

**“Communities of learning and action?”: a case  
study of the Human Rights, Democracy and  
Development project, 1999 - 2005**

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## **Abstract**

Enduring levels of illiteracy point to a long-term failure to address one of society's more solvable problems. The conditions giving rise to illiteracy are systemic and complex, but also deeply personal. Such conditions are invariably linked to histories of neglect, domination and injustice.

Lying in a small, marginal space between limited, ongoing provision of adult basic education and training (ABET) from the South African state and industry, on the one hand, and state-led mass literacy campaigns, on the other, is the ABET work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This thesis examines a case of ABET within this alternative NGO sector at a time of heightened attention to the challenges of illiteracy in the global arena and a time of major transition in South Africa. It focuses on the Human Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project in rural KwaZulu-Natal as a case of NGO-led ABET provision in community settings. The HRDD project attempted to combine ABET with livelihood and citizenship education. Its vision was to foster communities of learning and action.

Using case study methodology within a critical paradigm, this study set out to critically document, narrate, analyse and theorise the practices, learning, and identity development within the HRDD project. The entire HRDD project serves as the unit of analysis for the case study. Data collection included 28 in-depth interviews with learners, educators and project partners and analysis of more than 100 project documents.

The HRDD project provides opportunities to study adult learning and to examine a range of different types and purposes for learning. In this regard, the theories of Paulo Freire (1970; 1994), Jack Mezirow (1975; 1991), and Lave and Wenger (1999) are explored in setting up theoretical frames through which to understand and theorise learning in the project.

The HRDD project provides an excellent opportunity to examine the processes of educator development within a community-based project and to

examine the early stages of a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999; Lave, 1993) in which educators could learn the practice of "adult basic education" and find a network of support.

A further theoretical frame which emerged during the process of the study and which showed relevance and promise for theorizing the relational and social network aspects of the study is Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1990). This frame suggested the notions of *depleted social capital* and *fracture* as significant characteristics of the post-conflict status of the HRDD context.

This thesis highlights the importance of paying close attention to the lives of learners and educators in educational projects and for viewing *the project within the lives of learners and educators* rather than viewing *learners and educators in the life of the project*. The thesis illuminates and contrasts such multiple perspectives and also highlights the importance of context and history as primary shapers of learning and action.

This thesis ends with discussion of an emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project. The model contains four project dimensions, namely, *learning, identity, personal transformation and social change*. In addition, it includes four pedagogical devices, which are, *reflection, dialogue, action and relationships*. Finally, the model also reflects four major contextual factors, namely, *poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and a post-conflict status*. The concepts integrated in the model emerge from analyses and discussions throughout the thesis. The model is discussed as a summative device, as a heuristic and as a dialectic to outline several purposes which it serves in this study and could serve in future studies.

The levels of struggle and fear which emerge through this case study present a portrait of life circumstances and learning contexts which are distinctly anti-dialogical and oppressive. The portrait also depicts several tenacious women who continue to struggle and learn in hope!

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**This thesis is dedicated to my loving early educators,  
Peter Pillay, Kamatchi Pillay and Regina (Radha) John  
They did not get to see this thesis but share in its joy.**

## Declaration

I, Vaughn Mitchell John, declare that

- (i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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Signed:



Vaughn Mitchell John  
15 December 2008

As the candidate's Supervisor I agree to the submission of this thesis.

Signed:



Dr Peter Rule  
15 December 2008

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## **Abbreviations**

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ABLE	Adult Basic and Literacy Education
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa
CAE	Centre for Adult Education
CBO	Community-based Organisation
DOE	Department of Education
EFA	Education for All
ETDP	Education Training and Development Practices
FET	Further Education and Training
GEAR	Growth, Economic Acceleration and Redistribution
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRDD	Human Rights, Democracy and Development
IEB	Independent Examinations Board
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
IGP	Income-generating Project
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LWE	Learn with Echo
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NASA	Natal Adult Basic Education Support Agency
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NLS	New Literacy Studies
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PALC	Public Adult Learning Centres
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
US	United States (of America)
USA	United States of America

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction to the study**

### **Introduction**

Almost one fifth of the world's adult population still lack basic literacy skills (UNESCO, 2007). Many of these people live in the so-called developing countries of the world, often in conditions of poverty. Women have always constituted the larger portion of this section of society. The statistics point to a long-term failure to address one of society's more solvable problems. The conditions giving rise to illiteracy are systemic and complex. Such conditions are invariably linked to histories of neglect, domination and injustice. For the individuals concerned, however, the experiences of not being literate and of occupying the margins of society are always deeply personal and are often poignant accounts of survival, struggle and hope. The stories of illiterate people are frequently narratives of long-term, multiple oppression and inequality. Such stories nevertheless also contain kernels of hope. This study presents several such stories.

Adult literacy is not just about the abilities to read, write and count. Adult literacy has come to be associated with several broader public goods. Literacy is seen as an important buttress for democratic societies where people freely and actively participate as citizens in community affairs, governance processes and in development (Crowther, Hamilton & Tett, 2001). Adult literacy has been advanced as a human right, allowing people greater freedoms and improved access to other rights (Rule, 2006; UNESCO, 2005; Robinson-Pant, 2004). In workplaces, literacy has been viewed as an enabler of productivity, safety, further learning, and ultimately profit. Several countries have promoted adult literacy as a precursor to lifelong learning and to the creation of learning nations. The dual goals of global competitiveness and social cohesion for nation-building have spurred such interests in lifelong

learning (Walters, 2006). Campaigns for poverty-reduction, women's empowerment, democracy-building and social justice have also been linked to adult literacy as a foundation (see Chapter Four). The latter motivations often propel literacy work in the so-called developing parts of the world. Adult literacy has thus come to be seen as a major catalyst or enhancer of personal, organisational and societal development. Chapter Four discusses more fully the social purposes, statistics and discourses associated with adult basic education, which incorporates literacy, at global and local levels.

Advocacy for the reduction or eradication of adult illiteracy draws on strong ethical, political, economic and educational arguments and has resulted in a powerful, well-rehearsed global discourse (see Chapter Four). By contrast, the narratives regarding the creation and sustaining of illiteracy are often a much weaker, hidden and localised discourse. This latter set of narratives of illiteracy, in terms of its genesis and its lived reality, can expose broader patterns of oppression and inequality and of the systems in society which maintain such injustice. A case study of a literacy project offers an opportunity to examine the origins, experiences and responses to illiteracy. The richness of the case allows for the personal, organizational and societal narratives to be woven into a scholarly tapestry. Such a study allows for a blending of stories, critical remembering and multiple perspectives.

This chapter provides an introduction to a case study of the Human Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project, a community-based education project in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The chapter provides brief overviews of the HRDD project and its contexts, and discusses the background, methodology and rationale of the study. The latter discussion presents the HRDD project as both a form of adult education practice and as a case in study. The chapter ends with an outline of how this thesis is structured.

## **Background**

South Africa's position in the global political economy as a land of struggle and hope is ubiquitous. All domains of life in the country, economic, political, and social, are strongly framed by the dualities of struggle and hope. In 1994, the country took centre stage internationally when, after decades, the sustained popular struggle overcame divisive and destructive apartheid rule, and entered the global community as a democratic, free and hopeful country. The peaceful nature of the transition gave South Africa beacon-status on the continent, lighting up new paths from struggle to hope.

Today, after fourteen years of democratic rule, the dualities of struggle and hope continue. A rainbow nation was declared and a world-renowned constitution, which includes an impressive Bill of Rights, is in place. The economy has grown and some measure of political stability has been achieved. However, it is in the social domain that enormous challenges remain and grow. For a large part of the population, life is still very much about struggle and hope. Many people struggle to survive and continue to hope that the fruits of democracy and the promise of a substantial freedom will be theirs as well. The struggle for political freedom has not translated into social freedom or into social justice. Too many of South Africa's new citizens remain in poverty and continue to struggle to meet basic needs such as food, water, health care and education (Human Sciences Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005). And while they demonstrate enormous tenacity and survival skills, their hopes are diminishing! Most of these people, who under Apartheid were classified as African, now carry new classifications of belonging to the "second-economy" (Mbeki, 2003; Mbeki, 2006; Skinner & Valodia, 2006; Bond, 2007) or "underclass" (McCord, 2007). A large proportion of them live in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which has the most severe concentrations of unemployment, illiteracy, rural marginalisation and HIV infection in South Africa. KwaZulu-Natal, located on the east coast of the South Africa is also the most populous province (see map below). With a population of 9.4 million people, KwaZulu-Natal accommodates approximately

21 % of South Africa's population of 44.8 million people (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

South Africa's democratic era thus faces a number of challenges (Chisholm, 2004; Human Sciences Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005), particularly in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Amongst these the level of illiteracy in the country, an inheritance from the previous era, is a key challenge and remains at unacceptably high levels. According to the last census which uses an incomplete grade seven education for classifying functional illiteracy, 9.6 million adults can be considered to be functionally illiterate. Half of these adults have had no schooling at all (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

Approximately 2 million of the functionally illiterate adults live in KwaZulu-Natal. Some research argues that the actual number of illiterate adults may have grown within the new democratic dispensation (Aitchison & Harley, 2006). The low levels of adult basic education (which subsumes literacy) are commonly associated with a retarding effect on development, freedom and democracy in the country. From a rights-based perspective, such statistics present a challenge to the government in terms of equality, human rights and social justice. The literacy concerns within South Africa resonate with growing alarm and pressure at a global level as expressed in high-profile campaigns and programmes under the banners of Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Chapter Four).

Attempts to address the educational challenges in the country have raised much hope but have been weak in delivery and impact (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004). The initial years of democracy were dominated by massive restructuring of the educational landscape and enormous policy development, particularly in the schooling and higher education sectors. Large amounts of resources were devoted to these sectors. Impact has, however, been weak. South African school children perform poorly when assessed in international studies. In 1995 the country's children scored below the international average of 38 countries participating in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In a study of reading competence, South African children fared the worst amongst forty nations (Howie, Venter, van Staden, Zimmerman, Long,

Scherman & Archer, 2006). This study found that three-quarters of South African learners “were not able to reach the lowest international benchmarks” for reading (p. 60). Learners fared even worse on the nine African languages which, together with English and Afrikaans, make up South Africa’s eleven official languages. Parents’ level of education was found to strongly influence the reading abilities of the child. These startling findings serve as a warning bell regarding the creation of new generations of functionally illiterate adults. They are of concern in a country facing significant skills shortages and one which is still struggling to address its current adult illiteracy problem. There is now a real sense in which Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) in South Africa, is not just a remedial or compensatory programme in response to historical neglect. It may well be needed as an ongoing programme to deal with new generations of learners who leave school in a semiliterate state and who may lose some of the literacy-related skills they do have once they enter contexts which do not support these skills.

In regard to the ABET sector, the new government put some effort into new policy development and planning as reflected in *A National Policy Framework for Adult Basic Education and Training* (Department of Education, 1997a) and *A National Multi-year Implementation Plan for Adult Education and Training* (Department of Education, 1997b). These plans were virtually stillborn as promises of better resourcing did not materialize. Seriously inadequate budgets have been directed to adult basic education by the democratic government in South Africa (Aitchison, 2003a). The government’s main provision of ABET continued through a weak, under-resourced system of Public Adult Learning Centres (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004). Inadequate numbers of potential ABET learners have been reached, and when reached, the quality of such provision has been weak. In addition to this state provision there has been some provision from the business sector and a small, declining contribution from NGOs. The context and system of adult education in South Africa is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

The past few years appear to have heralded an important era in South African adult education history with an apparently greater acknowledgement of the

inadequacy of ABET provision and greater political will to address the challenge of illiteracy. At both national and provincial levels of government, ministers of education have in recent times made bolder statements regarding the need to address this key challenge. At a conference in 2005, Ina Cronje, the MEC for Education in KZN, made a passionate call for illiteracy to be eradicated within three years. This call was similar to an earlier one from Kader Asmal, the then national Minister of Education, who in January 2000 declared an intention to "break the back of literacy" over a five-year period. Such early statements were followed by research and consultations, including studies of successful literacy campaigns in parts of Latin America. We are now in the midst of the literacy campaign era. On 19 October 2006 a mass literacy campaign for KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), called the Masifundisane Adult Literacy Campaign (Masifundisane means "let us teach one another" in isiZulu) was officially launched (John, 2006a). A larger, national campaign, called Kha Ri Gude (meaning "let us learn" in Tshivenda) was launched on 28 February 2008. The national campaign which runs from 2008 to 2013 aims to reach 4.7 million illiterate South African adults (McKay, 2008).

Lying in a small, marginal space between limited, ongoing ABET provision from state and industry, on the one hand, and state-led mass literacy campaigns, on the other, is the work of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in ABET provision. This category of provider in South Africa was much larger and stronger in the pre-democratic era when substantial donor-NGO partnerships prevailed (John, Aitchison & Butler, 1996). Its presence and reach have declined considerably as donors directed greater portions of their funding directly to the democratically-elected government (Harley, Aitchison, Lyster & Land, 1996; Morrow, 2004). Despite its size and scale of operation, ABET provision in this sector has some unique characteristics, most significantly, its level of innovation and strong transformatory agenda. Rule (2006) refers to literacy initiatives of NGOs as an alternative model to formal government provision and campaigns for achieving adult basic education.

This study examines a case of ABET within this alternative and marginal NGO sector at a time of major transition in South Africa. It focuses on the Human

Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project in rural KwaZulu-Natal as a case of NGO-led ABET provision in community settings. As reflected in its name, the HRDD project attempted to combine ABET with livelihood and citizenship education. It is an example of an educational project which attempted to integrate ABET with development and livelihood foci (see Oxenham, Diallo, Katahoire, Petkova-Mwangi & Sall, 2002; Aitchison, Keyser, Land & Lyster, 2005 for examples of such projects).

## **Methodology**

Using case study methodology within a critical paradigm, this study set out to critically document, narrate, analyse and theorise the practices, learning, and identity development within the Human Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project. The entire HRDD project is taken as the unit of analysis for the case study. Data collection included 28 in-depth interviews with learners, educators and project partners and analysis of more than 100 project documents. A detailed discussion of the design and methodology for the study is provided in Chapter Three. As part of this introduction, the aims of the study are listed below.

### **Aims of this study**

This study was initiated with three broad aims in mind. Several specific questions were developed at the outset and during the study to elaborate these aims, which were:

1. to understand the genesis and processes of change in the HRDD project in relation to its wider context,
2. to capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning, identity and civic action, and

3. to construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory.

### **Key questions**

The two key questions listed below emerge directly from aims 1 and 2 above. These two broad questions, each with subsets of more specific questions, helped steer the study towards addressing the above-mentioned aims. These questions need to be seen as a set of initial questions. As is typical of case study research, new questions emerge during various moments of data collection and analysis. Several of these questions are raised and discussed in the chapters which follow.

#### **1. How did the project develop and change in relation to its context?**

- What gave rise to the HRDD project?
- What forces shaped the project along the way?
- How did the project relate to its various layers of context?
- What organisational and programme formations emerged through the project life cycle?
- What relationships and networks appeared and disappeared as a result of the project?
- How were successes, failures and different trajectories in the project presented and understood?
- What level of project learning did the HRDD project facilitate?

#### **2. How was the project experienced by key constituencies?**

- How did the project relate to the histories, needs, and aspirations of the learners in the project?
- How did learners story such experience?
- What factors influenced learner enrollment and retention in the project?

How did the project relate to the histories, needs, and aspirations of the educators in the project?

How did educators story such experience?

What spaces for learning did the project facilitate for various role-players?

What impact did the project have on the identities of key participants?

What spaces for broader civic participation (action) did the project facilitate and how were these experienced by various role-players?

What relationships and networks did the project harness and facilitate?

## **What was the HRDD project?**

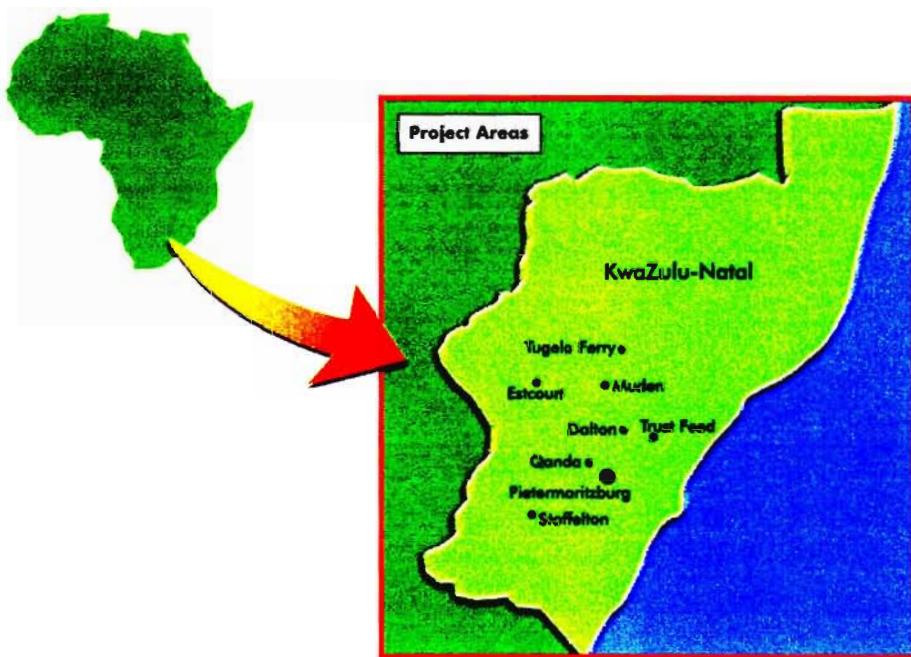
Two responses to this question are provided. The first response presents a short descriptive account of the HRDD project in terms of what it did, who it involved and where it took place. This response positions the HRDD project as an education and development intervention. A more detailed narrative of project activities can be found in Chapter Five. A second response to this question adopts the perspective of an adult educator and researcher and positions the HRDD project as a form of practice for theorisation and knowledge production. The latter perspective hones into the heuristic properties of the project and also elaborates the rationale for the study.

### **The HRDD project – an education and development intervention**

The HRDD project was an adult education and development intervention in rural KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The project was initiated in 1999 as a partnership between the Tembaletu Community Education Centre (an education NGO in KZN), the Centre for Adult Education (CAE, a university department in KZN), the Embassy of Finland (a donor agency in South Africa) and seven communities in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The communities are Dalton, Tugela Ferry, Qanda, Estcourt, Trust Feed, Muden and Stoffelton (see map of site locations below). The project, whose tenth year of operation was 2008, offered a combination of ABET classes and livelihoods activities to adult learners in several communities. The combined activities of the project aimed to create a

literate, informed and active citizenry who could participate in development in their communities. The project's rural sites are all characterised by high levels of unemployment and poverty, and low levels of education and development, all of which contribute to marked social exclusion (discussed more fully in Chapter Five). Educators for the literacy classes were recruited from within these rural communities and constitute a new cadre of community-based adult educators who have been trained and supported by Tembaletu and CAE. The learners and educators who participated in the project were predominantly women.

**Figure 1: Map of KwaZulu-Natal reflecting HRDD sites**



The project was essentially an adult education intervention with a livelihoods component and a strong curriculum emphasis on the themes of human rights, democracy and development (hence the project name). A central part of the rationale for the project was to establish literacy classes and income-generating projects within marginalised communities as spaces for people to learn and practice democracy in a micro context, as preparation for application and civic action in wider contexts. An important goal of the project was to

facilitate critical reflection amongst participants with regard to their life circumstances and their futures. The intervention was a complex endeavour with several different delivery components, sites, actors, stakeholders and discourses interwoven into a single project, or in case study language, "an integrated system" (Stake, 1995, p.2). From the outset, the project received considerable research attention, particularly of the evaluation type, resulting in a huge and rich archive of data.

### **The HRDD project – a heuristic or a case in study**

A case study of the HRDD project allows for an array of research interests and foci to be pursued. The social practices of the HRDD project could be approached and understood from different paradigmatic and methodological orientations. Likewise, several theoretical and conceptual frameworks or schemas could be fruitfully employed in understanding and generating knowledge about the project. There is also an enormous body of data to be considered and there too, a choice in terms of what to consider and focus on. A case study of the HRDD project thus involves several choices which a researcher must make. Acknowledging a range of choices and declaring the actual choices made, reflect the constructed nature of this case study (as with all studies) and something of how a researcher comes to be implicated in the study. In this section, I set out the choices made in constructing this case study of the HRDD project and offer some justification for my choices. Here, I will be providing some details and background to "the making" of the case and "to making sense" of the case.

As an educational intervention, the HRDD project can be located within the sub-discipline or field known as adult education. The HRDD project has community-based learning at its centre and is an example of adult education practice in a transitional and developing context. Its core programmes of adult basic education and livelihoods activities are typical of adult education practice in developing contexts. Its foci and the origins of its name relate to the transitional state of its context, a new democratic South Africa, post-1994. Human rights, democracy and development are seen as key national priorities of the new South Africa and thereby provide direction to its adult education

practice. The HRDD project provides a space to examine formal, non-formal and informal adult education and the interactions between these forms of education within a single project. These different forms of adult education are defined and discussed in Chapter Four and illustrated within the project partners' narrative in Chapter Five.

The HRDD project involves several actors, organized into different social groupings. Different actors and collectives play a range of roles and can be seen to be enacting different practices, identities and knowledge-making processes. These actors all make sense of the project from different socio-cultural and historical positions. These subjectivities and interpretations allow for fruitful analysis of how project participants negotiate projects and incorporate them into their life courses. This study allows for critical remembrances (McLaren and da Silva, 1993; Tejeda, 2005) and for the voices of learners and educators, not often heard, to be given expression. In this way the dynamic and lived nature of the HRDD project may be reflected. Such a lived perspective makes for interesting comparisons with the official project script as portrayed in project proposals, for instance. The study allows for a theorisation of the relationships between context (rural KwaZulu-Natal), learning, identity and action, particularly for women in marginal positions.

As indicated above, a case study of the HRDD project provides perspectives into several important areas of interest and debate within the adult education and community development fields. It could also make a much-needed contribution in terms of scholarly analysis and documentation of NGO-led education project work and of community-based adult education provision in rural contexts. NGO and community-based organisations rarely have the capacity or time to undertake such research activity. As the project is rich in data and reports, future similar projects could benefit from a form of meta-analysis as part of the case study which takes the analysis to new levels of knowledge production and theorising. There are gains to be made from closer attention to the lives of learners and educators in projects such as this one, and from a view of the project within the lives of its main participants. This brings a different perspective to the HRDD project, which has predominantly

adopted the perspective of *viewing learners and educators in the life of the project*. This case study attempts to illuminate and contrast such multiple perspectives.

As an example, the HRDD project allows for an examination of community-based adult education provision during South Africa's first decade of political freedom and democracy, which was also a period of massive formalisation of the education sphere. In an earlier period, the HRDD project would most likely have been constituted as a typical non-formal educational intervention, with a strong non-governmental stance within the radical adult education tradition (von Kotze, 2005; Welton, 1995; Collins, 1991). Within its context and the period under study (1999-2005), the HRDD project represents a shift from projects of such earlier periods and presents an interesting mixture of informal, non-formal and formal adult learning (Walters, 1998; Tight, 1996), operating within a sea of formalisation and increased relationships with state structures, policy and discourses (Morrow, 2004). We are granted an opportunity here to observe a project sitting at the nexus of discourses and ideologies of the radical tradition and instrumental traditions (Collins, 1991). It is important that this type of educational provision, which often lies at the margins of the educational landscape, is investigated, and that its actors, ideologies, processes and stories are documented and understood.

There are also opportunities in this study to focus on adult learning and on a range of different types and modalities of learning. Given the HRDD project's goals, we can examine learning for purposes of personal transformation and social change. The HRDD project affords substantial spaces for learning through practice for learners, educators and project partners. In this regard, the theories of Paulo Freire (1970; 1994), Jack Mezirow (1975; 1991), and Lave and Wenger (1999) will be explored in setting up theoretical frames through which to understand and theorise learning in the project.

The HRDD project provides an excellent opportunity to examine the processes of educator development within a community-based project. The educators in the project were all recruited from within the participating local

communities and have participated in several forms of training and development, through formal, non-formal and informal learning processes. Unlike the schooling sector, the field of adult education in South Africa does not have well-established systems and pathways for educator development. It would be interesting to examine the processes of educator development adopted (or evolved) within the HRDD project with a view to understanding the practices of these educators and the development of their competences and identities. The project under study was a product of a planned pedagogic and organizational intervention with explicit ideological, educational and development goals. As an educational intervention constructed by bringing together existing educational activities or programmes, the HRDD project can be conceived of as a partnership project or as possibly constituting several communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1999). Of particular interest, would be an examination of whether the project facilitated the development of a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999; Lave, 1993; Von Kotze, 2003; Van Vlaenderen, 2004; John, 2006b) in which educators could learn the practice of "adult basic education" and find a network of support.

A further theoretical frame which emerged during the process of the study and which showed relevance and promise for theorizing the relational and social network aspects of the study is Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990; Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Several strands of this theory are reviewed in Chapter Two. Of these, Bourdieu's theorization of social capital has greater currency because of the attention given to context and structures of power in society (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Coleman's (1988; 1990) concept of *closure* is employed in this study to theorise the state of community relations at HRDD sites.

A case study of the HRDD project thus offers space for a multi-faceted inquiry and understanding related to the research interests discussed above. A case study allows for various interests and foci to be pursued within a single study and in relation to contextual and historical impulses. Chapters Four and Five

provide greater detail on the layers of HRDD context. A brief preview of some of the main features of the HRDD context is offered next.

## **The HRDD contexts**

The HRDD project is best understood against the background of the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) which has high unemployment, high illiteracy levels, vast rural terrain, a history of civil violence, worrying AIDS statistics and poor socio-economic development (Statistics South Africa, 2003), all of which are sources of barriers to learning and civic participation for communities in the province. While the local contexts of the seven HRDD communities are typical of the KZN context, they each have peculiar socio-political features. Within the wider context of South Africa, the project is located within a new democratic dispensation, a constitution with a strong Bill of Rights, a state discourse on freedom, equality and justice, poor educational provision for adults (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004), a declining NGO sector (Morrow, 2004) and massive moves towards formalisation and standardisation within education (Baatjes & Mathe, 2004). From a wider global perspective, the HRDD project resonates with ideas and campaigns for Lifelong Learning, Education For All and Citizenship Education (Walters, 2006; Bhola, 2004). Chapter Four provides a detailed exploration of various layers of context which are seen as encompassing the project.

This case study of the HRDD project seeks to understand the project within, and in dialectical relation to, these various contextual impulses.

## **Delimiting the study**

This case study examines the first seven years of the HRDD project, from 1999 until 2005. This aspect of setting a temporal boundary for the case study is necessary. Although the HRDD project has continued since 2005, the data

used in this study reflects participants' experiences of the project up until 2005.

Also, the study focuses only on the core adult education practices of the HRDD project within rural communities. For a few initial years, the HRDD project included a subproject called the Hope Study Project. Because this was an urban project targeting a transient population of secondary school learners, it fell outside the scope of the present study.

## **Title and structure of this thesis**

The title of this thesis, namely, "Communities of learning and action?": A case study of the Human Rights, Democracy and Development project, 1999-2005, reflects two major features of this study. The first part of the title signals the main research and theoretical interests of this study, by posing broad questions about *learning* and *action* in the project and the notion of *community*. The second part of the title is a methodological descriptor, which conveys the intention to conduct a case study of the first seven years of the HRDD project.

In presenting this case study, I have chosen to reflect multiple perspectives and stories about the HRDD project. The second half of the thesis therefore presents project partners', learners' and educators' narratives and perspectives. In the analysis and conclusions, I have attempted to connect these narratives to broader narratives of South African society. The earlier chapters which discuss the literature and contexts relevant to the study can be treated as pre-story frames.

As a document, the thesis has been organised into nine chapters. The literature reviewed for this study is presented mainly in Chapter Two and Chapter Four; however Chapters One and Three also refer to broader literature relevant to the study. The findings and discussion of the study are presented over four chapters (Five, Six, Seven and Eight). Chapter Nine

concludes the study and introduces an emergent perspective. A synopsis of each chapter is provided below.

### **Chapter One – Introduction**

This chapter introduces the study by setting out its background, context, methodology, research foci and theoretical interests.

### **Chapter Two: Theoretical framework**

This chapter is divided into two parts, with each part providing a discussion of two theories. Part 1 examines the adult learning theories of Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire, as an internal framework of the HRDD project in terms of the explicit influence of these theories on project design. Part 2 of the framework examines two further theories, namely, Communities of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1999; Wenger, 1998) and Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990). The latter constitute the external theoretical framework for the study.

### **Chapter Three: Research design and methodology**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology involved in conducting a case study of the HRDD project. Organised in four sections, the chapter locates the current study within a critical paradigm, discusses case study methodology, discusses data collection, data management and data analysis, and finally discusses researcher positioning, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

### **Chapter Four: Adult education and development contexts**

This chapter outlines various layers of context in which the HRDD project is situated. Working from the global to the local, the chapter allows the project to be located and understood in terms of significant developments, agendas and discourses in its global, regional and local contexts. This chapter reviews several conferences, policies, programmes, definitions and statistics on illiteracy. This chapter is part of the literature review for this study.

## **Chapter Five: Project partners' perspectives: learning in a rich community of practice.**

This chapter is divided into two parts. It attempts to convey, from the project partners' perspective, a textured portrait or thick description of the HRDD project by presenting, in narrative form, its critical stages, activities, sites and participants. In doing so, significant changes in the project are illuminated and presented in terms of the forces underlying such change and the implicit ideological foundations. The first part of the chapter presents a narrative of the participants, the sites and the activities of the HRDD project as recorded in various project documents. The second part of the chapter discusses project genesis, change dynamics, relationships, ideological positions, project learning and other significant trends emerging from the project partners' narrative. Some discussion of key metaphors in the project narrative is also offered.

## **Chapter Six: Learners' perspectives and critical remembrances**

This chapter presents narratives and analysis of the adult learners in the HRDD project. The first section of the chapter provides brief narratives of seven learners with regard to their lives and experiences in the HRDD project. A second section is organized around key themes which emerge from the learner narratives. The concept of critical remembrance is employed for analyzing and presenting the key themes.

## **Chapter Seven: Educators' perspectives on learning and identity development.**

This chapter presents narratives and analysis of the experiences of the educators in the HRDD project. Using a format similar to the previous chapter, the first section of the chapter provides brief narratives of seven educators with regard to their lives and experiences in the HRDD project. Greater detail on the educators' experiences in the HRDD project follows in the second section which is organized around key themes emerging from their narratives about the project.

## **Chapter Eight: Educators' perspectives on negotiating the relational space.**

This chapter is also based on the narratives of the educators in the HRDD project. Its focus is the relational space of the project from the perspective of the educators. The chapter discusses a range of relationships in the study and how such relationships shape project activity in both positive and negative ways. The chapter pays close attention to remembrances of political violence in educators' narratives. The relational space of the project is theorized using Social Capital theory.

## **Chapter Nine: Concluding and emergent perspectives: many windows, few doors ...**

This final chapter draws on the preceding chapters in attempting to highlight the most significant findings of the study and connecting these to broader societal narratives. It summarises the main conclusions regarding learning, identity development, personal transformation and social change. The chapter also provides some reflection on conducting a case study.

The final section of Chapter Nine introduces an emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project. The model contains four project dimensions, namely, learning, identity, personal transformation and social change. In addition, it includes four pedagogical devices, which are, reflection, dialogue, action and relationships. Finally, the model also reflects four major contextual factors, namely, poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and a post-conflict status. These concepts integrated in the model emerge from analyses and discussions in the previous eight chapters. The model is discussed as a summative device, as a heuristic and as a dialectic to outline several purposes which it serves in this study and could serve in future studies.

## **Conclusion**

This study is premised on the view that the HRDD project was about engagement in a planned set of practices and thus constitutes constructive

processes involving learning, identity, relationships, ideology and discourses. Sets of understanding and practices developed in the HRDD project were unique to the group of actors involved and were bound by a range of historical and contemporary factors. This case study seeks to surface these factors and their influences in the project through a consideration of various layers of HRDD context. It further seeks to document and theorise the unique set of understandings and practices which evolved through a period of seven years of the project's life. In doing this, privileged attention will be given to the lives and voices of learners and educators. Their struggles and hopes permeate the study.

Through this study, the people and lives referred to in the Education for All campaign and the Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign as *illiterate* and in former-President Mbeki's classification as *second-economy citizens*, are also seen as what Paulo Freire (1970) saw as *the oppressed* and Frantz Fanon (1988) described as *the wretched of the earth*. They are, however, also incredible survivors, many of whom engage in critical reflection, dialogue and transformative learning.

Through a case study an attempt is made to provide a holistic and situated account of a multi-faceted community-based adult education project in a marginal and transitional context of South Africa.

This chapter introduced this case study of the Human Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project. It provided an overview of the HRDD project and its contexts, and discussed the background, methodology and rationale of the study. The chapter ended with an outline of this document's structure and a brief synopsis of each of the nine chapters.

The next chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Theoretical framework**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter is divided into two parts. Each part presents a discussion of two theories. Part one examines the theories of Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire. These theories of learning developed by Mezirow and Freire are of special relevance to the case study of the HRDD project as they influenced the design and implementation of the HRDD project. In particular, concepts such as reflection, dialogue, transformation, empowerment and civic action which feature prominently in the project's design and goals (described in Chapter Five) are firmly underpinned by the theories of Freire and Mezirow. Chapter Five, which presents the project partners' perspectives and understanding of project, reveals the influence of Mezirow's and Freire's ideas in the original design of the project. The extents to which the original design and influences of Mezirow's and Freire's works are sustained in the implementation of the project are critically examined in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight. The theories of Mezirow and Freire are treated as an internal theoretical framework of the HRDD project. It is the project itself which thus suggested this part of the theoretical framework in the present case study.

Part two of the theoretical framework examines two further theories, namely, Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998) and Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1998). Wenger's theorisation of learning and identity-development through engagement in practice within a community was seen as a suitable lens for examining the practices of different actors in the HRDD project and how such practices served learning and development objectives in the project. The relevance of Social Capital theory emerged during the process of this study and was prompted by the attention given to the role of relationships in the

adult learning literature (see section on Transformative Learning theory below) as well as the substantial amount of data dealing with relationships of trust, cooperation and conflict in the study. Part two of the theoretical framework thus contains external, researcher-introduced and data-prompted theoretical lenses. These theories extended the theoretical framework for studying the HRDD project by introducing additional lenses for new understandings and theorisation. In addition, Chapter Nine presents a conceptual model emerging from this study. This introduces a further lens developed through an inductive, grounded-theory process.

Of the four theories reviewed in this chapter, namely, Transformative Learning (Mezirow), Critical Pedagogy (Freire), Communities of Practice (Wenger) and Social Capital (Bourdieu, Putnam and Coleman), the first three are seen as relatively comprehensive theories of adult learning. Social Capital theory, by comparison, is regarded as an auxiliary theory which informs important aspects of the discussion and theorization of community-based adult learning and development, particularly with respect to relationships and social networks.

Each of the four theories discussed in this chapter, begins with a rationale for the inclusion of the theory in this case study. This is followed by a discussion of the origins of the theory by examining its contextual and theoretical roots, and its key contributors. Such an examination within a critical paradigm allows for the ideological underpinnings of the theory to be surfaced. The main tenets and concepts of the theory are discussed, together with applications of the theory in studies. This is followed by a review of the critique of the theory in the literature, as well as my own critique thereof. Each theoretical section ends with a discussion of the implications and questions which the theory raises for this case study of the HRDD project and for future research.

