



THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

**NATIONAL REPORT OF
THE KINGDOM OF SWAZILAND**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

11TH AUGUST 2004

The Education System at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century:

An Overview

1.1 Major Reforms and Innovations

(a) The Legal Framework of Education

The Education system is still governed by the Mbokodvo manifesto, which emphasises the right of all citizens of the country to education to the limit of their capabilities. Although the Education Act of 1982, itself is still intact there has been desire to review it, especially its relevance to the present times. The manifesto defines education, especially tertiary as a social obligation, where everyone is entitled to it, irrelevant of demand for the kind of skill.

The Teaching Service Act of 1982 remains the only legal document used for the recruitment, deployment and transfer of teachers

The Education for All (EFA) movement has brought about challenges and the need to look at the organisation of the education system. In its effort to ensure a quality and equitable distribution of education the Ministry has had to introduce major organisational changes in the management of education. A large proportion of the management aspect is that of the teaching force.

The Ministry is currently reviewing its scholarship bill with a view to ensure that the scholarship fund serves the interests of the country. One of the aspirations of the review is to ensure that scholarships are granted in those fields of study which will benefit the country. This exercise is linked to the National Development Strategy, a vision that seeks to provide training in areas that have been identified in the Human Resource Development Plan. The Ministry is indeed looking at areas that will be of great cost-benefit to the country. This presents a shift from a pre-service approach that was wholly based on “social demand” to a one that seeks to address the human resource needs of the country. This shift will of course have an impact on the framework, thus this in itself can be viewed as a means to review the Act.

With the impact of the HIV/AIDS, the country is faced with increased levels of poverty which has led to the desire to protect all orphans and vulnerable children. Government has seen the need not only to “observe” children’s rights, the protection of the girl child and women in general, but to see to it that there is legislation to that effect. This in itself has also motivated the Ministry to see to it that schools are a place of safety, and this of course requires some legal systems to be set up to protect every school child. In an attempt to empower every child with education, His Majesty’s Government has strongly advocated for all children irrespective of socio economic status should have access to education. This presents a gradual move to the provision of highly subsidised primary education, which could lead to a “free” primary education to all Swazi children. This could then lead to “compulsory education”, which as a matter of principle should be guided by some legal framework.

(b) The organisation, structure and management of the education system

All these pieces of legislation empower the Minister for Education to promulgate regulations from time to time as the need arises.

The structure of the education system has not had major changes in the last few years but there is an emerging development to focus on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) in a greater detail. The South Africa Development Community (SADC) is looking into introducing a concept of a “reception year” that is called “grade zero” as a pre-requisite for entry into grade 1. Swaziland has not gone into that development as yet, but is exploring ways of reorganising education at this level by involving organisations and communities.

The Ministry is currently engaged in an exercise that looks at the total overhaul of the management of the teaching service. Government has approved the increase in the number of administrators at the TSC, and this has presented some limited deconcentration in the management of teachers. This has not only increased the human resource at the TSC, but has also ensured that all schools in the four districts get improved attention, thus ensuring an equitable distribution of teachers throughout the kingdom. This is also viewed as a means to make the operation of the TSC more effective and efficient, such that teachers fulfil their mandate, which is teaching.

This change has been brought about in parallel with other management innovations, which include the strengthening of the research and planning function and the inspection section of the Ministry. This has seen the development of a fully operational Educational Management Information System (EMIS), which is a concerted effort to ensure that all policy, decision-making and distribution of resources is based on data and information collected from the regions throughout the country.

(c) Curricular policies, educational content, teaching and learning strategies

The major thrust in the curriculum has been a shift from a “white collar” curriculum to one that promotes a sense of entrepreneurship attitude in the children. This is also motivated by the demand placed upon the country by the levels of poverty and unemployment that are made worse by the HIV/AIDS situation. The Ministry has decided to formally establish “practical subjects” in the primary education cycle. Practical Arts will be introduced from year 3 of basic education. Schools already offering Agriculture and Home Economics shall continue to offer these as an extended curriculum. The business strand will be spread across all five components to ensure that children see each strand in the light of a business opportunity.

This curricula innovation has implications on teacher training, timetabling and on the concept of integration. Teacher training (both pre and in service) has to produce

graduates that will have the capacity to handle drama, arts and craft, music and business entrepreneurship. Another factor that will need to be considered at teacher training level is the aspect of “integration”. Teaching these subjects separately would require specialist teachers and would further cause complications in timetabling since the first seven years of basic education curriculum is already crowded. Further, teaching these, as specialist subjects would require additional and specialized personnel. In the light of the economic recession, it cannot be possible to engage additional personnel to teach practical arts as a stand-alone subject, hence the decision to integrate it, into the curriculum such that every teacher should be able to teach it.

