In late 1999 the Eastern Cape Education Department (ECED) was given an additional R200m. emergency payment by the central government, but early in 2000 the provincial MEC (Minister) of education said that his department would exceed its 2000

¹⁸ Ibid, p.484.

¹⁹ A. Donaldson, 'Reconstructing Education: Reflections on Post-Apartheid Planning, Systems and Structure' in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen, *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press,2001), p. 71.

budget by at least R600m. He said this to explain his announcement of the closure of the province's farm schools only a few days after he had promised the Human Rights Commission that he would provide these impoverished schools with a R14m. subsidy.²⁰

Teacher allocation and redeployment is an important provincial responsibility which is critical to the achievement of greater equity in the school system. Each province has its own formula for calculating the quota of teachers to which each school is entitled, and teachers above that quota are placed on a redeployment list. In the Eastern Cape, learners in grades 1-3 are weighted above 1, those in grades 4-7 at 1, and learners in grades 8-12 according to subject. The formula is then based on the school's share of all weighted learners in the province multiplied by the number of available posts in the province. Schools with excess teachers may decide which teachers should be placed on the redeployment register. This offers some opportunity for manipulation, as schools may designate teachers who offer subjects unlikely to be in demand at deficit schools.

In August 2000 the Eastern Cape had 68,863 'educator posts', of which 3,161 were vacant. The 10,289 teachers initially declared in excess represented a higher proportion of the teaching force than in any other province apart from the North West Province, thus the redeployment challenge was formidable. By August 2000 7,730 (75 per cent) had been redeployed and 2,559 (25 per cent) remained on the redeployment register (ECED 2000). Initially teachers in excess were expected to apply for other posts, but not all of them did so. Now that the province has reached what it regards as the 'mopping up' stage of the redeployment process, excess teachers no longer have a choice: they are matched to suitable vacancies and receive 'placement letters' informing them of their allocation to these posts. Some resign rather than move, others appeal on grounds of marriage, health or other reasons. In some cases their school governing bodies re-appoint them and pay their salaries out of school funds.

The Eastern Cape: a Poor Province

With a population of 6.8m. in 2000, the Eastern Cape had 15.4 per cent of South Africa's population, but its share of the country's GDP was only 7.2 per cent. Its per capita GDP was less than half the national average, lower than all other provinces apart from the Northern Province.²¹ The province's 'equitable share' of nationally raised revenue, based on a formula which takes into account such factors as the magnitude of the province's infrastructural backlog and number of schoolchildren, was 17.5 per cent.²² This matches its share of enrolled school learners, which was 17.95 per cent in 2000,²³ but any allowance

²⁰ P. Dickson, '700 E Cape farm schools to close', *The Teacher*, 18 February 2000.

²¹ SAIRR, *Fast Facts* No.6 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2002).

Accessed at <http://www.sairr.org.za/members/pub/ff/200206/province/profile/htm>

²² SAIRR, *South Africa Survey 2000/2001* (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2001), p. 530.

²³ SAIRR, *Fast Facts* No. 6 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2002).

for the massive backlog in educational infrastructure must presumably have been cancelled out by other factors in the funding formula.

The poverty of the Eastern Cape is clearly linked statistically to the low proportion of whites in the population (5.6 per cent), just under half the national average (11.6 per cent) in 2001.²⁴ Only the Northern Province had a lower proportion of whites. The relatively low level of urbanisation – 42.9 per cent compared with a national average of 56.1 per cent in 2000²⁵ – is also significant, given the extent of rural:urban inequality in South Africa as a whole. Unemployment, a major cause of poverty, is above the national average: 32.0 per cent (strict rate) and 48.4 per cent (expanded rate) in the Eastern Cape in 2001, compared with 29.5 per cent and 41.5 per cent respectively for South Africa as a whole.²⁶ The widening of the gap in the case of the expanded rate suggests that many of the unemployed have ceased to look for work, probably because they see no prospect of finding it.

Among many educational indicators that might be cited, the proportion of underqualified teachers (26 per cent) was above the national average of 22 per cent in 2000;²⁷ the LTR of 35.7 in 1999 compared with an average of 32.7²⁸ and the computer:learner ratio of 1:558 was less than half the national average of 1:254 in 1996.²⁹ Examination results in the Eastern Cape were well below the national average in 2001: 46 per cent passed Senior Certificate (school leaving) examinations, compared with 62 per cent nationally, and only 7 per cent qualified for matriculation exemption (university entrance), the lowest figure in South Africa and less than half the national average of 15 per cent.³⁰ This gap between provincial and national performance has widened markedly since the late 1990s.

Spatial Patterns of Educational Provision and Outcomes in the Eastern Cape

Data on examination performance in 1999, 2000 and 2001 were obtained from the provincial Examination Department. The latter consisted of lists of all schools in the province in descending order of performance on a spreadsheet, but re-arrangement of the schools into their respective school districts made it possible to calculate district performance in the Senior Certificate examination and Matriculation Exemption. These data have been mapped for 1999 and 2001.

LTRs in 1991 (Figure 2) illustrate clearly the more favoured status of whites and coloureds in the former Coloured Labour Preference Area (CLPA) (Figure 1). This was an area which covered all the present

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ SAIRR, *Fast Facts* No. 8 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2002).

²⁶ Both definitions include those who are economically active (aged 15-64 and available for work) and who have not worked in the seven days prior to interview. The strict definition excludes those in this number who have not looked for self-employment opportunities in the four weeks prior to interview.