## **Part One: Transformative Learning theory of Jack Mezirow**

### **Introduction**

Transformative Learning theory was articulated by Mezirow, the 20<sup>th</sup> century American adult education practitioner and theorist, in his 1975 work entitled, *Education for Perspective Transformation: Women's Re-entry Programs in Community Colleges*. The theory was appreciably developed in *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (Mezirow, 1975; Mezirow, 1991). The theory has received substantial attention from both practitioners and researchers in adult education. Cranton's (1994; 1996) work exemplifies the interest from a practitioner perspective while a series of influential studies by Taylor (1997; 2001; 2007) exemplifies the interest in Transformative Learning theory from a research perspective. Today, Transformative Learning theory rests on over three decades of development and scholarship in adult education. It stands as a major theory of adult learning. The theory has attracted much critique (Pietykowski, 1998; Inglis, 1997; Pietykowski, 1996; Newman, 1994), some of which has evoked responses from Mezirow (1998a; 1998b; 1997).

Transformative Learning theory has particular relevance for this case study of the HRDD project for two main reasons. Firstly, Transformative Learning theory was influential in the design and implementation of the HRDD project and in research and theorization of the project. In the conceptualisation and planning of the HRDD project, an expressed goal was to foster critical thinking and transformative learning amongst learners and educator in the project. Further expression of Transformative Learning theory is to be found in how the CAE project partner sought to make meaning of the project. A good example of this expression of the theory in the project is evident in an article written by Memela and Land (2006). To this extent, Transformative Learning theory has an historical connection with the project in that it served as an

internal theoretical frame to plan, implement and understand the project and this frame needs to be subjected to some examination in this case study.

A second strand of the rationale relates to the fact that Transformative Learning theory now enjoys recognition through a substantial body of literature within adult education. The literature is, however, based largely on studies conducted in the western, 'developed' world. This bias prompted a recent study of Transformative Learning theory (the study adopted the term transformational learning when discussing transformative learning) in Botswana (Merriam and Ntseane, 2008). The HRDD project is an educational project for adults in rural South Africa, a developing context. An examination of learning in the HRDD project from the perspective of Transformative Learning theory, as a popular contemporary theory in adult learning, could shed light on the value of the theory within a southern developing context which is marked by impoverished learning environments. In this regard, the inclusion of Transformative Learning theory in this study holds potential value in terms of theory development. The theory offers a lens for an understanding of learning, identity development and personal change within the HRDD project.

## **What is Transformative Learning theory?**

Transformative Learning theory according to Mezirow (cited by Taylor, 2007, p.173) is where "learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action". According to Mezirow (1975, 1991), adults develop over the course of their lives a worldview which guides their perceptions of experiences. This worldview, their sense of seeing and being in the world, is a construct of a lifetime of prior learning. The worldview is made up of meaning perspectives which serve as frames of reference for all experiences and learning encountered in life. Meaning perspectives and their constituent parts, which Mezirow calls meaning schemes, act as powerful filters or mediators when interpreting new experiences. As is commonly

articulated in constructivist theories of learning, Mezirow argues that when confronted with new experiences adults need to integrate such experiences with their prior learning. Often, such integration will occur smoothly. However, when integration is not smooth, but presents a dilemma or contradiction for the person, the person has to find a way of resolving the tension. Two options are available in such circumstances. One option is that the new information is rejected and the tension is thus resolved with the meaning perspective intact. The other option is for the person to reflect on and revise their meaning perspective. When the latter option is taken, the person's meaning perspective has been transformed, and transformative learning is said to have occurred. Mezirow sees transformative learning as a goal of adult education, allowing for the ongoing development and learning of adults (Mezirow 1975; 1991).

Mezirow outlines two processes through which transformative learning can take place. In the first process, transformative learning occurs gradually over a period of time in which a person's meaning schemes are revised through critical reflection. The second process involves a swifter and more dramatic transformation of the person's worldview. The above summary is a very broad overview of a multi-faceted theory developed over a considerable period. The remainder of this section will provide greater detail on aspects of the theory.

## **Development of Transformative Learning theory**

Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory has its origins in a study he conducted in 1975 of women returning to college after an extended hiatus. This early contribution to the development of Transformative Learning theory had a strong focus on personal transformation of the individual and identified learning as a key lever in adult development. Based on his 1975 study Mezirow (1991, p.168) described a ten-phase process of perspective transformation involving:

1. Experiencing a disorienting dilemma
2. Undergoing self-examination

3. Conducting a critical assessment of internalized role assumptions and feeling a sense of alienation from traditional social expectations
4. Relating one's discontent to similar experiences of others or to public issues - recognizing that one's problem is shared and not exclusively a private matter
5. Exploring options for new ways of acting
6. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. Planning a course of action
8. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
9. Making provisional efforts to try new roles and to assess feedback
10. Reintegrating into society on the basis of conditions dictated by the new perspective.

Although studies have confirmed the general model of perspective transformation developed by Mezirow, several have found the process to be recursive rather than linear. Mezirow subsequently acknowledged that the process may not follow the exact 10-phase sequence (Taylor, 1997). The genesis period of Transformative Learning theory appears to reveal a strong influence of developmental and cognitive psychology in Mezirow's thinking. As reflected in the ten phases listed above, the theory at this stage has a distinct focus on the transformation of the individual. Much of the critique of Transformative Learning theory appears to have focussed on this aspect of 'individualism' in the theory and the consequent discounting of the social nature of experience and learning (Newman, 1994; Inglis, 1997). This feature of Mezirow's theory in its early stages is probably accounted for by the dominance of the psychology of the individual, reflected in academic discourse at the time of its development (Inglis, 1997).

Mezirow's work in the decade following his first articulation of Transformative Learning theory drew heavily on the thinking of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. A second and smaller influence on Mezirow's work came from the thinking of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (Cranton, 1994). As to Freire's influence, Mezirow drew links between perspective transformation and Freire's notion of conscientization, making reference to Freire's (1970) four

levels of consciousness. It is noteworthy, that Freire's central idea of praxis (Freire, 1970), captured in his fourth level of consciousness, of acting on the world on the basis of conscientization to transform the world, does not gain prominence in Mezirow's theory. Mezirow's theory focussed on personal transformation rather than social transformation, although he linked the two processes in subsequent clarifications of the theory (Mezirow, 1997)

Clare (2006, p.380) states that there is agreement between Freire and Mezirow with regard to perspective transformation involving three elements, namely:

- (a) an empowered sense of self that is made manifest in greater self-confidence,
- (b) a more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture shape one's belief and feelings, and
- (c) more functional strategies and resources for taking action.

### **Meaning perspectives in Transformative Learning theory**

As stated earlier, Mezirow saw the worldview we bring to experiences in life as being made up of meaning perspectives acquired during life. He described these perspectives as "uncritically assimilated habits of expectation" (1991, p.4) which frame our perceptions of the world and how we interpret experiences. Meaning perspectives consist of sets of meaning schemes, which are "specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgements or feelings involved in making an interpretation (Mezirow, 1991, p.5) Mezirow describes three types of meaning perspectives, namely, epistemic, psychological and sociolinguistic (1991).

The concept of meaning perspectives operates as a lynchpin in Transformative Learning theory as it represents both the accumulation of past learning and the target of new learning. This idea is captured in Mezirow's definition of meaning perspective as "Sets of habitual expectation or meaning perspectives (created by ideologies, learning styles, neurotic self-deception) constitute

codes that govern the activities of perceiving, comprehending, and remembering" (1991, p.4). Mezirow used the term "habitual expectation" to communicate an important aspect of meaning perspectives, namely, that they are held over lengthy periods without being subjected to critical examination. In Transformative Learning theory, meaning perspectives are subjected to critical scrutiny and either validated or revised. Mezirow identified critical reflection as the process for doing this.

### **Critical reflection in Transformative Learning theory**

Critical reflection, notably self-reflection, is a further key concept in Transformative Learning theory. Mezirow saw reflection as the process of "critically assessing the content, process, or premise(s) of our efforts to interpret and give meaning to an experience" (1991, p.104). This definition reflects the three types of reflection, namely, content, process and premise, which Mezirow identified. Mezirow explains the importance of the three types of reflection with reference to changes in meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. Content and process reflection allow for beliefs or meaning schemes to be altered. Premise reflection however, allows meaning perspectives, and consequently worldviews, to be transformed.

Using the conceptual framework discussed above, Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory is about a learning process in which adults examine their meaning perspectives, through a process of critical reflection (premise reflection), resulting in possible transformation of such perspectives. When perspectives are transformed, emancipatory learning is said to have occurred, paving the way for personal transformation. Mezirow (1998b, p.72) explains that Transformative Learning theory "deals with how individuals may be empowered to learn to free themselves from unexamined ways of thinking that impede effective judgement and action".

## **Reflective discourse in Transformative Learning theory**

The role of reflective discourse is an important concept in Transformative Learning theory. It does, however, appear to have received insufficient attention in the early articulations of the theory. Mezirow has since fortified the importance of discourse in the theory, partly in his response to critique about the overly individualised character of Transformative Learning theory (discussed in the next section). For instance, in response to critique from Newman (1994), Mezirow (1997, p.60) refers to "discourse to validate the critically reflective insight" as one part of the process of perspective transformation. References to discourse and possible action taken by the learner are two main forms of defence mounted by Mezirow when arguing that Transformative Learning theory does have a social character (Mezirow, 1997).

## **Applications of Transformative Learning theory**

Transformative Learning theory has been employed in a number of empirical studies and theoretical essays in adult education and other areas of education. Taylor's reviews (1997; 2007) indicate that there has been wide employment of Transformative Learning theory in empirical studies. These reviews have examined studies which examine Transformative Learning theory from the perspectives of social and community transformation, participation in group experiences, personal illness, intercultural learning, and lifestyle and career changes. It is noteworthy, that these studies reviewed by Taylor involved learning contexts and samples found largely in the western, developed part of the world.

Furthermore, the context of adult basic education has not featured in such studies. Mezirow has, however, shown the relevance of his theory to adult basic education in an article entitled, "Toward a learning theory of adult literacy" (Mezirow, 1996). This article argues for a perspective on adult literacy education which transcends literacy being seen just as a task performance or a competency and includes a vision of literacy being a transformative process.

For literacy education to meet such higher order goals, emphasis has to be placed on critical reflection on assumptions and discourse. Chapter Five will show that this goal was a central part of the original HRDD project design and was theorized using Transformative Learning theory by the project partners (Memela and Land, 2006).

In a study which supported Mezirow's theory on perspective transformation, Bennetts (2003) investigated the impact of transformational learning on 197 individuals, their families and their communities. She found that individuals (within a fellowship scheme) in supportive and trusting relationships enjoyed significant transformations in motivation, career aspirations, relationships and quality of life. Employing Mezirow's 10-step model of perspective transformation, Bennetts reports evidence of a disorienting dilemma, but in some instances this was of the gradual 'slow burn' type rather than a critical incident. A significant aspect to this study is the attention given to the life context of the participants and the notion of a predisposition for change. Bennetts (2003, p. 460) argues that in "order to be 'change ready', individuals need to have some hope for the future; some dream that they can aspire to in order to go through the difficult process of changing their circumstances". Bennetts found that participation in the fellowship scheme served as a catalyst for hope as it signaled new possibilities in the lives of the fellows. Does participation in the HRDD project generate similar hope?

Like Bennetts, Kovan and Dirkx (2003) reported that perspective transformation amongst environmental activists was a gradual process over an extended period of time rather than a dramatic and climactic moment. They state that although the deep engagement experienced by environmental activists "may result in various disorienting dilemmas or catalytic events, these seem more the result of an attitude or stance toward one's life, rather than provoking change itself .... Rather than epochal happenings, the activists' experiences of transformation suggest a lived stance towards a sense of a call, a form of practice reflective of deep spiritual commitments, and gradual unfolding of the self "(p.114). In a study of women, Pope (cited by Taylor, 1997) described a similar trigger event to transformative learning, where an

evolutionary unfolding occurred rather than a dramatic crisis. While these applications of Transformative Learning theory have been supportive of some key concepts, they have also served to broaden understandings of concepts such as the disorienting dilemma and the rate of response to it.

A unique and valuable contribution to the literature on Transformative Learning theory is found in a three-part longitudinal study of HIV-positive adults. Reported as three separate articles in *Adult Education Quarterly* (Courtenay, Merriam and Reeves, 1998; Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves and Baumgartner, 2000; Baumgartner, 2002), the study explored meaning-making and perspective transformation with a cohort of HIV-positive adults over a four year period. The unique contributions of this study rest in the opportunity created through its longitudinal design, started in 1995, for assessing the durability of perspective transformation and for concurrently tracking changes in meaning schemes over a period of living and learning with HIV/AIDS. In the third phase of the study conducted in 1999, Baumgartner (2002) was able to attest to the durability of the original perspective transformation, to report that participants had acted on subsequent meaning schemes, and to identify two further changes to meaning schemes. In addition, this third phase of the study highlighted the centrality of social interaction to the learning process and provided some evidence of personal transformations which had led to social transformations. Baumgartner (2002, p. 57) reports:

Initially, participants experienced a perspective transformation that resulted in a strong need to help others. When participants joined groups that fought for causes such as money for HIV/AIDS drugs, they acted on their new perspective of needing to be of service to others, and their collective actions helped others ... in the local HIV/AIDS community.

Such evidence is extremely significant given the critique (discussed below) of Mezirow's purported neglect of social action and social change.

## Critique of Transformative Learning theory

As indicated earlier, Transformative Learning theory has drawn considerable critique. A fair amount of the critique of the theory is captured in Taylor's critical reviews (1997; 2007). This body of critique can be treated as emerging from an empirical basis. In addition, critical challenges to theory have appeared as theoretical essays in journals, notably, Adult Education Quarterly. In several instances Mezirow has responded to such critique, sometimes with extreme robustness (see Mezirow 1998a; Mezirow 1998b), and through such exchanges has furthered clarified and developed Transformative Learning theory. This is an admirable feature of the scholarship on Transformative Learning theory where Mezirow and commentators have clarified and developed the theory through debate and dialogue, to the benefit of the field. A number of Mezirow's most explicit views on the social and situated dimensions of experience and learning have emerged through such dialogue with his critics.

While Taylor's (1997; 2007) reviews show that a number of studies confirmed Mezirow's model of perspective transformation, particularly in relation to the trigger element of a disorienting dilemma, Taylor (*ibid*) did however indicate that there were additional aspects not considered by the model. Some of the studies reviewed signaled the need for considerations of more gradual transformation over a longer period of time, of the role of intense emotions and prior stressful life events, of readiness factors for change, of non-rational ways of knowing such as intuition, empathy and spirituality, and of the centrality of positive relationships in transformative learning. All of these findings pointed to the need for a more holistic and contextually grounded view of transformative learning with greater attention paid to affect and *emotional engagement* and to the *relational space of learning* (my terms and emphases). These dimensions of learning are explored in forthcoming chapters.

Some of the critique of this theory is worth pursuing further in the light of the HRDD case study, particularly in relation to learning experiences of learners and educators in the project. Firstly, the importance of relationships and associated concepts such as trust, support and friendship, were highlighted in the review as being highly significant in transformative learning. Mezirow's original formulation of the theory appears to have neglected the importance of relationships in transformative learning. Instead he articulated a process which tends to promote the ideas of a self-directed, autonomous learner. The centrality of relationships reported in studies of transformative learning highlight the social and connected nature of knowing and learning. Yorks and Sharoff (2001) also signal the importance of relationships in promoting the idea of 'collaborative inquiry' where the group context introduces benefits such as diversity of perspectives, social support and greater connectivity between social action and personal change.

Taylor (1997, p. 55) also identified the need for transformative learning:

... to be explored at a more in-depth level, providing greater understanding of the varying nature of the catalyst of the learning process (disorienting dilemma), the significant influence of context (personal and social factors), the minimization of the role of critical reflection and increased role of other ways of knowing.

The decontextualised nature of the disorienting dilemma in Transformative Learning theory has received critique for ignoring the mediating influence of the immediate and historical context of the life crisis. Not all life crises initiate perspective transformation. Yorks and Sharoff (2001, p.25), who explored transformative learning in nursing education, concur with the critique of Mezirow's focus on rational ways of knowing. They argue for an extended epistemology which "links and integrates the intuitive and affective dimensions of learning with the cognitive reflection emphasized by Mezirow".

This discussion now turns to some of the critique of Transformative Learning theory, which has appeared in the form of published theoretical essays. For

many of these Mezirow offers a response and in two cases the authors followed with rejoinders. Newman (1994) asserted that Transformative Learning theory had not provided answers for how transformative learning could occur in the context of systemic oppression and for how it could contribute to political struggle. Newman's disappointment stems largely from the neglect of social action, particularly collective social action, in Transformative Learning theory. He drew attention to Mezirow's acknowledgement that adult educators could only help facilitate emancipatory education which led to personal transformation.

In a response entitled, "Transformation theory out of context", Mezirow (1997) contended that personal transformation triggered by a disorienting dilemma occurred through a three part process: critical reflection of assumptions (meaning perspectives), reflective discourse to validate insight, and action. Mezirow's (*ibid*) view is that in conditions of oppression, the individual and/or collective action taken by the learner should be under the learner's own direction and terms. He also argued that collective social action was a special competence for which adult educators needed training. Through this exchange, Mezirow (1997) asserted that learning "is a social process, but it takes place within the individual learner" (p. 62).

A postmodernist critique of Mezirow's work is offered by Pietrykowski (1996; 1998) who sets up 'emancipation' as a grand narrative and sees Mezirow's claims of adults being at different stages of emancipatory understanding as a modernist concept of progress. Pietrykowski (1998) offers a different reading of Habermas and turns to Foucault to challenge the notion of 'self' inherent in Transformative Learning theory, arguing for a conceptualisation of self which reflects its social and discursive character. He proposes that a postmodern perspective is needed to counter the emancipatory logic and power dynamics inherent in transformative education. In response to this critique, Mezirow (1998a) has argued that he neither believes in nor has articulated a stage-model of adult development but does believe that adults are at different phases in their transition to an emancipatroy understanding. He further defended his theory by asserting that transformation theory "places major

emphasis on the significance of personally assimilated cultural frames of reference, on broad-based critical discourse to validate beliefs and on collective action, when appropriate, to implement transformative learning “(p.67).

Inglis (1997) also raises questions about the conception of ‘self’ and ‘power’ in Transformative Learning theory and he too draws on the work of Foucault to argue for a theory of power in transformative learning. Inglis is critical of Mezirow’s overly individual and psychologising focus in transformative learning. He set up a distinction between the concepts of ‘empowerment’ and ‘emancipation’, seeing the former as a domesticating force which seeks change in capital accumulation of individuals within the system whereas emancipation seeks change of the system itself. Inglis believes emancipation should be the goal of adult education. While acknowledging the value of critical self-reflection and personal empowerment, he sees these processes as the start towards social transformation and emancipation. Drawing attention to the neglect of action in Transformative Learning theory, Inglis is adamant that an emancipatory education must foster action for social transformation. Using terms such as “nonsense” and “off the wall”, Mezirow’s (1998b) response to Inglis argued that Transformative Learning theory allowed for social transformation, action and social justice goals, and that the role of the adult educator was not to prescribe nor to indoctrinate but to “foster the kind of personal transformative learning that results in each learner making an informed decision to take effective, appropriate action” (p.72). In a well-argued rejoinder Inglis (1998) again set out the case for seeing social life as structured and the ‘self’ therefore as constituted. He reaffirmed the argument for a theory of power and recommended the works of Foucault and Bourdieu for this purpose. Responses from Mezirow to both Pietrykowski and Inglis have not fully engaged the critique of how the ‘self’ in Transformative Learning theory is conceptualised.

The gaps identified in Taylor’s 1997 review appear to have led to a fruitful research programme. In a later study, Taylor (2001) addresses the questions raised about Transformative Learning theory’s over-reliance on critical

reflection and consequent neglect of feelings and unconscious processes by turning to technology-enhanced research emerging from neurobiology and psychology. On the basis of this new brain research, he demonstrates the importance of emotions and implicit long-term memory (unconscious ways of knowing) for rationality and learning. According to Taylor (2001, p. 234), "feelings are found to be the rudder for reason, without which it wanders aimlessly with little or no bearing in the process of making decisions" and recent research on memory "reveals an active and nonconscious cognitive process that has been found to have a significant influence on how we make meaning of the world around us". Taylor (2001) also pointed to studies which have shown that some participants experience perspective transformation without premise reflection. These participants appear to respond more immediately and intuitively to a disorienting dilemma with a form of sensory understanding which occurred at an implicit and non-conscious level rather than the critical reflection route. This study poses a serious challenge to the prized status accorded to critical reflection and rationality in Transformative Learning theory leading to the conclusion that transformative learning is "not just rationally and consciously driven, but incorporates a variety of extra-rational and nonconscious ways of knowing for revising meaning structures" (Taylor, 2001, p. 221). These other ways of knowing, include affective, intuitive and spiritual ways, and give credence to the reconceptualisation of transformative learning as whole person learning. A spiritual dimension to transformative learning is also reported by Merriam and Ntseane (2008). Taylor's study (*ibid*) further points to the need for widening the epistemological frame on learning as the reported insights gained from neurobiological research are not available through qualitative research, the dominant paradigm in transformative learning research.

Taylor's position of the role of feelings in learning receives support in the work of York and Kasl (2002). These authors identified Mezirow as part of a group of influential adult learning theorists who promote a pragmatist understanding of how experience relates to learning as opposed to a phenomenological understanding. In their view such pragmatist theorists use experience as a noun, that is, to denote "all that is known, the knowledge or practical wisdom

gained from the observing, undergoing, or encountering". A different conception of experience, one which values affect, sees experience as a verb, as "either a particular instance or a particular process of observing, undergoing or encountering" (pp. 179-180). York and Kasl (*ibid*) argue that the dominance of pragmatism in American adult education has privileged reflective discourse to the detriment of the affective dimension of learning.

Taylor (1997; 2007) has consistently presented Transformative Learning theory as a theory still in development. Importantly, Taylor also noted that few studies have considered the influence of cultural background on transformative learning, leaving key determinants such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation and marginalization largely unexplored. This conclusion heightens the potential contribution which a case study of the HRDD project could make to the literature on Transformative Learning theory. Taylor's conclusion also underpins the broadened definition of transformative learning constructed by the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education (OISE) (cited by Kovan & Dirkx, 2003, p.101), who describe transformative learning as:

... a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feeling, and actions ... a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body-awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

The OISE definition of transformative learning has a deeper and more holistic reach. It pays attention to non-cognitive ways of learning, to power, to the social character of learning and makes explicit an ontology grounded in social justice. The definition does however seem to privilege a dramatic transformation process over more a gradual process.

## **A Transformative Learning theory lens in a case study of the HRDD project**

This final section of the review of Transformative Learning theory considers the possible implications of the theory for this case study of the HRDD project. To use the language of this theory, this section considers the frame offered by the theory for understanding experience and learning within the HRDD project. This framing task begins by offering some critical engagement with the literature of transformative learning just reviewed:

1. Transformative Learning theory enjoys a substantial literature base in adult education. There is much support for the theory and critique of the theory, developed over a considerable period. Despite the substantial literature base and period of development, it would appear that Transformative Learning theory should still be considered a theory in development.
2. The development, application and critique of Transformative Learning theory have a strong western, “developed” world frame. This bias in the literature has been noted by Merriam and Ntseane (2008) who initiated a study in Botswana in response to such bias. The present study could also contribute towards addressing such a bias.
3. The samples in empirical studies based on Transformative Learning theory appear to be drawn mainly from middle class people and on occasion, working class people. The so-called underclass, the poor and marginalised sector of society, who Freire (1970) referred to as *the oppressed* and who Fanon (1988) termed *the wretched of the earth*, do not feature in studies of transformative learning. In other words, Transformative Learning theory does not appear to have been applied to contexts of extreme and repetitive deprivation and oppression.
4. The theory retains a strong focus on the individual despite clarifications offered by Mezirow in terms of the social character of experience and

learning, and his suggestions about possibilities of action following reflection.

5. Transformative Learning theory is firmly lodged in a pronounced rational, propositional epistemology.

On the basis of these observations, several questions regarding the relevance of Transformative Learning theory in contexts of developing countries or communities such as those of the HRDD emerge:

1. How useful is Transformative Learning theory for an understanding of educational projects in South Africa such as the HRDD project?
2. What frames of reference do multiple and repetitive experiences of oppression create for learners and educators in the project?
3. How can the concept of a “disorienting dilemma” be understood in the context of the HRDD project?
4. Which type of catalyst to perspective transformation, a dramatic “disorienting dilemma” or “slow burn”, is likely to be present in the HRDD project?
5. How does perspective transformation relate to action in the context of the HRDD project?
6. What role does affect play in transformative learning in lives which are likely to be crisis-ridden and trauma-filled?
7. Does the HRDD project allow for a consideration of “other ways of knowing” such as affective learning, intuitive memory and whole-person learning?
8. How can a sample of African learners and educators in a developing context contribute to the ongoing development of Transformative Learning theory?

## **Part One: Critical pedagogy of Paulo Freire**

### **Introduction**

Paulo Freire, the preeminent Brazilian adult educator and theorist, has been described as one of the most important educators and educational thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gadotti, 1994; Smith, 2005). Freire's work has been influential in education over a substantial period and has enjoyed global reach. There is now a significant body of literature on Freire's philosophy, pedagogy, life and work. Freire himself contributed several books and gave many talks all over the world until his death in 1997. His second book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), serves as his flagship work and is likely to remain his most cited work. This work is cited extensively in this study. The Freirean literature base has grown through contributions from several scholars in different contexts with interest in Freirean philosophy and pedagogy. Peckham (2003) lists several scholars who constitute a sort of Freirean vanguard. These include Stanley Aronowitz, Henry Giroux, Joe Kincheloe, Peter McLaren, Shirley Steinberg, Donaldo Macedo and Ana Maria Araujo Freire. One could add to this Moacir Gadotti, Peter Mayo and Carlos Torres. Robust challenges to Freire's work have come from Taylor (1993), Bowers (cited by Margonis, 2003) and Facundo (1984), amongst others.

### **Why is Freirean theory relevant for a case study of the HRDD?**

As discussed in Chapter Five, Freire's work has been a source of inspiration and has served as a theoretical framework in the design of the project. The HRDD project is an adult education intervention in contexts of poverty and inequality. A central focus of Freire's work has been adult education within such contexts. Freire provides a theory and method for literacy. Literacy classes based on the notion of reading the word and the world (Freire, 1970) were an important facet of the HRDD project.

A broad goal of the HRDD project was the development of capacities for civic participation. Freire's theory (1970) explicitly addresses such participation, seeing as its goal that people take charge of their liberation and the transformation of their world. The HRDD project included programme foci on human rights, democracy and development. These are all key aspects or goals within Freire's critical pedagogy. Both the HRDD project and Freirean pedagogy are based on goals of freedom, empowerment and democracy.

## **Origins of Freire's theoretical and pedagogical thought**

Paulo Freire's insights and theory stem from personal experience of poverty, hunger, imprisonment and exile. Freire was born in 1921 into a middle-class family in Recife, Brazil. His family circumstances changed drastically in his childhood due to the economic depression of 1929. This created for him the direct experience of poverty and hunger. Later in adulthood, his work with the poor peasants of Brazil brought him into contact with the widespread poverty and hunger of the oppressed peasantry (Mackie, 1980).

With changing governments in Brazil during the 1960s Freire lost his influential university position and became a persona non grata. He was arrested, imprisoned and later exiled. It was during this time in exile that he wrote his classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970). Again with political change in Brazil, Freire was invited back in 1979. He first took up a university position in Sao Paulo and later became the Secretary of Education for Sao Paulo. In an interview, Freire described his books as "theoretical reports of my practice" (Gismondi, 1999, p.2), thus expressing the strong grounding in practice of Freirean theory. In addition to the influences of practice and experience, there are strong traces of Marxism, phenomenology and Catholicism in Freire's work. These influences are part of the historical and discursive contexts which have shaped Freire's worldview and scholarship.

## A return to Freire

This section sets out the philosophy, theoretical insights and pedagogy of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1970; Mackie, 1980; Horton & Freire, 1990; Gadotti, 1994). It argues that a return to some of Freire's wisdom would be appropriate for adult education work in this millennium and that Freire has relevance for this case study of the HRDD project. The argument for a *return* is twofold. Firstly, the influence of Freire's work has waned in recent times as educational practice and discourse has become more formalised, utilitarian and depoliticised in character (Collins, 1991). Secondly, Freire's thought is still narrowly perceived as relevant only for the education of poor, marginalised illiterate peasants of a context and time long forgotten.

Today, 38 years since the publication of the famous *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970), in a world of growing inequality and mass deprivations, there is an even greater relevance of Freire's work for the challenges of education in this millennium. There are still millions of people around the world, "the wretched of the earth" (Fanon, 1988), who live under circumstances of extreme economic, social and political marginalization. Poverty, as a form of systemic and symbolic violence, continues to deny these people their basic needs and rights as humans. Far too many people in South Africa still do not have access to water, food, shelter, education and safety (Human Sciences Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005). For these South Africans now relegated to the "second economy" (Mbeki, 2003; Mbeki, 2006; Skinner and Valodia, 2006; Bond, 2007), the struggle for freedom and humanization is their life-long struggle and source of life-long learning. The needs for conscientisation, critical reflection and emancipation are ever present and growing under neoliberal regimes which perpetuate marginalization and exclusion of citizens (Baatjes, 2003). Some of the key concepts in Freire's work, all of which have relevance for the practices of adult education and education more generally, are discussed next.

## **Key concepts in Freire's theory**

### **Culture of silence**

Freire's (1970) early work with poor people in Brazil allowed him to name a prevalent condition of the dispossessed. He called this the *culture of silence*, to describe the condition where people who face economic, social and political domination remain submerged, silent and inactive in the face of their oppression (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Such people lack the voice, critical awareness and response needed to change their situation. Freire saw oppression as violence to both the oppressed and the oppressor. The oppressor becomes internalized within the oppressed and this causes people to fear freedom. Through education people can free themselves and their oppressors. Freire realised that the education system was a key instrument for bolstering this culture of silence. He set about developing a model of education which would free people from this bondage and allow them to *read the word and the world* (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

We find this culture of silence in many communities today. Nobel peace laureate Wangari Maathai (2005) powerfully reveals the current state of a culture of silence and how poverty is manifested as psychological and social barriers when she says:

When people are poor and when they are reduced to beggars, they feel weak, humiliated, disrespected and undignified. They hide alone in corners and dare not raise their voices. They are, therefore, neither heard nor seen. They do not organise but often suffer in isolation and in desperation. Yet all human beings deserve respect and dignity. ... As long as millions of people live in poverty and indignity, humanity should feel diminished (n.p.).

As the world's poor grow in numbers in current neoliberal economic systems, the condition of silence also becomes more prevalent. Freire points out that a

“culture of silence” (1970, p.12) breeds the condition referred to as an “absence of doubt” (1970, p.18), in other words, a lack of criticality regarding one’s oppression. This lack of critical consciousness stunts the possibilities for transformation, liberation and ultimate humanisation. The culture of silence is not an independent culture of poor people, allowing for them to be blamed for their unjust situations, but is linked to and framed by the dominant, oppressive culture (Kidd & Kumar, 1981). For Freire, true freedom arises from one’s critical awareness of the social, political and economic relations in and out of which one’s existence is negotiated, and from taking action to challenge those structures and systemic relations of oppression. Such a process of people-led participation and liberation emerges through the practice of praxis, the synthesis of “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1970, p.33). A case study of the HRDD project could illuminate different cultures of silences within the project and its broader context. The important question which arises in this study is: Is the HRDD project able to facilitate critical awareness, reveal the cultures of silence that people get locked into and lead to action which shatters such silences and transforms their world?

## **Dialogue**

Freire (1970; 1994) argued that dialogue is a key tenet of emancipatory education and serves as a correction to the dominant form of education which he described as *banking education*. For Freire, banking education, referring to attempts by educators to make deposits into educatees, is antidialogical, authoritarian and part of the systemic process of creating domesticated learners and citizens. Freire (1970, p.47) believed that “the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world”. We see here the crucial link between dialogue, and critical consciousness and social transformation. According to Freire dialogue allows for the democratisation of the learning encounter, distributing power amongst learners and educators, and creating an education which liberates and humanises. Freire saw dialogue as a symbol of respect in which people act *with* each other rather than acting *for* or *on* another. As a horizontal

relationship based on respect and trust, dialogue in Freirean theory is important for fostering non-exploitative relationships, critical thinking, learning and collective action. The concept of dialogical action, the combination of action and reflection, is what allows the learner to move 'from Object to Subject'. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970) and *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994), Freire argues for a dialogical problem-posing education rather than the banking form of education because while banking education "treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers" (1970, p.56).

Dialogue in Freirean theory is more than just conversations between people. Dialogue is *interactive critical conversations* (Forneris, 2004) which occur under conditions of respect and equality and which serve as a precursor to social action. Gadotti (1996, pxi) clarifies this sense of dialogue when he says:

For Paulo Freire, dialogue is not just the encounter of two subjects who look for the meaning of things - knowledge - but an encounter which takes place in praxis - in action and reflection - in political engagement, in the pledge for social transformation. A dialogue that does not lead to transformative action is pure verbalism.

Gadotti (*ibid*) also clarifies the dialectical nature of dialogue by pointing out that dialogue encompasses conflict, making it possible for the differences and conflicts between teacher and learner to be embraced within dialogue rather than needing to be ironed out. This notion of dialogue embracing conflict is important in the diverse, post-Apartheid context of South Africa.

### **Conscientization**

*Conscientization* is the process of becoming more critically aware of one's world and one's position in the world. This leads people to want to take action to change their world. Freire's thoughts on conscientization are closely related to the preceding discussion on the culture of silence and the concept of generative themes which follows later. Freire advocates for an education

which is political and emancipatory. Conscientization through education allows for those silenced through various forms of oppression to be able to read the word and their world. Tett and Crowther (1998, p. 454) interpret this to mean, "that the teaching of literacy has to take into account the way in which power is distributed unequally within the social structure so that the voices of some are marginalised whilst others are privileged". For Freire, conscientization is the process of developing a critical awareness of one's situation and oppression, and learning how to act to change such a situation. Conscientization is a continuous, life-long process which allows people to gain voice and to name their world.

## **Praxis**

For Freire, education is an explicitly political and action-oriented process. He saw dialogue and conscientization as being inextricably linked to action to transform the world. The concept of *praxis* allowed Freire to convey the dialectical relationship between making meaning of one's social reality via dialogue and reflection, and transforming one's social reality via action, and thereby creating new meaning. Freire (1970, p.41) stated that "reflection - true reflection - leads to action. On the other hand, when the situation calls for action, that action will constitute an authentic praxis only if its consequences become the object of critical reflection. ... Otherwise, action is pure activism". In this, Freire was forming a tight knot between action and reflection, between theory and practice. In as much as action without reflection was 'pure activism', reflection without action was considered to be pure 'verbalism'. Freire expands on this when he says that as "they [the oppressed] attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement" (1970, p. 44). As with the conception of respectful dialogue, action too, has a strong value basis, in that Freire advocated for action which was just, collective and ethical. Freire adds to critical action a strong social justice vision.

## **Participation and action**

As revealed in the earlier quotation on action, the notion of full and meaningful participation by people is at the heart of Freirean theory and practice. When redesigning the school system in Brazil, Freire aimed at transforming systems and processes in order that authentic participation was ensured. Participation, according to Freire, should not be merely token or superficial, but instead, must allow for people to develop a voice and actively use this voice in decision making processes.