On the basis of the above factors, it was decided that all the teachers should teach Practical Arts as an integrated subject. This strategy requires a conscious and willingness on the part of the teacher to integrate the practical arts components when teaching the other subject areas. This strategy requires a teacher to go beyond the normal lesson preparation and investigate how practical arts components can be integrated such that at the end it makes sense and create interest to the child.

To continue with practical arts the Ministry of Education is strongly advocating for the strengthening of practical subjects at secondary school level, which will also include major support for the prevocational education currently being piloted in 16 secondary schools in the country.

Another major reform has been the introduction of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GSE) form of curriculum, which is of higher and relevant standard than the former O’level examination syllabus. This form of curriculum paradigm shift advocates for a normal progression throughout the system, this in turn will mean the country will have to introduce a system that will continuously monitor the achievement of students throughout their school life.

(d) Objectives and principal characteristics of current and forthcoming reforms.

The major thrust of reforms has been to improve the internal efficiency of the education system. The country has not adopted any of the existing strategies in the region, which include, “automated promotion – normal progression”, but is looking at other forms of teaching and learning strategies that will enhance improved efficiency.

Coupled with efforts to improve internal efficiency has been the move by government to increase enrolment rates and also maintain children within the school system. A major initiative in this regard has been the deliberate attempt to absorb all school aged children into the system, the country has done this through support from the communities, local and international organisations, and through a programme that was kick started by His Majesty, the King.

With the advent of the HIV/AIDS the Ministry is out in full force in the introduction of programmes that are meant to empower the children with information on the scourge. There has been quite a number of initiatives coordinated by the Ministry’s Guidance and Counselling department.

1.2. Major Achievements and Lessons Learned

The Ministry has always thought it a good policy idea to always address the issues of access, equity and quality as one. This is meant to ensure that access does not compromise quality, and treating unequal communities unequally is also a way to ensure that resources are indeed distributed equitably throughout the country.

(a) Access, Equity and the Quality of Education

The participation of all children at basic education level is being advocated and supported at very high levels of authority in the country. His Majesty's Speech at the Throne lamented the same message and a number of government and non-governmental organizations are working tirelessly to ensure that no child is denied access to basic education and this has seen a number of children who have been previously marginalized going back to school. The country has in the last years put a lot of resources into primary and basic education. This can be observed from the initiatives under:

a) Access

- Provision of free textbooks to all primary school going children. The underlying aim being that this initiative will lower the cost to parents and thus more will afford to send their children to school.
- Introduction of a “bursary grants” for all school going children. However, emphasis is placed at increasing access to primary education. This it is doing with assistance from organizations such as UNICEF (Swaziland), the National Emergency HIV/AIDS (NERCHA) and the local community.
- Introduction of a school feeding scheme especially to support orphans and the vulnerable children to have at least one balanced meal a day. This activity has been coordinated by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), local government and international organization such as UNICEF, WHO, and World Vision.

b) Equity

- The initiative on bursary grants (EFA grants) by UNICEF and Government was focused on communities that were observed to be worse off. This was aimed at balancing off the effects of poverty and drought.

c) Quality

- The introduction and implementation of Continuous Assessment as a form of teaching and learning. This is a “child centred” approach, which aims at improving the learning potential of every child.

- Ensuring that all schools in the country are places of safety, this includes ensuring that the infrastructure is well adapted for the physically handicapped to have easy access to all educational institutions in the country.

Lessons learnt.

All the initiatives described in the previous section were national, thus some of the lessons learnt tended to exhibit limiting factors that areas exist in the regions. From a management point of view, the greatest lessons have been the shortcoming of planning, decision-making processes without taking into consideration the uniqueness of communities. Major observations include:

- 1) Poorly resourced schools, which are mostly rural schools, do not attract good teachers. Such schools also tend to be poorly resourced and do not have the basic requirements for comfortable living, such as water, housing and electricity.
- 2) Lack of a sound working policy on the relationships between government and schools that are private or mission owned. Government is usually concerned when putting resources into such schools especially when the communities feel like they control everything in the schools. There maybe disagreements in terms of which teachers to recruit, who owns the infrastructure and this affects the role played by government.
- 3) Most of the initiatives have benefited those that are in school. A major challenge for government is the education and care of more than 40 000 orphans who might not be benefiting (out of school) from the education system.

This brings in the core the question that, if the country has made major leaps in access, equity and quality, has it done enough for those who are out of school? These are currently under the care of non-governmental organizations.