²⁷ SAIRR, *Fast Facts* No. 8 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2002).

²⁸ SAIRR, *South Africa Survey 2000/2001* (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2001), p.282.

²⁹ SAIRR, *Fast Facts* No.6, (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 2002).

³⁰ Ibid.

Western Cape province as well as smaller parts of the Eastern and Northern Cape, in which the predominance of coloured people led the previous government to give preference to coloureds over Africans in employment, in an attempt to minimise African immigration and maintain the coloured and white character of the region. In the Willowmore District, for example, there were a mere 35 African pupils, and in the neighbouring Aberdeen and Jansenville Districts 257 and 765 respectively.³¹ Of those districts with an average of more than 47 learners per teacher, 14 out of 17 fall within the former Transkei homeland but none are within the former boundaries of Ciskei. This may reflect the major contrast in functional urbanisation levels between the two homelands: 11.7 per cent in Transkei in 1989 and 84.7 per cent in Ciskei, which includes East London's huge satellite township of Mdantsane.³² In the province as a whole, urban areas have average rather than exceptionally good teacher provision. This probably reflects the increased ratio of Africans to whites among younger age groups – the pupils on which the LTR is based, together with the impact of African urbanisation which leaves many older people behind in rural areas.

The two maps of examination results across the province reveal a striking east-west contrast (Figures 3 and 4). They are based on school districts, which in the more sparsely populated west of the province tend to be much larger in area than the Magisterial Districts in Figure 2, but the 50 per cent pass rate in the Senior Certificate is clearly confined to seven districts comprising the western part of the province together with the city of East London in 1999 (Figure 3). The two most successful school districts, Humansdorp and Graaff Reinet, correspond closely to the former CLPA. Areas with pass rates of below 40 per cent coincide equally closely with Ciskei and Transkei, with the former Transkeian capital, Umtata, the single island of slightly greater success. Six districts have average pass rates below 25 per cent, all of them in Transkei.

Levels of matriculation exemption show similar patterns of variation. In Transkei only Umtata (17.9) and Butterworth (10.5), the main industrial growth point, managed rates of over 10 per cent in 1999; no district in Ciskei achieved this. Most areas outside the former homelands had matriculation exemption rates of over 15 per cent, rising to 28.1 per cent in Port Elizabeth West and 37.8 per cent further west in Humansdorp.

Comparison of Figures 3 and 4 requires awareness of overall variation between 1999 and 2001. There was a significant increase in the Senior Certificate pass rate in South Africa from 49 per cent in 1999 to 62 per cent in 2001. In the Eastern Cape, however, the improvement was much less impressive: from 40 per cent in 1999 to 46 per cent in 2001. Likewise the Eastern Cape failed to participate in the national improvement in the rate of matriculation exemption, from 12 to 15 per cent; the Eastern Cape figure

³¹ C. Taylor, 'Education', in B. M. O'Leary, V. Govind, C. A. Scwabe and J. M. Taylor (eds), *Service Needs and provision in the Eastern Cape* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1998), pp. 45-50.

³² Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA), *SATVBC Countries: Statistical Abstracts 1989* (Halfway House, DBSA, 1990).

remained unchanged at 7 per cent. Allowing for the improved overall Senior Certificate pass rate, the geographical variations in Figure 4 repeat the broad pattern of 1999, as would be expected only two years later. Analysis of the raw data reveals, however, that regional inequalities may have widened slightly. Of 24 school districts falling within the former Transkei, one-third experienced a decrease in their Senior Certificate pass rate, compared with only two districts out of thirteen in non-homeland areas. Only one district out of five, had a lower pass rate in the former Ciskei, but this district, Mdantsane, was by far the largest in terms of population. This widening inequality is even more marked in terms of matriculation exemptions, with 21 districts out of 24 in the former Transkei achieving worse results in 2001. Thus not only is the Eastern Cape falling further behind the national average, but within the province the poorest areas appear to be making least progress.

The region chosen for fieldwork, the Grahamstown District, is not one of the poorest areas, and it is important to bear this in mind in relation to the resources, conditions and examination results of the African schools visited. It falls within former 'white' South Africa and includes no former homeland or CLPA areas. It did, however, offer the opportunity to visit a wide range of schools including wealthy private sector schools, English- and Afrikaans-medium formerly white, ex-model C state schools, a formerly coloured school, African township schools and rural schools including one where the coloured/African divide had been blurred even in the apartheid years.

Grahamstown: Profile of a Small Apartheid City

The city of Grahamstown, the location of eleven of the schools visited, lies some 80 miles north-east of Port Elizabeth. It was bisected by the national road to East London until the apartheid authorities decided to build an expensive by-pass to avoid the African townships during a politically turbulent period in the 1980s. The Settlers' Monument, a massive hilltop memorial to the 5,000 British settlers of 1820-21, embodies Grahamstown's claim to be the capital of 'settler country' in the Eastern Cape. The Anglican Cathedral and English-medium Rhodes University, at opposite ends of the High Street, symbolise both the 'Englishness' of Grahamstown and its function as an educational and cultural centre, relying heavily on its university and schools for employment.