Freire's theorisation of action is relevant to the current context in South Africa where participation, initiated and legitimised by the state, is also heavily circumscribed (John, 2008). Several state-initiated participation processes in South Africa tend to limit the focus and action of citizens to the local arena. Authentic participation as advocated by Freire, would be initiated by citizens and would possess a critical gaze which extended to national and transnational matters as well.

## **Relationship between teacher and learner**

Freire saw the relationship between teacher and learner as a crucial nexus in critical and emancipatory education. He argued that education "must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students" (1970, p.46) and therefore proposed the concepts of 'teacher-student' and 'student-teacher'. These concepts indicate that the educator and learner learn together and teach each other. This conception of the teacher is the antithesis of the 'expert' who makes deposits into the minds of passive students in banking education. Freire expresses this sense when he says:

the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the programme content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition - bits of information to be deposited in the students - but rather the organized, systematized, and

developed 'representation' to individuals of the things about which they want to know more (1970, p.65).

Freirean pedagogy outlines a method for identifying and representing themes (discussed below) which are embedded in the lives of learners where learners are co-investigators and curriculum developers. This process allows for critical remembrances (discussed in Chapter Six) and for the pedagogy of the oppressed to be realised. Freire suggested that "the progressive educator must always be moving out on his or her own, continually reinventing me and reinventing what it means to be democratic in his or her specific cultural and historical context (Freire, 1997a, p.308). In promoting such a relationship, Freire was cognizant of the differences in experience and function between teachers and learners.

For Freire, all education is political, and neutrality is therefore not an option for the educator. The only choices for educators lie in participating in educational encounters which either domesticate or liberate. Education can be a key mechanism for suppressing people and sustaining systems of oppression, or it can facilitate the development of critical awareness leading to action and freedom, thus liberating and humanising people. These are the only choices Freire sees as open to educators.

### **Love, hope and trust**

The concepts of love, hope and trust are not commonplace in educational theory. Freire (1970), however, often foregrounded these concepts in his theoretical works. He spoke of the need for love of the people and belief (trust) in their ability to learn and change their world as necessary qualities of educators. Freire provides a theory of hope alongside a theory of critique. Hope is an important concept in education for social change and social justice and one which Freire addressed often. Freire's interest in concepts such as hope and love are reflected in the titles of some of his books such as *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1994) and *Pedagogy of the Heart* (Freire, 1997b). Freire juxtaposes hope with fatalism which results from educators and

learners internalising the oppressive conditions they face, and through which they acquire the culture of silence and absence of doubt. Freire's message to educators, that they should work within the realms of what was historically possible for them, provides hope and inspiration to educators working in contexts of entrenched and systemic inequality. Hope, love and trust can be seen as part of the contextual factors which create solidarity and readiness for transformation and action. Margonis (2003, p.145) provides testimony to the hope provided by Freire when he says:

For many of us, the incredible work of Paulo Freire has offered hope, for his works might be viewed as early post-colonial theory ... Freire gave us a lifetime of practice and theory devoted to helping formerly colonized people throw off the yoke of oppression and determine the direction of their own lives.

Freire's views on love, hope and trust are more than just ontological positions, they are emotional or affective dimensions of ways of knowing and being in the world. In this sense, love, hope and trust are pedagogical principles and professional orientations for educators. Freire (1998, p.125) demonstrates this inextricable connection between feeling and cognition in *Pedagogy of Freedom* when he said:

What is to be thought and hoped of me as a teacher if I am not steeped in that other type of knowing that requires that I be open to caring for the well-being of my students and of the educative experience in which I participate? ... What it does mean is that I am not afraid of my feelings and that I know how to express myself effectively in an appropriate and affirming way. It also means that I know how to fulfill authentically my commitment to my students in the context of a specifically human mode of action. In truth, I feel it is necessary to overcome the false separation between serious teaching and the expression of feeling ... Affectivity is not necessarily an enemy of knowledge or of the process of knowing.

This early insight expressed by Freire is now being confirmed by new brain research made possible by new technology (see Taylor, 2001 in the section on Mezirow). The value of trust, promoted here by Freire, is also a central concept in Social Capital theory to be discussed later.

### **Literacy pedagogy and generative themes**

Freire (1970) discusses the use of generative themes in his pedagogy. Generative words and themes serve as key pedagogical devices to stimulate dialogue within learning contexts, allowing learners to be able to name their world, to write about it and to gain a critical awareness of their situation such that they feel empowered to take action to change their world. To be effective, generative themes must emerge from the lived reality of the learner group. The investigation of themes grounded in the lives of learners is an important stage in the development of literacy programmes. In the Freirean method, educators need to represent themes back to learners using codes in the form of picture or word stories. Such codifications of the themes allow for popular topics within local contexts to be linked to the *larger world* and thus to global patterns and forces.

In his book with Donald Macedo, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, Freire (1987) promotes an emancipatory perspective of literacy as 'cultural politics'. As with all education, Freire sees literacy as a process which could domesticate learners into accepting the status quo, by merely focusing on the technical skills of reading, writing and numeracy. Literacy as cultural politics, however, sees literacy as a cultural and transformational force through which "the oppressed are equipped with the necessary tools to reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices" (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p.157).

Freire's advice on starting from where learners are and with what they have is important for the process of new knowledge to be constructed. Education must have some content. This content must emerge from the lived experiences of people and must be connected to other experiences of the people and the educator. Such a process reflects respect for the experience of

learners and the concept of learner-centeredness, both of which are key tenets in contemporary adult education. This argument is developed in discussing critical remembrances in Chapter Six.

## **Application of Freirean theory and pedagogy**

A number of educational programmes in Latin America, Africa and Asia are based on Freirean theory, values and pedagogy. In South Africa, Freire's work was extremely influential in anti-apartheid and popular education circles.

Walters and Manicom (1996, p.10) acknowledge Freire as a "central influence" in their edited volume on popular feminist education. Recently, John (2008) has applied Freire's ideas to the context of growing insecurity under militarism and advocates for a Freirean-inspired critical peace education. The Reflect approach is a current popular application of Freirean philosophy and pedagogy in community education for social change in southern Africa and elsewhere (Archer and Newman, 2003). Reflect is a combination of Freirean pedagogy and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to create a programme which provides an opportunity for people to come together to discuss issues affecting their lives and to collectively develop responses to the challenges they face. A survey conducted in 2000 revealed that the Reflect approach was being used by over 350 organisations in 60 countries for a wide variety of development-related goals (Archer and Newman, 2003).

In North America, critical pedagogy based on Freire's ideas, is a source of critique of the school system, of higher education and of cultural politics (see McLaren, 2003; McLaren, 2005; Giroux, 2005; Torres, 1998). Using a Freirean-inspired critical Africanist perspective, Murrell (1997) argues that American schools indoctrinate African-American children into the dominant culture and devalue African-American culture. In a higher education setting Peckham (2003) explores the concept of codifications in reflecting on his class-room practice. He also describes the difficulties which students have with the language used by Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Likewise, Kane (2003) discusses three examples of his classroom practice which are

based on Freire's ideas. Facundo (1984) also refers to a diverse range of Freirean-inspired programmes in the US.

## Critique of Freire's theory

Freire's work has attracted much critique, particularly from scholars in the North. One recurrent theme in this critique relates to the relevance of Freire's ideas in contemporary times. Authors have questioned the relevance of Freire's revolutionary theory in non-revolutionary contexts and have expressed difficulty with the terms oppressor and oppressed in contexts where the struggle is not overtly class based and where oppression is mediated by other identity features such as gender, race, religion etcetera (Facundo, 1984). Freire's insistence that educators side with the oppressed and that they need to commit class suicide in order to achieve this solidarity have posed ideological and methodological conundrums for some contemporary educators (Margonis, 2003; Peckham, 2003). Freire has, however, always been sensitive to different and changing contexts. He says:

It is always important to foreground the particularity of oppression against a background of multiple possibilities ... We must not lose sight of the need to recognize multiple constructions of power and authority in a society riven by inequalities of power and exclusionary divisions of privilege and how these are implicated in the constitution of subjectivity differentiated by race, class, and sexual preference (cited in Peckham, 2003, p.228).

When questioned about the relevance of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to first world contexts, Freire responded that he had provided a theory of knowledge in pedagogical form in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He argued that since educators in the first world were working on a daily basis in the process of knowledge, his work was therefore relevant for them too (Gismondi, 1999).

Writing from a practitioner's perspective, Blanca Facundo (1984) provides a detailed critique of Freirean pedagogy on the basis of programmes that she was involved with in the US. She identifies a number of problems in how she and several other Latin American educators working in the US, attempted to apply Freire in their work. Facundo realises that they had uncritically attempted to import many Freirean ideas into a context (North America) which did not allow for simple applications. Facundo (1984, np) declares that "Problem-posing has no chance with U.S. funding sources unless accompanied by problem-solving". Facundo further believes that in using terms such as "true, correct and authentic", Freire had not "specified precisely where he intends his ontology and epistemology to guide the struggle for liberation, nor what liberation means, concretely, within a given economic and political system" (1984, np).

A further common aspect of the critique of Freire is a response to the impenetrability of his early language. Peckham (2003) provides explicit accounts of his learners' frustrations in reading Freire. A related language issue which has drawn criticism, is Freire's use of sexist terms such as 'man' and 'mankind' in his early works. Feminist writer bell hooks (1993) is one contributor of such criticism but also an admirer of Freire's insights. She writes:

It is feminist thinking that empowers me to engage in a constructive critique of Freire's work ... and yet there are many other standpoints from which I approach his work that enable me to experience its value, that make it possible for that work to touch me at the very core of my being. (hooks, 1993, p. 149)

Freire accepted the criticism about sexist language and attempted to remedy these in his latter works. Freire's conversations with Myles Horton in *We make the road by walking it* (Horton & Freire, 1990), is an example of his dialogic approach to writing books which are highly accessible and non-sexist.

Some critique of Freire from post-modernist perspectives is offered by Margonis (2003) who refers to the view that the “cultural mind set underlying Freire’s pedagogy leads to a modernizing and Westernizing mode of consciousness” which is a form of cultural invasion (p.145). A second post modern critique discussed by Margonis refers to the notion of critical educators cultivating solidarity with oppressed learners. This critique rests on skepticism about whether the differences in power and privilege between the teacher and learners can be overcome.

The critique leveled at Freirean views on the role of the teacher is also picked up by Peckham (2003). He considers the critique which challenges Freire’s contention of siding with the learner and democratising the classroom, and the charge that Freire has oversimplified the power dynamic between teacher and learner. Peckham (2003, p.230) believes that Freire should not have to carry the blame for some of his followers who choose to see themselves as “teacher heroes practicing conversion pedagogy and whose object is to enlist their charges in the holy war of redressing oppression”. This position is supported by Kane (2003) who believes that Freire has been misinterpreted and that the claim of using a Freirean approach in education is being used too loosely.

### **A Freirean lens in a case study of the HRDD project**

The work of Freire prompts several questions which could be considered in relation to the HRDD project:

1. Do HRDD actors engage in critical reflection and dialogue? If so, what impact has this had?
2. Does the HRDD project allow for conscientization of actors?
3. Has the HRDD project fostered praxis for the various actors?
4. Do Freire’s notion of love, hope and trust influence learning and change within the HRDD project?
5. Do Freire’s ideas on feelings and care help in understanding educator practices in the project?

6. What are the relationships between educators and learners in the project?
7. How does the HRDD curriculum relate to the life contexts of learners?
8. What are the relationships of power within the HRDD project and how do these affect learning and change?
9. Are actors in HRDD able to engage in authentic participation?
10. Does the notion of a 'culture of silence' apply in the case of the HRDD project?

## **Part Two: Communities of Practice theory**

### **according to Lave and Wenger**

#### **Introduction**

Communities of Practice theory developed by social anthropologist Jean Lave and former teacher/organisational consultant Etienne Wenger is a social theory of learning which focuses on how people learn through everyday informal interaction with significant others, in the course of their shared practices (Lave and Wenger, 1999; Wenger, 1998). The body of literature on Communities of Practice theory has a relatively short history, spanning the last decade and a half. This literature is, however, steadily growing particularly through applications of the theory in organisational and workplace contexts. As explained below, the theory emerges from Socio-cultural Theory and Activity Theory, both of which have longer histories (Vygotsky, 1978; Engestrom, 1987) and more widespread application. What relevance does Communities of Practice theory hold for a case study of the HRDD project?

The fields of adult education and community development are dependent on thorough induction and training of new educators and practitioners. It is in this regard that Communities of Practice theory has value for both adult education and community development practices. Both practices could benefit from a theory of learning and practitioner development which explains how newcomers enter the practices and how such newcomers and practices grow and evolve. The training and support of a new cadre of community-based adult educators is a vitally important aspect of the HRDD project. Communities of Practice theory thus provides a framework for understanding the learning, identity formation and practices of these educators.

The theory would likewise have value for understanding other communities of practice in the HRDD project. Communities of Practice theory thus holds wider promise for understanding complex educational projects as a constellation of

inter-related communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In this regard, it is significant that the HRDD project was created by the bringing together of organisational partners who each had existing, but separate, practices.

## Conceptual origins

The concept of a *community of practice*, commonly attributed to the work of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, is one that has been extensively developed in the book *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning and identity* (Wenger, 1998). This book is referred to extensively in presenting the theory below. An interesting little anecdote in the acknowledgement section of the book reveals that Lave and Wenger, who have collaborated extensively for several years, cannot make up their minds as to which of them first introduced the concept of *community of practice*. They each choose to attribute the genesis of the concept to the other. Lave and Wenger (1999, p.23) define a community of practice as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice".

Lave and Wenger's (1991) earlier collaborations in developing theory on Situated Learning gave birth to the notions of *legitimate peripheral participation* (discussed below) within *communities of practice*. They acknowledge Activity Theory, critical psychology and workplace learning as being influential in their development of theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The theoretical heritage of Russian psychology thus has strongly influenced the theorisation of situated learning and communities of practice. This heritage can be seen to underpin the foundational ideas of contemporary Social Learning Theory as evidenced in views that learning and the mind have distinctly social origins, that activity and labour warrant focal attention, that tools (material and symbolic) and tool use are central to practice, and that the sense of self (identity) is bound to the system of activity in which it is enacted and recreated. In identifying the heritage of Russian psychology, it is also then necessary to take a step further back and acknowledge the strong influence of Karl Marx on this tradition of psychology. Engestrom and Miettinen (1999, p.4)

note that although Marx in his *Theses of Feuerbach* was the first philosopher to provide an explicit account of the centrality of activity, it "has become commonplace to omit Marx as an essential theoretical source from discussions of Activity Theory, in particular in assessments of Russian psychologist Vygotsky's work. This omission occurs largely for political and ideological reasons". Such Marxist underpinnings are not immediately visible in Communities of Practice theory which has now also become popular within the capitalist corporate world (see Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002).

Today, Communities of Practice theory and Activity Theory have been combined into what is known as Social Practice Theory (Trowler & Turner, 2002; Mathieson, 2005), a theory which focuses on the social, historical and context-bound nature of learning and which examines the constructive processes associated with culture, identity and discourse. Vygotsky's seminal contention that learning is social underscores much of what can now be grouped as social practice theories. Despite considerable variations in terminology and ideology, both Activity Theory and Communities of Practice theory focus on knowledge and learning as outcomes of social engagement in shared practice within a context. Both approaches also place emphasis on the mediating tools of the practice such as language, symbols, rules and physical artifacts. Wenger (1998) refers to *reification* in practice to deal with this aspect of the communities' production of tools, language and symbols. Wenger appears to have introduced a number of new terms for concepts described in the earlier socio-cultural and activity systems theories of learning. Trowler and Turner (2002) and Mathieson (2005) all acknowledge that there is substantial overlap between Communities of Practice theory and Activity Theory. Mathieson (2005) contrasts Activity Theory with Community of Practice theory and highlights that while the latter focuses on the social nature of learning, meaning and identity within practice, Activity Theory focuses on organisational structure, history, contradictions and change. Given the close links between Activity Theory and Situated Learning Theory to Communities of Practice theory, the next section includes a consideration of some of the literature on Activity Theory and Situated Learning Theory.

## Key concepts in Communities of Practice theory

The essence and value of Communities of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1999; Wenger, 1998) lies in its potency as a theory of learning through *participation* in social contexts and the considerable attention given to *identity* formation in social learning processes. The theory deals with concepts such as participation, relationships, practice, identity and context to explain the social and situated character of learning. What follows, is a list of some of the key tenets of this theory as conveyed in the work of Lave and Wenger (1999):

- People learn through activity, the engagement with others in a shared practice developed over time
- Social practice (participation) is the fundamental process by which we learn and thus become who we are (identity)
- Meaning is socially constructed within context
- Identity is created (and recreated) in the process of learning within practice
- Practice is a source of coherence of a community
- Communities of practice are everywhere and people can belong to several communities of practice simultaneously, and usually do
- To examine learning, we need to treat the community of practice, rather than individuals or institutions, as the primary unit of analysis.

This understanding of learning departs radically from many cognitive theories which see learning as something which individuals do on their own and as a process which occurs largely in their minds. In reaction to the later view, Lave (1998) argues that thought is not simply an individual's cognitive process but

is embodied, enacted and socially determined. Learning through participation in practice highlights the social and cultural contexts of learning, where educator and learner roles are dispersed throughout the community and the practice constitutes the learning curriculum.

### **The nature of learning in communities of practice**

Wenger (1998, p.5) identifies four central components of this social theory of learning which are “Meaning (learning as experience), Practice (learning as doing), Community (learning as belonging) and Identity (learning as becoming)”.

These four components constitute the core of a social theory of learning, capturing the activity, relationships and identity aspects of learning in social practice,

According to Lave and Wenger (1999), learning is the increasing participation in a *community of practice*. The process of learning begins with *legitimate peripheral participation* where a newcomer is allowed access to a practice but spends some time at the periphery of the practice and then gradually moves to the center of the practice and becomes a full participant. The newcomer eventually makes the practice her/his own and thus becomes an old-timer. The meaningful use of artifacts of the practice and the assimilation of the identity of the practice are two central parts to this process of learning through and in activity. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation is a central idea in Lave and Wenger’s theorisation of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1999). It describes the issue of access to community and the evolving relationships which newcomers experience with members of the practice. In explaining legitimate peripheral participation, Lave and Wenger (1991, p.21) focus on the issue of access to practice, arguing “that ‘transparency’ of the sociopolitical organization of practice, of its content and of the artifacts engaged in practice, is a crucial resource for increasing participation”. They see the movement

from the periphery to the center of practice as one which generates identity and the motivation of newcomers.

Communities of practice theory views knowledge and learning as being constructed in the process where people negotiate meaning within a community. This sense of knowledge reflects its dialogical genesis, its social character and its embededness in practice and context.

### **The nature of community**

A community, for Wenger and Lave (1999), is defined by the existence of a shared practice. A work organisation or a group of people who inhabit a particular geographic location are therefore not automatically communities of practice, although they may comprise such communities. Sharp (1997, np) notes that "Typically such groups do not overlap with company-assigned teams or task forces. Because they grow out of human sociability and efforts to meet job requirements ... a COP [community of practice] is typically not an authorized group nor a role identified on an organization chart".

Wenger (1998, pp.125-126) provides a list of fourteen indicators of a community of practice. Included in this list are: "sustained mutual relationships - harmonious or conflictual"; "shared ways of engaging in doing things together"; "substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs"; "knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise"; "mutually defining identities"; "specific tools, representations, and other artifacts"; "a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world". Evidence of such interactions, relationships, communication patterns, ways of understanding and acting in unison, all indicate that a community of practice has formed. Wenger (1998) sees *mutual engagement* (relationships, doing things together), *joint enterprise* (negotiated enterprise, mutual accountability) and *a shared repertoire* (tools, discourse, styles) as the dimensions through which a practice serves as a source of coherence of a community.

Lave and Wenger's (1999) Community of Practice theory thus deals with practice as the social production of meaning, as the source of coherence of a community and as a process of learning. These products of practice are achieved by members of a community of practice who have a sustained history of mutual engagement. While these communities develop organically and informally, much of Wenger's later work (see Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) deals with how such communities can be seeded and supported in order that their value may be harnessed by organisations.

### **Identity development in Communities of Practice theory**

The process of identity development and of becoming who we are receives parallel attention with learning in the theory. Wenger (1998, p.145) sees the building of an identity as an integral part of a social theory of learning and as consisting of "negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in social communities". He presents identity and practice as mirror images of each other and discusses the multi-dimensional nature of identity which includes, "Identity as negotiated experience", "Identity as community membership" and "Identity as learning trajectory (Wenger, 1998, p.149).

Lave and Wenger (1999, p.33) state that "development of identity is central to the careers of newcomers in communities of practice ... learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: they are aspects of the same phenomenon". Participation in social practice within a community is thus simultaneously a generator of knowledge and of the self. Practice is a wellspring for what we know and who we are. Practice is also the mode for the socialisation and development of future generations of members. However, in as much as practice shapes the learning and identity of new members, such members and the negotiated nature of engagement, also shape and change the practice. Practice is thus a dynamic construct with the capacity for change and renewal. Wenger refers to *boundary practices* and *brokering roles* where members introduce new aspects of practice which they acquire from their membership in other communities.

## **Application of Communities of Practice theory**

The greatest interest and application of Communities of Practice theory appears to be in the design and study of workplaces and other organisations (Wenger, 1998; Brown & Duguid, 1991; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002). The theory was developed largely from observations in such contexts where Lave and Wenger (1991) observed apprentice learners become midwives, tailors, quartermasters, butchers or non-drinking alcoholics in an A.A. programme. Wenger's (1998) key text *Communities of Practice: learning, meaning, and identity* is richly illustrated with detailed references to the practice of claims processors in a large medical insurance company called Alinsu. Wenger currently serves as a consultant to such organisations and has tailored his theory for application in such contexts. In a collaborative work entitled, *Cultivating communities of practice: a guide to managing knowledge*, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) and colleagues offer organisational leaders and managers, seven principles for cultivating communities of practice. In this guide they remind the reader that the organic and alive nature of a community of practice is paramount to its success and warn that attempts at design and planning could destroy the community. However, they believe that the seven principles which they recommend could create environments which can seed, cultivate and nourish communities of practice rather than construct them.

The substantial take up of the theory in the business world can in large part be attributed to the so-called shift from a machine age to the information age. The recognition that a competitive edge lies in ideas about knowledge workers, a knowledge-based organisation, and a learning organisation has given much impetus to workplace interests in communities of practice as sites of learning. That important learning can take place in informal, worker-organised fora without much direction and investment from the company, must surely add to the attractiveness of the model. A further attractiveness of the model is to be found in its value in terms of social capital (see discussion on social capital later in this chapter). Smith (2003, n.p.) states that communities of practice

“can be seen as self-organizing systems and have many of the benefits and characteristics of associational life such as the generation of what Robert Putnam and others have discussed as social capital”. Likewise, Lesser and Storck (2001) argue that the social capital available in communities of practice leads to benefits in organisational effectiveness and profitability.

Communities of Practice theory has also been used to design and understand a range of educational interventions. It has also becoming increasing popular in planning and theorising teacher development programmes (Maistry, 2008a; Maistry, 2008b).

In a study of learning in a South African trade union context, Cooper (2006) draws on Lave and Wenger's work on Situated Learning Theory and Engestrom's Activity Theory. She argues that both theories offer useful lenses for viewing everyday learning in such contexts. These theories were seen to have particular relevance for a trade union context which emerged from struggle and contestation, and for reflecting the unions social and historical character. Cooper contrasts the view of the union as a site of informal learning with that provided by the learning organisation literature and sees the latter as inadequate because of its emphasis on rationally planned organisational interventions.

Social Practice Theories (the umbrella category encompassing Communities of Practice theory) have been fruitfully employed in the study of the higher education sector. Here, Trowler and Knight (2000) have used Activity Systems Theory and Communities of Practice theory to examine the entry and induction of new staff into university departments. They argue that these theories can serve as useful heuristics for developing fresh understandings of higher education practice. Trowler and Turner (2002) examine the practice of an unusual academic department comprised of both deaf and hearing academics. In an article which is critical of Wenger's theorisation of communities of practice (discussed below), they argue that much of current higher education induction programmes are based on rational-cognitive models yet what is actually needed by new academics can best be learnt in

academic practice. Using a similar theoretical framework to Trowler and colleagues, Mathieson (2005) examines the effects of the changing terrain of the academic landscape in South Africa higher education on academic practices of teaching and learning. She highlights the importance of localised departmental and programme teams as the sites where academic identities and practices are shaped and reshaped. Also focusing on higher education practices, Dison (2004) employs Situated Learning Theory and Communities of Practice theory to understand research capacity development and identify formation amongst new researchers in South African university-based research units. She finds Wenger's discussion of the tension between identification (investments in group positioning) and negotiability (investments in personal positioning) a useful analytical tool for understanding the development of capacity and negotiation of power in research contexts.

In an interesting study of an atypical community of practice, Merriam, Courtenay and Baumgartner (2003) examine learning and identity formation in a community of witches. The significance of this study lies in the application of Communities of Practice theory to a marginal practice. The authors find that the marginal status of the community of witches significantly influenced the learning and practice of the group. Such a finding has relevance to the present study which also examines a practice, that of community-based adult education, which occupies marginal status within the educational field and society at large.

A small number of attempts have been made to apply Communities of Practice theory to the field of community development. Houghton and John (2007) have used the theory to explore ways in which the small peace education community in South Africa may be grown and how new peace educators may be supported and developed through engagement in peace education practices. Von Kotze (2003) employs Communities of Practice theory to understand and theorise project-based learning (PBL) within a university adult education programme. In this study which examines knowledge construction, group participation and criticality Von Kotze views project groups as communities of practice, a formation which is unlikely to

satisfy Wenger's criteria for communities of practice. Von Kotze found that collective learning in such groups holds potential for critical questioning and the negotiation of new understandings, but that emancipatory and social justice impulses do not automatically flow from such organisation of learning. This highlights the need for an active role for educators in fostering criticality and action-oriented curricula.

The theory has also been employed in theorising community development projects conducted in partnership between different organisations. Hart, Maddison and Wolff (2007) use the theory to frame and understand partnerships between a university and local communities in the United Kingdom. In similar fashion, Van Vlaenderen (2004) also attempted to use Communities of Practice theory to theorise university-local community projects. In this article she suggests that such partnerships may be conceived of as merging communities of practice. In a critical response to van Vlaenderen, John (2006b) rejects the argument regarding merging and suggests that Van Vlaenderen has incorrectly interpreted the theory of Lave and Wenger. Given the relevance of this discussion to an understanding of the HRDD project, some aspects of John's response to Van Vlaenderen are provided in Chapter Seven.

## Critique of Communities of Practice theory

A sound critique of Wenger's work on communities of practice is offered by Trowler (2005). He argues that Wenger places too much emphasis on harmonious relationships and shared knowledgeability, sees groups as closed systems and gives inadequate attention to the power dynamics in communities. Wenger (1998, p.56) does acknowledge that "participation ...is not tantamount to collaboration. It can involve all kinds of relations, conflictual as well as harmonious, intimate as well as political, competitive as well as cooperative". However, he tends to pay relatively little attention to the conflictual and competitive aspects of communities. Communities of Practice theory has a strong storyline of cohesiveness, negotiation and sharing.

Greater attention to power dynamics and political machination in the theory would better reflect communities as contested terrain and their boundaries as possible arenas of exclusion and struggle. In addition, such an approach would be sensitive to the ways that class, gender and the broader culture may affect access and rates of participation. These are important issues which Wenger (1998) gives little attention to. Communities of practice are systems which reproduce themselves. How they change appears to be relatively under-theorised. Greater considerations of change, conflict and power dynamics could provide for a more dialectical account of communities and practices, and could provide space for considerations of radical, revolutionary and transformational change as opposed to just gradual, negotiated change of practices. It would seem possible to incorporate such a dialectical view without undermining the key tenets and principles with regard to learning.

While acknowledging Lave and Wenger's work as one of the contemporary strands of activity theory, Engestrom and Miettinen (1999) find weakness in the notion of learning as a one-way trajectory from the periphery to the center of the practice. They argue that such a trajectory does not valorise outward movement and movement in unexpected directions. They find the theory is inadequate on instability and contradictions of practice and on issues such as challenge to authority, criticism, innovation and stimuli of change. It is noteworthy, that many of the aspects of practice referred to here relate to questions of power in practice.

Cooper (2006) picks up the issue of change and points to an important ideological issue, which is somewhat underplayed in Wenger's account of communities of practice. Using Engestrom's interest in transformative learning as opposed to knowledge transmission as a reference point, she states that Engestrom's studies "on the social transformation of the organisation of work seek to identify how people - through critically interrogating their work contexts - collectively produce new understandings and hence new knowledge" (Cooper, 2006, p.31). The argument for a dialectical view of communities of practice discussed earlier, would better accommodate both the transforming and transmission capacities of communities.

Another line of critique relates to the voluntary, organic and informal character of communities of practice and its tacit nature of learning. Writing in the context of adult literacy education, Kell (2004, n.p.) argues:

[the ] theory of Wenger (1998) about communities of practice was found wanting because though the idea originated from ethnographic observation of naturally occurring processes it is now being applied as a technology for learning. Yet naturally occurring processes appear to the participants precisely as natural and incidental. Once they are made explicit they lose something of their incidental tacit nature.

This critique refers more to how the theory has been applied in designing educational events rather than its use for understanding educational processes and learning. However as noted earlier, Wenger too has encouraged the application of the theory in organisational contexts, but warns that communities of practice are not outcomes of managerial fiat and that attempts to regulate them can destroy them.

The literature on communities of practice has been seen as awarding inadequate attention to the life histories of actors and the dispositions which they bring to the community. Mutch (2003) argues that Bourdieu's notion of habitus (see section on social capital) may be a useful way for accounting for such historical and contextual influences on a person's thinking and behaviour when they engage with a community. There does seem to be an emphasis in the communities of practice literature, particularly in Wenger's work, on what happens within the boundaries of the community of practice. This leads to a neglect of activity and forces outside of the community of practice, and to its members' histories and experiences prior to joining the practice. The notion of habitus does offer some potential redress to this lacuna. Wenger does consider the concept of habitus but views habitus as an emergent structure of practice, whereas Bourdieu's sense of habitus would be an underlying generative structure which precedes practice and thus directs practice (Mutch, 2003). Dison's study, (2004), discussed earlier, also draws on Bourdieu's view

that habitus regulates practice through the historical schema it brings to practice.

In a review of the participation metaphor employed in a series of projects, Edwards (2005) argues that in focusing on behaviour and membership, the communities of practice discourse has tended to neglect the cognitive aspects of learning. Edwards looks back into the Socio-cultural Theory and Activity Theory roots of Communities of Practice theory to demonstrate that this heritage contained a substantial focus on the cognitive dimension of learning, one which has become watered down in Communities of Practice theory.

It is noteworthy that much of the literature and empirical studies involving Communities of Practice theory tends to be based on formal work contexts, institutional arenas (eg higher education), professional identities (teachers, engineers) and long-standing craft practices. All of these livelihood contexts enjoy some measure of stability and continuity. Furthermore, with the exception of Cooper's (2006) study, there appears to be a relatively common class position of the actors involved in such practices. The samples in the studies reviewed comprise largely middle class and well-educated members of communities. How do these factors influence the stability of communities? Can communities of practice emerge and be sustained in more marginal contexts where short-term external funding is the stimulus for the practice? The implication of this trend regarding the class and social status of the members and their practices is significant for the present study, which examines a marginal practice with members who work and live in poverty-stricken contexts, and who are entering a donor-funded practice which does not enjoy high social status. It is interesting to assess the relevance of Communities of Practice theory in this very different context.

## **A Communities of Practice theory lens in a case study of the HRDD project**

Communities of Practice theory offers much promise for understanding practices, identity development and a range of types of learning within the HRDD project. The theory has particular relevance for understanding informal learning, everyday practice, and tacit and local knowledge. Within this potential usage, several questions can be posed in anticipation of the HRDD data to be considered:

1. What are the different communities and practices within the HRDD project and how do they relate and interact, if at all?
2. Does the notion of a 'constellation of communities of practice' offer a theoretical lens for viewing community educational projects such as the HRDD project?
3. Who are at the centre of each practice, and can legitimate peripheral participation serve as a conceptual tool for understanding the movement and activity of newcomers?
4. How have practices evolved over the period of seven years of the HRDD project life?
5. What learning and knowledge production occurs in HRDD communities?
6. What identity formations occur in HRDD communities?
7. Does Communities of Practice theory meaningfully accommodate diversity and conflict in HRDD practices?
8. Is the theory robust enough for application in the non-work and non-professional context of the HRDD project in a context marked by inequality and marginalization?
9. What value do considerations of context introduce to the framework?

## **Part Two: Social Capital theory according to James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu**

### **Introduction**

The inclusion of Social Capital theory in the theoretical framework of this study was prompted by two impulses during the course of this study. This first of these emerged during the literature review of Transformative Learning theory and Critical Pedagogy. This literature pointed strongly to the importance of relationships in learning and development. For instance, Taylor's major reviews of studies of Transformative Learning theory (1997; 2007) (discussed earlier in this chapter) highlighted the important role of relationships in transformative learning. Likewise, the literature on Freire reviewed in this chapter emphasised the importance of loving and trusting relationships between teachers and learners and amongst learners. This literature also highlighted the need for *dialogue* and *solidarity* as part of pedagogical and political action of solidarity. The concept of *dialogue* which features in the theoretical work of Mezirow, and even more so in that of Freire, also implies trusting relationships. A strong sense emerged from the literature that learning and development is enhanced by a relational space based on strong networks of relationships and mutual trust. Social Capital theory (discussed below) gives focused attention to the interactions between trust, relationships and networks, and development in its broadest sense. It seemed worthwhile then to introduce a Social Capital theory lens for examining the relational space of the HRDD project.

The second impulse which prompted the inclusion of Social Capital theory emerged during preliminary analysis of the data. Early readings of transcripts of interviews with educators indicated the presence of substantial data regarding relationships, both of the harmonious and trusting variety and of the conflictual and violent variety. This impulse strengthened the belief that the

Social Capital theory would be relevant and useful for an understanding of the relational space encompassing learning and development in the project.

A large and growing body of literature on Social Capital theory has developed internationally (Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990; Portes, 1998; Burt, 2001; Fine, 2001; Fine, 2002; Mansuri & Rao, 2004; Dika & Singh, 2002; Knudsen, Rousseau, Stolarick & Florida, 2005).

In South Africa, Social Capital theory has been used in research into entrepreneurship (Pingle, 2001), HIV/AIDS (Campbell, 2003; Campbell, Williams & Gilgen, 2002), on the relationships between government and communities, on membership in stokvels, on land reform, on mineworkers' health, and on civic organisations (see Thomas, 2002), on local economic development (Nel, Binns & Motteux, 2002) and on inclusive education (Muthukrishna & Sader, 2004).

The development of Social Capital theory is associated with three theorists, namely, Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam, who have provided different but related conceptions of the theory. This diversity in the literature is reflected in the discussion of Social Capital theory which follows.

## **Defining social capital**

Morrow (1999) notes that *social capital* is an elusive concept which defies easy definition. Social capital has been associated with sociability, social networks, family ties, social support, social control, trust, reciprocity, group solidarity, community engagement, civic mindedness, social justice and participation in civil society. Fukuyama (1999) correctly notes that many definitions of social capital refer to its manifestations rather than to social capital itself. There are several definitions of social capital, each originating from different conceptualisations and strands of the theory associated with different theorists. To define social capital is therefore to reveal an association

with a particular theorist's work, thus it makes sense to define social capital in relation to the different theorists. At this point, it would be sufficient to indicate that social capital relates to sociability, the types and strength of relationships people come to have with other people, structures and organisations and how these relationships influence aspects of their lives, their education and social development.

