Submission #236

Breaking the cycle of poverty: What kind of change is needed for schools to make a difference?
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Work in progress
Not for dissemination
Introduction

Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) is being promoted by Ministers of Education of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region to ensure that all children in the region have access to schooling, stay in school and make good progress through school. CSTL concepts are not new, as they provide the foundation for any good quality inclusive system of education. CSTL acknowledges that education reform cannot be achieved by schools alone and requires a co-ordinated multi-sectoral response by families, civil society and a range of government officials. This paper uses the distinction between an institution-based model of partnership and a community-based model of partnership\(^1\) as a lens for exploring the potential of CSTL for contributing to meaningful social change through building capacity for authentic engagement of community in school-community partnerships. The term “community” is used to refer to “a place where individuals experience daily life – one that defines their opportunities for learning, formal schooling, healthcare, employment, housing and more”\(^2\). Although involvement of service providers from outside the local neighbourhood might be essential to advance the partnership, the meaningful involvement of the local residents is equally important.\(^3\) The context for the discussion is provided by a brief overview of the continuing inequality of educational opportunities for children from different socio-economic backgrounds in South Africa and a brief introduction to CSTL.

The legacy of inequality in South African schooling

Recognising education as a pre-requisite for individual and societal development, the post apartheid South African government enshrined the right to basic education in the Constitution (section 29). The Constitution does not specify the content of the right but section 39 states the requirement for interpreting all constitutional rights to “promote the values that underlie an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom in line with international conventions”.

However, in South Africa in 2012, despite laws and policy to protect education and other rights, there are still “stark distinctions between the prospects of children from poorer communities and those from more affluent communities”\(^4\). The performance gap between former black schools and former white schools prevails. The distinction between “formal” and “epistemological” access is helpful in understanding this inequality\(^5\). While access to education has increased, the quality of schooling does not always guarantee children’s systematic learning of basic skills, knowledge, values and does not guarantee practices that respect children’s dignity and background.

Poverty, race, gender, geography and disability affect the quality of schools that children attend\(^6\) and the quality of their learning experiences. The legacy of apartheid has endured in the aftermath of a fragmented school system, evident in the persistent under-performance of schools previously designated as schools for black learners under apartheid\(^7\). As a result, the poor quality of schooling “constrains the ability of the education system to provide a pathway out of poverty for poor children”\(^8\).

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\(^1\) Walker et al 2012 page 3
\(^2\) Walker et al 2012 page 2
\(^3\) Walker et al 2012 page 2
\(^4\) van der Berg et al 2011
\(^5\) Pendlebury 2009: 24
\(^6\) (Pendlebury/Motala – page 25
\(^7\) (van der Berg et al 2011:07

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children\(^8\). The following problems have been identified as probable causes for the inequality: number of teachers and teacher quality; availability of textbooks and other learning materials; classroom practices; assessment and feedback; and home background of learners (parental and community influences)\(^9\).

It is the last of these possible causes that provides the focus for this paper, as it is necessary to look both within and outside of schools for factors that impact on the potential role of schools to break the cycle of poverty. High unemployment and seasonal work leave many families in poverty and a lack of food and basic services threatens children’s health and development.\(^10\) The breakdown of family structures due to poverty, violence and HIV and AIDS further contributes to children’s vulnerability. Adult support and supervision of children after school hours are rare, compounded by low levels of education in the family. Children seeking a sense of purpose and belonging are easily influenced by peer pressure to engage in high risk and negative behaviour. Problems in homes and neighbouring communities spill over into schools.\(^11\)

Through considering the causes of dropout for different aged learners the Barriers to Education Project and explored nuances between absolute versus relative poverty. While absolute poverty may account for delayed entry and progress through school, relative poverty and patterns of social exclusion are identified as primary causes of dropout from Grade R to Grade 9. This data speak to dynamics of inequality, shame and social exclusion and highlights the child’s experience of multiple dimensions of poverty. Learners in higher grades questioned the value of education in communities characterised by high unemployment\(^12\). Drawing on Sen’s capabilities approach, we understand that if education is to realise people’s “capabilities” it needs to enhance young people’s freedom to realise their full potential and lead lives that they have reason to value. This extends beyond the current focus on human capital development where the purpose and content of education is driven by the marketplace\(^13\).