Grahamstown's physical location in a basin, and its relatively small size, make it possible to view the whole city at once from the Settlers' Monument. Unusually for an apartheid city, the African townships were and are a prominent feature of the landscape visible from many white parts of the city. Distances within Grahamstown are small, and thus a much less significant obstacle to school desegregation than in larger cities. The apartheid legacy could hardly be plainer. Former all-white suburbs in the west are well treed and relatively spacious. The major schools, several with extensive boarding facilities, are prominent features in the landscape. A small Indian area can be identified by the prominence of its modern Hindu mandir. The coloured area forms a transitional belt before the African townships are reached. Much of the

open land which formed a 'buffer strip' in apartheid days – criss-crossed with the paths trodden by Africans walking to shops and jobs in the white town – is now covered with African people's homes. Beyond the older townships – the Fingo Village, Tanti, Makana's Kop – more recent formal and informal African housing stretches for two or three miles up the eastern slopes: a dense mass of buildings and shacks with few trees or open spaces, but a few schools, a sports stadium, small churches and the towering floodlights which provide economic if intrusive street lighting in most of South Africa's African urban areas. This part of the town is obviously poor, though with islands of relative affluence and some signs of improving infrastructure including electricity, more tarred roads and telephones.

Despite Grahamstown's limited employment base, large numbers of Africans have been moving there since the 1990s either to escape the rural poverty of much of the former Ciskei homeland or when forced to leave commercial farms as they shed labour. The latter process has accelerated since 1994 as farmers anticipated new laws giving Africans greater rights to stay on white farms by evicting many of them while they could legally do so.³³ The city's population was recorded as 62,640 in the 1996 census, but five years later the real figure was estimated to be about 100,000, including some 15,000 whites, a few thousand coloureds and 300 Indians.³⁴ The result of this growth, in the absence of significant economic growth, is an estimated unemployment rate of 60-70 per cent. Survival, for many families, depends upon old age pensions (often supporting younger members of the family as well as their recipients) and informal employment.

This experience of population growth without parallel economic growth, with ensuing unemployment and widespread poverty, is common to many small and medium-sized towns in the Eastern Cape. Rapid growth of the school-age population is a challenge to the ECED, while the poverty of most Africans in both urban and rural areas severely limits any parental contribution to school costs.

Private Schools in Grahamstown

It was important to include private schools in this study, given their prominence in Grahamstown and their disproportionate share of educational resources in the city and region. Kingswood, St. Andrew's and the Diocesan School for Girls (DSG) had only 1,400 pupils between them, and only 1,000 at the secondary level (grades 8-12) which is the focus of this paper (Table 1). Numerically, therefore, they jointly equate to just one of the larger township schools. Most pupils board – two-thirds of seniors at Kingswood, 85 per cent at St. Andrew's and 80 per cent at DSG. Significant numbers come from outside South Africa: over 15 per cent at Kingswood, and about 10 per cent at St. Andrew's and DSG. Kingswood draws particularly from Botswana, and to a lesser extent Zambia and Lesotho, in all of which the school actively markets itself. Currency restrictions have made it impossible for most Zimbabweans to

³³ S. Greenberg, 'Agrarian Reform in Perspective', *Land Update*, 60 (July 1997), pp. 6-9.

³⁴ These very crude estimates were the best that the Town Clerk could provide.

afford the fees since the 1970s. One-third of the school's South African students come from outside the Eastern Cape, principally Gauteng and the Free State. St. Andrew's and DSG have small numbers of pupils from many countries in southern and eastern Africa, Europe, Hong Kong, Australia and elsewhere. Often these are children of company executives who move around, and want their children's education to be anchored in one place.

These schools no longer receive any state subsidies and fee levels exclude all but the most affluent, with the consequence that the racial composition of all three schools is dominantly white (Table 1), although as private schools with a relatively 'liberal' tradition they have been admitting pupils of other races since this became legally possible in 1972. Kingswood commented on increasing difficulties of recruitment in the face of a white emigration process that is selective of those with money and skills. Grahamstown's image as a relatively safe place helps competition within a shrinking pool of affluent whites, but the black upper middle class is small in the Eastern Cape. St. Andrew's sometimes has a waiting list, but seldom a large one. DSG had a waiting list at all grades except one, perhaps because of its small size and because it is the only girls' private school in the area. Even for those parents who can afford it, the high quality of Grahamstown's former white state schools, which also offer boarding facilities, offers a vastly cheaper alternative (see below). What, then, are parents buying at private schools?

Academic results are predictably excellent – 100 per cent is the norm in the Senior Certificate and almost all pupils also gain matriculation exemption – but this is not significantly different from former white state schools (Table 2). The possibility of a post-matriculation year is attractive to some. Very low LTRs guaranteeing personal attention are important, and the low proportion of African children is perceived to be an advantage by parents who believe that a higher proportion would lower standards, or who are 'culturally conservative'³⁵, as is the case with many Eastern Cape farmers. The same factor also attracts some African parents who want their children to be educated in a white/European/Western environment, with the standards they associate with this. Spiritual values are also important to some parents – all three schools are church foundations with a strong Christian ethos.

Another obvious attraction is the outstanding facilities of all three schools. DSG and St. Andrew's, which share some resources, have nearly 200 computers between them. They offer an unusually wide range of sports and DSG alone boasts two full-time drama teachers and five full-time and ten part-time music teachers, many of them from Rhodes University, offering tuition on every instrument. They share a multi-million rand design and technology centre on the St. Andrew's campus. St. Andrew's has eight rugby fields, nine tennis courts and five squash courts, three swimming pools (one of Olympic size), fourteen cricket nets, bowling machines and seven turf wickets.