## Conceptual origins

Tracking the origins or identifying founding thinkers of Social Capital theory are not straightforward matters. In terms of contemporary use, three theorists feature, namely, Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman and Robert Putnam.

Robert Putnam of the United States is undoubtedly the theorist who has popularised the concept (Putnam, 1993; 2000). His scholarship is widely cited and gained considerable influence with policy-makers and powerful institutions. Putnam based his ideas on the work of James Coleman. Putnam identifies Lyda J. Hanifan as the first user of the term social capital in 1916. Since this pronouncement, many other writers (Smith, 2001; Daniel, Schwier & McCalla, 2003) have also named Hanifan as the originator of the concept. Hanifan was interested in broadening the role of schools in order that they could serve as hubs for community life. The sense that social capital conveyed in this movement, referred to the relationship between institutions of education, the school in this case, and broader society.

An investigation by conceptual historian James Farr (2004) has thrown new and interesting light on the origins of the concept. Farr traces the concept to more well-known works available at the time of Hanifan's work. He unearths and clarifies usage of the concept *social capital* in the work of John Dewey and points to early origins of the concept in the works of Marx and Durkheim. It is noteworthy, that powerful institutions such as the World Bank have, in recent times, also developed an appetite for a particular conception of Social

Capital theory (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). Various conceptions of Social Capital theory are now discussed.

## **Three conceptions of Social Capital theory**

### **Social Capital theory according to James Coleman**

The sociologist James Coleman's work (1988; 1990) on social capital has dominated the literature on 'social capital and education'. This is partly due to the popularising effect of Putnam's work (discussed below) and in part due to the considerable interest in replication of Coleman's original studies.

According to Coleman (1988, p98):

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors - whether personal or corporate actors - within the structure.

Coleman's conception of social capital thus focuses on the structure of relations between people. For Coleman, the value of social capital lies in how it functions, principally in its ability to facilitate productive activity. Coleman brings to social capital a functionalist and rational choice conception (Fine, 2001; Spies-Butcher, 2002).

Coleman's main units of analysis were the family and neighbourhood which he saw as important structures of relations. He identified four forms of social capital residing in these structures, namely, shared obligations and expectations, information opportunities (networking), norms and sanctions, and authority relations (O' Brien & O' Fathaigh, 2004). Coleman distinguished between social capital inside and outside the family. The structure of relations constituting social capital *inside* the family are those between children and

parents and other family members. The presence and availability of adults for the child determines the social capital within the family structure. In this understanding, single-parent families were seen as deficient in social capital. Social capital residing *outside* the family inheres in the relations amongst parents in the community and in their relations with institutions of the community.

For Coleman social capital has productive capacity, making possible certain ends which would not be possible without it. The forms of capital, particularly norms and sanctions, and authority relations and social relations, not only facilitate productive activity, they are also mechanisms of social control within the community.

Coleman's concept of *closure* (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990) has been seen as a useful concept in Social Capital theory (Portes, 1998; Burt, 2001). Closure refers to the density of relations within a network or structure which helps to cement expectations, norms and obligations of members. This understanding of social capital, arising from the inter-connectedness of one's network, sees it as an asset which could be acquired, grown and also destroyed. As family and community relations weaken, closure is reduced and social capital dissipates. According to Coleman's theorization of closure, a community's social capital is greater when there is greater interconnectedness or density of relationships. Closure carries the benefits of better information sharing, increased trustworthiness and collective sanctions. The relevance of these benefits to community development and to a project such as the HRDD are fairly evident. In Chapter Eight, the concept of closure is employed to theorise the effects of political violence in KwaZulu-Natal on community connectedness and social capital.

Coleman was interested in the relation between social capital and human capital. He saw social capital in the family and community as influencing the creation of human capital through the development of skills and knowledge of the next generation. This interest has been picked up by other authors. Schuller (2001) for example, examines the complementary roles of human

and social capital in terms of policy formulation. With similar interests, Cote (2001) examines policy challenges involved in promoting human and social capital.

A few examples of how Coleman applied social capital in his analysis of society will help to explain how he conceived of it. Coleman (1988) used social capital to explain different levels of crime in Jerusalem and suburban Detroit. He attributed the relatively lower crime level in Jerusalem to its larger social capital derived through its normative structures which inhibited crime in that society. In this example social capital is a means, functioning as a mechanism of social control which produces value desired by the community. However one could also argue that lower crime creates an environment which fosters greater sociability within families and communities, thus allowing for greater social capital. In the latter explanation, social capital becomes an end or product of other social conditions. Such tautology in Coleman's thesis has troubled scholars (see Portes, 1998 for example).

In the area of education, Coleman saw low motivation as a factor in youth unemployment. He recommended that local business should invest in education by placing a bounty on the head of each child. He suggested that the bounty should be redeemed by anyone who took responsibility for developing the child into a productive and efficient member of society. In this example, a form of social capital outside of the family is being suggested. In a further educational application, Coleman refers to the role of parent-teacher associations (school governing bodies) in developing disciplinary procedures for the entire school community. An investment in social capital is needed for the disciplinary procedures to benefit everyone. This form of social capital inheres in the relations amongst different stakeholders in the school.

The examples just discussed provide a sense of Coleman's view on community relations and how social control is achieved in society. Dika and Singh (2002, p.34) identify "strict, traditional values, rigorous discipline, and hierarchical order and control" as major characteristics of such a view of

society in Coleman's work. Such a view of society stands at odds with one characterized by freedom and equality, as promoted by Freire (1970).

### **Social Capital theory according to Robert Putnam**

As indicated earlier, Putnam's contribution to the social capital literature has raised the popularity of the concept in social analysis. Putnam's (1993; 2000) works has, however, received mixed responses. On the one hand a number of scholars and policy makers have embraced Putnam's contentions, allowing one commentator to declare Putnam as the most cited author in the 1990s across the social sciences (Fine, 2001). Putnam's work has also been the straw man for critiquing Social Capital theory. Much of the criticism of Social Capital theory (discussed below) is targeted at Putnam's conceptualisation and application of social capital.

As with other views on Social Capital theory, Putnam was interested in relationships and the value or productive capacity of such relationships. He saw social capital as the “features of organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (cited by Mansuri & Rao, 2004, p.8). Putnam, however, extended the focus from families and neighbourhoods to larger social groupings such as the nation. His main thesis was that social capital accumulation influences a region's economy and level of political integration.

Putnam distinguished between two dimensions of social capital, bonding and bridging. Bonding social capital relates to the relationships and the value of such within one's close circle of family and friends. Bonding social capital thus has a tendency to create strong in-group loyalties and identities and can become exclusive. Bridging social capital refers to value-added links with people and groupings outside of one's immediate social group, which allows one to benefit from resources of a broader, more diverse network. Bridging capital can thus broaden one's source of support and identity. Some scholars, even those critical of Putnam's work (Campbell, 2003), find the distinction between bonding and bridging capital useful in their analyses of social life.

Beugelsdijk and Smulders (2003) have developed a model of economic growth based on the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. They found that bridging social capital was associated with increased trust and economic growth. Knudsen et al. (2005) have also empirically established the economic growth benefits of bridging social capital. They observe that “bridging [social capital] is oriented to moving ahead, development, and growth” (p.7). The difference between bonding and bridging social capital is perhaps best expressed by de Souza Briggs’ (cited by Knudsen et al., 2005, p.7) who held that bonding social capital is good for “getting by”, while bridging social capital is necessary for “getting ahead”.

Putnam argued that the productive value of social capital, measured by the levels of trusting relationships and membership in civic structures such as trade unions, bowling clubs, parent-teacher associations and religious organisations, facilitated cooperation, coordination and control in society. A major thesis of Putnam was that social capital in the United States was in decline as its citizens were disengaging from collective, civic structures (Putnam, 2000). The title of his book, *Bowling Alone* (Putnam, 2000), reflects this thesis by pointing to the demise of the club bowling culture in the US as more people take to unorganised bowling activity. Putnam saw civic engagement as a fount for social cohesion, debate and information sharing. He said:

Joiners become more tolerant, less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others. When people lack connections to others, they are unable to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give or take of casual conversation or in more formal deliberation. Without such an opportunity, people are more likely to be swayed by their worst impulses ... (Putnam, 2000, pp. 288-289).

It is not difficult to see the traces of Coleman-type interests in social cohesion and control in Putnam’s conception, as evident in the quotations above. Putnam sees social capital operating like a kind of social glue, without which, things fall apart. He attributes growing problems in crime, educational

attainment and poverty in the US to lowered civic engagement and declining levels of trust. The implication of this view is that communities are depleted of their social capital and are unable to deal with the challenges facing them. From a national perspective then, the productive capacity and global competitiveness of the nation is thereby lowered. Putnam has captured the attention of state leaders and planners with contentions such as:

... networks of organised reciprocity and civic solidarity, far from being an epiphenomenon of socio-economic modernisation [are] a precondition for it (Putnam, cited in O' Brien and Fathaigh, 2004, p.5).

Two key shifts occur in Putnam's conception of social capital. Firstly, he turns social capital into an attribute of communities rather than individuals. Secondly, he gives social capital bold explanatory power, stimulating a discourse of causality for social capital. For Putnam, social capital can explain economic growth and decline, and can be read from levels of education, health and peace.

The linking of social capital to the economy and to development is highly attractive. On this Smith (2001, p.10) comments that "increasing evidence shows that social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable". In similar vein, Smith notes that social capital has been given the acclaim of enabling people "to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric" (2001, p.10).

### **Social Capital theory according to Pierre Bourdieu**

As indicated above, many commentators on social capital express clear preference for Bourdieu's theorization of social capital (Mansuri & Rao, 2004; Portes, 1998; Morrow, 1999; Campbell, 2003; O' Brien and O' Fathaigh, 2004; Burnheim, 2004). Portes (1998, p.3) sees the work of Pierre Bourdieu as the "first systematic contemporary analysis of social capital". Burnheim (2004, p. 5) captures Bourdieu's more critical use of social capital when comparing

Coleman and Bourdieu in stating that, “Coleman [and Putnam] wants more social capital; Bourdieu questions what sort and for whom”.

Bourdieu (1986, p.51) defined social capital as:

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words - to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

A key distinguishing feature of Bourdieu’s work is his focus on social class as the unit of analysis of social capital as opposed to the family, neighbourhood or nation. A further distinguishing feature is Bourdieu’s interest in how societies are structured through the unequal distribution of different forms of capital. This is a highly significant departure in social capital theorisation for several reasons. Firstly, Bourdieu offers social capital as a tool for analysis and critique of hierarchy, power and inequality in society. Next, he sees social capital as operating in tightly connected ways with other forms of capital. He indicates that the different forms ultimately have economic value. Finally, Bourdieu’s work fully acknowledges the less desirable effects of social capital.

Bourdieu (1986) identified four forms of capital. Social capital refers to social networks and is seen as operating in tandem with the three other forms of capital, namely, economic capital, symbolic capital and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to financial resources and assets. Symbolic capital refers to the perceived value attached to certain cultural products such as books, schools and values. Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital refers to the socially designated value of education and educational products and symbols. Cultural capital is therefore extremely significant to discussions in education and of how education is related to the reproduction of inequality. In fact, Burnheim (2004) argues that cultural capital is a more important concept than social capital in Bourdieu’s theory.

Portes (1998, p.7) makes the distinction between popular notions of capital extremely clear when he says, "Whereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships".

With respect to the conceptual history of social capital the lack of acknowledgment of Bourdieu's work is treated with some suspicion. Fine (2001, p.1) notes:

Pierre Bourdieu is a (decreasingly) acknowledged initiator of the theory of social capital, the critical aspects of his contributions have been excised in deference to the tamer versions associated with the likes of James Coleman, rational choice founding father of the social capital phenomenon, and Robert Putnam, its most ardent populariser.

The value of Bourdieu's work lies in its attention to the socio-cultural and historical nature of inequality and disadvantage. He takes account of the lived experiences (an explicit interest in this case study) of actors and provides explanations for how advantaged and elite groupings dominate particular fields such as education, market and state, amass capital and power and thus maintain and reproduce social inequality. Morrow (1999, p.10) captures this well: "Bourdieu's notion of capital is a useful way forward, because it is essentially a theory of privilege rather than a theory of inadequacy [or deficit]". Bourdieu provides a theoretical basis for examinations of inclusion/exclusion, historical disadvantage and of social justice in education. Bourdieu's analysis provides a way of exploring oppressive systems such as colonialism, apartheid, patriarchy, as well as exploitative economic systems. His theoretical insights are valuable in developing contexts and for periods of transition where redress and social justice agendas seek the redistribution of various forms of capital and restructuring of relationships in many fields of society. The HRDD project has many of these contextual currents flowing through it.

## **Applications of Social Capital theory in education**

It is significant that the earliest origins of social capital as attributed to Dewey and Hanifan emerged in the context of education. Also significant, are the concerns about community education which gave birth to the concept. This strengthens the rationale for using Social Capital theory, in understanding the HRDD project.

In reviewing the take-up of Social Capital theory in the educational literature, Burnheim (2004) adopts the three-way typology of ‘analysis, prescription and heuristic’, to categorise a range of studies which use Social Capital theory. She notes that analysis-type studies have often been reruns of Coleman’s studies while prescription-type studies are associated with policy interests of organisations like The World Bank. As a heuristic, social capital “has been seized on as a way of reinstating different forms of education into the debate, in particular continuing, adult, informal and vocational education” (Burnheim, 2004, p.8). A review of several studies has indicated a positive relationship between social capital (mostly parental social capital) and educational achievement (Dika and Singh, 2002).

One aspect of the appeal of Robert Putnam’s work is that his focus on civil society and community organisations resonates strongly with the notion of community-based learning programmes in informal adult education. Social capital thus becomes a powerful means and end in the informal education process. Smith (2001, p.10) comments that “Informal educators’ interest in dialogue and conversation, and the cultivation of environments in which people can work together, take them to the heart of what is required to strengthen and develop social capital”.

In an examination of the role played by social capital in mediating perceptions and aspirations regarding education amongst Palestinian students in Israel Khattab (2002) found that the high educational aspirations of Palestinian students was inconsistent with the low educational attainment amongst their

parents' generation, their marginal status in Israel and with their limited life prospects. Social capital in the family was seen as the key determinant for bolstering students' aspirations and serving as a conduit for their parents' values, norms, knowledge and expectations to be transmitted. Khattab (2002) argues that low socio-economic status and minority status do not automatically lead to low educational aspirations as the family's social capital and perception of education as an escape route from poverty and marginalisation, strongly influences aspirations.

In exploring how Social Capital theory may help in the development of inclusive schools and communities, Muthukrishna & Sader (2004) suggest that the norms and values inherent in the philosophy and discourse of inclusion are conducive to the generation of networks and connections. On the basis of an educator development project in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Muthukrishna and Sader (2004, p.17) argue:

the goal of inclusive education may be achieved through the development of social capital and that the skills and knowledge of human capital can be made available for the benefit of individuals, schools, and communities through social capital.

In an investigation of community participation and action competence in the area of environmental care in Australia, Fien and Skoien (2002) illustrate the link between social capital and social learning. They note that social capital "promotes productive, purposeful and collaborative communities, which are ideal social conditions for learning" (Fien and Skoien, 2002, p.271).

## **Critique of Social Capital theory**

One form of critique of social capital, applicable across the range of conceptions just reviewed, originates from concerns regarding discourse and ideology. Of concern here, is the tendency for 'capitalisation' and the deep danger of skewing our consideration of social phenomenon and goods

towards the economic. The notion of capital brings with it a whole set of discourses inevitably linked, in the current context, to capitalism. Fine (2001) supports this contention and points to the irony that non-economists have embraced social capital because they see it as an assault on economics and fail to see the colonising effect of economics. Fine (2001, p. 2) is highly dismissive of the terminology of social capital and its conceptual implications. He argues:

the very terminology of social capital signifies its weaknesses. That the notion "social" needs to be attached to capital to mark a distinct category is indicative of the failure to understand capital as social in what is taken to be its more mundane economic, putatively non-social, form.

Authors such as Fine (2001; 2002) and Portes (1998) view social capital as a new 'dressing up' of older, established ideas in social theory. They argue that some of these ideas can be traced back to the work of Durkheim and Marx and other theorists, as also suggested by Farr (2004).

In as much as the work of Coleman and Putnam has received widespread attention and acclaim, such work has equally attracted the most severe criticism in the social capital literature. In a highly critical article which examines social capital in relation to social theory, Fine (2001) comments that the functionalist approach to social capital taken by Coleman and Putnam in their empirical studies has been shown to be questionable. In addition, Fine sees Coleman's and Putnam's work as renewed attempts to infuse social theory with rational choice theory, for which Coleman is seen as a founding father.

As indicated earlier, the tautology in social capital theorising, mainly in Coleman's and Putnam's conception has received much critique. Portes (1998) argues that it is important to distinguish the resources from the capacity to acquire them via ones relational networks, an aspect which is missing in the work of Coleman and Putnam.

Coleman and Putnam's view that civic life in the US was in decline, a central part of their theses, has also been challenged through studies which have used different indices of civic engagement. On this basis, Ladd (1999) contended that civic life in the US was "churning" rather than declining as argued by Putnam. Ladd had found that while membership in some organizations had waned, new organizations had emerged.

Several authors (Portes, 1998; Fukuyama 1999; Edelman, Bresnen, Newell, Scarbrough & Swan, 2002) have discussed the negative or darker side of social capital. Authors adopting a critical view have examined how social capital can be used to exclude people and maintain structures of privilege and power. Portes (1998, p.15) identified four negative consequences of social capital in studies, namely, "exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms". He provides a clear explanation of each of these negative consequences of social capital, demonstrating how sociability "cuts both ways" (Portes, 1998, p.18). Fukuyama's (1999) commentary on the darker side of social capital shows how the key variables of social capital such as trust, shared norms, solidarity and collective action, can also be put to use against the common good of society. He states that both "the Ku Klux Klan and the Mafia achieve cooperative ends on the basis of shared norms, and therefore have social capital, but they also produce abundant negative externalities for the larger society in which they are embedded" (Fukuyama, 1999, n.p.). Edelman et al. (2002) likewise identify a number of the darker-side aspects of social capital in the context of industrial companies in the United Kingdom.

Other critiques of the work of Coleman and Putnam relate to the lack of attention to socio-historical contexts, gender and ethnicity (Morrow, 1999), its ability to continually refine itself in the face of criticism through the introduction of additional variables (Fine, 2001), and its tendency to blame the poor for their plight (Skocpol, 1996).

Mansuri and Rao (2004) argue for a contextualised understanding of social capital where community heterogeneity, culture and politics are considered. They see the delinking of power and social relationships as one of the chief problems in the World Bank's conception and application of social capital.

## **A Social Capital theory lens in a case study of the HRDD project.**

The literature just reviewed on Social Capital theory prompts the following questions for this case study of the HRDD project:

1. What contribution does Social Capital theory make to understanding the HRDD project?
2. What are the levels of trust, shared norms and values, reciprocity and information exchanges in the HRDD project? How does this influence learning, identity and action in the HRDD project?
3. Does Social Capital offer insights into marginalization and inequality in HRDD communities?
4. Is there evidence of closure (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990) in the HRDD context and how does this affect the project?

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented a very detailed and complex theoretical framework for a study of the HRDD project. The first part of the chapter reviewed the learning theories of Jack Mezirow and Paulo Freire. These theories were seen as inherent to the project, constituting an internal theoretical framework of the project, as project partners had drawn on these theories in ongoing planning within the HRDD project. A review of these theories showed them to provide lenses which are relevant and useful for a case study of the HRDD project. In particular, this part of the framework has highlighted the importance of critical reflection, dialogue, relationships in transformative and emancipatory types of

learning. The impact of such learning on personal development and social change has also been highlighted.

In order to extend the understanding and theorisation of the project new theoretical lenses were introduced. The second part of the chapter thus reviewed Communities of Practice theory and Social Capital theory. These theories constitute external, researcher-introduced and data-driven theoretical lenses. Their inclusion extended the theoretical framework for the study. This part of the framework highlighted the social nature of learning and identity development and of the importance of relationships in the education and development arenas. This part of the literature also provided lenses for examining the practices of different actors in the HRDD project and how such practices served learning and development objectives in the project.

The next chapter discusses the research design and methodology of this study.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research design and methodology**

"to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' ...of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation."

(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.182)

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology involved in conducting a case study of the HRDD project. The chapter comprises four sections. The first section examines different research paradigms in terms of their ontological and epistemological positions and ends by locating the current study within the critical paradigm. The second section reviews the literature on case study methodology and sets out the suitability and value of such methodology for an enquiry into the HRDD project. This section ends with a discussion of concerns about quality in case study research. The third section of the chapter discusses the sources of data, the data collection methods, data management and data analysis in this study. This section also considers the importance of narratives in this study. The final section of the chapter discusses researcher positioning, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The broad aims of the study, introduced in Chapter One, are repeated below as they frame the design and methodology of this study.

#### **Aims of this study**

This study was initiated with three broad aims in mind, which are:

1. to understand the genesis and processes of change in the HRDD project in relation to its wider context,

2. to capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to their learning, identity and civic action, and
3. to construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory.

## **Research paradigms**

The work of Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1994; 2005), developed over a period of more than two decades, has become a standard reference for discussions on research paradigms. The history of this development is succinctly conveyed by Morgan (2007) and Guba and Lincoln (2005). Morgan (2007) provides a critical perspective on the processes of paradigm construction and draws attention to the interest-laden and power-ridden nature of this process.

From the outset, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.105) have argued that that “questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm” because the paradigm “guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.” Following this position, it is necessary to provide some discussion of paradigms and then set out the paradigm within which this study was conceived and conducted.

Paradigms are worldviews or belief systems which determine how one sees and comes to understand the world. Bassey (1999, p. 42) offers the following definition, “a research paradigm is a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpins their research actions”. A paradigm works like a lens in that it influences one’s sense of the nature of the world, how one relates to such a world, and how one can come to understand such a world and generate knowledge about it. We employ paradigms regularly in all aspects of our lives and they often

operate at a tacit level. For purposes of research, however, it is important to acknowledge the paradigmatic dimension of a study and to identify the implications of such a research stance. This study was conducted within the critical paradigm. A general discussion of paradigms follows, leading to a more focused discussion of the critical paradigm and its relevance and implications for this case study.

Cohen et al. (2000) focus on three paradigms in educational research, namely, the scientific paradigm (also referred to as the positivist paradigm), the interpretivist paradigm and the critical paradigm. Although different terms may be used, these are the paradigms most commonly identified and discussed in the literature (see also van der Mescht, 2002; Neuman, 2000; Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004). However, some writers such as Bassey (1999) for example tend to limit their discussion to the differences between positivism and interpretivism. Some paradigms are also treated as umbrella concepts, covering several variants. For example, historical materialism and feminist critical theory are at times treated as subsets of the critical paradigm. The discussion which follows is based on Guba and Lincoln's (1994) comparisons of four paradigms, namely, positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism. As indicated earlier, this list has laid the basis for many subsequent discussions in research circles (see van der Mescht, 2002 for example). In a more recent discussion of paradigms, Guba and Lincoln (2005) have included a fifth paradigm referred to as the 'participatory paradigm'. There appears to be a fair degree of overlap between this participatory paradigm and the critical paradigm. The original four paradigms would thus suffice for the purposes of the present discussion.

### **Positivist and Post-positivist paradigms**

The positivist and post-positivist paradigms hold that reality exists independently of the researcher and can therefore be studied in an objective and value-free manner. Within these paradigms, a disinterested knower records the world and reports on it in such a manner, making it possible for others to repeat the research action, replicate the record and thus produce

generalisable statements about reality. The methods used by such researchers are modeled on those employed in experimental laboratories. Here, knowledge is generated through accretion, hypothesis-testing and falsification where particular understandings of events are linked to discern patterns and theoretical structures, often with the hope that future events can be predicted.

Guba and Lincoln's distinction between positivism and postpositivism is one that has not been picked up by other commentators, such as Cohen et al. (2000) for instance, and refers to a paradigmatic shift made by some investigators in response to criticisms leveled at the positivist paradigm. At ontological and epistemological levels, this shift from positivist to post-positivist paradigms represents an acknowledgement that reality cannot be fully and perfectly apprehended but only approximate and probabilistic apprehensions are possible in research. This is a significant shift. In terms of methodology, the shift is smaller but has increased the space for the use of qualitative methods in research.

### **Interpretivist paradigm**

The interpretivist paradigm signalled a major paradigmatic shift. Within the interpretivist paradigm, or what Guba and Lincoln (1994; 2005) have labeled "constructivism", reality is not seen as something that exists independently of the researcher and his/her cognitions. Reality is constructed by interested knowers. Such reality or the world is understood as subjective and value-laden. Researchers thus seek to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors and the meaning which such actors attach to their experience of the world. Attempts are made to gain deep insights into phenomena with a view to generate interpretations and meanings in a socially interactive process. Such meanings are linked to existing theory or generate new theory and sometimes may help to predict future phenomena, although the latter outcome is rarely paramount. Bassey (1999) suggests that phenomenology, ethnomethodology, hermeneutics and social anthropology are approximate alternative labels for the interpretivist paradigm. I view these as research

methodologies within an interpretivist paradigm rather than different labels for the interpretivist paradigm. The data generated by researchers working in an interpretivist paradigm, typically using methods such as interviews, narratives, observations and documentary analysis, are largely but not exclusively qualitative. There is now a growing interest in mixed-methods research which draws on both qualitative and quantitative designs and attempts to transcend the rigid boundaries which have grown around research approaches (Tashakkori & Teddle, 2003; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; see also Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 2007-2008).

### **Critical paradigm**

A critical paradigm, sometimes referred to as critical theory paradigm, emerged in response to the perceived failure of positivism and interpretivism to fully account for the political and ideological embeddedness of reality. This paradigm holds that social, political and economic values become structures shaping the world. In this paradigm, researchers focus on understanding the contexts within which phenomena arise, and how power and conflict influence human behaviour. A critical paradigm shares some epistemological and methodological space with interpretivism by positing an interested researcher with acknowledged values and goals constructing knowledge from data collected through dialogue with the world. Goals of emancipation, transformation and social justice are often foregrounded in research within a critical paradigm.

A critical paradigm approach to research has been the subject of some challenge and critique. A postmodernist critique rejects the idea of a unified knowledge-constituting subject adopted in the paradigm (Palmer, 1997). Morrison (cited by Cohen & Manion, 2000) argues that the link between ideology critique or action research and an emancipated person or society, which are central goals of the critical paradigm, has not been proven and may not be a logical necessity. Usher, Bryant and Johnson's (1997) postmodern challenge also questions the strong modernist conception of rationality and the universalist view of emancipation of critical paradigm research. They warn

that “emancipation may itself become oppressive” and that attention should be given to the “power-knowledge nexus” of a critical paradigm (*ibid*, p. 190).

Cohen et al. (2000) believe that the interpretivist paradigm is most naturally suited to case study research. They state that “the use of critical theory in case study research is at a comparatively embryonic stage but offers rich potential” (p181). The present case study of the HRDD project within a critical paradigm thus occupies this somewhat embryonic but rich heuristic space. The present study seeks to understand the HRDD project through the perspectives and experiences of various project actors. Consequently, in its epistemology, the study could fit comfortably within the interpretivist paradigm. In terms of how the study was conducted, that is its methodology, the study could also be located within the interpretivist paradigm. However, the point at which this study departs from the interpretivist paradigm, is when its gaze focuses on the systemic and ideological forces which shape the actions of participants in the HRDD project. A rationale for this is provided below.

### **Why a critical paradigm is most suitable for a case study of the HRDD project.**

The adoption of a research paradigm is often influenced by the professional, political and institutional identities of researchers (Morgan, 2007). In this way, ethnographers may be inclined to work within the interpretivist paradigm and feminist researchers or Freirean scholars may find the critical paradigm something of a ‘natural home’. While this may be common practice, I believe like van der Mescht (2002) and others, that the nature of the problem or phenomenon under study should determine the choice of paradigm and methodology. What then is the nature of the HRDD project which invites an enquiry located in the critical paradigm?

The HRDD project works mainly with poor, marginalized women in rural KwaZulu-Natal. An enquiry into the project should consider the history and context of these women’s lives and how such factors have influenced who they are and what they seek to be and gain through education. A further

aspect of history and context relates to the fact that the HRDD project emerged and operated during a particular time of socio-political transition in South Africa. Research within the critical paradigm foregrounds the relationships between history, context and social practices. The issues of marginalization, power and empowerment are important in the HRDD project and in this study. The critical paradigm allows for attention to be focused on the issue of power and how it manifests in homes, communities and broader domains of society.

A strong interest in this study, served by a critical paradigm, is to contribute to:

- research for new knowledge and improved action (critical praxis)
- research serving empowerment, social change and social justice

These interests have been furthered during the process of this study through several engagements with research participants and other audiences to provide feedback, facilitate reflection and stimulate discussion on the project based on findings from this study. This has taken the form of workshops with educators and staff of the NGO partner, reports to project partners, conference papers and journal articles. A series of further such products and events will follow the completion of study. This aspect of the study, a commitment to contributing to the goals of the HRDD project and to broader social change in an action-research fashion, is an explicit value of research in the critical paradigm.

Having set out the paradigmatic position for the study, this chapter now turns to a discussion of case study methodology. In this section, I wish to examine different definitions, types and purposes of case study. Particular focus will be given to the controversial question of generalisability in relation to notions of validity. In all of these latter discussions, it should become clearer that the choice of paradigm has a strong influence on methodological positions and outcomes.

## **Case study methodology**

Although relatively new to the field of education, when compared to fields like medicine and law, case study methodology is becoming commonplace in educational studies. The methodology also appears to have become a popular choice in postgraduate studies in education. A case study allows for rich, detailed (in-depth) study of educational phenomena and can lead to both descriptive and analytical accounts of such phenomena. The methodology allows for an engagement with and for generation of theory, sometimes starting with or resulting in hypothesis or propositions. Case studies use both qualitative and quantitative data and usually employ a variety of data collection methods and sources. Case study methodology has only in recent times gained the status of academic acceptability. For a long time, it was seen as "a weak sibling among social science methods" (Yin, 2003a, p.xiii) because of perceptions of a lack of scientific rigor. Such perceptions and the power underlying such positions say less about case study as a research methodology and more about the past hegemony of the positivist paradigm and its associated discourse.

### **Essential features of a case study**

A number of definitions and descriptions of case study appear in the literature. Some of these are considered below for two related purposes. The first purpose is to distill and construct a list of essential features of case study research. The second purpose is to understand what particular value a case study may offer in terms of understanding educational phenomena.

The first two statements below illuminate a key feature: that case studies are studies of a single *instance* or *unit*. In the present study, the unit is an educational project, the HRDD project.

Case study is the examination of an instance in action.

MacDonald and Walker (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.24)

The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit.

Cohen et al. (2000, p.185)

The next statement points to the fact that case study research involves *in-depth, intensive* enquiry which also attempts to reflect a *rich and lively* reality of the case.

Case studies strive to portray 'what it is like' to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for, a situation.

Cohen et al. (2000, p.182)

The next description of case study points to a further central feature: that the case is approached and studied as a *whole* or *system*. This feature implies the existence of boundaries to the case and that the parts are interconnected in such a way that a study of the parts in an isolated fashion will not yield the same understanding as would a study of the parts in relationship to each other. Such an epistemological position, a feature of interpretivist and critical paradigms, is fundamental to the case study of the HRDD project where temporal and spatial boundaries are set and where the relationships between the different parts and stakeholders of the project are necessary for a full understanding of the case.

The case is an integrated system. The parts do not have to be working well, the purposes may be irrational, but it is a system.

Stake (1995, p.2)

The notion of interconnectedness of parts implied above is extended to the relationship between the case and its context in the next definition:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that

- investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
- the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.

(Yin, 2003a, p. 13)

This idea which recognises the embeddedness of phenomena signals a special relevance of case study methodology for an understanding of the HRDD project in that the genesis and development of the project needs to be explored in relation to events and influences in the transitory South African context and wider contexts. This notion of the embeddedness of social reality advanced by case study resonates strongly with the ontological position of the critical paradigm, discussed earlier. Yin (2003a, p.13) recommends that “... you would use the case study method because you deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions - believing that they might be highly pertinent to your phenomenon of study”. Such an idea would not be subscribed to within a positivist paradigm where influences of context are separated out and controlled for.

The next statement also signals non-positivist orientations and epistemology in commenting on a further level of interconnectedness, that between the researcher and the case, and on the preferred style of the researcher in conducting a case study:

... educational case studies need the ‘fusion of the styles of the artist and the scientist’ Case study is the way of the artist, who achieves greatness when, through portrayal of a single instance locked in time and circumstance, he [or she] communicates enduring truths about the human condition’.

MacDonald and Walker (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.24)

While these definitions and descriptions clearly signal that a case study is a study of a singularity, a number of the definitions refer to the idea or purpose of finding *patterns*, *generalisable* relationships or *enduring truths*. Not all writers believe that generalisable results are a necessary outcome of case study research. It will be seen from later discussion that proponents of the view that case study findings must be or should be generalisable tend to lean towards the post-postivist paradigm. Robert Yin's (2003a, 2003b, 2004) much-published texts on case study promote some aspects of this orientation.

### **Types of case study**

Yin (2003a) distinguishes between three forms of case study, namely exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. A descriptive case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context. Exploratory case studies could involve grounded theory and could serve as the precursor to explanatory studies. Explanatory case studies allow for hypotheses to be tested and theories to be developed. Stake (1995) contrasts two broad categories of case study, namely intrinsic and instrumental case study. Case studies done as part of a commissioned evaluation, where the case is predetermined, would be seen as instrumental because the interest in the case stems from external sources. With an intrinsic case study, the case is chosen because of an intrinsic interest in learning about that particular case because of its unique features and surrounding context. The present case study of the HRDD project is an intrinsic case study. It is undertaken because of its unique characteristics as a community-based education project in rural KwaZulu-Natal during South Africa's period of transition to democracy.

Bassey (1999) discusses Stenhouse's categorisation of four broad styles of case study, namely, ethnographic, evaluative, educational and action research case studies. The present case study could be conceived of as straddling both the educational and action research categories. According to Stenhouse (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.28):

Educational case study is where many researchers using case study methods are concerned neither with social theory nor with evaluative judgement, but rather with the understanding of educational action

...Case study in action research ... is concerned with contributing to the development of the case or cases under study by feedback of information which can guide revision and refinement of the action.

### **Concerns about quality in case study research**

Mention was made earlier of the historically low status of case studies in the academy. This perception (or misconception) stems in large part from dominant conceptions of research quality which are measured in terms of traditional reliability and validity indices associated with a positivist orientation. The following quotation sharply conveys this prejudicial view regarding research quality in case studies:

The case study method ... is the logically weakest method of knowing. The study of individual careers, communities, nations, and so on has become essentially passé. Recurrent patterns are the main product of the enterprise of historic scholarship. (Smith, cited by Cohen et al, 2000, p.183)

The prized status of "recurrent patterns" is what constitutes the external validity of a study. The low status attributed to case study in such a discourse relates to the belief that because case studies are studies of singularities, they cannot make valid claims about patterns and the frequency or recurrence of such patterns. It is important to state that this attributed status and prejudice is a function of paradigmatic loyalty and dominance of positivism in the research enterprise.

