Education and social transformation: An Eastern Cape study
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L Lawrence and G Moyo (eds.)

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It can be argued that public perception of schooling in the Eastern Cape is largely negative. In the public imagination schooling and education more broadly in the province is characterised by, among other things, dismal learner performance, poor teacher self-image and motivation, hostile relations between the department and teacher unions, legendary administrative bungling and

endemic corruption.

In *Education and Social Transformation* are essays that describe and review a selection of attempts at education innovation in schools and communities of the Eastern Cape. A larger purpose of this book is to cultivate educational hope, imagination and action. Lawrence and Moyo refer to this as a vocation of cultivating "spirit".

To my knowledge, this is the first publicly available volume on educational innovation and social transformation in a post apartheid Eastern Cape. Like most socially engaged scholarship this collection of essays is a "work-in-progress", for two reasons. First, research discussed here forms part of a larger University of Fort Hare education research programme that has now begun to be published. Second, the practitioner-scholars represented here have continued to think, create and work on the themes described and reviewed in these essays, well beyond funded project work that gave them initial impetus.

The specific focus of the book is educational innovation. It highlights the contribution, meaning and challenges of educational innovation and transformation in the Eastern Cape. Read as a whole, the volume succeeds in surfacing themes essential to an understanding of the character, the possibilities, and the limits to educational and social transformation in the Eastern Cape.

The essays by Muthayan (chapter 1), Cole, Godden, Lawrence and England (chapter 2) and Porteus (chapter 8) speak to a complex interaction of widespread poverty and unemployment with continuing inequality in educational provisioning; low and erratic organisational capacity to lead, plan, and manage educational change in the public education system; contrasted to the heroic efforts of some learners, caregivers, teachers, policymakers and administrators.

Chapters 3 to 7 contains a set of descriptive and analytical case studies exploring the role of educational innovation in: seeding sustainable school transformation (Lawrence and Peters; Moyo); building school and community relations (Moyo); piloting adult education programmes based on the everyday experiences of learners (Matshazi); constructing models for teacher training, development and support in the context of a vast rural province (Lawrence; Adendorff, Botha, Devereux, and Sotuku); and generating new approaches to

school transformation through integrated district based development models (Moyo).

The book also points to a number of substantive issues in educational and social theory. I reflect only on two themes that this book points to as requiring further exploration. These themes revolve around the question of how education itself needs to transform so that it may stand a greater chance of making a contribution to social transformation of the Eastern Cape.

The first theme of exploration has to do with tracing the social and pedagogical ramifications of the fact that the South African education system, like public education systems elsewhere in the world, is run by the middle class – teachers, administrators, and the policymakers. But the South African public schooling system is two-tiered in historically unique ways. Educational achievement is restricted largely to upper tier that is almost exclusively populated by middle class children of all hues. And some of those who are responsible for quality public schooling put their children in private education. Probably, very few in the middle class dare to put their children in the second tier of the public schooling system. The second tier accounts for virtually all educational failure in the system. An essentially Bernsteinian theoretical question to be posed here is how does the fact of social and educational inequality in post apartheid South Africa plays itself in micro spaces such as classrooms and its manifestation in curriculum offerings, pedagogy, assessment and learner outcomes. Taken to their logical conclusion this is an implication of the analyses proffered especially in chapters 1, 2, and 8 of this volume.

The second theme is connectable to the first. This theme has to do with the possibilities and challenges of building the social and intellectual capital of schools, communities education departments so that innovation and change is sustainable. Part of the challenge for the Eastern Cape is educational innovation and transformation has tended to be isolated, episodic, fragmented and short lived. This is an issue which is dealt with at some length in chapters 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8. The strategic research and development question is what are the possible roles of schools, universities and departments of state - in the context of historical and social "adversity" described in chapter 2 - to support communities to build what Dani Nabudere calls "their own local institutions of learning and action".