However, the issue of equity in educational provision or opportunity enjoys the fullest support of the Ministry. This is articulated in the Ministry's Draft Education For All (EFA) Plan of Action for 2002. Amongst many other objectives of the Ministry aimed at subscribing to the EFA 2015 agenda, the following can be extracted to show the seriousness attached to ensuring equity in educational provision: The Government of Swaziland undertakes to:

- Ensure provision of equal access and full participation in basic education of all especially orphans and vulnerable children and children with special needs.
- Guarantee equitable distribution of education resources to all schools, this is to be achieved by a comprehensive use of information for planning and decision making.

- Develop comprehensive programmes that will make education accessible and affordable to all young people and adults, eg locally published books.
- Increasing the number of science teachers at secondary school level by introducing a Bachelor of Education in Science and Maths. The Local University has not been offering any teaching qualification in Science and was relying on Science graduates to take up the teaching of science. This has been counter productive as such graduates tended to leave the profession for greener pastures.
- To encourage girls taking up science, the Ministry has encouraged teacher-training students to take up science and mathematics teaching at primary school level. This it is believed, will encourage girls to take up science, as most primary school teachers are women.
- Revamping the pre-service training such that students are encouraged to take courses that are in line with the Human Resource needs of the country. This might introduce a shift from the “Social Demand driven approach to human resources planning to a more cost-benefit related planning approach.

A key strategy to be employed in ensuring equitable distribution of resources to ensure a quality education to all is a very comprehensive information system that will guide the allocation of such resources. This notion asserts the view that quality is viewed as composed of the quality inputs to education, the quality of the processes in education and the quality of the outputs of the education system. To address all these different aspects of quality the Ministry has undertaken some major curriculum changes.

The understanding of what is quality has been evolving over the years. In the past priority was given to cognitive understanding and development. Even though quality education today takes cognisance of social and other dimensions of learning, the conventional definition remains important to understanding quality education. This includes literacy, numeracy and life skills and is linked directly to such critical components as teachers, content, methodologies, curriculum, examination systems, policy, planning, management and administration.

(d) Content of education, major challenges for the curriculum

Recognising the need to further diversify the curriculum, the Ministry, in collaboration with an NGO, the Computer Education Trust (CET), has made remarkable strides in the field of computer related education by supplying computers to 85 secondary/high schools throughout the country.

In addition through support from UNESCO, the Ministry is in the process of introducing information communication technology as part of the curriculum of all teacher-training colleges, so that teachers who graduate from such institutions are computer literate and possess all the skills necessary to teach computer classes or use computers as teaching aid. Financial support The Government of the Republic of

China (ROC) continue to play a critical role in the supply of computers and related equipment to a number of secondary and high schools throughout the country. Many schools benefited through the ‘*Computers For High Schools*’ programme funded by the ROC. The Ministry remains greatly indebted to the Chinese Government for their tireless efforts towards making the country’s vision on education a reality. Further, the Government of the Republic of China and our Government are also working on a programme to train a substantial number of teachers on computer education through the provision of technical assistance.

The Ministry is paying particular focus to the relevance of the country’s education system, more so because it remains committed to addressing issues around HIV/AIDS, poverty and unemployment. The Ministry strongly believes that all efforts aimed at making education as relevant as possible to the needs of the people of Swaziland will go a long way towards improving the peoples’ standards of living and thus mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS, and reduce levels of poverty and unemployment. The Ministry has gone into the implementation of the Africa Girl Education Initiative, which aims to empower all girls on the challenges associated with the HIV/AIDS scourge. In addition it has fully supported the development of Life Skill Centres, and Neighbourhood Care Points that aim to provide care and support to all children in their communities. These centres ensure that all children get at least one full medical check-up, and get food and psychosocial care within the communities that they live in.

In an effort to improve the quality of education, the Ministry continued to be engaged in curriculum development and reform. There has been a paradigm shift from O’ Level to General Certificate on Secondary Education (GCSE), which is a broad-based programme that emphasises on pupils achievements opposed to pupils weaknesses. In-service courses for teachers were mounted regularly throughout the year to keep them up to date with the latest teaching strategies.

(e) Policy dialogue, partnerships and participation by the civil society.