Children’s ability to learn is affected by multiple, interrelated factors, many of which are rooted in South Africa’s education system, fraught with challenges due to the legacy of apartheid, while others emerge from the country’s persistent structural poverty and inequality and complex social ills. This paper acknowledges that children’s circumstances can hamper their meaningful access to education and advocates, as one critical intervention, building capacity for partnership between schools, families and communities to promote child well-being and learning. It introduces the rights-based Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) framework that seeks to mobilize government and civil society role-players to build school and community partnerships and examines its potential to tip the balance in favour of children who might otherwise have been excluded from meaningful access to education.

\(^8\) (v d B 05)  
\(^9\) van der Berg et al 2011:05-07  
\(^10\) Data from the Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town Caring Schools action research project which investigated an expanded role for schools in the context of poverty and the AIDS pandemic  
\(^13\) Check ref
The potential role of schools

Education is recognised as a critical avenue for the promotion of children and young people’s development and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, serving as a foundation for poverty reduction and rural development, especially in developing countries. Yet children cannot enjoy their right to education in its entirety if they are experiencing deprivation or vulnerability in any form. For example, children who are ill, have a sick caregiver, are grieving over a lost loved one, are victims of abuse, or are experiencing hunger, are likely to show diminished participation in education.

Deprivation in one area (such as nutrition) may negatively impact on progress in another area (such as physical and cognitive development). A growing awareness of the effects of poverty and the HIV and AIDS crisis on children living in Southern Africa has resulted in a review of existing education strategies. Given the increasing numbers of children in difficult circumstances, it is necessary to modify our current notions of schooling and think creatively about the role that teachers, schools and communities can play to support children and mitigate the effects on educational outcomes.

Education ministries are becoming increasingly cognisant of the need for an expanded role of schools not only to cater for children’s educational needs, but to respond (in partnership with other role-players) to a range of social, health and other needs that have not traditionally been viewed as the mandate of education. Over the past decade, this vision of an extended role for schools in the context of HIV and AIDS has been growing and has started to be incorporated in national and regional education policy.

Across the SADC region, there are numerous innovative school-based responses to address a range of children’s needs in a collaborative, co-ordinated manner. These kinds of responses have created the notion of the school as a centre, ‘node’ or entry point for the delivery of a range of health and social services to children. In the context of poverty, drought and the AIDS pandemic, schools on their own cannot address barriers to learning, but schools can and frequently do play an important role in identifying children who need help and supporting them to access the resources they need.

Introducing CSTL

CSTL emerged out of a range of international and regional policies and programmes designed to improve education outcomes and child wellbeing. These include: a range of international and regional child rights instruments; Education for All; Inclusive Education; and the Millennium Development Goals. Recognizing the complex challenges facing vulnerable children and youth across the region, SADC initiated a policy development process with strategic interventions for the Comprehensive Care and Support for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children and Youth in SADC.

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15 Check and add ref to Cluver
16 Check ref
19 For example:
This policy identified a critical role for schools as conduits for the delivery of care and support services\(^{20}\).

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) programme was unanimously adopted in 2008 at a meeting of the Education Ministers of all SADC Member States. A review of all relevant policies across all Member states has generated a framework to guide the implementation\(^ {21}\).

The goal of CSTL is to create schools that are inclusive centres of learning, care and support in which the education rights of all children are realized. Key characteristics include schools that:

- are child-centred, rights-based and inclusive
- address significant challenges to education, such as poverty, gender inequalities and communicable diseases
- build partnerships to provide essential services to learners to enable them to enter, remain at, and progress in school

Key elements of the CSTL programme are depicted and explained below\(^ {22}\).