³⁵ This phrase, used by the Headmaster of St. Andrew's College, may be considered a euphemism for 'racist'. The Deputy Headmaster of Kingswood made the same point in similar terms.

What relevance, if any, have these islands of privilege in a poor community and region? Their existing efforts to relate to the local situation are extremely limited. Bursaries help some pupils enter or remain at the schools, but these assist families who must, because of the contribution they still have to make in almost all cases, be relatively affluent. The R10m. raised by the headmaster of St. Andrew's in the USA and Europe to fund such awards helps a small number of people, whereas such a sum could make a vast difference to a far larger number of pupils in township and rural schools. The same applies to the one full boarding award offered by DSG to an African girl from a disadvantaged family in Grahamstown.

Much more valuable, potentially, is the sharing of teaching resources and facilities. St. Andrew's founded the Pupil Enrichment Programme in the early 1980s, which brought township children to St. Andrew's on Saturdays to 'enhance capacity' in science and maths. This subsequently came to be perceived as paternalistic, and was replaced in the early 1990s with the Teacher Aid Project, which moved help into a township setting. In 2000, as community control in the townships increased, it became the Teachers and Parents Project, but at this point St. Andrew's relinquished its involvement at the request of the African community. Some township children were allowed to use St. Andrew's sports facilities, but the headmaster stressed that the parameters of such co-operation must be spelt out carefully 'because of different expectations'. DSG bussed in girls from township schools twice weekly to play squash, hockey and other sports, and, like the other private schools, has long had some joint sporting fixtures with township schools (Grahamstown claims the first integrated sports organisation in the country, with schools playing one another, dating from 1988).

Another potential contribution comes from community service by the pupils of these privileged schools. Arguably, however, the benefits to the pupils themselves, in bringing them into contact with the lives led by most South Africans, outweigh the actual contribution that they can make, and it was in these terms that the headmaster of DSG presented his school's community service. At St. Andrew's the headmaster pointed out that the boys had little spare time, given the 'frenetic' nature of the school with multiple activities and high expectations; he also mentioned potential problems of litigation and parental objections.

Former White Schools in Grahamstown

The three schools visited in this category, all ex-model C schools, had previously distinctive roles: Victoria Girls High (VGH) and Graeme College as the only white English-medium secondary schools for girls and boys respectively, and Hoërskool P. J. Olivier (PJO) as the only Afrikaans-medium secondary school. Graeme and PJO also incorporate junior grades. All three have a boarding element (VGH 130, Graeme 112, PJO 80), but with fees a fraction of those in private schools (Table 1), and catchment areas within the Eastern Cape, apart from three VGH girls from Lesotho and twenty Ghanaians, Kenyans and other Africans at Graeme. VGH and Graeme in particular have impressive facilities and grounds, offering

a wide range of sports, music, drama, design and technology. All three schools achieve or come very close to 100 per cent pass rates in the Senior Certificate; VGH and Graeme also have very high levels of matriculation exemption, but PJO lags far behind (Table 2).

All three schools had desegregated much further than the private schools, thanks to fee levels affordable by the black middle class (Table 1). At VGH 95 per cent of boarders were African, and at Graeme 45 per cent. In recent years Graeme has attracted some Afrikaans-speaking whites whose parents want an English-medium education for their children and an environment which has more to offer extra-murally. PJO, founded in 1956 for the Afrikaans-speaking minority of whites in Grahamstown, now has spare capacity following the closure of three former employers of Afrikaners – water affairs, the railway and the Afrikaans-Nederlands department at Rhodes University – and the substantial reduction of military personnel stationed in Grahamstown. Its African students are the children of Afrikaans-speaking parents who have joined the rural exodus to Grahamstown. Its white pupils include a small number from relatively poor families, usually because of unemployment.

Fee income enables all three schools to support extra teachers, whilst two of them also continued to benefit from ECED teachers on the redeployment list (Table 1). Even without ‘excess’ teachers, these schools benefit from provincial formula weightings in terms of grades and subjects which give them more quota teachers than their numbers alone would warrant. Graeme College was clear that it would try to retain and pay its ‘excess’ teachers if and when the ECED eventually insisted on their redeployment. The personal problems inherent in the process are illustrated by the placement letter sent to one Graeme teacher, allocating him to a Xhosa school on the KwaZulu-Natal border, 500 km. away: he did not speak Xhosa, his daughter was taking matriculation examinations in Grahamstown and his wife also worked there. The administrative problems of the process produced a revealing comment from the headmaster of VGH:

Why has it taken so long to redeploy the other three teachers? The administration is not in place... I have not seen any departmental official... I don't think I have ever had a reply to my letters yet... [in effect] this is a private school and run as a private school.

The headmaster of PJO also reported failure to respond to communications on the part of ECED, which had failed over a period of months either to approve the filling of a quota vacancy or to respond to a request to make a substitute appointment to replace a teacher who was seriously ill.