The movement from Dakar 2000 provided and reinforced the need for dialogue within the country at all levels. The notion of engagement of the community started off with the EFA Plan, and was further encouraged by the need for community engagement in mitigating the effects of poverty and the HIV/AIDS situation. The education of orphans and vulnerable children, which has become a national initiative, also facilitated the participation by civil society. This is evidenced by a national slogan that goes, “¹Imfundvo yindzaba yetfu sonkhe”, and indeed education has become an item on the national agenda of this country. This is observed from the number of initiatives aimed at improving the life of the child in the country, the areas of coordination include:

- The introduction of the school grants schemes by UNICEF and government.. These are programmes where the community, the school and government join hands in ensuring that the poor, the less privileged are allowed to access the education system. This presents a slight shift from just providing a bursary

¹ Education should be in everyone’s agenda

(scholarship), but encouraging the community to take care of other needs like feeding, clothing and general care of the destitute children.

- Provision of “assistant teachers” under the same initiative. As hinted on earlier, the country is exploring at increasing access to primary education, but is very cautious on ensuring that quality is maintained. One major impact has been bigger classes, some with enrolments as high as 80 in a class; this has demanded that the country seeks assistance of these assistant teachers. These are not trained teachers, but the ministry is exploring ways in which they be given basic teaching skills thorough the INSET department. Currently UNICEF and the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office under welfare programmes coordinate this programme.
- Neighbourhood Care Points, these provide a complete care of the child. Education is considered one important aspect of the life of the child but efforts are being made that the less privileged get medical, and psychosocial care and physical care which includes meals on non-school days.
- Provision of an alternate curriculum for the overaged children who are “too old” to go into lower levels of education. The programme is titled the National Universal Primary Education (NUPE) is coordinated by a community based NGO called SEBENTA.
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These initiatives have not only engaged the community, civil society in education but have played a bigger role in bringing the nation together in fighting the scourge of poverty and the HIV pandemic. This has demanded that the Ministry be very active and be aware of all initiatives that support the vision for universal access to basic education.

1.3 The main problems and challenges facing the education system at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The education system in Swaziland, like many other systems of education the world over, is still plagued by the old-age problems and these have been further complicated by new challenges such as poverty, HIV/AIDS and the increased levels of food insecurity and unemployment. Addressing issues around access alone was not enough. The challenge for our education system became the provision of high quality education; one that was relevant to the needs of the citizens of the country and one that was affordable. Hence, over and above the issue of access; relevance, affordability, equity and quality became issues of prime concern.

(a) Access

Swaziland has had quite a respectable enrolment rate pattern, with Net Enrolment Rates of about 85% in the early 1990’s. This is gradually being eroded by the HIV/AIDS and poverty. In the early 2000’s the rate went down to 67%, and that was an indication that the country was encountering problems.

Another challenge has been sustaining the increase in enrolment and also retaining the children within the system. The Ministry has introduced a number of initiatives, the free textbooks, Continuous Assessment and the Bursary Funds, it is hoped that this will encourage the retention of children, thus lowering the drop out rate. By working with other agencies, which cater for other needs like food, clothing and general care the country is indeed hoping to keep children in school, for them to at least finish basic education.

The above initiative gave rise to increased enrolment and the country ran out of classroom space for some of the children. This was a major blow because some classes are either held under trees, in the open or in some cases the class size was increased to above 100 children. This was not very good for the education sector. The Ministry did think of “double shift” schooling, but couldn’t go ahead with the plan since the children were young, and had to walk long distances to school.

A serious effort is underway to ensure that children with special needs also get a basic education. The Ministry is strongly advocating for including of mild cases of disability in normal school and is exploring building the first special need secondary school in the country. It is hoped that this will pave the way for special needs people to access tertiary education, which currently is a problem in the country. The Ministry is also exploring introducing special needs education in teacher training colleges to ensure that every school is user friendly and to encourage inclusion.

For those children that cannot go into formal education the country is expanding open and distance learning options. This is viewed as very critical especially to cater for the overaged children who are already in employment.

Places at tertiary levels of education are still very limited. The country is still faced with providing places locally, and this has become a major challenge as the costs of education are going up each day. As a start the Ministry intends training students in areas of priority – as in the Human Resource Development Plan, the problem being that too many students qualify and each year the Ministry has to review criteria because it cannot cope with the increase in demand for training.

(b) Equity

The smallness of the country has made it easy to distribute resources in an equitable manner, especially those resources that are distributed from the public sector. The system is still very centralised and as such all distribution is done from the head quarters, thus it is possible to ensure that the four districts are catered for equitably.

Schools in Swaziland are largely a partnership between Government and communities, schools from poor communities are characterised by lack of adequately qualified teachers. The Government tried to strike a compromise by introducing some incentives, like “hardship allowances”. This endeavour was thwarted by financial constraints, especially because the teachers’ union

negotiates such issues and the Ministry has to be cautious when dealing with such issues.