**Figure 1: Essential package of care and support\(^ {23}\)**

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\(^{21}\) The description of CSTL in this paper draws on the draft CSTL report and framework that is being finalized for adoption at the next SADC Ministers of Education Meeting.


Leadership and structures — the commitment and leadership of education officials to drive the process; multisectoral support structures at school, district and other levels which include a range of stakeholders such as social workers, health workers, other government extension workers, traditional and civil leaders, community-based and non-governmental organizations.

Community — parents, caregivers and the broader school community. Activities, like home visits, lay counselling, establishing food gardens, childcare services, homework clubs and reaching out-of-school youth are best conducted with the community support.

Material support — includes uniforms, books, stationery and food

Infrastructure — physical structures, including access for those with disabilities and structures to create a safe school environment (e.g. fences, security, ventilators)

Water and sanitation — includes availability of clean, fresh water and proper toilet facilities for children with different needs .e.g. teenage girls, children with disabilities

Health — promoting the health and wellness of learners, educators and officials, sexual reproductive health, STIs including HIV and AIDS; personal hygiene; environmental health; mental health; substance abuse; learner pregnancy; safe circumcision.

Nutrition — includes food production, storage and preparation; promotion of healthy lifestyles, nutrition education and de-worming

Social and welfare services — collaboration with parents, caregivers, the broader community and other government workers. This includes birth registration, support for child-headed households and other children at risk.

Curriculum support — efforts which ensure that curriculum is efficiently and effectively delivered to learners, including those experiencing barriers to learning and out-of-school youth e.g. assisting teachers with curriculum, values and human rights education and learner support programmes.

Psychosocial support — psychosocial support for learners and teachers.

Safety and protection — a safe school environment to protect learners and educators from all forms of discrimination, violence, neglect, abuse and injury including forced and early marriages

Teacher development and support — capacity development within the Ministry to be able to effectively meet the care and support needs of learners and teachers.

Key principles of Care and Support for Teaching and Learning

There are several interlinked key concepts and principles that underpin CSTL and that are critical in ensuring its effective implementation. The notion of children’s rights being indivisible is central to the focus of this paper. Children’s right to education extends beyond physical access and school attendance. In their General Comment 13 on the Right to Education, the UN Committee on the Rights to the Child recognises that children’s rights are indivisible and interdependent. In other words, a child’s right to education depends on the realization of a broad set of other rights such as the right to food, water, and health-care services. The Committee also outlines a range of rights that need to be respected in the education system. For example children need a school environment that is safe, and where they can participate and have a say in school governance. Lastly, the Committee describes education as a gateway through which children can access other rights. For example,
education enables people to access information, move out of poverty and claim a range of other political and socio-economic rights as outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Children’s rights to, in and through education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rights to education</th>
<th>Rights in education</th>
<th>Rights through education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The right to education also depends on the realization of children’s other rights, including the:</td>
<td>A range of rights needs to be respected within the education system, including the:</td>
<td>Education facilitates access to a broad range of political, social and economic rights, including the:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to life, survival and development</td>
<td>• Right to dignity</td>
<td>• Right to dignity and equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to social security (including social grants)</td>
<td>• Right to equality and non-discrimination</td>
<td>• Right to an adequate standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to social (welfare) services</td>
<td>• Best interests of the child is of primary importance</td>
<td>• Right to information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to health and health care services</td>
<td>• Right to participate and the right to be heard and taken seriously</td>
<td>• Freedom of thought, belief, conscience, opinion and religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to water and sanitation</td>
<td>• Right to privacy and confidentiality</td>
<td>• Freedom of expression and association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Right to a clean, unpolluted environment</td>
<td>• Right to protection from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation</td>
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<td>• Right to food and nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Right to housing and shelter</td>
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Children’s rights are important for CSTL as they can be used in different ways to improve the wellbeing of children through holding duty-bearers to account.