In terms of recruitment, it was clear than none of these three schools adhered strictly to legal requirements. Financial viability was essential for the boarding hostels, so admission of boarders clearly depended on ability to pay, although this certainly did not exclude Africans, as has been seen. Otherwise PJO, with its spare capacity for Afrikaans-speakers, appeared to be easier for Africans and coloureds to

enter (though many are no doubt deterred by fee levels) than Graeme and VGH, which are both oversubscribed. In these schools, headmasters used phrases such as ‘girls who will benefit’ and ‘someone who might fit in, on the basis of the school report’. Communication skills and a reasonable fluency in English were mentioned. VGH, while allowing for variations in background, regarded ‘ability to cope with the standards’ as essential. It had developed a number of unofficial ‘feeder’ schools, both in Grahamstown and farther afield, including ex-model C primary schools whose children ‘need to continue the type of education they are used to’. In effect, admissions policies of these schools bear comparison with those of private schools. They are not racially discriminatory, but in the absence of monitoring they clearly depart from legal requirements in order to maintain character and standards.

The private school analogy is increased by the fact that these schools are, unlike former African, coloured and Indian state schools, responsible for almost all funding apart from the salaries of quota teachers: utilities, phones and fax machines, computers, repairs and maintenance, furniture and non-teaching staff salaries (with the interesting exception of matrons in the overwhelmingly African VGH boarding houses, reluctantly paid for by ECED after the school secured the intervention of Kader Asmal, the national Minister of Education). There is obvious equity in this arrangement, given the schools’ more affluent catchment areas and the higher costs of maintaining their superior facilities. It does, however, confirm their private school *mentality*, which is reflected in the attitudes and justifications mentioned above in relation to recruitment.

Mary Waters: a Former Coloured School

Opened as a predominantly coloured school in 1940, and located in the coloured area of Lavender Hill, Mary Waters became a high school in 1963 and came under the control of the (coloured) House of Representatives between 1984 and 1994. In 1996 it was decided to broaden the basis of the school by introducing dual-medium instruction – English as well as Afrikaans – and this was done, although formal provincial approval was still awaited. It continued to recruit most Grahamstown coloured children of secondary age, but was now about one-third African. It also had children from smaller Eastern Cape towns as well as the children of military personnel stationed in Cape Town, but no boarding hostel. Accommodation bursaries from the House of Representatives once helped to pay the cost of living with private families, but were no longer available. Provincial maintenance grants, formerly paid to poorer mothers who could prove that the father did not exercise responsibility towards the child, had also been ended.

The school had eight ‘temporary’ classrooms built fifteen years ago, but had little hope of replacing them given the financial problems of the province. The school’s location close to informal settlements made it vulnerable to violence, and it used scarce resources to employ a security firm. Three classes were gutted by vandals in 1996, but ECED refused to pay, regarding their replacement as a community responsibility.

The school responded with fund-raising efforts in the community and approaches to the private sector which have enabled it to repair some of the damage and acquire some furniture and equipment. The library had to be used as a classroom, so the books were put in store. ECED had failed to deliver textbooks since 1997, and the school was forced to spend money photocopying books. It had no teaching computers, which meant that students had to answer the computo-typing question paper using typewriters (which ECED would not pay to service). The three laboratories were poorly equipped. The school's only sports facilities were two concreted netball courts. There was no sharing of resources with wealthier schools at the time of survey – incidents on the rugby field had soured relations with both Kingswood and Graeme College – so the school had to hire municipal grounds for sports fixtures, though one team had been using an empty field belonging to Kingswood, without permission.

Despite having four teachers on the redeployment register, Mary Waters already had a LTR of 31:1. Its examination results were modest, falling behind those of the best township schools (Table 2). Teachers commented that 'it is part of the mindset of our pupils not to be goal-orientated'. The school had a high attrition rate, with five classes in grades 8 and 9 but only two in grade 12. This reflected both poverty and a failure to return after failing grade examinations. African students tended to do better, with a higher proportion going on to higher education. This appeared to reflect a greater screening of African applicants, who were drawn mainly from four ex-coloured primary schools and four township schools. The school tended to lose its star pupils, some of whom have won bursaries at Kingswood and Graeme College; others go to the Technical College.

Despite these shortcomings, Mary Waters was oversubscribed by a factor of 2:1. The fees were doubled to R200 p.a. in 2000, but some parents had offered to double this to get their children in. This probably reflects the calibre and dedication of the staff in a school which remains proud of its history and achievements: the first African student, for instance, is now a High Court Judge.

Township Schools

The four township schools visited in Rini (Grahamstown East) were all 100 per cent African, drawing their pupils largely from local townships and informal settlements. The nominal level of fees (Table 1) reflects the poverty of most families in their catchment area. One school, Nathaniel Nyaluza, had nearly 200 parents who had not paid the second instalment, although the headmaster suspected that in some cases the children had spent the money themselves. He predicted that the Parents Meeting would decide (illegally) to exclude the children whose parents had not paid, and then (as before) 'they will all come and pay'. Nombulelo also had a large amount still owing, but 'many fees come in dribs and drabs'. All four schools sought to supplement their meagre fee income, but the potential is limited in poor communities: activities included shows, concerts and other cultural activities, raffles, hiring out chairs and in one case

buildings. Nombulelo was the most successful in this respect, raising 55 per cent of its school budget of just R140,000 in such ways.