Although the EFA initiative advocates equity, it has been a challenge for the country mainly because of lack of accurate information on the wealth of the communities. Another feature is the rural – urban migration. Since the rural communities are relatively poor then the schools are left to dilapidate. Teachers then avoid such schools. This coupled with other effects like lack of clean water, accommodation, and resources has led to inequity in the status of the schools which then gives rise to inequity in the provision of education. The unfortunate consequence is that in these poor schools, there tends to be a lot of under qualified teachers, assisted by under unqualified assistant teachers, a very unfortunate situation. The Ministry is trying to give some basic training to all these teachers, but still need some experience on how to deal with the situation.

Swaziland can learn from countries like Senegal that developed the idea of assistant teachers to an extent of even developing a course that was followed by such teachers. Some of the volunteer teachers ended up having the necessary qualifications, and thus the quality of education was not compromised.

The problem of space is not a serious at secondary and tertiary levels since there is a lot of dropout out along the way, only a fraction reaches O'level. Although this might be viewed as wastage of the system, the few that are successful at O'level are awarded a scholarship. The main challenge with this situation is that more and more of such graduates are forced to attend universities in neighbouring countries because of lack of space at our only university. This is a major cost to the country, as it has to finance students at higher costs. Proponents of globalisation would argue that this is good for the world, but the country is still developing and risks losing all its qualified people to countries like South Africa.

(c) Quality

Even though a lot has been done to address the issue of relevance and quality a number of challenges still lie ahead. Skills-oriented education and training, which remains the only solution to curbing the socio-economic problems faced by the country is still fraught by attitudes, complexes and fears from parents and pupils who were brought up to believe that this type of education is for the lower class, poorly-performing and struggling pupils - hence a second choice to many. There is need to change the attitudes of parents and children towards accepting vocational and skills subjects as passionately as they do with academic subjects. The Ministry believes that such changes could help pull more pupils towards subscribing to programmes like the Pre-vocational Education, which is still at its pilot phase. Further, pupils need to be encouraged to explore other vocational or skills oriented subjects including the traditional practical subjects.

The Ministry believes it has tried its best to allocate quality resources into the schools and as such expects the output of the system to be of the highest quality. The introduction of individualised learning styles coupled with improved recording of achievement scores will ensure that the children get a quality education. These efforts will be coupled with the advising of students on career choices will improve the quality of the products of our education system. It is expected that the outcomes of such an education system will be a better country that has enough human resources to overcome the current odds.

2.0 Quality education for all young people: Challenges, trends and priorities

Swaziland is one of the countries that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. The Government of Swaziland highly believes that education is a basic human right and plays an important role in the development of a human being. As a result the education policy promotes equal access to education to both boys and girls at formal and non-formal schools. School enrolment at primary school level is 50 % boys and girls. However slight imbalances occur at around year eight of school when girls begin to exhibit a higher dropout rate than boys. Teenage pregnancy and financial constraints account for the high drop - out rate among girls. This is of concern to the country as it suggests that there might be something lacking in the classroom content that should help our young people to protect themselves from harm and damage.

2.1 Education and gender equality

(a) Gender and the Curriculum

The Ministry of Education sensitised curriculum developers about gender issues. As a result books revised and produced locally ensure gender sensitivity and promote gender equality and elimination of gender stereotypes. Through the Guidance and Counselling Unit, girls are being empowered to make informed decisions especially in relation to subject choice, occupational choice, their health and their lives in general. The forum For African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Swaziland Chapter working with the Ministry has programmes that assist the ministry to address such problems. These programmes include attachment of girls to occupations that were earlier on known to be for males such as electrical engineering, aircraft pilots, medicine etc. Girls are encouraged to select those subjects that scare women away such as Mathematics, Science and Technical subjects. Even though progress is slow, but there is movement towards the right direction.

(b) Gender in Education and Training

Sensitisation of teachers on gender issues both at in-service and pre-service has been made possible by the Ministry with a lot of financial assistance from UNICEF. The Gender Unit coordinates all gender issues in the country and is tasked with sensitising people at the grassroots. This tallies very well with our school programme as parents

and school-going children now understand gender issues that affect their lives and development.

Gender and HIV and AIDS

The Ministry has established a Health Education Section that addresses school health issues including those of HIV and AIDS. Working with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare helps to ensure that health services are provided and health issues are dealt with at school level and in all schools in the country. At present a pilot programme of Health Promoting Schools Initiative is currently taking place in twenty-four. It is well understood that it is girls and women mainly that suffer the consequences of HIV and AIDS because they have to care and support for the ill and finally bear the burden of looking after the siblings after their parents' demise. The rate of infection among pregnant women in Swaziland is at 38.6% according to the most recent statistics (Sero-surveillance Report 2002).