**Rights holders and duty bearers**

The UN Convention and the African Charter were written by the United Nations and the African Union to create a better world for children. When states sign and ratify these international treaties, then their governments are legally bound to promote, respect, protect and fulfil all these rights for children. All rights are based on needs. Duty-bearers are responsible for ensuring that the rights of children, families and communities are realised. Duty bearers may be responsible legally or morally for ensuring that rights are met or they may have moral responsibility. Government is the primary duty bearer and must put policies, laws, programmes, services and budgets in place to make these rights a reality, but it is not the only duty bearer. Families, community members, service providers and civil society also have a role to play in realising children’s rights and supporting children’s wellbeing and optimal development. All adults and children are rights holders. But with rights come responsibilities. The law identifies the duty bearers for each right and describes what the duty bearer must (or must not) do to protect, promote and fulfil that right. Duty-bearers include the government, local government, community structures, parents and a range of service providers. All adults are duty-bearers except for those who lack capacity because they are mentally ill. Most rights

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involve more than one duty-bearer and there are relationships between different duty-bearers. For example, parents and families are responsible for children’s upbringing and development and should do so in a way that promotes the best interests of the child. But if parents or caregivers cannot afford to meet their children’s basic needs, then government has a duty to provide support for the family to make sure that these children can access adequate food, water clothing and shelter as well as health care, social services and education. Similarly, if the parents or family members abuse the child, then a social welfare services has a duty to protect the child. This perspective on rights helps adults to understand that the rights of children depend on the rights of adults, rather than being in competition. A rights perspective highlights the need to build circles of support.

**Building circles of support**

Bronfenbrenner’s model of development helps to identify the influences on children lives and highlights the importance of improving the relationship between schools and communities so that all partners can work together to support child well-being, particularly in the context of multiple deprivations. An ecological approach views school communities as a living system and encourages:

- the creation of a network of care that draws on many role-players in the home, school and wider community
- the strengthening of relationships and collaboration between different role players and across different sectors, instead of looking at each component in isolation
- the creation of a dynamic system that is able to respond to children’s changing needs and environment

Here is one way of describing a circle of support

**Figure 3: Circles of support**

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25 CI Caring schools project
Children: children are at the centre of the circle. Some children are vulnerable and in need care and protection, but it is also important to recognize that children can play an active role in promoting wellbeing for themselves and for other children. Children can help us understand the situation from a child’s perspective, identify workable solutions, and help their friends cope with the challenges of school work, family problems and peer pressure.

Home: this is the first circle of support for children where parents, caregivers, close family and friends meet most of children’s physical and emotional needs.

Schools: schools support children’s learning and development through the curriculum as well as through a range of extra-curricula activities. Relationships with other learners, teachers and support staff are an important resource and can either promote or undermine children’s wellbeing. As critical agents in the system, teachers also require support and their own wellbeing requires attention.

Service providers: nurses, traditional healers, agricultural extension workers, social workers and police provide essential support services to children, families and schools.

Communities: neighbours, community leaders, local businesses, NGOs and religious organizations together with ordinary community members can promote child and family wellbeing.

Wider society: International laws, policies and programmes designed to promote children’s wellbeing and optimal development. Policy makers, planners and managers at national and provincial level have a responsibility to put in place laws, policies, programmes and budgets to meet these international commitments and make sure that children and families get the services they need.

Multi-sectoral responses

CSTL aims to protect and fulfil the rights of all children and youth, enabling them to thrive and develop optimally through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning and providing essential services. While the primary concern of CSTL is with educational outcomes – enrolment, completion and performance, it recognises the need to address a broad range of barriers to learning and explicitly draws on a rights framework to promote a holistic approach to enable children to reach their full potential. Through CSTL, schools work to strengthen the protective factors that promote the wellbeing of children and reduce the risk factors that make children vulnerable. CSTL concepts are essential elements of an education system that seeks to ensure inclusion of all children of school-going age, to enable children to develop optimally and to support teachers in the important role they play in the lives of children.