All four schools suffered in varying degrees from the poor facilities characterising most township schools. Only one had a functioning library, which was poorly used, and laboratories were poorly equipped except at Nathaniel Nyaluza. Computer provision was wholly inadequate for teaching purposes, ranging from a ratio of 1:95 pupils at Nombulelo to 1:174 at Nathaniel Nyaluza: Nombulelo had obtained its fourteen computers from programmes run by Rutgers University and the World Bank, but could not afford internet access. All schools reported difficulties in obtaining textbooks from ECED, with Nombulelo claiming that it had received none for six years: in 1999 it had spent more than 20 per cent of its budget on producing and duplicating materials. None of the schools had playing fields, although, unlike Mary Waters, some had land available but no money to develop it. In most cases facilities were rented, but Nombulelo benefited from an arrangement with Rhodes University, and had secured sponsorship for cricket nets to be installed, and Nathaniel Nyaluza was able to make some use of facilities at Kingswood and St. Andrew's.

Khulitso Daniels suffered from poor 'temporary' corrugated zinc classrooms, erected in 1982, which are uninsulated and so very hot in summer and very cold in winter. ECED had said it had no money for buildings, and parents had paid for repairs themselves, as well as for the installation of electricity in the one brick building, to allow the use of the school's three computers and photocopier, and for burglar bars on the building to protect this equipment. Like Mary Waters, the school also paid for a security firm. ECED was consulting the community about closure of the school.

Examination results varied widely between the four schools (Table 2), but none were amongst the worst in the province: in terms of Senior Certificate pass rates in 1999, they ranked 85 (Nombulelo), 176 (Nathaniel Nyaluza), 374 (Benjamin Mahlalesa) and 501 (Khutliso Daniels) out of 909. Nombulelo achieved similar Senior Certificate results to Port Alfred High School (see below) and matriculation exemption results not far behind P J Olivier, despite a LTR of 32:1, whereas Benjamin Mahlalesa seemed to derive little benefit from its LTR of 21:1, swollen by five teachers on the redeployment register. Nombulelo shares the high attrition rate common to most African schools, but this includes the loss of some of its brightest students to VGH and Graeme College, some of them gaining sponsorship, as well as weaker students who move to other schools after failing grades rather than returning to re-take with pupils who have been a year or two below them.

Nombulelo clearly benefits from its success, with parents anxious to get their children in, but the headmaster claimed to admit them on a first-come, first-served basis. Nathaniel Nyaluza, in contrast, had received no applications for the coming year at the time of interview, and expected its entry to be smaller than the existing numbers in grades 9-11. This appeared to reflect parents' complaints about the standard

of teaching and behaviour of the teachers, which were echoed by the headmaster. He complained of poor control of pupils, absenteeism, poor timekeeping, and leaving classes unattended to take children to extra-curricular activities without permission: his appeal to his own staff for greater co-operation had gone unheeded. He attributed the school's relatively good results to his policy of concentrating the most supportive teachers in grade 12. Official procedures for dealing with problem staff offered no solution, given their slowness, the lack of alternative teachers and the inefficiency of the redeployment process. The headmaster, himself African, blamed lack of commitment and professionalism on the lack of whites on the staff, commenting that he had observed the work ethic of white teachers and its effect on the whole school when he had worked in an African secondary school in Northern Province; he attributed the success of Nombulelo to its mixture of white, coloured and African teachers. However the headmaster of Khulitso Daniels, where all staff are African except for an Indian Head of Sciences, said that all teachers were supportive and doing their best. The headmaster of Benjamin Mahlalesa, which also had just one non-African (Indian) teacher, also had some problems of lateness and absenteeism, but claimed that most teachers were supportive. Many factors could influence variations in the commitment and professionalism of teachers, but demoralisation flowing from poor resources including lack of textbooks, insufficient information and training on the delivery of new syllabuses and sometimes poor leadership may all play a part.

Port Alfred Schools

The small coastal town of Port Alfred at the mouth of the Kowie River offers many recreational attractions: beaches and water sports, a harbour and residential marina, angling, golf, hiking trails and a canoe trail. It has enjoyed significant growth in recent years, offering a safe haven for white retirement and second homes, and has also attracted substantial migration of rural Africans who form a substantial majority of the population. The formerly all-white Port Alfred High School (PAHS) will be compared here with one of the African secondary schools, Nonzamo.

PAHS remained two-thirds white (and more so in the senior school), and Nonzamo 100 per cent African. Both schools have local catchment areas, although some Nonzamo pupils from more distant places stay with relatives or rent rooms. The two schools are similar in size, but PAHS has all grades (Table 1). Despite the usual vast discrepancy in fee levels, they had the same LTR. Nonzamo had seven teachers on the redeployment list, a reflection of reduced pupil numbers since the building of a second African secondary school in Port Alfred in the early 1990s and the introduction of higher grades in three of its former feeder schools. Three other excess teachers had already left, and another had received a placement in Transkei, but she could not afford to move and could not trust ECED to pay her expenses after the event. PAHS was one teacher under quota, but benefited from thirteen teachers paid for by the school (seven of them part-time) and four part-time teachers sponsored by local churches.

Nonzamo was in some respects better off than Grahamstown's African schools. It had four science laboratories with basic equipment, and a library which housed the school's only computer (with internet access). The school had no playing fields, but free use of the community stadium, and was able to offer seven sports. It supplemented fees with beauty contests and concerts, street collections, small charges for outside use of its facilities (from 2001) and appeals to local companies to sponsor special events. The headmaster described the governing body as very supportive. Although there was some absenteeism in the (all-African) teaching staff, this was not, he claimed, a major problem. The major problem was the very low motivation of the children themselves. The headmaster blamed this (questionably?) on lack of tertiary institutions in Port Alfred, as well as homes without electricity and lack of parental support. Some parents do, however, manage to find the fees to move their children to PAHS and Nonzamo loses some of its brightest children in this way.