One alternative conception of research quality distinguishes between statistical generalisation and analytical generalisation. Yin (2003a, p.10) notes that "in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical

generalization)". He later comments that a "fatal flaw in doing case studies is to conceive of statistical generalization as the method of generalizing the results of the case study. ... the mode of generalization is "analytic generalization," in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study (Yin, 2003a, p.32). This quote also indicates Yin's preference for beginning case studies with theoretical propositions. He argues that the role of theory development prior to the conduct of any data collection, is one point of difference between case studies and related methods such as ethnography and "grounded theory"; theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies (Yin, 2003a, pp. 28-29). Yin describes a case study that does not begin in this way as "exploratory". Yin also advocates the use of a number of the techniques of the scientific tradition such as hypothesis testing, using multiple cases and detailed design protocols to enhance the reliability and validity of case study.

Bassey (1999) takes a somewhat similar position to Yin (2003a) by advocating the use of fuzzy propositions and fuzzy generalizations as the route towards contributing towards a cumulative body of knowledge and theory building via case study. Not all commentators agree with this position of the primacy of theory and hypotheses. Nisbet and Watt (cited by Cohen et al., 2000) advise against the generation of hypotheses too early in a case study; rather, they suggest, it is important to gather data openly. I believe that not all case studies need to begin with theoretical propositions as suggested by Yin (2003a). In the present study, it was deemed useful to begin with a theoretical framework (see Chapter Two) which guided initial stages of data collection and analysis, but to remain open to the emergence of theory from the data. No hypothesis or theoretical proposition was declared prior to this study.

### **Trustworthiness**

Traditional measures of assuring quality in research such as reliability and validity are not appropriate for most case studies. A case study within the

critical paradigm (and interpretivist paradigm) acknowledges that the case study as presented in a written report would be an interpretation and construction of the researcher. The notion of an interpretation troubles the sense of reliability employed in surveys and experiments. A case study is also a study of a singularity, with an emphasis on its particularity (Stake, 1995). It may allow for some measure of generalization but such an objective is not the primary concern for the researcher. This lack of concern for generalisable findings renders notions of validity, specifically external validity, irrelevant for a case study. Researchers working within critical and interpretivist paradigms have sought alternative measures of research quality. For example, Guba and Lincoln (2005) have promoted the notion of *trustworthiness* as an alternative to reliability and validity. Cohen et al. (2000) also discuss the concept of trustworthiness and offer eight questions which the researcher should use to test the trustworthiness of their findings. Narsee (2003) offers an interrogation of generalisability and several positions which researchers have taken with regard to the challenge about generalisability. She furthermore discusses strategies taken, like that of Guba and Lincoln, in reconceptualising the concept of generalisability.

What then are the measures of quality for a case study of the HRDD project? The concept of trustworthiness has offered a useful path for researchers wanting to conduct respectable case studies of good quality. Being able to provide affirmative responses to the following questions posed by Bassey (1999, p.76) was taken as a measure of the trustworthiness of this case study:

- Has there been a prolonged engagement with data sources?
- Has there been persistent observation of emerging issues?
- Have raw data been adequately checked with their sources?
- Has the ... working emerging story been systematically tested against the analytical statements?
- Has a critical friend thoroughly tried to challenge the findings?
- Is the account of the research sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence in the findings?

## Triangulation and crystalisation as routes to quality

The process of triangulation has been suggested by researchers doing qualitative research and case studies as a vehicle for achieving high quality, rigorous and respectable research. Both Yin (2003a) and Stake (1995) give extensive coverage to this process in their texts on case study research. Essentially, triangulation refers to the process of using multiple sources and methods to support assertions or findings generated in a case study. The logic is that the multiplicity of sources and methods would strengthen the validity of the assertion or finding by eliminating the inaccuracy or bias introduced by a single source or method. Triangulation is thus strongly promoted by case study advocates such as Yin and Stake. Bassey (1999) also includes the process of triangulation as a quality-promotion device. Van der Mescht (2002), however, disagrees with this position. He correctly argues that the process of drawing on multiple sources can allow for a fuller picture but not a more accurate or truer picture. If one's interest, as is the case in this study, is to get to the lived reality, meaning-making and story-telling processes of educational actors and to see and feel such experience from their points of view, then including additional actors or seeking data from them via different methods, simply provides a greater breadth of perspectives but not a truer (more valid) perspective. Taking this stance strengthens the congruence between the epistemology and methodology of this study (see earlier discussion on paradigms).

Two concepts which appear to offer fruitful ways out of the paradigm incongruence highlighted above by van der Mescht are crystalisation (Henning et al., 2004) and data-saturation (Bassey, 1999). I have found these to be useful and appropriate quality criteria for the present study. Crystalisation points to the multi-faceted nature of reality, where additional sources and methods show up additional facets rather than confirm some true position as signaled by triangulation. Data saturation refers to the process where data collection is halted when no new insights appear to be gained from additional data.

## **Related case studies in education**

Case study methodology has become popular in studies of educational practice. A brief review of four South African case studies, all conducted as doctoral research in education, are provided below.

Shirley Walters (1989) produced three rich case studies of community resource agencies in Cape Town in the early 1980s. This study is one of the earliest attempts in South Africa to understand and theorise informal and non-formal educational practices within community organisations promoting democratic participation. Using a participatory research approach and grounded theory, Walters was able to show the relationships between micro organisational processes and macro forces. Given its emphasis on educational activity within community organisations, education for democracy and on the relationships between micro and macro contexts, Walter's study serves as an important point of reference for the current study.

Peter Rule (2003) constructed three historical case studies of projects of the Interchurch Education Programme in Johannesburg, between 1978 and 1999. Using critical education theory and a narrative genre, Rule provides vivid accounts of how the three projects variably responded to their changing contexts and to different educational crises during a turbulent period in South Africa. This study makes a valuable contribution to adult education theory by theorising NGO-led educational projects as dialogic spaces. Such theorisation, together with emphases on context and history, make this study relevant to the present study.

Linda Cooper's (2006) case study, completed in 2005, provides detailed exploration of informal learning within a South African trade union. Using Situated Learning Theory and Activity Theory (discussed in Chapter Two), Cooper was able to explore learning within an organisation characterised by its collective and social action orientation. She contrasts this case of learning (in a trade union) with learning in more conventional workplaces as discussed in the 'learning organisation' literature. Cooper's study shows the importance

of context, history and power as primary shapers of learning organisations. This study serves as a further point of reference for the present study, particularly given its theoretical lens of Situated Learning Theory and its focus on context, history and power.

The final case study reviewed here is not an adult education study but its relevance lies in the potential for theory development and generalisation from a case study and in the attention given to context in the study. Janet Hesketh (2004) conducted a case study during the late 1990s into a university curriculum designed to promote independent thought. She showed how theorisation, model development and model replication was possible from a single case study. Similarly, the present study is interested in theorisation and possible model development based on a case study of the HRDD project.

### **Why a case study is ideal for enquiry into the HRDD project**

The argument for the best fit between methodology and research question or phenomenon provides substantial justification for adopting case study methodology in the present study of the HRDD project. Yin (2003a, p.1) notes that “case studies are the preferred strategy when “how” or “why” questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context”. In so doing, Yin is describing conditions most pertinent to the HRDD project with regard to research questions, researcher control and context.

Adelman et al. (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.23) identifies several possible advantages of case study which resonate strongly with interests in this study. In particular, they point to the recognition given by case study to the “complexity and ‘embeddedness’ of social truths”. This is a major interest in the present study and is reinforced by the critical paradigm adopted. Adelman et al. (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.23) also note that “case studies are a ‘step to action’. They begin in a world of action and contribute to it. Their insights may be directly interpreted and put to use”. I have already pointed to this objective of the present study, a feature of research within the critical research

paradigm. The final two advantages discussed by Adelman et al (*ibid*) refer to the outcomes or products of case study in that their “products, may form an archive of descriptive material sufficiently rich to admit subsequent reinterpretation ... [and] in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research report. These latter strengths of case study are important in the present study which seeks to address a range of audiences.

A major determinant of methodological choice in this study is that a case study is able to locate and understand action most suitably within its historical, social and political contexts. Cohen et al. (2000, p.79) list four purposes served by case study:

- To portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of real individuals and situations through accessible accounts.
- To catch the complexity and situatedness of behaviour
- To contribute to action and intervention
- To present and represent reality - to give a sense of ‘being there’

These four purposes are inherent in the three aims of the study listed at the beginning of this chapter. Such synergy between the aims of this study and the purposes listed by Cohen et al. serve as an indicator of the appropriateness of case study methodology for this study.

### **The data, sources and participants in this study**

Data collection methods for this case study include in-depth interviews which generated narratives, participant observation and documentary analysis. While most of the data generated is of a qualitative nature, some relevant quantitative data such as census statistics and learner enrolment figures, have also been used.

As indicated in the second aim, this study sought:

to capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to their learning, identity and civic action.

To achieve this aim, three groups of key roleplayers were identified. The first group is the HRDD learners who attend ABET classes and participate in development projects within their communities. The second group is the HRDD educators who facilitate the ABET classes and support the development projects. The third group is made up of staff of the Tembaletu Community Education Centre, staff of the Centre for Adult Education of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and staff of the Embassy of Finland. These three organizations are the “project partners” (see Chapter Five) whose staff conceptualized and initiated the HRDD project and oversaw its operations. In-depth interviews were held with selected participants from each of these three groups. The in-depth interview method was adopted as it provided the best opportunity to capture the lived experiences of participants in narrative form and allows for additional probing by the interviewer. The interview method is particularly suitable for situations where research participants may have low levels of literacy. Interviewing has long been the most popular method in qualitative research (Seidman, 1998; Gilbert, 1993; Cohen et al. 2000; Henning et al., 2004) and is very frequently employed in case studies (Bassey, 1999). Interviewing is more than just a technical skill. It depends on good interpersonal and communication skills and is a political and context-bound process (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Seidman’s (1998) work on in-depth interviewing guided the interview process (explained below) in this study. The criteria used to select participants from each group, in other words the sampling process of the study, is discussed next.

### **Sampling for in-depth interviews**

Purposive sampling was used to select participants in each group. For each group, a set of criteria guided the selection of participants.

## **Educators**

Seven educators were selected for interviews. Three criteria guided the selection of educators namely, HRDD site, gender and length of participation. It was deemed important to cover all seven of the HRDD sites. This would allow for specific community factors and dynamics to be captured and to understand how such factors have influenced the participation and experiences of the different educators. It was also considered important to include both men and women educators in order to understand the influence of gender within this sample. Finally, an attempt was made to include some educators who had been involved for several years and some who had joined the project more recently. It was hoped that such a range would allow for a more nuanced understanding of educator development and for possible comparisons in terms of how the project was understood and experienced.

Interviews with the educators were conducted during 2005. With such a small group of educators (particularly male educators), obtaining an adequate spread in terms of the three criteria meant that very little choice was available.

**Table 1: Sample of HRDD educators interviewed**

<b>Educator pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Length of participation</b>
Malindi	37	Female	8 years
Orvil	34	Male	8 years
Khosi	37	Female	4 years
Nokthula	31	Female	5 years
Nonjabulo	24	Female	3 years
Cosmos	27	Male	3 years
Welcome	26	Male	2 years

### ***Interview process with educators***

Each educator was approached telephonically and invited to participate once the purpose of the interview had been explained. If they were willing, and gave their consent, interview dates were negotiated and appointments set up.

Educators were interviewed twice each at their HRDD site. The interviews were conducted by myself and an experienced bilingual researcher. Each educator chose a pseudonym for themselves which has been used on all records and throughout the document. A further step taken to ensure the anonymity of participants was that they have not been identified in terms of their HRDD site. It was felt that if age, sex and the HRDD site of participants were revealed, then their true identities could be determined. As indicated, the method of in-depth interviewing was guided by Seidman (1998) who recommends 3 interview sessions when conducting in-depth interviews. A shortened, 2-session version of this process was adopted. The first interview focused on the educator and their life history. The second interview, a week later, focused on the educator's understanding and experience of the HRDD project. During the first interview, each interviewee was asked to tell the story of their life and during the second, a story about their involvement in the HRDD project. In both interviews educators were encouraged to construct their own stories in a self-directed and open-ended fashion. A checklist (see Appendix A) was used to monitor the story-telling processes. Items in the checklist were used as probes for clarity during the interview and as probes for completeness at the end of the interview. The responses of participants, their silences and body language during the interview sometimes also prompted additional questions.

A total of 14 interviews were held with the 7 educators, each lasting between 1 and 1 ½ hours. Educators were encouraged to use their mother-tongue during the interview and most preferred this option of speaking in isiZulu. The interviews were recorded on audio tape with the permission of the educators. The recordings were transcribed verbatim in isiZulu and then translated into English. Samples of each transcript were checked by an independent bilingual research assistant to assure the accuracy of the translation and transcription processes. The 14 interviews resulted in very lengthy and detailed English transcripts. The transcripts revealed that a wealth of extremely rich narrative data had been generated. This was loaded into the NVivo programme (version 2.0) for qualitative data analysis.

## **Learners**

The main criterion guiding the selection of learners for interviews was HRDD site. Attempts were also made to include one or two male learners in the sample. As with the educator sample, it was deemed important to cover all seven of the HRDD sites in order to capture the influence of dynamics affecting learning in the different HRDD communities. The vast majority of learners in the HRDD project are women. This majority was reflected in the final sample chosen. Of the seven learners interviewed, only one male learner was included. This learner was also the only male in his class.

It was also important to gain the perspective of learners who had spent a reasonable time participating in ABET classes and community projects in order to tap into understandings of the project developed over some time. For this reason, most of the learners in the sample were recruited for interviews during the Adult Learners Week celebrations in 2005. Learners involved in such events are likely to have had a reasonable length of involvement in the project activities in their area. This event also involves a good representation of learners who have experienced some measure of success in the project. This possible sampling bias should be borne in mind when reading the learners' perspectives in Chapter Six.

Appointments were made with learners who agreed to participate in this study. Learners were interviewed privately within their communities by myself and an experienced bilingual researcher in early 2006. At the start of each interview, the purpose of the interview was explained and informed consent was gained. Permission for recording the interview was obtained. Each learner chose a pseudonym for themselves which has been used on all records and throughout the document. In a further step taken to ensure the anonymity of learners, they have not been identified in terms of their HRDD site. It was felt that if the age, sex and the HRDD site of participants were revealed, then their true identities could be determined. A single interview with combined foci on life story and HRDD experience was conducted in isiZulu with each of these learners. Each interviewee was asked two main questions. First, they were asked to tell the story of their life. They were then asked to tell a story about

the HRDD project and of their experiences of the project. Both questions allowed learners to respond in a self-directed and open-ended fashion. A checklist (see Appendix A) was used to monitor the story-telling process. Items in the checklist were used as probes for clarity during the interview and as probes for completeness at the end of the interview. The responses, silences and body language in the interview also prompted further questions. Interviews generally lasted about 1 ½ hours. As with the educator interviews, interviews with learners were recorded on audio tape, transcribed, translated and loaded into the NVivo database. The transcripts of these interviews revealed that a wealth of extremely rich narrative data had been generated.

**Table 2: Sample of HRDD learners interviewed**

Learner pseudonym	Age	Sex
Dora	56	Female
Nothando	51	Female
Khetiwe	49	Female
Eliza	42	Female
Phumzile	35	Female
Sipho	50	Male
Zinhle	58	Female
All learners had been involved in the HRDD project for more than a year.		

### **Project Partners**

The final group of interviewees was comprised of staff of the Tembaletu Community Education Center, Centre for Adult Education and Embassy of Finland. These three organizations, referred to as the “project partners”, were responsible for initiating, developing and supporting the HRDD project for a period of almost 10 years. Details of the roles of these three organizations are provided in Chapter Five. It was deemed important to gain the perspectives of key staff from all three organizations. At the time of the interviews in early 2006, each organization had experienced some change in terms of staff

responsible for the HRDD project. It therefore became necessary to interview both existing staff who had joined the organization more recently and had a shorter involvement with the HRDD project, and ex-staff who had been involved in the conception and early development of the HRDD project, but who had since left their organization for other positions. The following seven stakeholder interviews were conducted:

**Table 3: Sample of HRDD project partners interviewed**

Tembaletu Community Education Centre	Centre for Adult Education	Embassy of Finland
Past Director	ABET Programme Coordinator	Past Programme Officer
Current Director	HRDD Researcher	Current Programme Officer
ABET Manager		

The interviews with partner representatives were conducted in Pietermaritzburg during 2006. All these interviewees were comfortable with me interviewing them in English and with their names being used in this study. These interviews focused on how the HRDD project was understood and experienced from the perspective of the project partner and the role of the partner's organization in the HRDD project throughout the lifespan of the project. Project partners were asked to tell their story of the HRDD project. They were allowed to respond in a self-directed and open-ended fashion. A checklist (see Appendix B) was used to monitor the story-telling process. Items in the checklist were used as probes for clarity during the interview and as probes for completeness at the end of the interview. These interviews were recorded on audio tape and transcribed. The interview data were then loaded into the NVivo database together with data collected from the educators and learners.

## **Generating, analyzing and reporting narratives**

The case study of the HRDD project makes extensive use of narratives and in its entirety can be seen as essentially a story about stories. Storytelling during interviews was the principal form of generating data about the lives of HRDD actors and about their experiences in the project. Using narratives in this way has become commonplace in qualitative research. Plummer (2001, p. ix) has commented on the growth in “life story work”, stating that, “biography, narrative, lives, oral histories, subjectivity, telling tales – all these have developed into a wide network of research”. As a field of study, education is a relative newcomer to this narrative turn (Rossiter & Clark, 2007). Generating a substantial part of the data for this study in the form of narratives held the promise of satisfying the desire to see the project through the eyes of different actors and to understand the project in terms of these actors’ understandings and lives. Such promise of narratives is supported by McLaren and da Silva (1993) who state that “making an experience into a story is perhaps the most fundamental act of human understanding” (p.73). Rossiter and Clark (2007) also support this position when stating that we “make sense of our experience, day by day and across the lifespan, by putting it into story form” (p.3). This study began with a deep interest in hearing and analyzing the stories of people involved in the HRDD project.

Given the nature of the data, data analysis was largely about making sense of the project through the narratives and perspectives of its main protagonists. With the narratives being subjected to translation from isiZulu to English, content analysis of themes rather than language form became the chief form of narrative analysis in this study. The translation process would have transformed the language form of the transcripts thus eliminating the possibility of other forms of narrative analysis such as figurative analysis and discourse analysis. Elliot (2005) notes that the content of a narrative can serve two functions, namely, descriptive and interpretivist functions. In the first, past events are described and developed into a chronology. In the second, the content conveys the meaning of events and experiences in the life of the

storyteller. The content of narratives of HRDD actors serves both these functions in this study.

Riessman (cited in Henning et al. 2004, p.122), believes that “personal narratives are, at core, meaning-making units of discourse. They are of interest precisely because narrators interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce the past as it was”. This idea of interpreting the past is discussed as a form of critical remembrance in Chapter Six where examples of learners’ recollections and new interpretations of their lives and experiences in the project are discussed.

The discrete analytic moves taken by researchers in the process of analysing qualitative data, is often fairly idiosyncratic (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Henning et al. (2004) offers useful practical advice to researchers working with qualitative data. As indicated, the type of analysis which the data generation process in this study allowed for was content analysis (see Henning et al., 2004). In addition to the content analysis, some attention was given to metaphors in the data. An example of this is the “window” metaphor discussed in Chapters Five and Nine. A set of fairly typical analytic moves was adopted which included repeated careful readings of the data, deductive and inductive identification of themes and categories of themes, identification of relationships or patterns between categories and then moving such analysis to higher levels of abstraction and theorising (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Chapters Five to nine present both deductive and inductive forms of analysis. The deductive analyses were influenced by the research questions, research aims and theoretical framework of the study. The inductive analysis was based on the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The identification of themes and thematic categories in one narrative were constantly compared with such identification in other narratives. This process allowed for the patterns across narratives to be discerned, as well as for themes and categories to be refined. In similar vein, Goetz and LeCompte (1981, p. 58) note that as “events are constantly compared with previous events, new topological dimension, as well as new relationships, may be discovered”. Following such an inductive process in this study, constant

comparison of themes across learners' and educators' narratives allowed for the identification of poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and a post-conflict status as significant features of the HRDD context. These characteristics of the HRDD context thus feature in an emergent model discussed in the final chapter.

The entire analysis process involved several cycles conducted over a period of 18 months and was interspersed with fieldwork and writing activity.

A final way in which narratives feature in this study is in the presentation of findings or reporting genre. This use of narrative takes two forms. Firstly, in wanting to create a space for participants to "tell their stories" extracts from participants stories are quoted and form a major part of some chapters. While this increased the length of this document substantially, it added valuable depth, richness and authenticity to the study. Secondly, in organizing the findings into chapters, it made sense to tell a story about the project from the gaze or perspective of the different groups of HRDD actors, namely, project partners, learners and educators. This case study, in its entirety, thus presents multiple perspectives on the HRDD project as told in stories.

Discussions and reflections on the use of narratives as part of the methodology of this study will continue in forthcoming chapters. Chapter Six provides a discussion of how the processes of telling stories and analyzing stories can be seen as different forms of critical remembrance. As part of the conclusion, Chapter Nine provides some reflections on the methodology of this study, in particular, the value of narratives within case study research.

### **Collecting, organizing and analyzing documents**

Texts on research methods offer little guidance on documentary analysis (see Bassey, 1999 for example) relative to other methods typically used in case studies such as interviews and observation. Given the importance and reliance on existing documents in case study research, there is a need for greater attention to this method of enquiry. Researchers could contribute to addressing this lacuna by providing details of what documents they

assembled and how they went about using such documents in their study. In the present study, a substantial amount of the data needed for a case study was generated within the project throughout its lifespan. This data contained in various documents discussed below, was kept by different staff members of the Tembaletu Community Education Centre and the Centre for Adult Education. At this point, it is worth noting that the documents are themselves positioned in that they are produced by a particular constituency within the project, with vested interests and for particular audiences. It is tempting to see project documents as the “official record” of what happens in a project. This study has resisted this temptation by presenting the “official story” (see Chapter Five) as one perspective on the project amongst several perspectives.

An early stage in the research process for this case study involved locating, copying and organizing the various project documents into a single project archive. The project stakeholders supported the creation of a project archive which would initially be used for the case study but later become a resource for the project. This exercise, undertaken in 2005, resulted in an archive of 19 large ‘lever arch’ files of documents. The files were labeled by year with some years needing more than one file. Within each year, the documents were sorted into document types.

The following document types were identified:

Project proposals, project reports, baseline research reports, internal evaluation reports, external evaluation reports, other research reports, minutes of stakeholder meetings, reports on community fora, reports on seminars, educator reports, conference papers, other incidental documents.

Once the project archive was compiled, all documents were read twice, once prior to the interviews discussed earlier and once after the interview data was analysed. During these readings of the documents, important information related to the aims of the case study (presented earlier) were marked and annotated for later use. Several documents were returned to during the analysis and reporting stages. Notes were made during this process for

purposes of constructing a thick description of the project (see Chapter Five). This process of documentary analysis also raised several questions which were followed up by checking with other sources. The documentary analysis proved to be a valuable method in the case study. The sheer volume of documents, the variety of information and sources and great detail on different aspects of the project provided a perspective on the project which no single person interviewed could provide. Documents allowed for a chronological account which was unavailable from any person involved in the project, and allowed for a comprehensive history of the project and for project change to be identified. The documentary analysis complemented the lived, experiential accounts of the project produced from in-depth interviews.

All documents, those cited and not cited in this study, are part of the set of 19 files of project documents gathered and copied specifically for the purpose of this study. Although these files will initially be stored at the offices of the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal as required by university policy for postgraduate research, they will ultimately become an archive belonging to the Tembaletu Community Education Centre. The documents cited in this study, mainly in Chapter Four, appear in a separate section of the reference list

**Table 4: Summary of sources and related data collection methods**

Sources	Methods
Learners from all seven communities	In-depth Interviews (7)
Educators from all seven communities	In-depth Interviews (7)
Director of Tembaletu (2)	In-depth Interview (2)
ABET Manager of Tembaletu	In-depth Interviews (1)
Embassy of Finland Officer (2)	In-depth Interview (2)
ABET Programme coordinator of CAE	In-depth Interview (1)
HRDD Project Researcher.	In-depth Interview (1)
Various project documents	Documentary analysis

## **Researcher positioning, ethical considerations and limitations**

As a member of staff of one of the project partners, namely, the university-based Centre for Adult Education (CAE), I have had varying levels of contact with the project and its participants. My closest involvement with the project was during the last two years of my term as the director of CAE and as convenor of the HRDD research subcommittee (2004-2005). At the time that I decided to conduct a case study of the HRDD project I had interacted with the other project partners, with educators and the learners as a project partner representative. The idea of a comprehensive study of the HRDD project had been raised in discussions by both the CAE ABET coordinator and the Embassy of Finland partner. The present case study was thus an opportunity to address this need. My interest in doctoral study allowed for me to combine a personal interest with a work interest. This case study is, however, a project under my sole direction. The study draws on past HRDD research and aims to contribute to current HRDD research, but maintains a level of independence from the project. It is important for me to declare at the outset that the present study does not attempt to evaluate the HRDD project but to gain a better understanding of it and to theorise its practices. The project had been the subject of several internal and external evaluations (see Chapter Five), none of which were under my direction. However, I am aware that in conducting this study and commenting on what it achieved and did not achieve, I could stray into the realm of project evaluation.

Conducting the research and presenting the case as a written document involves processes of selection, interpretation, construction and representation. All of these processes strongly implicate the researcher with the researched. In adopting a narrative approach during data collection, data analysis and in how the case is represented I acknowledge that the study contains the stories of HRDD participants as well as my own story of the project. This is most evident in the construction of the project partners' narrative in Chapter Five.

My positions as a former CAE director and chair of the HRDD research subcommittee facilitated access to project documents and primary sources. It also meant that I could use my own reflections and experiences of the project as an additional source amongst several other sources. The critical paradigm allows for such positioning of the researcher where quests for so-called “objectivity and neutrality” are dispensed with.

My organisational position (former Director of CAE) and the associated power that this carries within the project is, however, a factor that created the need for a research practice based on care, sensitivity and transparency. I resigned as Director of CAE prior to the commencement of fieldwork. While I had formally relieved myself from a decision-making position in the HRDD project and could present the identity of researcher during interviews, it is likely that research participants still associated me as someone with influence within the project. I attempted to minimize this potential for bias by assuring participants that no one else apart from the research assistant and myself would have access to the data and that their comments would not affect their involvement and relationships in the project. I encouraged participants to feel free to speak openly and critically. As will be indicated in later chapters, participants appeared to have heeded this call. I also assured participants of complete confidentiality by allowing them to adopt a pseudonym at the beginning of interviews.

Other ethical considerations employed included gaining informed consent from all respondents for the interview and for recordings of interviews. Permission was secured from all gatekeepers of secondary data. In addition, confidentiality was maintained in all the research transactions and products. The ethical issues involved in this study were also subjected to review at school and faculty level according to university postgraduate research protocols. A certificate granting ethical approval for this study by the University of KwaZulu-Natal is attached as Appendix C.

## **Limitations of this study**

This study's limitations arise from factors in the research process, namely, the remote locations of research sites, reliance on bilingual (English-Zulu) research assistants and choice of case study methodology.

The great distances to research sites and their spread within KwaZulu-Natal meant that careful planning of fieldwork was necessary and that the best possible use was made of trips undertaken. It was not possible to easily return to the field as new ideas or questions arose because of the great distances and costs involved. Contact with research participants was also hampered by poor telecommunication facilities in some areas.

My lack of communicative competence in Zulu meant that I was dependent on bilingual assistants for conducting the interviews and for translation and transcription work. Generous grants from the National Research Foundation and the Spencer Foundation allowed me to employ competent research assistants to assist with these tasks. While I was present during interviews with educators and learners, I was unable to personally participate and probe responses as was possible with interviews conducted personally in English. Despite this limitation, I was satisfied with the quality of data generated from the interviews conducted in Zulu and translated into English. The preparatory training sessions held with the research assistants seem to have ensured that good quality data emerged. This was confirmed by quality checks conducted by bilingual persons.

A further limitation arising from the translation and transcription processes was that certain types of discursive analysis were not possible. The possible influences of the interviewer, translator and transcriber in producing the data obviated the conducting of such analysis. This was not seen as a major limitation as a content analysis was able to address the aims of the study.

A final limitation, typical of case study research, is that the findings are not generalisable to other community-based educational projects. Some level of theoretical generalization, as explained by Bassey (1999), is however possible. Chapter Nine, in particular, includes some form of theoretical generalization in terms of the proposed heuristic properties of the emergent conceptual model presented.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the overall research design and methodology for a case study of the HRDD project. Firstly, it locates the study within the critical paradigm of research and identifies the ontological and epistemological implications of such a position. Secondly, it discusses the adoption and suitability of case study methodology for a multi-perspectival, in-depth, and contextualized understanding of the HRDD project. Thirdly, it discusses the sources of data, the data collection methods, data management and data analysis in this study, while highlighting the multiple uses of narratives in this study. The chapter ended with a discussion of positionality, ethics and limitations of the study.

The next chapter outlines various layers of context in which the HRDD project is situated.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Adult education and development contexts**

Education is empowerment. It is the key to establishing and reinforcing democracy, to development which is both sustainable and humane and to peace founded upon mutual respect and social justice  
(The Amman Affirmation, Jordan, 1996)

#### **Introduction**

Chapter One described the HRDD project as, essentially, an adult education and development intervention in rural KwaZulu-Natal. This chapter presents a multi-layered view of adult education and development contexts, from global to local levels. These are the contextual frames in which the HRDD project is located and against which a case study of the project is conducted. Through such a framing exercise, this chapter considers the HRDD project in relation to various agendas and discourses which dominate the different levels of context.

Adult education derives much of its purpose, form and direction from development agendas at local, regional and global levels. Adult education, as fields of practice and study, is an integral part of the broader field of development. Since 1973 the relationship between adult education and development, from scholarship and practice perspectives, has received dedicated focus in the journal, *Adult Education and Development* (IIZ/DVV, 1973-2008). In recent times, most notably the period in which the HRDD project is located, the links between adult education and development, particularly in the so-called “developing countries” of the South, have been strengthened and brought to the fore. Adult education for poverty reduction or eradication has become a major theme of this discourse. The emphasis on adult education and development is reflected more emphatically in

recommendations and declarations of local and global conferences, rather than in the conventional literature. Conferences and summits present a current view of the crises facing society, of development agendas and priorities, and importantly, of envisaged roles for adult education in facilitating and enabling development. Key conferences can thus serve as a useful source of data to map the adult education agendas at specific points in time and show how such agendas shift over time.

The first part of the chapter attempts to map the adult education and development agendas prevailing at the time that the HRDD project was being conceptualized. It does this by considering the major international conferences at the time. The next part of the chapter discusses key agenda-setting fora in Africa. The final layer of context presented in this chapter identifies significant agendas within South Africa as read from relevant conferences and South Africa's shifting macroeconomic policies.

A central thread linking the various chapters of this study is the idea of *multiple perspectives* or *gazes*. Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight present the gazes of the project partners, learners and educators, respectively. A further thread running through this case study is the extensive reliance on narratives in constructing and presenting the multiple perspectives of the HRDD project. The present chapter could be seen as an initial picking up of these threads, in that the extensive quotations from conference declarations and policy documents included in this chapter are parts of broader narratives of the global education and development community. These narratives tell a story of the world and its development priorities and crises at a particular time in history. They thus constitute a view of various layers of context encompassing the HRDD project. Learners' and educators' narratives, presented in forthcoming chapters, then become stories of the lived dimension of some of the crises identified in the conference and policy narratives of this chapter.

## International agenda-setting fora

Several conferences at the international level have relevance in terms of setting out the global context. Table 5 below is constructed from a review of major conferences and their declarations at an international level. The table provides both a chronology of the fora and summary of the significant documents and agendas which emerged from such fora. Quotations from these documents are included below to highlight significant agendas and the relevance of such to the HRDD project. All of these fora reviewed in this chapter were accessed via websites. These website addresses are listed at the end of each section to facilitate access.

**Table 5: Significant international agenda-setting fora**

Forum	Documents produced	Agenda
World Conference on Education for All, 1990, Jomtien, Thailand	<i>World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs</i> expressed as 10 articles and <i>Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs</i> .	Right to basic education for all; early childhood development; primary education; adult illiteracy; quality of learning rather than access; knowledge, skills and values for better living and sustainable development.
World Conference on Human Rights, 1993, Vienna, Austria	<i>Vienna Declaration</i> (39 points) and <i>Programme of Action</i> (100 points)	Human Rights; Democracy; Development; Poverty; Social exclusion
World Summit for Social Development, 1995, Copenhagen, Denmark	<i>Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development</i>	Poverty eradication; Employment; Social integration; Human rights; Health care; Harmonious relations
Fourth World Conference on	<i>Beijing Declaration</i> containing 38 points.	Women's empowerment; Gender equality;

Women, 1995, Beijing, China		Development; Peace; Poverty
World Food Summit 1996, Rome, Italy	<i>Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action</i>	Food security; Poverty eradication; Durable peace; Gender equality
Mid-Decade meeting on Education for All, 1996, Amman, Jordan	<i>The Amman Affirmation</i>	School access; Adult literacy; Gender disparities in education; Poverty as a barrier
Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), 1997 , Hamburg, Germany	<i>Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning and The Agenda for the Future</i> (10 themes and 61 points).	Adult learning; Human rights; Democracy; Development; Active citizenship; Women's empowerment; Gender equality
World Education Forum on Education for All, 2000, Dakar, Senegal	<i>Dakar Framework for Action</i>	Adult literacy and basic education; Development; Gender equality
Millennium summit (Millennium Development Goals - MDGs), 2000, New York, USA	<i>United Nations Millennium Declaration</i> containing 8 goals, 18 targets and 48 indicators to measure progress.	Poverty reduction; Health & HIV/AIDS; Universal primary education for children
CONFINTEA V Mid Term Review, 2003, Bangkok, Thailand	<i>Call for Action and Accountability</i>	Adult literacy; Poverty eradication
Adult Education and poverty reduction: A global priority, 2004, Gaborone, Botswana	<i>Gaborone Statement and Plan of Action</i> containing 13 recommendations.	Poverty reduction; EFA
World Social Forum, 2007, Kenya	<i>World Social Forum, 2008:</i> 9 objectives	Peace and Justice; Ethics; People-centred & sustainable economy; Gender Equality; Democracy; Human Rights

Four of the international conferences which appear in the above table were particularly significant in terms of expressing visions about education and targets for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These four conferences, listed below, together with reviews of their frameworks of action and targets, are discussed in greater detail in the pages that follow:

- World Conference on Education for All (Jomtien, 1990)
- Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, Hamburg, 1997)
- World Education Forum on Education for All (Dakar, 2000)
- Millennium Summit (Millennium Development Goals, New York, 2000)

In addition to these four conferences, this chapter includes discussion of a selection of other conferences which are relevant to the HRDD project. This discussion begins with the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, which placed the goal of Education for All (EFA) at centre stage of global education and development agendas and debates.

### **World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990**

The declaration of the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 took as its reference point the large scale failure to realize the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, a 40-year old declaration which asserted that “everyone has a right to basic education”. The conference noted that in 1990 more than a 100 million children and more than 960 million adults had been failed in terms of their right to basic education. The conference issued the *World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs* expressed as 10 articles and a *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs*. Significant features of the Jomtien declaration were the expanded vision that it enunciated, the wider range of learners considered, and its emphasis on learning (quality of experience) rather than access.