A multi-sectoral, co-ordinated response requires the creation or improvement of structures and systems to foster and support CSTL interventions. As such, CSTL offers a systemic approach rather than a new “policy”, “programme” or “project” in itself. It does not replace existing initiatives but provides the overarching framework within which a range of different interventions by different role-players are encouraged, accommodated and strengthened. There is no attempt to create a one-size-fits-all model for all schools.26 It needs to accommodate a range of approaches to enable schools to:

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• Respond to the care and support needs that children and teachers may experience within a particular school community, and

• Take into account the strengths and limitations and unique circumstances of each school community and its implementation partners

The Ministry of Education in each Member State is the lead government agency in ensuring school access, retention and achievement in partnership with other Ministries, sectors and communities. The notion of school communities is used to include all the government and non-government role-players that have responsibilities for protecting learner and teacher well-being and promoting improved education outcomes. Ministries of Education are responsible for creating enabling learning environments by strengthening the education system as a whole, including:

• policy, planning and resourcing (financing, human resources and human resource development)
• curriculum
• infrastructure
• governance
• monitoring and evaluation and
• advocacy

Multi-sectoral partners are responsible for prioritised, targeted interventions, based on country and local contexts to address barriers to education achievement, such as: poverty; hunger and malnutrition; violence and abuse; early marriage and pregnancy; gender; conflict; disability; health related issues (including HIV and AIDS and other diseases); and marginalised children and youth (displaced, migrant, living on the streets, out-of-school).

CSTL addresses barriers to learning and attempts to mitigate the impact of these barriers to enable children in difficult circumstances to actively engage in learning. The challenge is to remove the barriers permanently to facilitate children’s access to and participation in education on a long-term basis. Pragmatically, Education Ministries need to adopt a multi-sectoral approach to facilitate the effective and appropriate delivery of care and support services. The delivery of comprehensive care and support services entails collaboration and co-ordination between relevant Ministries – at national, provincial and district level. For example, providing immunisation services or nutrition support through schools generally involves partnership with Ministries of Health.

SADC Member States have a clear mandate to promote and strengthen the implementation of CSTL across the SADC region.

Models of partnership

The CSTL framework offers great potential for strengthening child well-being and the quality of schooling so that children can indeed benefit from the rights to, in and through education and reverse the cycle of inequity. However, a key challenge lies in the quality and purpose of partnerships that can be mobilised.27 Walker and others make the helpful distinction between institution-based and community-based models for partnership. In the institution-based model, the school is seen as the “primary site for the provision of social and health services or where the school

27 Distinction between a community-based model and institution-based model for partnership see Walker L, Smithgall C & Cushick GR (2012) Making community an authentic part of school and community partnerships. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.
controls or dominates the planning and governance of such services.”

The advantages of the institution-based model include direct access to children and their families for services, use of space and facilities to benefit the community, and administrative structures to deliver services. The main disadvantage of this model is that it attempts to build a comprehensive health and social service delivery strategy within a single institution whose primary mandate is to provide academic instruction.

In a community-based model, multiple institutions and organisations collaborate around the planning and implementation of service systems for children. A community-based partnership includes schools, families, community organisations and government services. For example, social services, faith-based organisations, health providers, youth programmes and other community-based organisations.

There are many advantages of the community-based model, given that:

- Children live and grow up in communities and communities are places where families raise their children. The quality of life for children and families in communities depend on the strength and diversity of all the institutions and organisations that serve and support them, not exclusively on schools. Moreover the improvement of underperforming schools may depend on the community-based resources available to meet the needs of children and families.

While there is agreement in South Africa and other SADC Member States that community involvement is necessary, insufficient attention has been given to mobilising participation or reflecting on power relationships within those partnerships. In a transforming community-based model of partnership “each organisation must participate in and accept decisions made by the partnership, and the partnership must respect the expertise and mission of each institution.” This model assumes that the needs of children and families should inform the development of a range of services and strategies that can be adapted in each constantly changing context.