PAHS is *de facto* selective, interviewing applicants and basing entry on ability, but African numbers are increasing. It is a dual medium school, with 20 per cent of pupils Afrikaans-speaking. No African parents had been elected to the governing body, and they tended not to attend meetings or functions, in part because of transport problems; for the same reason, African pupils found it difficult to stay behind for extra-mural activities. The school had good sports facilities including a swimming pool, a staffed library with study facilities, and an active cultural life. In contrast to Nonzamo, it had forty computers. After bad experiences of sharing its resources, PAHS allowed African schools to use its sports grounds only if there was a joint event. The headmaster criticised his two African counterparts in Port Alfred for lack of control and 'a major problem with discipline', and there was some evidence of this when the author visited Nonzamo.

PAHS normally expects a 100 per cent pass rate in Senior Certificate and the 1999 result (89 per cent) was described as 'pathetic' by the headmaster, who attributed it to the effective absence of a head or deputy head for two years. Its matriculation exemption record was more modest (Table 2). Nonzamo predictably fell far behind on both counts, although ECED figures show a dramatic improvement in 2001: this is hard to explain and may be an error in the data.

Rural Schools

The two rural schools surveyed were both small schools embracing all grades (Table 1). Their isolation ruled out the potential benefits of interaction with wealthier schools or a local university. Shaw Park Combined School near Bathurst was next door to a formerly all-white primary school charging fees of R2,400 p.a., now 50 per cent African as a result of bussing African children of professional parents from the former Ciskei and coloured children from Port Alfred. It was struggling to survive with only 50 children, but reluctant to combine with its poor African neighbour which has a LTR twice as high. It did, however, offer some help with office equipment and teaching aids for biology.

Shaw Park itself had lost some of its pupils with the withdrawal by ECED of transport subsidies in 1999; some now walked long distances on foot, starting as early as 5.0 a.m., and others who relied on lifts were often very late. Unlike many schools in the former Ciskei and Transkei, Shaw Park had a fully qualified staff in whom the headmaster expressed confidence. The school had no library, computers or playing fields, but a local farmer with a playing field for his employees allowed the school to use it free of charge; five sports were available, and there were fixtures with other schools. Imaginative fund-raising events had raised R3,080 in 2000, equivalent to about one-third of the school's annual fee income, and R1,100 had been spent on a fax machine.

Riebeeck East Combined School occupied good buildings that formerly housed a white school, but was empty until re-used in 1994. It now admits the local coloured and African children in this remote rural area; 30 per cent are Afrikaans-speaking and the rest Xhosa-speaking, but there was absolutely no dividing line and, in the headmaster's words, 'they don't know who they are'. Many coloured pupils were of mixed parentage and spoke Xhosa at home. The school was supposed to be dual medium (Afrikaans and English) but its African teachers (nine out of thirteen) could not speak Afrikaans very well. The community had requested a change to English as the sole medium of instruction, but the school had not yet decided on this, as English was a third language for most pupils, and its teacher quota benefited from its dual-medium status. The headmaster was reluctant to criticise his staff, but there appeared to be some problems of commitment.

The school had no library and only one ill-equipped laboratory: children had to write examinations without having done any experiments. Unlike most schools, Riebeeck East had received some new books in 2000, for grade 12 which had recently been introduced, but only for three subjects, and it lacked most of the necessary books for lower grades. The one old computer was used only for administration. The municipal field was available for sport. Transport was the school's biggest problem: the headmaster's own van was used to bring most of the teachers to school, and the police occasionally helped with transport for sports fixtures. Transport allowances for children and for teachers unable to live locally were paid by the former House of Representatives, but not by ECED; children walked up to five kilometres. Parents of children at both schools were predominantly farm labourers; the better-off households were those with a grandparent receiving a pension. Parent members of governing bodies at both schools were reported as making little contribution; at Riebeeck East none had turned up for the previous meeting, and some the headmaster had never seen. The examination results of these small, isolated schools with pupils from very poor families were poor (Table 2). The one student obtaining matriculation exemption, at Shaw Park in 1999, could not afford to go to university, but was working to save money and re-applying for bursaries.

Language Issues and 'Race Relations'

The one-way nature of the desegregation process in South African schools mirrors that in residential areas,³⁶ although with greater movement of Africans to formerly coloured schools. With the exception of the unusual situation at Riebeeck East, discussed above, it is only at former white and coloured schools (and essentially in the state sector) that significant desegregation has occurred (Table 1); African schools remain unchanged in their intake. More focused research involving participant observation would clearly have been needed to probe relations between children of different 'race' groups in depth, but the issue was explored at each interview.

In no case were serious problems raised: Graeme College had experienced one white:African fight in the past five years, but 'even this may not have been racial'. In all schools children did tend to sit in racial groups in the classroom, unless placed by teachers (as at PJO). The natural tendency for Africans to speak Xhosa to one another encouraged a degree of playground segregation. Sport was seen as bringing children together, and Graeme College had resisted the general tendency to make physical education a casualty of the redeployment process because of its socialising effect in getting pupils to work together physically. The headmaster of VGH believed that children were learning to understand one another's cultures with real breaking down of barriers: he regarded the emergence of teasing across the colour line as positive evidence of more relaxed attitudes replacing an initial wariness. No school reported having, or having yet had, an African head boy or girl, although the last three deputy head boys at Graeme College had been African. Township boys at Graeme visited white homes, and in some cases stayed for weekends, but there was little movement in the other direction. At both VGH and Mary Waters, there were also some good friendships between children of different race groups.