This shows an increase, and calls for education programmes that will really make an impact. It is therefore important that HIV/AIDS education be taken seriously and fast for the nation to survive. Several programmes on HIV and AIDS are in place at the moment but do not necessarily address girls' needs only, as everybody is affected. Some of these are run by NGOs such as the School Health and Population Education (SHAPE) in collaboration with the ministry. SHAPE has a programme specifically meant for school aged children

Gender and Child Abuse

Due to the increase in cases of child abuse, the Ministry has introduced a toll-free line through which children may report any kind of abuse to counsellors manning this line. Indeed many cases have already been reported and assistance sought for most cases. It is envisaged though that as many children develop life skills such as those of assertiveness, decision-making and negotiation, fewer cases will be reported since children will be able to negotiate their way out of critical situations.

The Government of Swaziland has allocated a sum of money to cater for this group of students. Even though it is not directly focusing on girls, we believe that since it is mainly girls that drop out of school they will have an opportunity to return to class and further their education. FAWE (Swaziland) also sponsors some girls who would otherwise be out of school.

Challenges:

1. Improving financial capacity to ensure access to education to all citizens. Government has to increase the funding allocation for assistance to orphans and vulnerable children.
2. Authorised readmission of girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy.
3. Strengthening the provision of guidance and counselling in schools, as at present there are no full time guidance teachers when children are facing so many problems.

2.2 Education and social inclusion

(a) Challenges for ensuring social inclusion

The main challenge in social inclusion is the financing of education in the face of with diminishing resources. The education sector is one of those that are rapidly expanding, and exert pressure on budget that seldom caters for the increase in costs of education. Swaziland challenges, besides limited finances include:

- Lack of infrastructure to cater for all needs, and infrastructure for special needs learners
- Lack of institutions for special needs education at secondary and tertiary levels
- Shortage of appropriately qualified teachers at primary school,
- Shortage of Mathematics and Science teachers at secondary,
- Shortage of support staff, inspectors, counsellors etc

(b) Vulnerable Groups

The country has identified orphans as the most vulnerable group; in the past this was not a major cause for concern, as immediate relatives would take care of such. With the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and poverty this is no longer the case, and in most cases orphans are left to fend for themselves. In the most extreme cases young children are left to care for their siblings and the challenge is that they in turn drop out of school to take care of the family. As in most African cultures, the child that is most vulnerable is the girl child, who is usually the one who stays at home.

Over the years the country has also tried to cater for special need education, this includes education for the disabled, physically challenged, and mentally challenged children. There has been limited support for the physically challenged, but little or no help was given to the mentally challenged as there was no capacity to deal with the situation. In most cases such children were kept at home, and did not get any basic education, and life skills.

The country is also witnessing an emergence of street children, a cause for concern as such children are prone to abuse. These are usually found in the city streets, with no shelter, care and education.

(c) Measures taken to adapt education to include vulnerable groups

Government, through the Ministry of Education has engaged itself in catering for all orphans and vulnerable children. As the situation suggests, the Ministry of Education saw to the educational need, and the relevant Ministries catered for other needs. As means to ensure that such children have an education Government recommended that all children be taken to school. This was a gamble it did bring to the fore the extent of vulnerability that existed in the communities. The Ministry has collaborated with non-governmental organisations in financing the education of such children. It has also ensured that the physically challenged do have access to institutions by adapting the structures to be friendly and safe for use.

Other Government ministries and NGOs have contributed immensely to the protection of vulnerable children. Some have taken care of their health needs,, which includes psycho-social needs, and in some cases legal representations especially to orphans who have been left to face the challenges of claiming family estates.

(d) Identification of vulnerable youth and adaptation of educational opportunities.

Identification of such youth was a challenge despite the fact that the country does register its citizens at birth. For identification the Ministry relied on communities that know the vulnerable children. This was further improved by knowledge and information gathered by “bagcugcuteli”, who are welfare officers who work in all the 55 constituencies of the country. Some of these children were also encouraged to come out by the call to school by His Majesty’s Government. It was then that the Ministry was made aware of the magnitude of the problems of children who were out of school or drop out of the system. A major adaptation by the country is the creation of a national project that seeks to protect all orphans and vulnerable children. This project will cater for all children, the poor, orphans, abused, street children and also have legal representation for all abused children. This is why earlier in the report it was highlighted that in the plight to protect the child, the Ministry would review some legislation, which might have impact on the legal framework of the Ministry. One major move is registering of all schools to ensure that schools follow national laws and guidelines and do not engage in activities that would jeopardise the welfare of a child.