This approach requires an investment in capacity development within and across collaborating organisations and individuals so that all can engage meaningfully in the partnership. Community-based partnerships invest in the capacity of communities, engage community leadership, support community-based organisations and develop trust with communities. Critical reflection is essential so that power relationships between all members of the partnership can be interrogated. It is necessary to ask questions about the kind of society and kind of education that we have, whose interests it serves and how we would like it to change. Creative strategies are needed to maximise participation and ensure that all beneficiaries (including the most marginalised) are included.

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28 Walker et al 2012 page 3
29 Walker et al 2012: 3
31 Walker et al 2012 page 3
32 Walker L, Smithgall C & Cushick GR (2012) Making community an authentic part of school and community partnerships. Chicago: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
Strengthening authentic community partnership

The next section of this paper explores some examples of policy and practice in the light of the distinction between institution-based and community-based partnership and identifies opportunities for developing and strengthening community-based partnership that can bring about meaningful social change. Most school policies and school-based interventions in South Africa focus on the school as the unit of activity and could be classified as falling into an institution-based approach. Given the increasingly complex role of school leaders who have to implement a series of sophisticated education policies with very little training or support from outside the school, many school leaders have begun to respond intuitively to the AIDS pandemic by creating networks of support for learners in and around their schools and by addressing the need for basic nutrition, aftercare and counselling\(^{33}\). Some organisations and networks have introduced interventions that could inform the implementation of CSTL. The following four examples are briefly presented to illustrate some dimensions of possibility: Youth facilitators, Jamborees, the Journey of Hope in Lucau village, and School Performance Review.

**Youth facilitators link schools and communities**

One innovative strategy being developed and tested by Save the Children is the appointment of young people to provide a link between schools and communities. These youth facilitators are contracted for a maximum period of two years and play a variety of roles depending on the needs of each school. Home visits by youth facilitators have proved particularly useful in helping teachers understand the circumstances in which children live—especially as teachers frequently do not live in the communities where they teach. The primary advantage is that these youth facilitators are members of the local school community and understand the context of the school, family and learners. Youth facilitators also play other supportive roles, such as providing after school activities and helping families to access grants. There is great value in building on the strengths, energy and enthusiasm of the youth in the context of unemployment. This strategy has been expanded with funding from the expanded public works programme and there are now \(XX\) youth facilitators operating across South Africa\(^{34}\). Similar strategies are used in home-visiting programmes within the early childhood development, health and social service sectors.

There is great potential for para-professionals of this kind to work in teams supported by mentors with greater experience and expertise. However, it is essential that there is a clear career path and adequate payment for youth and community facilitators so that schools, communities and para-professionals can continue to benefit. As para-professionals gain expertise, they should be able to take on more responsible positions within the team rather than being forced to seek better employment outside the community. There is also potential for these teams to operate across a cluster of schools rather than merely being institution-based.

**Jamborees: improving access to social grants**

Soul City in collaboration with the Alliance for Children’s Entitlement to Social Services (ACESS) facilitated a campaign to improve access to social grants\(^{35}\). At the heart of the campaign were a

\(^{33}\) Marneweck et al \(XX\)

\(^{34}\) Check with Elson and add ref

\(^{35}\) The Handbook of Global Health Communication edited by Rafael Obregon, Silvio Waisbord

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series of “jamborees” also called imbizos. These were big, public outreach events that lasted for a full day and brought together all the key players into a single place. The purpose of the jamborees was to make it easier for people to register for grants.

On an agreed date relevant officials from Departments of Social Services and Home Affairs as well as South African Police (SAPS) arrive at a school, so that children and their families can apply for birth certificates, identity documents and social grants in one place at one time. In the absence of this special service, individuals would need to make several trips to different offices at great cost to families in terms of both time and transport. These events also worked best when they included a cluster of schools in the same ward.