The *Framework for Action* specified six dimensions around which countries were invited to set their own targets for achievement in the 1990s. Dimensions 4, 5 and 6 are of particular relevance to this study in terms of their focus on adult education:

4. reduction of the adult illiteracy rate;
5. expansion of basic education and training in essential skills required by young people and adults;
6. increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and for sustainable development through all educational channels.

Sources:

[http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=37612&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=37612&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)  
[http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/background/world\\_conference\\_jomtien.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/world_conference_jomtien.shtml)

### **World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 1993**

As starting points this conference reaffirmed its commitment to the purposes and principles of the *Charter of the United Nations* and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and expressed particular concern about discrimination and violence experienced by women all over the world.

The conference issued the lengthy *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* which contains a 39-point declaration and 100-point programme of action. One point from the document is included below because of its relevance to the HRDD project in terms of its focus on democracy, development and human rights; and on the relationships between poverty, social exclusion and human rights:

25. The World Conference on Human Rights affirms that extreme poverty and social exclusion constitute a violation of human dignity and

that urgent steps are necessary to achieve better knowledge of extreme poverty and its causes, including those related to the problem of development, in order to promote the human rights of the poorest, and to put an end to extreme poverty and social exclusion and to promote the enjoyment of the fruits of social progress. It is essential for States to foster participation by the poorest people in the decision-making process by the community in which they live, the promotion of human rights and efforts to combat extreme poverty.

Sources:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu5/wchr.htm>

[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/A.CONF.157.23.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/A.CONF.157.23.En)

## **Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995**

The World Conference on Women constructed the 38 point *Beijing Declaration* which committed all governments to a *Platform of Action*. The Declaration endorsed earlier UN conferences and summits including the one focusing on women held in Nairobi in 1985. Two points of the declaration which are of particular relevance to the HRDD project are:

13. [We are convinced that] Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace;

26. Promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic structures, ensuring equal access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

The above extracts from the conference declaration are significant in terms of the attention given to women's power, empowerment and resourcefulness in terms of development, peace and poverty eradication. The position of women in rural areas also received attention.

Source: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/>

### **Mid-Decade Meeting on Education for All, Amman, Jordan, 1996**

As indicated earlier, the Jomtien conference convened in 1990 brought the pledge of Education for All (EFA) to centre stage and set targets for achievement by the end of the decade. Six years into the decade, a 'mid-term' review of progress was undertaken at a forum in Amman, Jordan in 1996.

The Amman review further highlighted the gender disparities in education and the role of endemic poverty as a barrier. It noted that governments had given rhetorical attention to education but had not met commitments. The document issued by the conference entitled *The Amman Affirmation* begins with the statement:

Education is empowerment. It is the key to establishing and reinforcing democracy, to development which is both sustainable and humane and to peace founded upon mutual respect and social justice. Indeed, in a world in which creativity and knowledge play an ever greater role, the right to education is nothing less than the right to participate in the life of the modern world.

It further highlighted the inadequacy of resources for attaining EFA, both financial and human. Importantly, the conference noted its concern that the expanded vision of basic education emerging from the Jomtien conference had in many places shrunk and had come to mean just school education for children. In this regard the *Amman Affirmation* states:

This lack of support applies as well to out-of-school literacy and education programmes for adolescents and adults. There are some 900 million adult illiterates in the world, nearly two-thirds of them women. In all societies, the best predictor of the learning achievement of children is the education and literacy level of their parents. Investments in adult education and literacy are, thus, investments in the education of entire families.

The conference furthermore highlighted the importance of educating girls and women and the importance of teacher training and development.

Sources:

[http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed\\_for\\_all/background/amman\\_affirmation.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/background/amman_affirmation.shtml)

[http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=47196&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=47196&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html)

### **Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V), Hamburg, 1997**

The International Conference on Adult Education, organized by UNESCO every 12 years, has become an important international event for adult education. The most recent of these, the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education or CONFINTEA V, took as reference points the profound changes taking place in the world and the series of UN conferences (5 of which appear in Table 5) which preceded it.

Youngman (2006, p.10) believes that in terms of global agendas, CONFINTEA V was “the most inspiring event in adult education in recent times.” This conference is pertinent to the present case study in two important ways. Firstly, CONFINTEA V encapsulates the global adult education community’s perspectives on adult learning at a time when the HRDD project was being conceptualized. Secondly, CONFINTEA V defines an agenda for adult education in relation to development priorities on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup>

century. Youngman (2006, p.10) sums up the importance of CONFINTEA V in noting that it “enunciated a new vision of adult education as multi-sectoral and integral to the attainment of development agendas”.

CONFINTEA V produced two important documents, namely, the *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning*, and *The Agenda for the Future*. The latter set out the details of the new commitment to developing adult learning across the world and expressed this as 10 themes. Both documents make several references to gender justice.

In the light of the HRDD project, with its foci of human rights, democracy, development, active citizenship, empowerment of women, and adult basic education, the introductory part of statements under theme 1 is presented below,

The introductory statement to Theme 1: Adult learning and democracy: the challenges of the twenty-first century, is:

The challenges of the twenty-first century require the creativity and competence of citizens of all ages in alleviating poverty, consolidating democratic processes, strengthening and protecting human rights, promoting a culture of peace, encouraging active citizenship, strengthening the role of civil society, ensuring gender equality and equity, enhancing the empowerment of women ... Indeed, to reinforce democracy, it is essential to strengthen learning environments, to reinforce the participation of citizens, and to create contexts where the productivity of people will be enhanced and where a culture of equity and peace can take root.

CONFINTEA V proposed that adult learning should be awarded 6% of the total public education budget of countries in order for substantial progress to be made.

Sources: <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/>  
<http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/agendeng.htm>

## **World Education Forum on Education for All, Dakar, 2000**

This forum in Dakar marked the tenth anniversary of the World Conference on Education for ALL (Jomtien, Thailand, 1990) which provided the *World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Needs*, commonly referred to as the EFA goals. The Dakar meeting took as its reference points the EFA targets set at Jomtien ten years earlier, country reports on progress (as part of a review process called the Education for All 2000 Assessment) and thematic studies on key issues such as literacy and non-formal learning (Osttveit, 2000). The Education For All 2000 Assessment, conducted in more than 180 countries, was the most in-depth evaluation of basic education ever undertaken. It assessed the status of basic education in each country in 2000 and evaluated the progress achieved during the 10 years since the World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien in 1990.

A significant outcome of the Dakar forum was the revision of targets and timeframes. This forum in Dakar set the target of “achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults”. To achieve the targets in the Dakar Framework of Action, a budget of \$2.8 billion per year is required.

While Youngman (2006) correctly asserts that the United Nations summit which gave rise to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (discussed next) was the most influential international forum in terms of setting a development agenda post-CFINTEA V, the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000) was an important event in terms of reasserting the needs of adult learners and role of adult education in development.

Source:

[http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef\\_2000/](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/wef_2000/)

## **Millennium Summit (Millennium Development Goals), New York, 2000**

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly called the *United Nations Millennium Declaration* in September, 2000. The MDGs focus on poverty, education, gender equality, health, the environment and international cooperation as the key development issues. The MDGs were expressed as 8 goals containing 18 targets to be achieved by the year 2015. An assessment of Sub-Saharan Africa as “the epicenter of crisis” was a major influence on the formulation of the MDGs.

Given the particular relevance to the HRDD project, Goals 1 and 2 are presented below:

### **Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Hunger and Poverty**

- Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
- Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

### **Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education**

- Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling

A noteworthy feature of the MDGs is its focus on basic education for children and its silence on adult education. This is a significant departure from earlier agendas of Education for All as expressed at the meetings in Jomtien in 1990 and Dakar in 2000, and the new vision for adult education and development emanating from CONFINTEA V.

Sources:

<http://www.un-ncls.org/MDG/Basics.htm>

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/index.html>.

## **CONFINTEA V Midterm Review, Bangkok, 2003**

Six years after CONFINTEA V this conference, involving 300 participants from more than 90 countries, assessed progress towards accomplishing the goals set at CONFINTEA V.

While some progress in terms of policy development, participation in adult education and empowerment of women was noted, the review found:

The ability of adult education and learning to contribute to establishing a world of democracy and peace and its potential to support struggles against poverty and violence, HIV/AIDS, and environmental destruction, among other problems, are not being adequately realized.

The conference noted the decline in funding for adult education and learning and issued a *Call for Action and Accountability* which implored Member States, donor agencies, non-governmental and civil-society organizations and social movements to collectively promote, monitor and account for the commitments made at CONFINTEA V.

Source:

<http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/activities/CONFVReviewindex.shtml>

## **Adult Education and poverty reduction: a global priority, Gaborone, 2004**

While not of the same size and significance as all the international conferences just reviewed, this international conference on adult education and poverty reduction held in Gaborone, Botswana in June 2004 involved NGOs, government ministries, international organizations, adult educators, academics, policy makers and development practitioners from 45 countries. The conference took as reference points the UNESCO EFA goals, the UNESCO MDG goals and the mid-term review of CONFINTEA conducted in

Bangkok in 2003 and issued *The Gaborone Statement and Recommendations for Action*.

*The Gaborone Statement* noted concerns about the poor progress in achieving targets set at previous international process, about the narrowing of visions and participation of some of the early processes and about the diminished regard given to adult education in development processes.

*The Gaborone Statement* made 13 recommendations for action which highlighted the positions that poverty was both a barrier to accessing education and exacerbated by insufficient education, and that adult education should feature in poverty reduction strategies.

Source:

[http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/cradall/docs/gaborone\\_declaration.pdf](http://www.gla.ac.uk/centres/cradall/docs/gaborone_declaration.pdf)

## **World Social Forum**

At the international level, many of the influential agenda-setting fora discussed above were dominated by representatives of governments and large multilateral organizations. An important alternative forum at the international level, which is driven by civil society organizations and which reflect the visions of social movements, is the World Social Forum (WSF).

The WSF began as an international forum, a broad alliance of social movements, unions and organizations, against neo-liberal policies and capitalist-led globalization. Its rallying call has been: "Another World Is Possible".

The most recent WSF took place in Nairobi, Kenya in January/February 2007 and involved approximately 50 000 participants. The activities of this seventh WSF, the first held in Africa, centered on 9 objectives (World Social Forum, 2008). Four of these objectives are listed below because of their relevance to the HRDD project:

1. Building a world of peace, justice, ethics and respect for diverse spiritualities;
5. Ensuring dignity, defending diversity, guaranteeing gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination;
6. Guaranteeing economic, social, human and cultural rights especially the right to food, healthcare, education, housing, employment and decent work;
9. Building real democratic political structures and institutions with full people's participation on decisions and control of public affairs and resources.

Source:

[http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/noticias\\_01.php?cd\\_news=2253&cd\\_language=2](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/noticias_01.php?cd_news=2253&cd_language=2)

### **Some reflections on shifting goals, targets and visions**

Before moving on to consider agenda-setting events in the continent, region and country, it would be useful to reflect on the agenda in the global arena and pose some relevant questions.

There has undoubtedly been significant progress made in bringing the concerns and injustices faced by poor and marginalized people onto global agendas. However, such progress is more at a symbolic than material level. Indications of greater political will have not translated into increased funding and implementation of programmes to address the well-formulated, much-publicised, and regularly-reviewed position papers, declarations and targets (Lauglo, 2001). Failure to meet targets has led to further conferences where targets are postponed and visions are emasculated. Schugurensky and Myers (2001) comment on the neglect of adult education in Latin America after the promises of Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000). This global trend is provocatively expressed by Rosa Maria Torres (2000, p.141) when she

declares that “Education for All ‘Shrank’”. The shrinkage is explained by Torres as being:

1. From education for *all* to the education of *children (the poorest among the poor)*
2. From basic education to *schooling* (and *primary* education)
3. From universalizing *basic* education to universalizing access to *primary* education
4. From basic learning needs to *minimum* learning needs
5. From focusing on *learning* to improving and assessing *school achievement*
6. From expanding the *vision* of basic education to increasing the *duration* (number of years) of compulsory schooling
7. From basic education as the *foundation for lifelong learning* to basic education as an *end in itself*
8. From enhancing the *learning environment* to enhancing the *school environment*
9. From all countries to *developing* countries
10. From the responsibility of *countries and the international community* to the responsibility of *countries* (IIZ/DVV, 2000, p. 160)

Likewise, the following poem poignantly captures the trends, failures, frustrations and injustice within the global community regarding attempts to deliver on promises of basic education.

UNESCO Institute for Education to become  
UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning

They failed Jomtien  
They failed Dakar  
They are failing the MDGs  
So they tell us to Go for LLL!  
They said 5 years

Then 10 years  
Then 5 years  
Then 10 years  
Then forever: let's condemn them for the rest of their lives.  
Who's accountable to the dead!  
(Source unknown)

In the spirit of the above poem and from the perspective of critical adult education, the following comments and questions are offered:

- What difference have the agenda-setting processes discussed earlier made to the lives of learners and educators in poor, marginalized communities such as those of the HRDD project?
- Learners and educators such as those in the HRDD project are usually unaware of these processes. Do learners feature in the processes beyond references to the “960 million adults” in need of literacy at the Jomtien conference, for instance? Mdu Hlongwane (2007), an activist from Abahlali baseMjondolo, a shack-dwellers movement in Durban, South Africa has made a hard-hitting statement regarding the proliferation of conferences about poverty. He says,

“We are supposed to suffer silently so that some rich people can get rich from our work and others can get rich having conferences about having more conferences about our suffering”.

- Global commitments, without substantive accountability mechanisms and proper resources, are not effective in addressing the challenges of adult basic education and development. In a strident critique of the MDGs, Amin (2006, n.p.) is pessimistic about MDG Goal 2 which aims to “Achieve Universal Primary Education”. He states that,

UNESCO devoted itself to this goal beginning in 1960, hoping to achieve it in ten years. Progress was made during the two decades that followed, but ground has been lost since. The almost obvious relationship between this lost ground, the reduction in public expenditures, and the privatization of education is not examined in fact nor in theory.

- What will CONFINTEA VI, scheduled for 2009, propose? Will it set new targets and timeframe?
- The next decade should focus on less talk and declarations and more on practical implementation.

## **Continental and regional agenda-setting fora**

Amongst the fora which focus the continent and region, those held under auspices of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) (replaced by the African Union in 2002) and the South African Development Community (SADC) are significant in determining agendas for education and development for the continent and southern African region. The 37<sup>th</sup> summit of the OAU adopted the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) strategic framework document which encapsulates an integrated socio-economic development framework for Africa. In addition, the International Conference on Adult Basic and Literacy Education (ABLE) in the Southern African Development Community, organised by the Centre for Adult Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in December 2002, considered reports on the status of ABLE in 12 SADC countries and culminated in the issuing of the Pietermaritzburg Declaration. This declaration together with key documents reflecting the priorities of SADC and NEPAD are discussed below in order to convey continent-wide and regional perspectives on adult education and development. These perspectives provide a frame for examining the HRDD project in relation to educational and development priorities in Africa.

## New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)

NEPAD has been a more recent framework for cooperation and development on the continent (relative to SADC programmes discussed below). It has an Africa-wide focus and thus includes the SADC region of which South Africa is a part.

According to the strategic framework document:

NEPAD is designed to address the current challenges facing the African continent. Issues such as the escalating poverty levels, underdevelopment and the continued marginalisation of Africa needed a new radical intervention, spearheaded by African leaders, to develop a new Vision that would guarantee Africa's Renewal.

The primary objectives of NEPAD are:

- a) To eradicate poverty;
- b) To place African countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development;
- c) To halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy;
- d) To accelerate the empowerment of women.

Amongst immediate outcomes envisioned in NEPAD are that:

- Africa becomes more effective in conflict prevention and the establishment of enduring peace on the continent;
- Africa adopts and implements principles of democracy and good political economic and corporate governance, and the protection of human rights becomes further entrenched in every African country;
- Africa develops and implements effective poverty eradication programmes and accelerates the pace of achieving set African development goals, particularly human development.

Source: <http://www.nepad.org/>

## **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**

It is well-known that Africa experiences great need in terms of literacy and basic education as well as serious challenges to addressing such need. This fact has been repeatedly highlighted at most of the international fora discussed earlier and has received special reference in targets and plans which have emerged. A key framework dealing with education and training in the southern region of the continent is the SADC Protocol on Education and Training which was signed by SADC member states in September 1997.

The protocol established seven technical committees to tackle the broader education and training challenges in the region. Amongst these, the Technical Committee on Lifelong Education and Training has been responsible for coordination and development of policy and plans related to literacy and basic education. This committee developed two plans, namely, the Strategic Plan for Lifelong Education and Training 2002-2006, and the Implementation Plan for Lifelong Education and Training 2002–2004 (Aitchison, 2003b). Soon after this work the committee was subjected to reorganization together with all the other SADC technical committees and appears to have become practically dormant ever since.

The two plans developed by the committee are relevant to this study in terms of the attention given to literacy and adult basic education programmes, materials and teacher support. The *Strategic Plan for Lifelong Education and Training 2002-2006* is a detailed 30-page document containing ten strategic objectives and associated programmes, while the *Implementation Plan for Lifelong Education and Training 2002–2004* outlines some priorities for action over the first two years of the plan, which included the priority:

To encourage participation in literacy and adult basic education and training programmes to ensure achievement of universal basic education (and especially literacy and numeracy) as the foundation for lifelong education.

Source: <http://www.sadc.int/index/browse/page/146>

## **International Conference on Adult Basic and Literacy Education in the Southern African Development Community, Pietermaritzburg, 2002**

This conference attended by some 200 adult educators and development practitioners from 30 (mainly African) countries was held with the objective of improving the quality of adult education, particularly adult basic and literacy education, in the SADC member states. The conference issued the Pietermaritzburg declaration which noted concern that monitoring reports indicated that many SADC countries were in danger of not reaching the EFA targets set in Dakar in 2000. Concern was also raised about a divergence from the enlarged vision of adult learning fostered by CONFINTEA V, SADC protocols, the Dakar meeting and NEPAD. The Pietermaritzburg Declaration stated:

We strongly urge the SADC member states and the restructured SADC Secretariat to make adult education central to the education agenda and that countries allocate resources to deploy adult education for community development, particularly for the millions of citizens and communities in poverty in the region.

Sources:

Centre for Adult Education (2002) International conference on Adult Basic and Literacy Education in the SADC region, 3-5 December 2002. University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.  
<http://www.icae.org.uw/eng/pieter.html>

## **South African agenda-setting events and programmes**

For the purposes of mapping the country context of the HRDD project, the socio-economic programmes of the new democratic government in South Africa, namely, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Economic Acceleration and Redistribution programme (GEAR) and the Accelerated Growth Initiative of South Africa (AGISA) will be discussed. In

addition, two local conferences will be examined in terms of the education and development agendas reflected by such fora. The local South African frame also needs to be considered against a history of apartheid socio-economic programmes and in relation to various post-apartheid transformations of the education, training and development context. Some of this history is presented in a chronology in Appendix D.

A final section on the South African context frames the HRDD project in relation to a history of adult education, statistics on illiteracy and to formal, non-formal and informal education.

### **Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)**

The RDP was the first socio-economic programme of the new democratic government led by Nelson Mandela. The programme was initiated in 1994 after considerable consultation with alliance partners and the general public, just prior to the first democratic elections in the country. The RDP took as its reference point the Freedom Charter (Congress of the People, 1955), the eradication of apartheid and the need to build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist future society. In introducing the programme, Nelson Mandela (1994) stated, "Democracy will have little content, and indeed, will be short lived if we cannot address our socioeconomic problems within an expanding and growing economy". This statement together with the three quotations from the RDP which follow, clearly highlight central features of the context which the RDP targeted, namely, poverty, peace and democracy.

Our income distribution is racially distorted and ranks as one of the most unequal in the world - lavish wealth and abject poverty characterise our society.

The spectre of poverty and/or violence haunts millions of our people.

No political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government.

The RDP was based on six principles which are summarized in the following statement:

**An integrated programme, based on the people, that provides peace and security for all and builds the nation, links reconstruction and development and deepens democracy** - these are the six basic principles of the RDP (emphasis in original)

The principles and programmes of the RDP strongly reflect an emphasis on poverty-eradication, peace and democracy.

Sources:

<http://www.anc.org.za/rdp/index.html>

<http://www.anc.org.za/rdp/rdp.html>

### **Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)**

Just over two years into the RDP, the South African government introduced a macro-economic strategy called the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy in June 1996. This policy shifted the focus to the economy and presented growth in gross domestic product (GDP) and employment, as the key levers for transformation in South Africa. GEAR included targets of 6% GDP growth and job creation of 400,000 per annum by the year 2000.

GEAR envisioned a South Africa in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as:

- a competitive fast-growing economy which creates sufficient jobs for all workseekers;
- a redistribution of income and opportunities in favour of the poor;

- a society in which sound health, education and other services are available to all; and
- an environment in which homes are secure and places of work are productive.

It was argued that the GEAR strategy would create a sustainable basis for implementing the RDP. This claim has received wide-spread criticism (Weeks, 1999). Many have argued that GEAR rather than being an enabler of the RDP which prioritised the poor was a neoliberal fiscal policy which effectively disabled the RDP. GEAR was seen as an abandonment of the vision encapsulated in the Freedom Charter. The GEAR document itself alluded to the need to curtail expenditure for the poor:

In order to achieve the new fiscal targets in the 1997/98 budget, the Minister of Finance has initiated a thorough audit of government expenditure, including RDP allocations, to identify those areas in which budgetary cuts can be made without detracting from the priorities and commitments of the Government.

Source: <http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/1996/gear.pdf>

### **Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA)**

In 2006, The South African government introduced the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa, a set of micro-economic strategies aimed at halving unemployment and poverty by 2014 (note the presence of an MDG target here). According to the then Deputy President of South Africa:

ASGISA is not intended to cover all elements of a comprehensive development plan, rather it consists of a limited set of interventions that are intended to serve as catalysts to Accelerated and Shared Growth Development ... ASGISA is not a new policy nor does it replace GEAR.

ASGISA was introduced in 2006 in a context of a stable macro-economic environment and an economy that grew by more than 4% in the previous two years. It envisages annual growth that averages 4,5% or higher by 2009 and an eventual growth target of 6% of GDP by 2014. These figures seem clearly unrealistic especially in the light of global economic slowdowns.

In terms of education, ASGISA has identified the skills shortage as the single greatest obstacle affecting development programmes. Many of ASGISA's interventions seek to create bridges between the so-called first and second economies in South Africa. On this the Deputy President stated:

We are convinced that to achieve ASGISA's goal of halving unemployment and poverty by 2014, we will have to work more closely with women and the youth. On women the focus will be on human resource training: ensuring they have access to finance across the board; fast tracking them out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> economy; ensure their significant participation beyond SMMEs [small, micro and medium enterprises] and to improve their access to basic services; increase their participation in expanded public works programmes.

Source: <http://www.info.gov.za/asgisa/asgisa.htm>

### **ABET on Trial Conference, Johannesburg, November 2000**

There have been several fora in South Africa at which the state of adult basic education (including literacy) has been examined. Critiques and recommendations regarding provision of adult basic education have flowed from such fora. One such forum, called ABET on Trial, which took place in November 2000 provided a useful synopsis of the state of play in the country, of promises and implementation and of proposals for a revival of the system (see Aitchison, 2000).

According to Aitchison's *A concise map of the present situation in ABET*, (2000), which was presented at the conference, there were in 1996 (the period just preceding the HRDD project):

- approximately 7.5 million functionally illiterate people in South Africa
- approximately 3 to 4 million people who had not had any schooling at all
- only approximately 162 900 learners registered at state public adult learning centres (PALCs)
- declines in the number of PALCs and teachers since the mid-90s
- a low level of qualified staff employed at PALCs, with only 11% possessing an ABET or adult education qualification
- widespread under-performance of PALCs
- serious decline in the number of NGOs serving ABET learners
- state expenditure on adult education as a percentage of the total education budget remained below 1% between 1995 and 1999
- government's Medium Term Expenditure Framework indicated drastic reductions to education budgets from 1999 onwards
- policies and plans for ABET had largely not been implemented
- a paucity of information and research about ABET.

This conference pointed to a pre-HRDD national context of great need for adult basic education, yet inadequate provision and resources. A well-developed policy framework had not been converted into effective systems and implementation. Furthermore, state funding for adult basic education had remained low and looked unlikely to improve. Aitchison (2000) described the state of adult basic education in the country as "lacklustre" and stated that it was "time to declare a state of emergency in the literacy and ABET fields" (p. 37).

## **South African National Commission for UNESCO Education Sector Seminar, October 2006**

This seminar brought together more than 50 presenters and delegates from government, NGOs and higher education institutions in South Africa, to consider the progress and challenges to the development of literacy in the country, in the context of the UNESCO Education for ALL Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life. UNESCO, using independent research teams, has produced global monitoring reports since 2000 which assess the progress made by countries in terms of the EFA goals. The seminar noted that South Africa was committed to meeting the EFA goals. The motivations offered for this commitment included South Africa's human rights agenda and its vision of socio-economic and civic benefits stemming from a literate society. Recommendations of the seminar included recognition that under-achievement in literacy (adult and child) was a crisis in need of urgent attention.

This seminar is significant in terms of providing a status report on literacy and EFA progress in South Africa at the end of the period under study, namely, 2006. Of great significance is the fact that in 2006, delegates at this forum were speaking of South Africa's underachievement in literacy as "a crisis requiring urgent attention", echoing the alarm bell rung by Aitchison six years earlier when he announced, that it was "time to declare a state of emergency in the literacy and ABET fields" (Aitchison, 2000, p. 37). Progress has been all too slow and a sense of failure and crisis persisted in the field of adult basic education in South Africa. More recent attention to the challenge of illiteracy in South Africa has come in the form of literacy campaigns.

On 19 October 2006 a mass literacy campaign for KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), called the Masifundisane Adult Literacy Campaign (MALC), was officially launched. A larger, national campaign, called Kha Ri Gude (Let us learn) was launched on 28 February 2008. These two campaigns are discussed next, as a way of describing the context in terms of current attempts to address illiteracy.

Source: <http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/>

### **The Masifundisane Adult Literacy Campaign, KwaZulu-Natal, 2006**

The isiZulu word *Masifundisane* translates to “let us teach one other” and signals the intention of the campaign to have people from all sectors of society participating as literacy teachers and learners. The campaign aims to make KwaZulu-Natal a “territory free of illiteracy” by 2008 (The Mirror, 31 May 2006). An amount of 300 million rand has been set aside for the campaign in this province over three years. Given the intended reach and potential impact, the Masifundisane Adult Literacy campaign represents the first mass-based extension of an educational franchise to approximately two million people in KwaZulu-Natal designated as functionally illiterate (The Mirror, 31 May 2006). In a recent speech to the KZN legislature the premier (Ndebele, 2006), who has been named as the “campaign commander”, announced:

South Africa, as a whole and our province in particular, has committed itself to the realization of the Education for All framework adopted in Dakar in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals which call on all nations to half (sic) illiteracy by 2015. We in KwaZulu-Natal want to do more than just half (sic) illiteracy. We want to eradicate it by the end of the 2008/9 financial year! ...

Our country has enough experience of mass mobilization ... Today apartheid is history, tomorrow illiteracy will be history.

In her 2007 budget speech, Ina Cronje (2007), the provincial minister for Education in KZN, reported that good progress had been made in the campaign and that by 1 April 2007 a total of 33 000 learners had been recruited and assigned to educators.

The expression of political will, backed by resources, represents a significant and welcomed shift in government’s approach to the problem of illiteracy. It also represents tacit acknowledgement of the gross inadequacy of the current

system of ABET provision in South Africa. Significantly, the influence of global educational campaigns and targets, as encapsulated in EFA and MDG goals, are also visible in such local commitments. It is however, too early to assess the impact of the campaign.

### **The Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign, South Africa, 2008**

At the national level, the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign signals the largest single investment in adult basic education in South Africa. While still in its early stages, this country-wide literacy campaign plans to train and deploy 80 000 volunteer educators in order “to reach 4,7 million unschooled adults by 2012, at a total cost of R6,1 billion.” (McKay, 2008).

The first literacy classes in the campaign began on 14 April 2008. Reporting on the progress of the campaign, its CEO Veronica McKay noted that target recruitment of 300 000 learners for 2008 had been exceeded by some 60 000 learners. She also reported that “world-class” learning materials had been developed in all 11 official languages as well as in Braille” (McKay, 2008). It is planned that in 2009, approximately 81 000 classes will be in operation across the country.

The campaign’s envisaged benefits include, “poverty alleviation” through payments of stipends to volunteer educators. In a recent presentation campaign officials described the Kha Ri Gude campaign as a corrective to “one of the degrading ills of the past”, as “South Africa’s solution to eradicate illiteracy ...”, and as a “silent revolution” (McKay, 2008). The impact of this campaign too, is yet to be determined.

### **Adult education and development theory**

This chapter began by highlighting the strong relationships between adult education and development in terms of practice and scholarship. The

extensive reviews of various agenda-setting fora provided in this chapter richly illuminate the tight and contested connections between development and adult education. In this section of the chapter a discussion of development theory is provided as a basis for understanding the various development agendas and impulses which frame the HRDD project. This section pays particular attention to feminist and other critical perspectives on development, and concludes with a discussion of Sen's (1999) notion of *development as freedom*.

### A review of development paradigms

Youngman (2000) provides a helpful discussion of development theory in relation to adult education. He considers five paradigms of development, namely, modernisation theory, dependency theory, neoliberal theory, populism and political economy. A brief summary of each of these development paradigms follow.

According to Youngman (2000), *modernisation theory* dominated development thinking until the 1980s. Its basic premise was that overall economic growth, created through industrialisation and a modern capitalist economy, would 'trickle down' and benefit society at large by raising incomes and livelihoods. A feminist critique of modernisation theory, one which is highly relevant to the HRDD context, is that unpaid work carried out by most poor women such as childcare and cooking, is not measured and valued (Green, 2008).

Within modernisation theory, investments in education were promoted as necessary to generate the human capital needed by the modern economy. The notion of universal primary education, which underpins current global campaigns, as well as targets and educational plans in South Africa, have their roots in modernisation theory. Youngman (*ibid*) notes that adult education, within modernist theory, was seen as important to national development and that this primary tenet continues to influence mainstream adult education.

Youngman (2000) observes that severe criticism of modernisation theory, particularly by neo-Marxist scholars, gave rise to *dependency theory*. This theory argued that the underdevelopment of countries was a consequence of imperialist and exploitative relationships between the advanced industrialised capitalist countries, (constituting a powerful centre), and Third World countries which made up the weaker periphery. Such thinking shifted the responsibility for poverty and low productivity away from the Third World and presented such conditions as products of historical inequality and subordination.

Ivan Illich (1997), in a highly critical essay titled, *Development as planned poverty*, argues for an expanded sense of underdevelopment which sees underdevelopment as a form of consciousness. He states, "Underdevelopment as a state of mind occurs when mass needs are converted to the demand for new brands of packaged solutions which are forever beyond the reach of the majority" (p. 97).

Dependency theory has had a strong influence on the radical tradition of adult education. The best exponent of this tradition was Paulo Freire (1970), whose work was reviewed in Chapter Two. Freire extended the foci on dependency, exploitation and subordination from the economic arena to cultural domains. As discussed in Chapter Two, Freire advocated for a pedagogy which would mobilise the oppressed to lose their dependency and silence in the pursuit of freedom. Chapter Five discusses the influence of dependency theory-inspired Freirean thought on the original design of the HRDD project. Dependency theory also offers a way of understanding the context of the HRDD project in post-Apartheid South Africa. Apartheid ensured the systematic underdevelopment of areas occupied by Black people. This was most severe in the rural periphery of the country. As discussed in Chapter Five, the HRDD project focuses on these areas and attempts to address some of the legacy of Apartheid-initiated underdevelopment.

A different form of criticism of modernisation theory, this time from the Right, gave rise to *neoliberal theory*. This theory gained much support in the early 1980s from right-wing governments in Britain, the USA and Germany, as well

as support from powerful institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Neoliberal theory promotes the ideas of free-market capitalism, individual entrepreneurs and a reduction in state intervention (Youngman, 2000; Thomas & Potter, 1992). It is associated with the highly-criticised structural adjustment programmes that forced Third Word countries to cut social spending, deregulate their economies and privatise state assets in return for foreign loans. Youngman (*ibid*) identifies two key consequences of neoliberal theory for adult education. Firstly, it directed state-provided adult education towards addressing markets needs. Secondly, it promoted the ideas of user-charges and private-sector involvement in adult education. In South Africa, the inadequate funding of adult education reported by Aitchison (2000) earlier in this chapter can be understood in the light of the reduction of state provision under neoliberal economic planning. The switch from the RDP to GEAR, discussed earlier, is another example of the influence of neoliberal theory on development planning and policy in South Africa in its early years of democracy.

The failure of development premised on economic growth, inspired by both modernist theory and neoliberal theory, to benefit large sections of the populations of Third World countries raised the need for an alternative paradigm. The response to this need was the *populist model* of development which promoted empowerment, self-reliance, local solutions, people-centred processes and bottom-up planning. Youngman (2000) identifies feminism, environmentalism and ethnoculturalism as significant influences on the populist model of development. Support for the characteristics of the populist model of development identified by Youngman resonate strongly with the features of feminist popular education identified by Walters and Manicom (1996, p. 7), who observe that feminist popular education, "valorizes local knowledge, working collectively towards producing knowledge, ... starting from where people are situated". While feminism highlighted the need for participatory development, environmentalism highlighted the need for sustainable development and drew attention to concerns about climate change.

Youngman (*ibid*) comments on the strong influence which the populist model has had on adult education, particularly in the South. Several examples of populist –oriented adult education practices, of NGOs, CBOs and some university-based departments, appear in the chronology in Appendix D. Such practices, inspired by strong feminist and Freirean ideology, flourished during the anti-Apartheid struggle within vibrant NGO and CBO sectors in South Africa.

The description of the HRDD project provided in Chapter Five will show that the project's original design was strongly influenced by the populist model of development. Evidence of this is seen in the project's focus on empowerment of women in rural areas, as well as its promotion of self-reliance and citizens' participation in local development processes.

As an example of a development project predicated on the populist model, the HRDD-project did, however, emerge (in 1999) at a time when the influence of populist development was waning in South Africa. Baatjes and Mathe (2004) note with concern the increasing influence of neoliberal thinking in adult education in post-Apartheid South Africa. A number of organisations which promoted populist development projects in South Africa were dependent on foreign aid. This created popular but unsustainable development.

While the populist model has foregrounded issues of equality and justice in development, these ideals are often compromised in practice. Mansuri and Rao (2004) draw attention to the phenomenon of *elite capture* in development, where powerful elements of a community garner unfair share of development gains because of their status associated with their gender and/or education. A further concern amongst proponents of the populist model is the extent to which parts of its discourse, such as notions of participation, empowerment and sustainability, have been appropriated by governments, the private sector and powerful organisations such as The World Bank. Manicom and Walters (1997, p.72) get to the heart of this concern when they ask, "How do we distinguish between the empowerment of women as authored by the World

Bank and the empowerment of poor women through a popular education process?"

The final development paradigm discussed by Youngman (2000) is *political economy*. Youngman identifies variants of the political economy approach to studies of development and subscribes to the approach within the Marxist tradition which has, amongst others, the following central elements:

- A focus on class exploitation and 'the mechanisms and processes of domination' that maintain existing structures.
- An analysis of classes and the contradictions that create 'possibilities for social movements and ideologies of change' (Youngman, 2000, p. 87)

The political economy approach within the Marxist tradition employs concepts such as capital, imperialism, class and state. Youngman (*ibid*) asserts that such an approach provides a relevant framework for analysing adult education and development in the countries of the South, which he demonstrates through an analysis of adult education and development in Botswana.