2.3 Education and competencies for life

(a) Secondary education in Swaziland is continuously undergoing review to ensure its alignment to national needs and aspirations. Due to the demand for life-skills education, the school curriculum is being broadened to include a range of practical subjects such as: Agriculture, Home Economics, Technical subjects and business studies. Computers are also being introduced to secondary schools towards the establishment of Information Communication Technology (ICT) education, through a global initiative funded through a UNESCO.

In addition to these subjects, a pre-vocational education programme running alongside these aforesaid subjects is currently being piloted in 16 high schools with a view to replicate it nationally if it demonstrates to be a success. Two subjects that are compulsory to all pre-vocational students have increased the four subject areas on this programme and these are IT and entrepreneurship, which are viewed as fundamental in the application of their life-skills. This curriculum recognizes the fact that not all students who graduate from high school will get further training opportunities and formal employment.

Further, curricular transformation at secondary school level is in the pipe line. Two years down the line, there will be a shift from General Secondary Certificate of Education (GSCE) curriculum and examinations to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) which provides opportunities of success to about 80%

of high school graduates versus O-level which is meant for the top 20%. This mode of curriculum advocates an individualised learning programme, and assessment. This approach will seek to identify the strengths and weakness of the student with a view to ensure that the students specialise in those subjects that they are skilled in, including practically based subjects.

(b) The greatest challenge with regard to Swaziland's curricular expansion and reforms is funding. The expansion of practical subjects to cover all secondary schools is much slower than the public expectations due to financial constraints. Such expansion in schools requires construction of appropriate laboratories/workshops and personnel to man these subjects. For this reason, a significant proportion of schools still offer a traditional and academic curriculum, which does not provide life skills for the majority of pupils. In schools where the curriculum is broad, practical subjects are well received with a motive for further education and training as opposed to self-employment. A significant proportion of students who participate in pre-vocational education in the 16 pilot schools, however, recognise that the life-skills acquired would enable them to create their own jobs for self-employment. Swaziland has the human resource capacity to develop school curricula and syllabi. These are subject panels and curriculum working committees who report to subject panels. These structures operate regularly to improve the quality of syllabi and curricula to align with contemporary research findings and international trends in education.

Secondary school curricula historically are developed from commonalities established in curricula and syllabi available in the region and the international community as well as adaptation elements guided by local research in the subject areas. This is done in order to harmonise our curricula and syllabi for regional and international equivalence and standardisation. However, a major concern is the need to local students to be able to access tertiary education in neighbouring South Africa, and the challenge has been that our students have been forced to sit an extra examination after form 5, which enables them to enter South African Universities. This is a cost to Swaziland.

(c) Swaziland prides itself with one language and culture. This has proved a rich possession the country seldom has differences, due to culture, language, religion and beliefs, thus the culture of living together is not a serious threat. The country has indeed taken several measures to ensure that secondary education helps young people acquire a common basis of human values in order to develop a greater capacity for tolerance and international dialogue, and these include:

- Provision of bursaries to orphans and vulnerable children to sustain the education of such socio-economically disadvantaged children. This initiative is combined with provision of a school grant, which aims to put schools and communities at the core of educating the orphans and vulnerable children. This initiative, promotes the idea of a school as an integral part of the community, and the education of community children is the responsibility of everyone.

- A national call back to school for all children of school going age who had dropped out of school from 2004 and prior. This national goal is not only been operationalised by the Ministry of Education, but all government departments are fully cooperating on the initiative.
- Promotion of sports and cultural activities. The Ministry and the nation at large has looked at culture as a way to mitigate the effects of the HIV/AIDS scourge, the leadership of the country re-introduced a cultural rite that promotes abstinence. This programme was launched recently and a number of our school youth has sworn to abstinence, which could help alleviate the problem.
- The Career Guidance department with a number of NGOs working with UNICEF has supported the African Girl Education Initiatives (AGEI) and Life Skills Education have developed initiatives that seek to develop consciousness about gender roles and the risks they are creating for both women and men. In conjunction with local business people this agenda has been further developed, schools occasionally hold debates and discussions on these issues with the hope that children will share experiences amongst each other.

2.4 Quality education and the key role of teachers

As mentioned earlier, the Teaching Service Commission is responsible for all the administration of teachers, their recruitment, promotion and discipline. There are four main institutions that produce teachers in the country, and all cooperate very closely with the Ministry. This guarantees that the country gets teachers who are of the expected quality standards. The country is witnessing an influx of young teachers, and this could be looked as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage being that the country is assured of at least some years of their service, the only drawback being lack of experience.