**The Journey of Hope in Lucau Village**

In the booklet, “The Journey of Hope”\(^{36}\), the community of Lucau village in Limpopo tell the story of how they are working in an inclusive way to improve well-being of their children. In this partnership a faith-based organisation and one of its high schools partnered with a neighbouring public primary school and began to mobilise a community-based partnership. The approach for capacity building was provided through the systemic action research project led by the Children’s Institute in partnership with the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)\(^{37}\). The strategy for capacity building built on strengths and ensured that everyone was welcome. Through learning about rights children, families and community members understood the importance of building a circle of support and could identify the roles they could play. The strategy for capacity building helped to grow the conversation about child well-being through cycles of action and critical reflection consisting of three main steps:

- Understanding the situation of children in the community
- Imagining a better life for the children and
- Creating a caring school community

A range of government role-players joined non-government service providers and local residents to explore the protective and risk factors impacting on the well-being of the children in their community and started to take individual and collective action to strengthen the protective factors and minimise the risks. Children were included, not only as recipients of help, but also as active partners and champions for change. For example, it was only after children were asked to imagine a caring school that the adults paid attention and took action to provide proper toilets. They were given a grant for 14 new toilets and community members offered their labour free of charge.

This appreciative approach helps to generate energy for change. Instead of starting with a community needs analysis, it starts by, sharing stories about what is working well. Participants are

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\(^{37}\) More information on the approach can be found in *Champions for Children’s Handbook: How to build a Caring School Community* at [www.ci.org.za](http://www.ci.org.za). The approach has also informed a teacher certificate that is being developed by REPSSI for the SADC region
then encourage to imagine a better future, and problems are identified in a form that more easily generates action. Dreams are organised into three categories: those that need little or no help or resources from outside the community; those that need some help and resources; and those that need a great deal of outside assistance. This enables individuals and small groups to take action immediately. Small successes can be celebrated while the big dreams are broken into smaller manageable action steps. In this way more and more role-players can be included as the process unfolds.

A rights-based approach helps the community to understand the services to which they are entitled and how to improve access. By understanding the duties of different offices and officials and how they relate to each other, community members are better able to hold duty-bearers to account. In Lukau, it was often difficult to find the correct official, but once the person was identified it was generally easy to enlist them into the network. For example, the South African Police Service played a particularly active role and hosted various campaigns to keep children motivated and focused on schoolwork, including youth camps and back-to-school activities for out of school youth.

**School Performance Review: strengthening school and district accountability**

Link has developed a unique and innovative process to measure individual school performance against common indicators of school success across the country. This strategy for school performance review (SPR) introduces evidence-based data collection in the areas of school management and leadership, teaching and learning, and community participation. It enables communities, schools, district officials and national education departments to develop individual school and collated district performance reports. These are used to address weaknesses and make the best use of scarce school and district resources to meet each school's individual needs.

SPR is now being implemented in over 1,000 schools in our African projects, and has been adopted by national and provincial governments in South Africa, Malawi and Uganda. In each country, the process has been contextualized to fit within and add value to education policy.

It follows the following ten steps:

1. Develop initial data collection tools
2. Train district staff in SPR data collection methodology
3. Collect data in every school
4. Input data into SPR database and analyse
5. Develop school, cluster and district SPR reports
6. Facilitate School performance appraisal meetings at community, cluster and district level
7. Develop school, cluster and district integrated plans
8. District school conference
9. Implement improvement targets
10. Refine/redevelop indicators (and then the cycle continues by returning again to step 2)

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38 Link website  http://www.lcdinternational.org/lcd_international/What_we_do/SPR.htm downloaded 16 August 2012
40 http://www.lcdinternational.org/lcd_international/What_we_do/SPR.htm
This is an excellent example of a community-based model as it links school improvement across the district and takes community participation seriously. Parents see they are able “to influence what happens in the local school and have the right to hold their local school accountable for the quality of education it delivers”\(^\text{41}\). It offers the “possibility of making schools and education offices much more accountable to their clients and to the education system as a whole”\(^\text{42}\). The monitoring system is not top down and balances support with accountability.