### **Sen's conception of development as freedom**

Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1999) provides a useful conception and framework for theorising development. In constructing *development as freedom*, Sen argues that the removal of substantial unfreedoms from peoples' lives constitutes development. He states,

Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states. (Sen, 1999, p. 3).

Sen views the expansion of people's freedoms as both the ends and the means of development. He shifts thinking about poverty in terms of material standards to lack of choice and of capability. This is a particularly useful framework for theorising development in the context of the HRDD project. Chapter Five will show that addressing the challenges or unfreedoms of women in rural parts of KwaZulu-Natal was a principle goal of the HRDD project. Chapter Nine discusses conditions of poverty and the notion of *learning in fear* in the HRDD project. These findings are juxtaposed with Sen's contention that development as freedom includes freedom from poverty and tyranny.

## **History and development of adult education, including ABET, in South Africa**

Historical accounts of adult education in South Africa have only recently been compiled (Gush and Walters, 1998; Aitchison, 2003a). Draper's (1998) volume of chronologies of adult education in twelve commonwealth countries, which includes a chronology of adult education in South Africa by Gush and Walters, is an important contribution to redressing the paucity of a historical account of adult education in Africa more generally. For the purposes of providing a historical contextualisation of the HRDD project, a summary of Gush and Walters' chronology is presented in Appendix D. Events related to adult basic education (ABE), community education, non-formal education, university-based provision and major political developments have been included. Gush and Walters's historical account covers the period from the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 until 1997. This chronology has been extended to 2001 by drawing on events reported by Aitchison (2003a) and Baatjes and Mathe (2004). These authors provide accounts of the recent history of adult basic education in South Africa and thus cover the context during the conceptualisation and initial years the HRDD project. This later period reflects some of the major institutionalisation and formalisation of adult basic education in South Africa (see Appendix D).

A significant part of the institutional framework for adult education, including adult basic education, is the Directorate for Adult Education and Training, within the national Department of Education. The Department's definition of ABET in South Africa is:

Adult basic education and training is the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts.

ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and, ideally, provides access to nationally recognised certificates. (Department of Education, 1997a).

The Directorate for Adult Education and Training has overall responsibility for adult education in the country. Sub-directorates for ABET exist in each of the nine provinces. Coordination of policy and practice is achieved through two coordinating mechanisms. The Inter-departmental Coordinating Committee coordinates the work within and amongst government ministries while the Provincial Coordinating Committee coordinates work amongst the sub-directorates (Aitchison, 2000). The Adult Basic Education and Training Act 52 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) serves as a key piece of legislation for adult basic education and training in the country. The Multi-year Implementation Plan (Department of Education, 1997b) provided a central framework for provision of ABET.

The Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs) form a central and most visible part of the ABET system in South Africa. With their origins as night schools in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see chronology in Appendix D), they are probably the only part of the current system which predates the democratic era.

The latest developments in the ABET system involve mass literacy campaigns. As discussed earlier KwaZulu-Natal has its own provincial

campaign and is also participating in a separate national literacy campaign. These campaigns follow a series of earlier, though smaller, campaigns in South Africa. Baatjes and Mathe (2004) discuss these earlier campaigns which, invariably, failed to meet their targets.

### **Some relevant statistics on ABET in South Africa in the late 1990s**

The statistical picture of the need for adult basic education and literacy has been confused at best and misleading at worst. This blurring of the picture has resulted partly from different definitions of what constitutes illiteracy and a partly from incomplete or inaccurate official statistics (see Aitchison & Harley, 2006). Lyster (1992) provides a useful overview of definitions and debates in the field during the early 1990s. In 2000, Aitchison noted that some consensus regarding South African statistics was emerging based on figures from the 1996 General Population Census and the annual October Household Surveys. This allowed for some agreement on the following picture regarding the need for adult basic education around the time that the HRDD project was being conceived.

**Table 6: Potential need for adult basic education in South Africa**

<b>Education level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Descriptive category</b>
Adults with less than grade 9	12-13 million	Incomplete general education
Adults with less than grade 7	7.5-8.5 million	Functionally illiterate
Adults with no schooling	3-4 million	Illiterate

Compiled from Aitchison (2000)

For a country of just over 26 million adults in 1996, the picture was thus one of about 7.5 to 8.5 million adults who were functionally illiterate and between 3 and 4 million of who were considered totally illiterate (who have never been to

school). This meant that close to a third of the adult population was functionally illiterate at the time when the HRDD project was being planned as an adult basic education intervention in KwaZulu-Natal.

Participation rates in ABET have been very low. There were just 162 900 ABET learners participating (or merely registered) at state Public Adult Learning Centres in 1999 (Aitchison, 2000). It has been suggested that participation may have declined in some provinces during the 90s due to downsizing of the PALC system because of inadequate budgets. Besides state provision, largely through its PALCs system, other providers of ABET include the business sector and NGOs. The table below presents estimates of total participation for the 1998-1999 period across all sectors. The picture has remained one of low participation given the potential number of learners in need of ABE.

**Table 7: Participation in ABET in South Africa in 1998-99**

Provider	Number of learners
State: Department of Education (via PALCs)	162 900
State: Other government departments and local government	25 000
Business (including parastatals)	140 000
NGOs	20 000
Other	8 000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>355 900</b>

Source: Aitchison, 2000, p.5)

More recently, in preparation for the Kha Ri Gude literacy campaign, the Department of Education (2007) acknowledged that the ABET system in the country was not reducing the number of illiterate people. The Department's campaign plans are based on figures of 9.6 million people who are functionally illiterate (less than grade 7) and 4.7 million who are totally illiterate (no schooling) (Department of Education, 2007).

The statistics of illiteracy at the global level and within South Africa are not uncontested. The variance in figures used is partly technical, depending on varying definitions of illiteracy, and partly political in terms of how need and provision are represented or misrepresented. Aitchison and Harley (2006) give focused attention to variations in illiteracy statistics in South Africa. There are also varying conceptions to what counts as literacy. This latter debate is best reflected in the different stances taken by the authors of two significant publications in 1996. The one focused on *ABE capacity building in the South Africa* (Harley et al., 1996) and the other focused on the *Social uses of literacy* (Prinsloo & Breier, 1996). The latter represents what is called New Literacy Studies (NLS), associated with the ethnographic perspective of literacy promoted by Brian Street (2001; 2005) and Anna Robinson-Pant (2004) amongst others. Street argues for a view of literacy as a set of skills and practices which are context-bound and thus only meaningful in relation to the context of its use. He called this the ideological model of literacy which is different, for Street, from the autonomous model which adopts a more generalized and non-situated view of literacy as technical skills used in a common manner by those who have acquired it (Land, 2001). While acknowledging the contributions of NLS, Stromquist (2001a) asserts that the NLS contributions reach:

a point of diminishing returns when their proponents fail to distinguish between the importance of print literacy and that of other kinds of communicative skills. From a Freirean perspective, it is necessary to know the tools that the masters use to subordinate people (p.4)

Stromquist (2001a) critically examines the autonomous model and the NLS model which she refers to as embedded social practice. She compares these literacy frameworks to a third framework called "Literacy as a Tool for Empowerment" (p.4). The latter, based on Freirean philosophy and political thought, emphasises consciousness raising and empowerment. As illustrated in the next chapter, the HRDD project was fashioned in terms of this latter framework.

## **Formal, non-formal and informal education and learning**

In describing the adult education system in South Africa, this chapter has outlined the institutional context of formal adult education. Formal adult education in this context thus implies provision which is organised, funded and accredited by the state and its agencies. As indicated previously, the largest part of this provision is adult basic education offered through the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs). Some elements of this form of provision will be seen to be present in the HRDD project in the next chapter. In the latter instances, the provision is deemed to be formal in terms of it constituting organised programmes leading to accreditation within the country's National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

While the HRDD project is framed by formal adult education in South Africa, it relates more closely to non-formal education and informal learning practices. These latter forms of adult education and learning are typically independent of state provision in South Africa. Such practices are most often associated with learning in organisations, communities and families and do not lead to accreditation. Walters (1998) makes the important observation that "Informal and nonformal education are critically important areas for women's learning within male-dominated societies (p. 436). Also of significance to the present study is Walters' contention that "Nonformal and informal education that is concerned with women's empowerment can be described as 'feminist'" (1998, p. 440). As indicated in the next chapter, creating opportunities for the empowerment of women in KwaZulu-Natal was a central goal of the HRDD project.

Traditionally, non-formal and informal education are difficult to define because of the wide range of activities and practices which they encapsulate. In addition, the category non-formal has been found to be inadequate because of its focus on what it is not, rather than what it is (Schugurensky, 2006). The definitions offered by Walters (1998) and Schugurensky (2006) are appropriate for the present discussion given their foci on education for development and democracy. According to Walters:

Nonformal education refers to planned educational activity that is usually, but not always, short term and noncertificated ... It is often defined in terms of its relevance to the needs of the poor, its flexibility in organisation and method, and its specificity of objective.

The notion of flexibility in Walters' definition is endorsed by Morphet (cited by Rule, 2003) who highlighted the experimental and project-oriented character of non-formal education.

Informal education, according to Walters, "refers to educational activity that is unplanned, incidental learning" (1998, p. 466). Schugurensky (2006) elaborates on this definition of informal learning by adding:

... much of the relevant (in the sense of personally meaningful and significant) learning acquired throughout our lives occurs in the area of informal learning. This certainly applies to the area of political and civic learning, and particularly to the learning required to act effectively in processes of participatory democracy (p. 163).

As will become more evident in the next chapter, the HRDD project involves formal and non-formal education facilitated by an NGO, as well as informal learning within and outside of project activities. The HRDD project is, however, essentially an example of community-based non-formal education.

## **The HRDD project in relation to local, regional and global agendas**

The 1990s was clearly a period of considerable reflection on the state of education and development in the world, particularly of the poorest parts of the world, and the setting of targets to reduce or eliminate some of the primary challenges facing society as the 21<sup>st</sup> century approached. When considering

global, Africa-wide, regional and country agendas in relation to the HRDD project, the following observations are apparent,

1. The various agendas conveyed by conference declarations enunciate the context of adult education in relation to development during the period of conception and implementation of the HRDD project. Many fora have given an extremely important responsibility to the education sector, particularly the basic education sub-sector. Such heightened responsibility coexists with relatively weak resourcing within the sub-sector. As would be expected, the role of education in enabling development, has been promoted forcefully at conferences such as CONFINTEA V and the World Education Forum (Dakar). However, at conferences where the focus was not education but social development, empowerment of women or human rights, the contribution of education in addressing such social concerns was also highlighted.
2. Poverty reduction, poverty alleviation or poverty eradication emerges as the primary concern of most fora and campaigns at global, regional and local levels. The conferences discussed earlier reveal a dominant discourse which firmly links adult education with the need to address poverty. The dominance of *poverty reduction* and *poverty alleviation* at the level of targets, programmes and discourses, indicates a preference for a phased process whereby half of those who currently struggle to secure food and other basic necessities could possibly see some relief by 2015. The other half of the world's destitute may have to wait another decade or more before they are targeted for such relief. The HRDD project targets some of the poorest people in South Africa. The needs for adult basic education and development expressed in assessments of historical neglect and contemporary failure to achieve targets resonate strongly with the conditions facing learners and educators in the HRDD project (see Chapters Six, Seven and Eight). The HRDD project thus works with the very people who are envisaged as the beneficiaries of the targets and plans of action of the various conferences.
3. While poverty reduction emerges as the preeminent issue on the development agenda, the issues of human rights, democracy and the

empowerment of women feature high up on this agenda. All of these issues are key objectives in the HRDD project.

4. There has been some struggle to keep basic education for adults on the agenda. The expanded visions of the Jomtien and Dakar conferences and of CONFINTEA V have shrunk. The MDGs which currently dominate in the development arena have dropped adults from basic education targets.
5. The various international fora considered earlier describe the context of globalization in education and development. The HRDD project, in the context of rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal, is shaped by such global trends and discourses. Evidence of this can be found in the frequent reference to EFA and MDG goals in the speeches of several South African leaders. An example of this is a recent speech to the KwaZulu-Natal legislature by the premier (Ndebele, 2006), who announced:

South Africa, as a whole and our province in particular, has committed itself to the realization of the Education for All framework adopted in Dakar in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals ...

There has been considerable development of the systems, bureaucracy and policy-legislative frameworks governing adult education in South Africa in the latter half of the 1990s (see chronology in Appendix D). Proper resourcing, training of educators and provision of quality programmes at scale, the substance of adult education provision, have not however, materialised. The tackling of the illiteracy problem through mass literacy campaigns is the latest development in the history of adult education in South Africa. This development reflects an attempt at a rapid solution to the illiteracy and skills problems facing South Africa. It may also reflect the pressure of government to comply with targets set in the global arena. The pressure to meet globally set targets is one instance where we can observe a convergence between the global context and the local country context.

6. The 90s appears to be the decade of conferencing, agenda-setting and declarations. Initial indications from reviews of these processes show little success in reaching targets and realizing plans which emerged from these processes. Progress in attainment of targets has been alarmingly slow.

Revision of targets appears to be the preferred strategy in a context where proper resourcing has not been forthcoming and accountability for failure remains weak. There is a need for closer examination of the global political economy of adult education and development and how this has affected the failure to achieve targets.

7. Many fora have highlighted the vulnerable position of women in society, as well as their vitally important roles in poverty reduction, food security, peace and development. The empowerment of women which allows them to participate more fully and equally in society remains a great challenge in this earlier stage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The majority of participants (learners and educators) in the HRDD are women. Empowering women in order that they may participate more fully and equally in society is a fundamental goal of the HRDD project.

8. The inadequate attention given to debt and debt relief at these international fora is alarming! There is a growing consensus that the debt burdens of countries pose the greatest barrier to the attainment of development targets (see Jubilee Debt Campaign, 2007; Actionaid, 2005; Youngman, 2000). Why then has there been so little reference to this known obstacle when declarations are developed, targets set and then revised? Is this because the countries who benefit from the debt crisis are the ones who control the development agenda-setting processes?

## **Conclusion**

The series of significant United Nations conferences, each organised to consider a key development issue at the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, provide a

global frame for the decade in which the HRDD emerged. Amongst these was a conference focusing on *education* (Education for All, held in Jomtien, 1990), on *human rights* (held in Vienna, 1993), on *social development* (held in Copenhagen, 1995), on *women* (held in Beijing, 1995) and on *food* (held in Rome, 1996) (Youngman, 2006). Given that many of the key social concerns discussed at these conferences have found some expression in the goals and objectives of the HRDD project, the HRDD project can be viewed as local programmatic expression of some of the priority issues on the development agenda as reflected by the series of UN conferences. The next chapter will indicate that the HRDD project is strongly geared to influencing *education*, *social development*, *human rights* and *women's empowerment*. Aspects of the project have focused on community-based income generation and livelihoods projects, the latter placing much emphasis on *food security*.

The HRDD project thus emerges at the confluence of global and local agendas. The global level highlighted adult education (including literacy) for poverty reduction/eradication, human rights, citizenship and the empowerment of women. The local level also highlighted human rights, equality (especially gender), citizenship and poverty reduction, as reflected in the most significant vision of transformation of South African society within the RDP. The global and local development agendas can be seen to find expression in the conceptualization of the HRDD project. In this sense, the HRDD project serves as a mirror reflecting global priorities and agendas for adult education and development.

This chapter provided a view of different layers of context in which the HRDD project is situated. In so doing, it provides a background to several perspectives and stories about the project. The next chapter presents the project partners' perspectives, which is the first of several perspectives of the HRDD project presented in this study.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Project partners' perspectives: learning in a rich community of practice**

We all learn from it [HRDD project], but maybe that has eaten away from focus? (Embassy of Finland, 2004a)

#### **Introduction**

A brief description of the HRDD project was provided in Chapter One as part of setting out the background to this study. In this chapter, the HRDD project is described in much greater detail and depth. The aim of this chapter is to provide an account of the project, from the perspectives of the project partners; it portrays its critical stages, activities, places and people. In doing so, significant changes in the project are illuminated and presented in terms of the forces underlying such change. Varying conceptions of the project and their implicit ideological foundations are also discussed. The chapter is based largely on data from documentary sources with occasional support by data from interviews with project partners. The chapter thus presents and reflects on the HRDD project from the perspectives of the project partners, namely, Tembaletu Community Education Centre, Embassy of Finland and the Centre for Adult Education.

In case study research, a description of the case or phenomenon under study, sometimes called a thick description (Geertz, cited by Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000), serves multiple purposes. Firstly, such a description helps to convey a rich, lively sense of the immediate context and action under study. The description also identifies the constituent parts of the phenomenon and reveals the relationships between parts, to convey a holistic sense of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995; Bassey, 1999). Finally, such a description provides a broad basis for analysis and theorisation of the phenomenon. All of

these purposes have influenced the construction of this chapter. In addition, the chapter attempts to paint a textured portrait of the HRDD project to extend to the reader a sense of the “close-up reality … of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about and feelings for” the HRDD project (Cohen et al., 2000, p.182). Such a sense of the project should facilitate a more meaningful engagement with the forthcoming chapters which deal with HRDD educators’ and learners’ experiences and perspectives.

This chapter contributes primarily to aims one and three of this study, which are:

1. To understand the genesis and processes of change in the HRDD project in relation to its wider context.
3. To construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory.

The first section of the chapter begins with a chronology of major events in the life of the HRDD project between the years 1999 and 2005. Some significant pre-project events in 1998 are also recorded. This chronology (see Table 8) is followed by a detailed description of the people, the sites and the activities of the HRDD project. A second section presents some reflections on the project partners’ narrative. It discusses the complexity of the HRDD project, ideological positions, project genesis and learning in the project. The second section of the chapter also contributes to the second aim of the study which is “To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning, identity and civic action”. This section also discusses learning in the project within a rich community of practice. The metaphor of “windows” used by a project partner to symbolise the HRDD project as a potential vantage point for learning is discussed. This metaphor is then contrasted with the metaphor of “doors” as used in the popular phrase of the Freedom Charter which, during the struggle against Apartheid, called for “The doors of learning and culture to be opened” (Congress of the People, 1955).

In constructing the project partners' narrative of the HRDD project, an attempt is made to surface aspects of the 'HRDD story' which are not usually highlighted in project records and which tend to remain invisible because of a "taken-for-granted" sense of certain things familiar to partners in the project. Typical project records such as minutes of meetings and reports to funders provide adequate accounts of *what* usually happens in a project. *Why* things happened in the way that they did, the background detail, assumptions, ideological positions and more tacit understandings are not usually captured in project records, and these understandings frequently fade away amidst the busy work of the project, or are lost as people leave projects. The perspectives of depth and interconnectedness, afforded through a case study, allow for these aspects of project life and history to be unearthed and to be turned into a more permanent public record.

An exemplar of the adoption of such a focus in the narrative is the detailed exploration of how the parties came together. As will be shown below, the HRDD project records make it clear who was involved and what the activities were. However, several years later, almost no one currently involved in the project was aware of all of the details regarding the project's early genesis. Adopting such a focus, provides a useful and necessary perspective of educational projects and fills the gaps in typical project histories. This also provides a basis for connections and disjunctions between the micro (immediate project context) and macro (South African, regional and global) contexts to be discerned and thereby contributes to a situated understanding and theorisation of a project. In these ways one can also address a practical need by contributing to the organisational memory of a project while simultaneously addressing more academic needs of analysis and theorisation.

### **A note on documents and references**

Research reports cited in this chapter generally contained full reference details. These reports are therefore referenced in the name of the author/s.

Several working documents and daily forms of communication did not contain all the traditional reference details. These documents are thus cited in the text with reference to the organisation name and date (where such exists). These appear in a separate list of references at the end of this document, with additional details such as document titles.

**Table 8: A chronology of the HRDD project**

Date	Event
1998	Tembaletu approaches Finland Government for funding.
1998	CAE approaches Finland Government for funding (after learning of Tembaletu's success)
1998	Partnership discussions on a joint project initiated by visit of Finnish Program Officer. Working Group of Tembaletu, CAE and Embassy of Finland formed. Project conceptualisation and planning begins.
May 1999	First funding received from the Embassy of Finland. Project referred to as "HRD" and then "HRD/D".
June 1999	Baseline research completed.
1999	Eighteen educators recruited. Initial educator training workshop conducted. Monthly educator development workshops started.
1999	ABET classes begin at 6 "satellite sites". HRDD themes add on to ABET programme Income generating projects (IGPs) started. Learn with Echo develops materials for project.
October 1999	Information and Resource Centre opened at Muden.
February 2000	Sixteen educators registered for Certificate programme at then University of Natal. Ongoing research and evaluation conducted by CAE.
May 2000	Project referred to as HRDD. First HRDD Indaba held.
2001	Estcourt site added as seventh "satellite site" of the project.

	Ongoing research and evaluation conducted by CAE. HRDD Council discussed.
June 2001	Naledi Stoffelton Resource Centre opened.
2002	External evaluation of project commissioned by Embassy. Ongoing research and evaluation conducted by CAE.
2003	Twenty educators attend Peace Education Programme. Some educators participate in ETDP Learnership Programme. Some educators trained in Home-based Care.
2003	Some learning centres taken over by Department of Education.
August 2003	Full-time researcher appointed for project.
2004	Workshop on “learner dropout” held. Second HRDD Indaba held. Stoffelton site creates independent CBO called Khotso. Muden site managed by local CBO, Zibambaleni.
	The Emperor’s new clothes document is tabled.
2005	Workshop on IGPs and Livelihood projects held. Khotso funded directly by Embassy.
2005	Shift from IGPs to Livelihoods projects planned. Emphasis on examinations dropped. Local public seminars started at Resource Centres. Stakeholder Forum constituted.
2005	Working Group (of partners) ceases to meet formally.

### **The HRDD actors and how they came together**

The HRDD project was a collaboration involving several, largely rural, communities in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), an NGO focusing on community education, a university department of adult education, and an international donor agency. As discussed later, all of these entities were in existence prior to the HRDD project and each thus came to the project with its own history, resources, constraints and interests. As this story unfolds, the HRDD project will be seen as a space where various interests and attributes of the different

partner organisations were blended, at a specific historical juncture in South Africa, in response to perceived needs related to that particular time and context. Who exactly are the HRDD actors and how did they come together?

The short answer to the first part of the question is that the HRDD project involved seven rural communities and three organisations, referred to hereafter as the 'project partners'. The number of rural communities involved in the HRDD project has varied over the lifespan of the project. At the height of the project (in numerical terms) there were seven rural communities, spread around the midlands of KwaZulu-Natal, participating in the project. These were communities from Tugela Ferry, Stoffelton, Muden, Dalton, Trust Feed, Qanda and Estcourt (see map of HRDD sites in Chapter One). The project began in 1999 in just six community sites. Estcourt became the seventh site in 2001 when Tembaletu (the NGO partner) agreed to take over ABET provision for learners of an NGO in Escourt which was closing down due to resource difficulties. The lead actors from the HRDD community sites were the HRDD educators and learners. Other supporting actors, included learners' and educators' families, community leaders, members of development fora, church congregation members and members of the broader community. The lead project partner in the project was the Tembaletu Community Education centre, an NGO with offices in Pietermaritzburg. Tembaletu's role was a substantial one in that it managed ABET centres and resource centres in the communities, it employed, trained and managed educators and supported the learners with the help of educators. Tembaletu also carried the lion's share of fundraising and project administration work.

The Centre for Adult Education (CAE) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal was another project partner, which played specific supporting roles in the project in the areas of educator development, materials development and research. The final organisation and project partner involved was the Embassy of Finland, the foreign donor based in Pretoria (later Cape Town) who provided funds and other support to the project for over the past decade (1999-2008). The term "project partners" is used throughout this thesis to refer to Tembaletu, CAE

and the Embassy of Finland. This is the term adopted by these organisations in their ongoing deliberations on the project (see Tembaletu, 1999a).

A composite profile of the rural communities involved is provided next. The educators and learners from these communities are discussed more extensively in subsequent chapters. Brief profiles of the three organisations involved, namely, Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy of Finland, in terms of their histories and how they came to be involved in the HRDD project, will follow the community profile.

### **Location and socio-economic profiles of the seven HRDD community sites**

A map showing the location of each site in relation to Pietermaritzburg, the capital city of KwaZulu-Natal was provided in Chapter One. The socio-economic profiles of the seven HRDD sites, presented in Table 9, was constructed from the 2001 census data (Statistics South Africa, 2003), a census done close to the time of commencement of the HRDD project. The census data presented in Table 9 below was drawn from statistics for local government wards. A search was conducted to first identify the ward within which each HRDD site was located. Key data for each ward was then drawn from census data to create a socio-economic profile of the broader community (in terms of wards) from which HRDD learners and educators are drawn.

**Table 9: Socio-economic data for HRDD sites**

	Dalton	Muden	Qanda	Stoffelton	Trust Feed	Tugela Ferry	Loskop Estcourt
<b>Approximate distance from Pietermaritzburg</b>	77 km	123km	40 km	96km	51 km	120km	130km
<b>Number of people in ward</b>	8 243	8 943	14 956	9 228	10 427	12 198	11 257
<b>% who are African</b>	75	98.8	99.9	99	95.4	99.7	99.9
<b>% who are unemployed</b>	24.4	46.3	70	80	38.3	71.4	72.7
<b>% with no monthly income</b>	15.5	34.2	24.8	37.3	22.8	42.7	44.8
<b>% with monthly income ≤ R800 (\$80)</b>	56.2	70	57	78.5	64	80.3	79.2
<b>% using candle light</b>	40	85.6	12.6	68.6	25.6	88.7	56.3
<b>% using river/dam water</b>	15	37.4	4	28.9	5	45.3	8.7
<b>% with no schooling</b>	19.3	47.8	14.8	30.1	22.4	57.1	35.7
<b>% with incomplete primary education</b>	26.1	21	24	25.7	20.8	11.7	21.6

The socio-economic profiles of the wards in which HRDD sites are located consistently show patterns of poverty. Unemployment is high in all wards with a significant proportion of households reporting no income at all. This is most extreme in the deeper rural areas of Muden, Stoffelton, Tugela Ferry and Loskop, Estcourt where more than a third of the households in each ward reported having no income. Furthermore, in each ward more than half of the households are surviving on an income of R800 or less per month (this

converts to approximately \$80 in November 2008). Government old age pensions and social grants are most likely the sources of such income. In the more rural areas, most households in Muden, Stoffelton, Tugela Ferry and Loskop, Estcourt rely on candles for light; Qanda and Trust Feed, which are closer to Pietermaritzburg have been electrified. In the most remote areas, where Muden, Stoffelton and Tugela Ferry are located, water is drawn from rivers and dams by roughly a third of the households in these areas. Education levels in all of the wards are low: between 14.8% and 57.1% of people living in these wards have had no schooling, while a further 11.7% to 26.1% of residents started school but did not complete their primary education. These figures point to high levels of illiteracy in these areas (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

### **Profiles of the three partner organisations**

#### **Tembaletu Community Education Centre**

Tembaletu is a non-governmental organisation whose primary focus is community education. Such education aims to contribute to the development of communities in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands who face severe economic and education disadvantages. The organisation operates from offices in Pietermaritzburg, the capital of KwaZulu-Natal, in conjunction with several adult learning centres and resource centres located in rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal.

The organisation's name is derived from the Zulu word "Ithembalethu", which means "our hope". Tembaletu started its ABET work in 1992 as part of its mission to facilitate "access to basic and further education and training for adults and out of school youth in KwaZulu-Natal, to enable them to participate and contribute to community development" (Tembaletu, 2005). Tembaletu's work is informed by the vision of "A literate and prosperous society which participates in all spheres of socio-economic life" (*ibid*). The organisation is registered as a non-profit organisation (NPO) and is governed by a board of trustees. A director oversees the operational management of the organisation with the assistance of programme managers and an administrative team.

Tombaletu's work is organised as a series of programmes, of which adult basic education and training (ABET), is a core focus.

Tombaletu is heavily dependent on donor funding and often carries out its work in partnership with other organisations. It is the largest educational NGO in Pietermaritzburg and has received recognition and awards both nationally and internationally for its work. In 1999 Tombaletu received the Presidential Education Award, and in 2002 it was judged the best adult education centre in the country, for which it received the Guinness UDV Adult Literacy Award. A year later Tombaletu received international acclaim with the 2003 UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize for provision of "literacy training to over 500 learners annually as well as for its role in the training of literacy educators" (Tombaletu, 2005).

### **The Embassy of Finland**

The Embassy of Finland, through its Human Rights and Democracy (HRD) Fund, was the principle funder of the HRDD project from 1999. The fund was created in 1996 to support South African projects, mostly implemented by NGOs, working towards building and sustaining a culture of human rights and democracy in South Africa. The fund arose from a belief that "foreign support would be needed to build a society in which there would be democratic checks and balances and in which a culture of human rights would be entrenched" (Embassy of Finland, 1998, p.1).

The Embassy's HRD fund, particularly in its pilot phase, operated with considerable flexibility. The Finnish ambassador to South Africa exercised discretionary powers over the fund which was managed by a Program Officer based at the Embassy offices in Pretoria (later Cape Town).

### **The Centre for Adult Education**

The Centre for Adult Education (CAE) is an academic centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. From inception, it has had a strong focus on widening access and improving provision of education for marginalised sectors of South Africa's adult population.

The Centre's work is guided by a mission statement which states:

The Centre for Adult Education supports the right to knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge by all adult members of society. It seeks to respond imaginatively to policy shifts and social and economic developments that affect the lives of ordinary people. In doing this the Centre endeavours to make its contributions to the field of education relevant, critical, liberating, and reflective of a commitment to serve those who have yet to benefit under South Africa's democratic dispensation. (Centre for Adult Education, 2007, p.3)

CAE's work is organised as five programmes, of which the Adult Basic Education Programme is a major focus. *Learn with Echo*, a weekly educational newspaper supplement for new adult readers, is part of this programme. The Centre is managed by a Director with the assistance of programme coordinators. Within the broader university structure, it is located within a School in a Faculty of Education. Its work, particularly its Formal Education Programme, is thus also governed by the university line management positions of a Head of School and a Dean.

### **Partnership formation**

Having described the different parties involved, the narrative now turns to an account of how they came together within a partnership around the HRDD project. This part of the history of the project lays a foundation for a later discussion of project genesis.

#### Tembaletu - rural communities' relationships

Some of Tembaletu's early documents were perused for the purpose of capturing its early (pre-HRDD) history. Documents such as minutes of meetings, facsimile correspondence and reports reveal an early involvement between Tembaletu and several rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal. Using a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID),

Tembaletu started in 1993 to set up what it called *satellite centres* in rural communities in order to offer ABET classes to learners from these communities. By the end of 1997, just prior to the conceptualisation of the HRDD project, it had established 13 rural satellite centres (Tembaletu, 2000a). Through this work it had formed relationships with these communities and had engaged and trained several educators from these communities. With some communities such as Muden and Stoffelton, particularly close ties had been formed, with Tembaletu becoming involved in the other development initiatives in these communities. This history illustrates the connection between Tembaletu and the rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal, and the especially close relationships with the communities of Muden and Stoffelton.

#### **Tembaletu - CAE relationship**

As major players in the ABET field in KwaZulu-Natal, Tembaletu and CAE had, over the years preceding the HRDD project, been engaged in several collaborative ABET activities. CAE had taught on Tembaletu's ABET Educator Training and Support Programme and good relationships had been developed between the two organisations.

#### **Tembaletu - Embassy of Finland relationship**

In 1998 Tembaletu reviewed their ABET programme and conceptualised a new programme called Development of Democracy through Dialogue (referred to as the 3-D programme), reflecting the themes of dialogue, democracy and development. This programme was funded by the Embassy of Finland's Human Rights and Democracy fund during its pilot stage. A connection was thus established between Tembaletu and the Embassy of Finland.

The birth of the HRDD project appears to have occurred with the visit of the Program Officer of the Embassy to KwaZulu-Natal in response to new funding applications made by Tembaletu for its ABET programme. The officer, who was familiar with the province, having done some postgraduate study there, used this opportunity to also consult with other organisations involved in education and development work. He thus met with CAE in response to an

invitation from them and other organisations in Pietermaritzburg. These meetings initiated the idea of a partnership between Tembaletu, CAE, and the Embassy. The concept of a project broadly dealing with human rights, democracy and development emerged from discussions within this fledgling partnership.

From the above descriptions of Tembaletu and CAE it is clear that there is considerable convergence in terms of the two organisations' missions, programmes and ideology. Both have a deep interest in ABET and educator development and pursue this relatively marginal sector of work in the belief that it can contribute to community development and social justice.

The challenges created by poverty featured strongly in early motivations and project design as reflected in the following reflections on Tembaletu's earlier ABET work:

... we were still confronted by the enduring reality of poverty. It is abundantly clear that ABE alone was not what the people in these communities wanted. While it is true that they needed to read, write and do sums, it is also true that they have families to provide for. ABE classes became increasingly empty as people concentrated their efforts on income earning activities, and also possibly as a result of stigmatisation of adult basic education. (Tombaletu, 1999b, p. 4)

These statements reflects an ideology of education serving redress, development and social transformation, an ideology strongly underpinning the visions and programmes of both Tembaletu and CAE.

The earlier description shows that the primary interest of the Embassy in terms of its HRD fund was about strengthening the new democracy in South Africa and building its human rights foundations. The Embassy of Finland did not have a specific focus on ABET. It did however value the role played by education in strengthening human rights and democracy. The interest and ideology held by the Embassy which allowed for its involvement in the partnership related to the creation of an educated citizenry which can become

an active citizenry in a participatory democracy. A later external evaluation of the HRDD project commissioned by the Embassy described ABET as a “window” to its human rights and democracy agenda (Ijas & Cartwright, 2002). The embassy also saw the strengthening of human rights and democracy as essential to South Africa’s prosperity and this in turn to the prosperity of the region (Embassy of Finland, 1998).

Tembaletu and CAE had already demonstrated a deep interest in educational provision which encouraged and enabled democratic participation of citizens. An early document detailing both partners’ interests and work, indicates that as a result of its interventions with communities in KwaZulu-Natal:

Tembaletu was then approached [by local communities] for support in the provision of adult basic education to enable members of the community to participate more meaningfully and actively in community development initiatives. They need adult basic education, not for its own sake, but for a specific purpose:

- to enable them to better understand their rights in relation to land issues;
- to enable them to participate more fully in community development however defined;
- to be able to participate meaningfully in processes of social and political transformation.

(Tembaletu, 1999a, p.1)

Likewise, regarding Learn with Echo, a materials development project within CAE, the same document indicates:

Before the HRD/D project, the Learn with Echo team had realised that in order for people to fulfil their roles in a democratic society, more work and information was needed than the simple “How to vote” instructions ... The HRD/D project, in partnership with Tembaletu ... helped us to formalise this direction. (Tembaletu, 1999a, p.7)

The HRDD project thus provided a space where similar interests and ideology about education for participatory development, human rights and democracy converged. The strong human rights and democracy emphasis in the ABET programme of HRDD was allowed to surface through the Embassy's interests and funds specifically dedicated for such an agenda. The HRDD project is therefore somewhat unique in the manner in which it was able to harness and consolidate existing capacity and interests. The level of synergy is significant as it facilitated partnership formation and the development of a common project identity.

Once a partnership was established, a Working Group made up of representatives of Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy of Finland took care of overall project development and management. Other fora (discussed later) were established to allow for the participation of educators and learners from the rural communities in guiding the development of the project.