The country has not followed its human resource needs closely, and scholarships have been largely awarded to students that have passed and have secured a place at tertiary levels of education. This has had its own problems when it comes to teachers. It has led to a misnomer where the country has more secondary school teachers who have majored in arts and humanities. This has unfortunately led to a shortage in Science and Mathematics teachers, and the country has had to rely on foreign teachers. This is, however, been addressed as the university, in collaboration with the Ministry have developed a new course that will produce secondary school teachers in Mathematics and Sciences, which should help alleviate the shortage. It is hoped that four years down the road the country will have its first group of young secondary teachers in Mathematics and Sciences.

Professionally, all subjects offered in the national curriculum have panels that are composed of the Ministry's professional staff members (inspectors, teacher leaders, counsellors) and teachers. These working groups are the core of curricula development, and work on a number of professional issues related to the subjects. These discuss the latest trends in subject areas, content and methodology. Curriculum

material is reviewed after three years, and it is in such activities that teachers and the professionals in education collaborate on professional matters.

The EFA process has again led to more debate on educational issues as teachers also have an EFA agenda with other international teacher organisations. This has made it easier to define new objectives for the education system locally. When the panels see the need to review the curricula, they do so after which they have organised in-service workshops for teachers. The in-service of teachers is coordinated by a department under the Ministry, INSET, which is based under one of the teacher training institutions. Currently, the university is assisting with the in serving of teachers in the use of information communication technologies in schools. Through the INSET department, short courses and workshops for head teachers, covering budgeting, adherence to examination procedures and regulations, planning and management and many other critical areas were also mounted to improve the management capacity of the school managers (i.e. head teachers).

As indicated earlier, teachers are organised under their national association and some of issues pertaining to their working conditions are discussed in that forum. The Ministry is a stakeholder in the forum, but largely decisions are based on mutual agreements. There are some schools that are in “hardship” areas, which the Ministry would like to assist in terms of equitable distribution of resources, especially teachers but this has proved a difficult task. One of the means to overcome this is provision of fringe benefits to such teachers, but the unfortunate thing is that the Ministry cannot decide upon such issues, as they are negotiated upon with the teacher union. Although, individual teachers would be keen on the “allowances,” they are viewed as means to “divide” the union at some quarters. The Ministry has tried a number of times without much success. This is one of the reasons why the country has been failing to retain Science and Mathematics graduates. It is hoped that the new pool of “secondary Science and Mathematics teachers”, will be educators, thus will not jump ship to greener pastures.

The Ministry prides itself in teachers who are largely committed not only to educating their students, but are also very keen Swazis, thus some of the community engagement issues are dealt with without major misunderstandings. The Ministry in collaboration with local and international organisation is working on introducing a grant scheme for funding the education of orphans and vulnerable children. This has been hard, but the few school heads that understand the morale behind the system are “converting” a few head teachers and the philosophy is gaining ground in a number of poor schools. The Ministry is however looking for assistance from international organisations that could help in enriching such efforts, especially in the form of capacity building of head teachers at primary school levels.

Efforts are also made to encourage women to take up Science especially at primary school level. This is aimed to encourage girls to take up Science and Technology related subjects at the same level.

2.5 Education and sustainable development

One vehicle that the country is using to promote the culture of sustainable development is through, work related to the environment, Sciences, socio-economics and Agriculture. The Ministry has not taken up the issue as a unique subject area but has included it in a number of subjects' areas – cross cutting.

There are also a number of NGOs that are working closely with schools in this regard, and have encouraged the formation of youth clubs on healthy living, environmental education, entrepreneurship etc. It is in these clubs that a lot of activity is taking place. In terms of the environment and degradation, the clubs go out into the community to educate community members on caring for the environment, and in cases where there is already damage work with the community to alleviate the situation. A number of “dongas” have been closed using this method. The challenge is that in some communities the poor tend to cut trees for fuel, sell some as firewood and this at time counters the efforts being made by the clubs. It has thus been seen as good thing to refocus the community to seek other income generating activities, which do not degrade the environment. In some communities, tree planting has been seen as means of creating employment, such that as they cut the trees they replace them. This Ministry it has done in collaborating with NGOs and the office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which is responsible for community development.

The challenges brought about by HIV/AIDS and poverty have gradually shed on the view that education is not a Ministry of Education's baby. Gradually the country is has witnessed mass emancipation where all the Ministries have a role in education. This is a good effort, but coordination of such efforts is best housed within the Ministry of Education.

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