**Making a paradigm shift**

Several shifts need to take place for CSTL to achieve its full potential. The scope of this paper can only touch on a few examples of areas for consideration. The first step is building capacity for authentic community participation that can generate possibilities for action through local decision making that responds to local challenges by drawing on local strengths and resources. This includes rethinking conventional role and models of schooling to better meet local needs.

Moving beyond individual schools to link clusters of schools and communities in meaningful partnership could open significant possibilities for strengthening schools, enhancing management and governance and allowing schools to develop referral systems and share resources across the cluster and wider community. School clusters would be better positioned to respond to local needs and draw on local resources and leadership.

In order to achieve economies of scale, the current tendency is to close smaller schools and consolidate bigger schools. This frequently impacts on access as it leaves children with longer distances to travel to school and has required building additional boarding schools, which are expensive and can exacerbate some risks to children, such as abuse\(^\text{43}\). As an alternative, multi-grade classes in which children in different grades are taught together by one teacher with appropriate training and support have proved effective locally and internationally\(^\text{44}\). Possibilities can be explored, for example, of satellite village classes, in which small groups, especially of young learners, can be taught close to home and still be part of the administration of a larger entity.

Building partnership between schools within in a cluster also means that one well-qualified teacher could supervise a team of teachers across several schools and offers other possibilities for strengthening capacity through integrated support teams and mentoring. The potential for effective integrated ward or district support teams is greater than those at school or institution level. The model of Schools as Centres of Care and Support\(^\text{45}\) includes the establishment of resource centres that service a cluster of schools. These have proved effective, but costly to establish\(^\text{46}\). It might be more feasible to locate the resources offered by the centre within a community development centre which serves the wider community. Locating school and community partnerships within effective community development could help to locate children’s issues more firmly on the ward level Integrated Development Plan.

\(^{41}\) Prew 2008 page 11

\(^{42}\) Prew M (2008) School and district accountability: A dream too far? (page 2)

\(^{43}\) Check CIE ref

\(^{44}\) Check reference

\(^{45}\) Schools as Centres of Care and Support (SCCS) is the model developed by MIET Africa in South Africa that has strongly informed the development of CSTL

\(^{46}\) Check ref
A move towards more decentralised local decision making offers the potential for more meaningful authentic partnership, but it must be accompanied by the necessary capacity building interventions that include strengthening communication across schools and between schools and with district and provincial education officials. The faltering plan\textsuperscript{47} to provide each teacher with a laptop should be evaluated and perhaps a more realistic aim could be to ensure internet access by teachers through a community development centre. Through commitment and creativity, for example, every school could at least be assured mobile telephonic communication, even in rural areas without electricity where small solar power generators can be provided.

**Conclusions**

For CSTL to deliver on its potential to bring about meaningful change, it cannot merely deliver a package of services to a specific targeted group of children, such as “orphans and other vulnerable children” (OVC). A rights-based can help to focus on the interdependent nature of rights and encourage the development of circles of support. Through identifying protective and risk factors, interventions can more effectively prioritise action for individual and groups of children in each specific context. Effective School Performance Review should balance accountability and support. CSTL must address knowledge and power relationships through building an enabling environment for critical reflection. Through the establishment of learning communities, all members of the partnerships (individuals, groups and organisations) “can develop and evolve as a whole through learning”\textsuperscript{48}. Partnerships established through CSTL must “promote democratic citizenship by inviting parents and others to form its policies, manage its resources and evaluate its services by devolving decisions about what and how to learn”\textsuperscript{49}. This is likely to be more effective across clusters of schools. Most importantly, a flexible systemic approach is needed that can build on strengths and identify and unblock barriers. A network of community-based partnerships in every ward could form the foundation for a broad-based movement for change through learning and then we might be on the road towards breaking the cycle of poverty.

\textsuperscript{47} Mail and Guardian: Mohlala T *Computers still out of reach* 31 May 2011 and Bauer N *Rescue plan for teacher laptop project in the works* 20 SEP 2011
\textsuperscript{48} Mac Naughton (2010) page 280
\textsuperscript{49} Mac Naughton (2010) page 280