None of these former white and coloured schools currently teaches Xhosa as a matriculation subject. Despite their relative affluence, a common refrain was 'we should like to, but can't afford it'. Port Alfred and PJO taught Xhosa at primary level, and Graeme planned to introduce it at this level as an alternative to Afrikaans. Grahamstown's private schools did offer Xhosa at secondary level, but very few students opted to take it. Both whites and Africans tended to see it as unimportant, albeit for different reasons. Mary Waters had ECED approval to start Xhosa but could not find a teacher, a situation that can only worsen as enrolment in Xhosa courses at universities has reached an all-time low.³⁷ In one of the most perceptive comments made on the subject, two staff expressed the fear that Africans were in danger of cultural alienation from their own environment: they were moving and speaking in an English-speaking environment, and some of them could hardly write Xhosa. In township schools the most common pattern was for pupils to do Xhosa, English and Afrikaans to matriculation. In some cases Afrikaans was

³⁶ See A. J. Christopher, 'Urban Segregation in Post-Apartheid South Africa', *Urban Studies*, 38 (2001), pp. 693-716.

³⁷ S. Ridge (Professor of English, University of the Western Cape), personal communication.

optional, in which case it was more popular than science or maths, often because it was perceived to be an easier subject, albeit a less useful qualification.

Conclusions

The massive inequalities found in the schools surveyed are in themselves no surprise: the vast backlogs of the apartheid legacy, combined with modest economic growth, precluded, and continue to preclude, transformation of schools serving historically disadvantaged groups. Equality of opportunity could only be achieved in present circumstances by ending the practice of charging fees in state schools. Such 'levelling down' would be as unpopular with the black middle class as the white, and would undoubtedly lead to an expansion of the private sector, if this were allowed to survive. The substitution of class divisions for those of race was in practice inevitable. But this does not mean that present policy and practice are incapable of improvement. Partial solutions at least may be found in at least three directions: local initiative, provincial practice and national policy.

Local initiative is important, but not if, as at present, it amounts to the imposition of impossible burdens on poor communities unable to raise significant funds. On the one hand, it needs to embrace far greater sharing of resources – human as well as material – between privileged and deprived schools than now occurs. Provincial policymakers need to reflect on what incentives might be provided to encourage former white schools in particular – private as well as state – to do more in this respect. Decentralisation can also play an important role, if focused on those schools with the capacity to do more for themselves, such as procurement of classroom materials and supplies, maintenance of buildings, supervision of in-service teacher education and reward of performance.³⁸ The more that these become school-level management responsibilities, the more ECED resources can be concentrated on disadvantaged schools.

At provincial level the specific shortcomings of the ECED have emerged all too clearly. The Department is aware that internal communication is slow, and there is often no clarity on the procedures to be followed: employees from different former administrations often try to follow procedures to which they are accustomed, which results in delays. ECED has been investigating issues of personnel, labour relations and administration at all levels from schools upwards, and has been seeking to implement the recommendations of an internal report since 2001. At the human level the Department is employing Educational Development Officers to provide support, targeting schools with less than 50 per cent pass rates in the Senior Certificate. It is seeking to develop more in-service training for teachers, making use of the many former teacher training colleges which have been closed. There is also an emphasis on 'action research' which brings researchers and those affected together to consider problems and identify solutions. ECED has several donor-funded projects operating in different parts of the province, looking at

³⁸ A. Donaldson, 'Reconstructing Education', in Y. Sayed and J. Jansen (eds), *Implementing Education Policies: the South African Experience* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 2001), pp. 62-72.

the development of management capacity at provincial and district level, although these were all concerned with primary schools in 2000. Capacity-building in school governing bodies is a vital need, if a difficult one to fulfil in many communities. It will inevitably be some time before such policies bear fruit, and a further decline in standards in the meantime cannot be ruled out.

Present problems are accentuated by the gap between conception and reality, between political symbolism and implementation, which were noted earlier. In part these appear to derive from the frustration of pursuing idealistic aims, often based on what is regarded as good practice in the most developed countries, without the human or financial capacity to achieve them. There is a fundamental contradiction in South Africa's education policies, insisting on equalisation and redress of opportunities to ensure a more equal distribution of educational resources, without recognising that the need for ever more sophisticated technical and educational skills pulls in the direction of specialisation and selection rather than the construction of a high quality system for all – a system able to produce an internationally competitive élite of technicians and managers. Outside such an élite, and a small middle class able to use its resources and influence to ensure that their children's schools retain a measure of quality, the poor will be left with an education system geared to low expectations and low-level employment: there will always be a few dramatic success stories, but 'selling the myth that this is a possibility for all can be likened to the logic that promotes the purchase of lottery tickets'.³⁹ South Africa needs to produce an élite, but the larger part of its education system should be geared to the needs of the urban and rural poor, rather than off-loading the consequences of inappropriate policies on to impoverished communities which lack the resources to implement them effectively.

³⁹ P. Kallaway, 'Whatever Happened to Rural Education as a Goal for (South African) Development?', in W Morrow and K King (eds), *Vision and Reality: Changing Education and Training in South Africa* (Cape Town, University of Cape Town Press, 1998), p. 35.