The narrative thus far presents an account of the project beginning with the visit of the Project Officer from the Embassy to KwaZulu-Natal in response to a funding application from Tembaletu. This account of project genesis emerged largely from the project documents. An interview conducted with the first Programme Officer of the Embassy (Ville Luukkainen) provides some interesting aspects to project genesis which the documents do not reveal. At the time that Tembaletu was seeking funding for its 3-D programme (explained below), the chairman of its board of trustees was a retired university professor. This chairman's daughter happened to be the personal assistant to the then Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry of South Africa. Aware that his daughter was accompanying the minister on a visit to Finland and aware of Tembaletu's funding drive, the Tembaletu chairman asked his daughter to take a copy of Tembaletu's funding proposal and pass it on to relevant parties in Finland. This special courier service led to the proposal being handed to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Finland who then referred it to the Finnish Embassy in South Africa for exploration in terms of its HRD fund. The visit of the Programme Officer of the HRD fund to KwaZulu-Natal and his contact with Tembaletu and subsequently with CAE was thus

the culmination of a circuitous and fortuitous set of circumstances, made possible by its location within a strong and influential network. This aspect of project genesis is theorised in terms of Social Capital theory later in this chapter.

### **Naming the project**

Project documents indicate that the final project name, HRDD, evolved over a period of discussion during the initial years of the project. There are three names used in the conceptualisation stage to refer to what eventually became the HRDD project:

The *3D project* is the term used to refer to the project in the early conceptualisation stage in 1998-9. The three Ds in this term refers to *Developing democracy through dialogue*, a concept of Tembaletu's first director. (see Tembaletu, 1999d)

The *HRD project* refers to the term Human Rights and Development. This appears to have flowed from the HRD (Human Rights and Democracy) fund of the Embassy but with the word "development" substituting "democracy". (see Tembaletu, 1999e).

The *HRD/D project* is a term used only in 1999. It represents the addition of democracy to the term HRD discussed earlier. The project developers were sensitive to the fact that a project with the word "democracy" in its name may face resistance in some rural communities where strong systems of traditional governance existed with hostility and friction alongside new forms of democratically elected local councils. The project was thus presented as the HRD (Human Rights and Development) project at initial community fora but referred to for a short time as HRD/D by the project developers (see Tembaletu, 1999a).

The eventual name, the *HRDD project*, reflecting all the components of human rights, democracy and development, appears to have been formally

used from about May 2000 once the implementation stage was well on its way (see Centre for Adult Education, 2000).

## **The HRDD activities**

Once the conceptualisation of an HRDD project had emerged from discussion between the parties and the funding secured, a series of activities were identified, prioritised and set in motion. This part of the project narrative presents this set of activities, again, with some attention to a chronology of events. It begins with a discussion of a research exercise which sought to establish baseline information for the project and then discusses the three main areas of project activity, namely, ABET classes, resource centres and income generation projects. This is followed by a discussion of a range of supporting activities such as educator development, materials development and ongoing research.

### **Baseline research**

Research was the first line of activity for the HRDD project. During the first half of 1999, baseline research was conducted by CAE to inform the curriculum, materials and educator development processes which were set to follow. From May to June 1999, this first of many phases of research within the project was undertaken. The baseline research involved a desktop study to establish a profile on each community, and participatory information gathering workshops in each community (Centre for Adult Education, 1999).

Amongst other things, the workshops revealed that household incomes were very low and that unemployment was a major concern. This initial finding is supported by the census data in Table 9. The baseline research found that many households relied on an old age pension as the primary source of income. For some families the income was generated from migrant labour. Those employed were in low-paying farmworker or domestic worker positions.

While some people saw ABET classes as significant for broader community development, in most of the communities ABET was seen more as a vehicle for personal satisfaction and development of individual learners rather than of broader benefit to the wider community. In these terms, ABET was seen as fostering self-esteem and personal empowerment. In a couple of communities, ABET was celebrated for enabling parents to be involved in their children's schoolwork and for allowing people to challenge decisions, to do their own banking and participate in voting.

While people reported an atmosphere of relative peace, they indicated a climate of fear, believing that people were reluctant to openly declare their political affiliation. This climate was seen as a residue of the political violence between Inkatha and ANC-aligned forces in the 1980s and 1990s which had devastated several communities in KwaZulu-Natal and which continues to influence community dynamics long after the formal ceasefire. People indicated that this climate was hampering dialogue and collaboration and in some instances development was being stalled due to perceptions that it was being driven by a particular political party. People reported that promises made prior to the country's first democratic elections had not been fulfilled and that leaders did not listen to their communities.

Generally participants reported unmet needs in terms of infrastructure development and services which were seen as the responsibility of government. They regularly mentioned ownership of houses, access to water, better roads, clinics, community halls, improved pension processes and employment as their needs. People saw the lack of skills and knowledge as a serious barrier to development.

Women were described as having low status and influence in the community and seen to be excluded from decision-making in community affairs.

People reported that AIDS was starting to impact negatively on the community and the youth and middle-aged people were identified as most at risk (Centre for Adult Education, 1999).

This research played a significant formative role in terms of project planning, development of curricula for ABET classes, identification of associated learning materials, and the design of an educator training and development programme. All of these activities are discussed below.

### **ABET with human rights and democracy foci**

The provision of ABET for learners in the six rural communities with which Tembaletu had relationships formed the core activity of the HRDD project. In this, Tembaletu was able to build on its prior work in this area and to draw on its existing resources and personnel. In each of the communities of Tugela Ferry, Stoffelton, Muden, Dalton, Qanda and Trust Feed, some ABET learning venues had already been secured. Some additional venues were secured. Schools, community halls and in some instances, homes were used as learning venues. Tembaletu engaged some of the educators in these communities with whom it had a relationship and advertised for additional educators. Eighteen educators were recruited for the HRDD project in its initial phase. This number grew to about 29 educators as the project progressed. With the assistance of Tembaletu staff, this initial group of educators began recruiting learners.

Part of the plans for 1999 included a mobilisation campaign in the HRDD communities in order to raise awareness and to secure support and participation in the project. This included meeting community leaders and setting up community meetings at which the project was presented and participation invited (Tembalelu, 1999b).

A human rights and democracy component was added to the ABET programme. Provision was made for an additional two hours per week to be added to the ABET programme to allow for such human rights and democracy lessons. This expansion of the ABET programme necessitated a range of other activities. Central to this was the need for appropriate curricula and

learning materials and for educators to be trained to facilitate the new ABET programme with strong human rights and democracy foci (discussed below).

The adoption of a human rights, democracy and development focus in the ABET programme was not an easy one. An evaluation some three years into the project (Harley & Dlamini, 2002a) raised the concern that educators were struggling to implement the new curriculum focus. It stated that the HRDD educators:

... have no clear concept of exactly what HRDD is. Thus they fail to recognise as HRDD issues a number of issues covered in the training which Tembaletu and CAE staff clearly understand to be HRDD (Harley & Dlamini, 2002a, p.14).

Believing that the educators "still need to learn to teach/ apply HRDD as part of all lessons rather than treating it as an 'add-on'" (*ibid*, p.11), Tembaletu decided that there was a need for a person who was dedicated to the HRDD project who would "have the responsibility to ensure that HRDD is integrated and implemented in classrooms and offer all the support that is needed by facilitators [educators]" (*ibid*, p12). In addition, the need for an HRDD workbook for use by facilitators in their classrooms was agreed upon. CAE was given the task of developing this workbook.

The strengthening of educators' capacity to implement an ABET curriculum with an HRDD focus continued as indicated by the following excerpt of a planning document a couple of years later:

Again, for 2004, educators will be encouraged and supported (through educator in-service workshop training) to relate and/or link all of their ABET facilitation whether it be in Communications or Numeracy or Entrepreneurship to the broader socio-political questions of Human Rights, Democracy and Development which remains the overarching banner/theme of this project (Tombaletu, 2004a, p.1)

A total of 316 learners were enrolled during the first year (1999) of the HRDD project, during which mother tongue literacy (levels 1 and 2), English second language (levels 1, 2 and 3) and numeracy were offered. Many of these learners wrote nationally set examinations at the end of the year. As educator development proceeded, the HRDD curriculum expanded with level 4 and additional learning areas being added, such as entrepreneurship. Numbers of learners fluctuated over the years. For example, of the original 444 learners at the start of 2003, just 271 (61%) learners were still participating at the end of the year with intentions of sitting for examinations. Examinations results of these learners are presented in Table 10 below.

On the basis of various annual reports and other records, it would be safe to claim that by the end of 2005, more than 2187 learners had participated in the HRDD ABET classes.

**Table 10: Results achieved the Independent Examination Board (IEB) ABET examinations in 2003.**

HRDD Site	Number registered for examination	Number wrote examination	Number who passed examination	Pass rate
Tugela Ferry	39	30	12	40%
Estcourt	70	56	38	68%
Muden	42	35	22	63%
Qanda	9	9	6	67%
Trustfeed	25	23	13	57%
Stoffelton	82	68	40	59%
Dalton	5	5	1	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>58%</b>

Source: Memela (2004b)

Table 10 indicates an overall pass rate of 58 % across all seven HRDD sites. There is considerable variation in pass rates, ranging from a low 20% in Dalton to 68% at Estcourt. In addition to a drop-out rate of almost 40%

between the start of 2003 and the end of the year, Table 10 shows a further decline in numbers between learners who registered for examinations and those who eventually wrote the examinations. The challenges of learner retention are discussed later in this chapter and in Chapter Seven.

### **Rural Information and Resource Centres**

A new aspect to ABET provision within the HRDD project involved the setting up of resource and information centres. These centres were introduced by the project partners as a means of supporting ABET classes and the broader community by having a central holding of information and resources relevant to the project's overall goals of strengthening human rights, democracy and development. Two communities, Muden and Stoffelton, both with longstanding relationships with Tembaletu, were initially identified for this and a process of securing venues began.

In Muden, a room in an existing building used by the Zibambeleni Community Development Organisation was secured and set up as a resource centre in October 1999. In Stoffelton, the Embassy provided funds for the renovation of an existing church building to be converted into a resource centre. With the help of the provincial library service, the renovated building was furnished and stocked with books for adult and school-going learners in the community. As with the Muden resource centre, training was given to five educators from Stoffelton on basic library skills. On 20 June 2001, the Naledi Stoffelton Resource Centre was officially opened.

Resource centres were also later established in Loskop (near Estcourt) and in Dalton. The establishment of these resource centres also necessitated the need for a new category of project worker. In response, some educators were promoted to the new position of "local coordinator" and then carried the responsibilities of managing the resource centres and overseeing the ABET classes (including the educators) in their area.

## **Income-generating projects**

A second new aspect started in the initial phase of the project was the setting up of income-generating projects (IGPs) in each of the rural communities. Each community site was given a start-up grant of R15 000 to initiate a project within their community. Learners could have chosen any type of community project. That they all chose income-generating project reflects their desperate needs to earn some income. This aspect of the HRDD project generated considerable debate and negotiation amongst learners and within the working group. Within the working group, the debate centred on control and decision-making with regards to the projects. It was decided that the projects would be left to the communities to initiate and manage. They were required to plan, prepare a proposal and a budget and submit this to Tembaletu. Educators were required to facilitate this process and to assist the learners. Funds were released by Tembaletu once a satisfactory proposal had been submitted. Within the community, part of the debate revolved around who should be allowed to participate and benefit from the IGPs. It was eventually decided by the learners that the projects would be primarily for learners who attended classes and not for people in the community who did not attend classes. Educators were not allowed to be members of the project group for fear that they would dominate. The latter decision was made by the working group.

The table below reflects the income-generation projects begun by each of the six communities in 1999.

**Table 11: Income-generation projects in 1999**

<b>Site</b>	<b>Project</b>
Qanda	Block making
Dalton	Sewing
Stoffelton	Chicken rearing and sewing
Muden	Block making
Tugela Ferry	Block making
Trust Feed	Block making

Learners participating in these projects in 2001 felt that IGPs should be judged as successful if there was evidence of: income, working capital, new projects, poverty alleviation, problem solving and sound decision-making, self-reliance, good working relations and equitable sharing of workload (Harley, Dlamini & Buthelezi, 2001, p.6).

Ongoing formative evaluations undertaken by CAE indicated that only small amounts of income were being generated via the IGPs (Dlamini, Buthelezi & Harley, 2001). The amounts were certainly insufficient to make a meaningful contribution to individual learners' livelihoods. The projects had also generated considerable frustration and some conflict amongst participants, and between participants and educators. However, the IGPs appeared to have been a source of significant learning for participants. An evaluation in 2001 reported:

It is abundantly clear that the substance and dynamics of the HRDD project do provide the learning opportunities hoped for ... in the course of their involvement in the income generation projects, adult learners are facing problems and frustrations, and in some cases managing to overcome difficulties and develop strategies for solving problems

(Dlamini, Buthelezi & Harley, 2001, p.55)

A progress report some three years later stated this more firmly:

The income generation projects are viewed much more as an instrument of encouraging learners as members of the community to engage in a dialogue about the socio economic issues affecting their lives and as an exercise of attaining skills rather than a profit making venture and in that sense no profits have been realised by the learners involved in these projects. (Tombaletu, 2004b, p.1)

The IGPs provided a catalyst for discussions on project ownership, division of responsibility and profits and provided an important opportunity to engage participants in reflecting on reasons for why the projects were not working optimally. As an experiment or catalyst for reflection and dialogue on

democracy and governance, the IGPs appeared to have been successful (educators' and learners' views on this are presented in the next chapter). However, in becoming sustainable sources of income for learners, they were not. In some areas, the projects were also abandoned after a couple of years when equipment failed or was lost.

#### Motivations and ideology of IGPs

The origins of the IGPs within the HRDD project warrant some closer attention. Two project documents indicate the origins of this aspect of the project.

As indicated earlier, Tembaletu's early experience with running ABET centres in rural areas had taught them that ABET on its own would be insufficient motivation for learners to attend classes. It is important to recall that in 1999, a project proposal written by Tembaletu notes that they:

... were confronted by the enduring reality of poverty. It became abundantly clear that ABE alone was not what people in these communities wanted ... ABE classes became increasingly empty as people concentrated their efforts on different economic activities to earn an income ...  
(Tembaletu, 1999b, p. 4).

A memorandum entitled, *Human Rights and (Community) Development: the Significance of Money* (Embassy of Finland, 1999), written by the project officer of the Embassy identified "two main impediments to strong communities: exclusion and poverty (ibid, p.1)". It proposed that the term, "communities of exclusion in poverty" was the starting point for community development in South Africa and that the goal should be "communities of inclusion in sustaining/sustainable wealth" (ibid, p. 2). The memorandum reflected on the complex issue of introducing money into projects in impoverished communities as "gun powder or even worse – it's nitroglycerine. It explodes on everybody's face at the slightest disturbance" (ibid, p.5). The memo noted that community developers therefore avoided the direct topic of

money preferring to deconstruct money into symbols such as “piggery, basket weaving, eco tourism” (*ibid*, p.5). In a bold, experimental move he suggested:

Let's go back to money big time. Let's blow things up. Let's have a contained explosion inside a community. Let's slug a bag of money into it and let rip. What happens? Do people die? Will the community perish? Or would that perhaps create a window of opportunity to genuinely alter some of the strategies of resource management? What would it require from a community developer to pull it off? (Embassy of Finland, 1999, p.5).

The implementation of the IGPs was, however, more measured. Ownership, decision making and implementation were placed firmly with learners. Educators were mandated to facilitate the process and assist the learners, and were also a major communication channel between project partners and learners. The funds, however, were administered by Tembaletu and released on the basis of plans and accountability systems developed. As such, the project partners held the initial bag of money and engaged in the discourse of plans, budgets and other symbols of money. Money and other resources generated via the IGPs were left in the hands of learners to control and use.

The tension about control of initial IGP funding was still apparent some two years later. An evaluation in November 2000 recommended:

... in accordance with the fundamental aims of the HRDD project, individual projects be given more control over the money allocated to them by the Embassy of Finland. The tight constraints governing the way in which the individual centres access their money no doubt conforms with good accounting practice, but it prevents the exercise of initiative on the part of participating centres ... It was understood that from the funder's point of view, this money could well be lost, but that if it provided the basis for experiential learning, it would be well spent (Dlamini, Buthelezi & Harley, 2001, p.81).

The notions of IGPs as a development experiment, as incentives for participation and as a catalyst for learning appear to be strong in the conceptualisation and implementation of IGPs in the HRDD project. The objective of IGPs creating a strong basis for experiential learning of human rights, democracy and development was considered a success by most parties in the project as indicated by the following comments from the director of Tembaletu in 2002:

Giving money to the learners was also intended to create dialogue within the community about their own development, since simply raising this issue in the classroom, even using Freierian [sic] methods, does not create the dialogue necessary for learning and change. The projects have been successful in generating this dialogue - facilitators are asking, "What is our role in the project", learners are asserting control over the projects, and Tembaletu has experienced a lack of clarity about its own role. (Harley & Dlamini, 2002b, p.26)

## **Educator development**

### **Initial training**

An educator development programme was jointly developed by Tembaletu and CAE based on the baseline research (discussed earlier) conducted in 1999. This took the form of an intensive week-long workshop followed by subsequent monthly workshops.

The initial educator training for the HRDD project was run as a week-long workshop for the 18 educators based in the various community sites. The workshops were facilitated by Tembaletu, CAE and included some input from other organisations. Topics covered in the workshop included an orientation to the HRDD project, portfolio development, human rights, democracy, citizenship, advocacy and lobbying, accessing information on rights, strategic planning, facilitating community development, and government structures and systems (Tembalelu, 1999c).

This intensive training aimed to prepare educators to incorporate human rights, democracy and development into their existing ABET lessons and to facilitate the IGPs.

#### **Continuous training and support through monthly workshop**

A series of monthly support workshops for educators were offered between May 1999 and April 2000. The workshops were facilitated by a range of organisations external to the HRDD project such as the Natal ABE Support Agency (NASA), Project Gateway, Built Environment Support Group and the Midberg Adult Education Centre. These workshops covered aspects of the educators work such as: integrated learning programme development, understanding outcomes-based education, teaching numeracy, ABET policy, learner support and development (Tombaletu, 2000b, pp. 11-12).

A memo from the Education Coordinator of Tombaletu to HRDD educators on 26 May 2000 reminded the educators of their contractual obligations in terms of monthly reports and attendance at monthly workshops (Tombaletu, 2000c). In terms of the former, Tombaletu was at the time unhappy that educators were not submitting reports. They then decided to make payment of educator salaries contingent on such reporting:

This memo is to inform you that with immediate effect (June wages), salary slips advice forms will only be generated and forwarded to the accounts department for persons who will have submitted monthly reports and hours worked.

(Tombaletu, 2000c, p.1)

The memo indicated that the information required from educators in their monthly reporting should include:

- Monthly report form;

- A general narrative report about the class – including a short summary of each student's progress based on a weekly, biweekly or monthly, whichever you prefer;
- Attendance register;
- Outcomes that were intended to have been met during the month, the extent to which they were met and reasons why they were not met. What steps have been taken to meet the outcomes;
- Copy of the assessment conducted (could be formal test, a quiz or simple project), and what results the students obtained.

(Tombaletu 2000c, p.1)

These instructions reveal several features of the project in its early implementation phase. It shows a level of growth in project institutionalisation and bureaucratisation, and the development of systems for quality assurance and accountability. In terms of educator development, there were also measures being put in place to foster reflection and planning on the part of the educators. There is furthermore a strong sense of learner-centredness in the instructions. South Africa's immersion in an outcomes-based approach in education is also very apparent in the reporting requirements put in place.

On the other issue, regarding attendance at monthly workshops organised for educators, the memo clearly reminds educators of the aims of these workshops. It stated:

The workshops are aimed to offer you as an educator:

- opportunities to widen your knowledge of teaching strategies
- meet colleagues and through discussions, share views and ideas relevant to adult teaching and learning
- opportunities to see first hand new materials in the field
- opportunities to learn about new policy developments in the field
- forum to express the your (sic) needs and those of learners in the ABET classes that need [to be] attended to

(Tombaletu, 2000c, p.2)

One sees here clear evidence of an understanding of educator development that is non-formal, continuous and distinctly social. The value of situated learning and learning through dialogue and engagement in practice is recommended in Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999). The extent to which such workshops served to build a community of practice will be explored in Chapter Seven which is based on interviews with HRDD educators.

In 2000, sixteen of the HRDD educators were admitted to the Certificate in Education (Participatory Development) programme offered by CAE. This programme leads to a formal university qualification at NQF level 5. Twelve of these educators completed this programme successfully.

In 2003, twenty HRDD educators attended a ten day residential peace education programme which covered practical skills on conflict management within a framework of sustainable development. Educators were then guided and supported in implementing peace related workshops in their communities. In the same year, HRDD educators also attended a course on entrepreneurship offered by CAE. These aspects of educator development were included in order that educators would feel more confident in assisting their learners and communities with IGPs and broader development projects.

Also in 2003, a group of educators (including many new recruits) was trained via a learnership programme under the auspices of the Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP) Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA). The learnership programme, modelled on a system of apprenticeship, combined formal study with practical on-the-job experience and led to a formal qualification at NQF level 5 for these educators. The availability of a learnership reflects the growing formalisation of education, even within the marginal adult education sector, in South Africa. This also shows how the project was harnessing opportunities in the broader ABET environment in the country and engaging with different sectors of the education system.

A further example of the project's linkages with the broader, albeit more formalised, ABET environment was a relationship developed in 2003 with the KwaZulu-Natal provincial Department of Education which saw some educators becoming employees of the Department. The rationale and implications of this move are captured in the following extract:

A quasi-formal working relationship with the provincial DoE was established in 2003 in which 2 of the [HRDD] communities have their ABET provision co-sponsored and co-managed by Tembaletu and the DoE. Tembaletu has been the lead partner in this process thus far and in 2004, we have been asked by the DoE to continue this cooperation until the ABET classes in these communities become fully fledged Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCs). The DoE's perspectives on adult learning provision potentially differ from those of the HRDD Project, yet the potential to engage with and influence the DoE "in practice" is an opportunity the HRDD Project cannot ignore and Tembaletu will explore the spaces and opportunities for involving the DoE in additional communities in 2004.

(Tembaletu, 2004a, p.1)

A group of educators also participated in training in home-based care which was provided by the German Adult Education Association (IIZ/DVV). This training aimed to build skills in providing care for the sick and terminally-ill members in communities. In similar fashion, educators participated in workshops offered by the Human Rights Commission of South Africa. In these ways, HRDD educators were able to broaden their repertoire of skills and their potential to be of service to their community. They were also being exposed to a network of providers who could support their work.

Turnover amongst educators created a constant challenge as it was not possible to repeat all forms of educator development for each new recruit. This is a particular challenge to projects in such marginal contexts where the prospects of sustainable incomes and long-term employment are rare. How

this challenge was addressed in the project is discussed in Chapter Seven and theorised in terms of Communities of Practice theory.

## **Materials development**

One of CAE's main roles in the project was to develop learning materials, for learners and educators, in the HRDD project.

### **Learn with Echo**

The *Learn with Echo* newspaper supplement served as an important source of learning material for the HRDD project. Producing the supplement consumed the largest portion of CAE's budget within the HRDD project. *Learn with Echo* is a weekly, 4-page educational supplement of *The Witness*, Pietermaritzburg's daily newspaper. *Learn with Echo* targets readers with low levels of literacy by providing them with news, information, entertainment and educational activities in the English and Zulu languages.

In 1999 with the formation of the HRDD partnership, *Learn with Echo* started being funded as part of the HRDD project. As part of the new funding agreement, the Learn with Echo project committed to devoting substantial space in the supplement to content on human rights and democracy (see Land, 2006). It also undertook to distribute copies of the supplement to all of the HRDD rural learning sites, thus increasing its readership in rural areas. Through LWE, the Embassy also saw the value of creating human rights and democracy material for the wider (non-HRDD) readership of the supplement. In 2000, the weekly readership of *Learn with Echo* was estimated to be 255 500 people (Harley, Arbuckle, Khumalo, Dlamini & Land, 2000). This survey found that content on human rights and democracy, funded through the HRDD budget, was the second most popular content area of the supplement, its popularity being surpassed only by the supplement's highly popular Mkhize comic serial.

Evaluations conducted in 2000/2001 found LWE to be "one of the primary resources used in classes at HRDD centres ... used for both literacy teaching

and for HRDD teaching" (Harley & Aitchison, 2001, p.3). The report noted that LWE had also carried material specifically about the HRDD project which reported on activities and people in all of the different sites. In picking up a strong HRDD focus, LWE had, using different types of articles, covered topics such as government, human rights, community development, entrepreneurship, economic literacy, education and training, cultural issues, personal financial management, personal safety/crime and health (*ibid*).

CAE also contributed other learning materials, most notably, the Women's Handbook (Centre for Adult Education/Midlands Women's Group, 1999; 2004), a guide to rights and resources for women in KwaZulu-Natal. At the outset, the Women's Handbook was identified as an important resource for HRDD classes. This was because the Women's Handbook dealt specifically with women's rights within democratic South Africa and concentrated on women in poor and marginal positions in society. The Handbook was also written in plain English and available in Zulu, which made it highly relevant for the HRDD context and classroom engagement. The HRDD educators were trained in the use of the handbook during their initial week-long training session.

As the project progressed, CAE also developed an educators' handbook which aimed to assist HRDD educators with their roles and with using LWE materials more effectively. Drafts of this handbook were piloted in HRDD classes but it is still to reach final publication stage.

### **HRDD staffing**

As the project evolved, a range of people came to be employed through the funds provided for by the Embassy of Finland. At the community level, educators, and later local coordinators in the various learning centres were employed on annual contracts by Tembaletu. With Tembaletu taking on the role of employer of educators and coordinators, it meant that they carried the full responsibility for human resource functions including disciplinary action. When educators and coordinators had grievances about their conditions of

service, Tembaletu, rather than their partners CAE and the Embassy faced the brunt of such dissatisfaction.

From the initial years of the project, Tembaletu employed two full-time field staff who visited and supported the HRDD sites. These staff reported to an ABET manager based at Tembaletu. The ABET manager was responsible for overall coordination of the HRDD project from Tembaletu's side and worked closely with the organisation's director in making decisions on the project. In the latter years of the project, a programme coordinator and ABET manager have managed the project on behalf of the director. As CAE's main responsibilities in the project lay in the area of research and materials development, its budget from the Embassy was initially used to pay for two full-time materials developers who produced the weekly newspaper, a part-time coordinator of LWE and for part-time researchers. In August 2003, a full-time researcher was employed by CAE. The ABET coordinator at CAE has from the outset held the main responsibility for the project on CAE's behalf.

The project has experienced considerable staff turnover, particularly within Tembaletu, where all staff are employed on annual contracts dependent on donor funding. By comparison, CAE enjoyed a more stable staffing complement because of its university base and relative independence from donor funding. The CAE ABET coordinator is the only person who was involved in the project throughout its life. High staff turnover is a significant cost to a project in terms of people needing to be constantly recruited, orientated and trained. With people leaving, an element of project memory is also lost. On a more positive note, staff changes also bring fresh perspectives and new energy into a project.

### **Research and reflection**

In addition to the Learn with Echo work, CAE's other major contribution to the HRDD project was in the area of research. The overall HRDD budget included an allocation for baseline research (discussed earlier) and ongoing formative evaluation research, which CAE was responsible for. Between 2000 and 2002

CAE conducted three rounds of formative evaluation research each year. Several of these reports have been referred to throughout this chapter. This initial phase of the research work was undertaken by a number of staff within CAE on a part-time basis under the leadership of CAE's Research and Development coordinator. The research produced valuable information on project implementation experiences and understandings. It also served as a major stimulant for reflection on the project by all parties involved, particularly for the three partner organisations.

As indicated, in 2003, CAE employed a full-time researcher for the HRDD research work. A primary responsibility of this research was to facilitate ongoing reflection on the project, particularly amongst learners and educators. This occurred through focus group discussions with learners and educators at all of the learning sites and via workshops on key issues and themes emerging within the project. The latter included a workshop in 2004 which focused on the problem of "learner dropout" and a workshop on income-generation and livelihood projects in 2005. These workshops attempted to introduce fresh perspectives on the issues faced by the projects by inviting experts who had little or no involvement in the project. In addition to the main task of stimulating reflection, the work of the full-time researcher also involved focussed studies in aspects such as "Reasons for low enrolment and learner dropout" (Memela, 2004a); information flows and communication problems in HRDD (Memela, 2005a) and changes in the project (Memela, 2005b; Memela, 2005c).

While most of the reflections on the project occurred at specific sites and within the project partner working group, on a couple of occasions everyone, namely, learners, educators, Tembaletu, CAE, and the Embassy, came together to reflect on the project. As discussed below, an HRDD Indaba took place in 2000 and 2004.

The research in the HRDD project was conducted in an action-research fashion (see John, 2003). It employed creative and highly participatory methods to establish spaces within the project for reflection and learning by all

parties and for formative evaluation to assist in project development. As discussed later, an external evaluation was commissioned in 2002 by the Embassy of Finland (Ijas & Cartwright, 2002). This too served as an important moment for reflection and learning in the project.

A primary goal of the project from the outset was to create opportunities in ABET classes, IGP's and other fora in the HRDD project for learners and educators to reflect on their life circumstances and activities. Early project documents made explicit references to a constructivist approach (as reflected in the quotation below) as the educational philosophy underpinning the project. After some years of implementation it was felt that more attention needed to be given to fostering reflection and reflective practices as indicated by the following comment in an evaluation in 2002 where CAE's ABET coordinator:

... felt that the Project needed now to put into place the "missing link" - the systematic reflection by the learners on what they are doing, why and how. She felt that this reflection should be in the form of regular (at least four to five times a year) sessions with learners and facilitators (sometimes together and sometimes apart), run by people skilled in community education ... The sessions would explore what has happened, why has it happened, and how could it be done differently. These sessions would fulfil the requirement, as argued by Mezirow, that learners need to analyse their current perspective/reality, identify the anomalies within it, and thereby allow transformation of it. Learners would have to be able to envision a different possible future, before they could move towards it ... What would be a critical part of such sessions is a recognition of the strengths of the learners, and the value of these, as the basis for reflection and discussion ... Ultimately, the HRDD facilitators should be developed to a stage where they are able to run these kinds of reflection sessions as part of their normal teaching.

(Harley & Dlamini, 2002b, p.40)

The employment of a full-time researcher in 2003 was in response to the critical need expressed in the quotation above. The quotation also illustrates the pedagogical and theoretical currents which shaped the project. Learning for change through critical reflection was the master pedagogical thrust in the project, heavily influenced by the educational theory of Jack Mezirow. CAE's influence in this regard was strong (see Memela & Land, 2006). The project's educational approach also reflected a strong Freirean influence adopted and advocated by both CAE and Tembaletu in their work. The theoretical and practical contributions of both Mezirow (1975; 1991) and Freire (1970) were discussed in Chapter Two, and were shown to have particular relevance to the HRDD project.

### **Project management and governance**

In discussing the different project activities, some indications of how aspects of the project were managed have been conveyed. This part focuses on the joint management and governance of the HRDD project as a whole.

For the early part of its life (1999 – 2004) the HRDD project received management and governance attention from a Working Group made up of staff of Tembaletu, CAE and the Finnish Embassy. As conveyed in the narrative, this group was responsible for the conceptualisation and planning of the project and had overall decision-making power, including the power to name the project. During the implementation stage, this forum met four times a year. The forum considered verbal reports from different staff on the various activities of the project. In terms of the contracts signed by Tembaletu and CAE with the Embassy, quarterly narrative reports on the HRDD project had to be submitted. Financial reporting was required on an annual basis, prior to new funding proposals and budgets for the forthcoming year.

Tembaletu's record reveals that considerable thought had gone into the need for an inclusive governance structure which would include learner and educator representatives (Tembaletu, no date). A document outlines a proposal and budget for a 34 person "HRDD Council" which would include

learner, educator and community representatives from each community joining representatives from Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy (in ex-officio capacity) to meet four times a year. The primary roles of the Council were proposed as:

- Decide on the strategic direction of the programme should take
- Oversee the development of the HRDD Programme
- Provide a platform for members of different communities to dialogue on: literacy, adult basic education and training, lifelong learning, human rights, democracy, and development.

(Tombaletu, no date, p. 3)

The Council did not materialise because of numerous logistical problems and issues related to representation of communities. The lack of participation of learners and educators in the overall project management and governance was a constant source of concern and tension for the working group. While educators and learners had opportunities and fora to provide their views, these were largely mediated via staff of CAE and Tembaletu. To create more direct forms of communication and to allow for a wide range of people to give direction to the project, an *indaba* (isiZulu word for a meeting to discuss a serious matter) was held. The quotation below highlights the origins and purpose of the *indaba*:

A shortcoming recognised by the HRDD Project management team in 2003 was the failure to keep up a consultative process with the educators and the learners and other community based stakeholders. It was agreed that as of 2004, dialogue with all stakeholders needs to be rekindled and the feedback received needs to inform the future thinking and planning of the Project. To kick-start the process in 2004, an “*indaba*” involving stakeholder representatives will be held to ascertain the current understandings of stakeholders of the HRDD Project as well as their expectations of what the Project can offer them. Following on from the “*indaba*”, channels of communication between the

management team and the other stakeholders (learners, educators and community) will be established and strengthened.

(Tombaletu, 2004a, p.2).

The indaba in 2004 was the second indaba convened to create a forum where the broadest range of participation of learners, educators, community representatives together with staff from Tombaletu, CAE and the Embassy was achieved. The first indaba in November 2000 brought together learners, educators and broader community members from each site together with staff from Tombaletu, CAE, the Embassy (including the Finnish ambassador to South Africa) and some other organisations funded by the Embassy for a day of reflection, sharing and planning.

The second indaba, held in 2004, brought together learners, educators and broader community members from each site together with staff from Tombaletu, CAE and the Embassy to discuss the project and take decisions on the future of the project. In a highly participatory process, different communities expressed their views of the project.

In 2004, the HRDD project piloted a model of independence with one of its community sites. The Stoffelton site showed signs of being most ready for a direct relationship with the Embassy. The Stoffelton educators and learners were assisted to form a community-based organisation (CBO), named Khotso (Sotho word for peace). They presented their own budget and proposal and got funding directly from the Embassy. Khotso showed initial signs of independence as reflected in the following comment from the Embassy representative, "So far the pilot with Stoffelton has progressed well, I was quite impressed with their first report (although a late arrival!). There are definite challenges there, but also capacity" (Embassy of Finland, 2004b). However, at the end of the first year, this fledgling organisation was unable to overcome its challenges and also did not satisfy the reporting requirements of the Embassy despite some support and extensions of time being given. This mode of funding was then discontinued.

In another community, Muden, where Tembaletu had established a longstanding relationship with a CBO called Zibambeleni, Tembaletu requested this organisation to take over management of the HRDD activities and budget for Muden in 2004. Part of the transfer of responsibility to this community structure meant that the Zibambeleni had to then raise its own funding from 2005 onwards. Unfortunately, here too, ABET classes were discontinued as the organisation was unable to raise the necessary funding to continue the work independently.

### **Major change: *The Emperor's new clothes***

The HRDD project evolved over the years in response to issues identified via the ongoing research and with the involvement of new people. Greater project institutionalisation and system development also occurred during this time. In 2005, however, some major changes to the HRDD project were signalled. These changes (described below) were precipitated by growing unease with some aspects of the project. The changes were catalysed by the entry of a new director at Tembaletu. After 7 months into his position, the new director tabled a discussion document titled *The Emperor's new clothes* (Rangiah, 2004). The document presented a highly critical view of the state of the HRDD project. It identified several problems and raised many questions. Most significant amongst these were:

- The lack of a grand plan and focus for the project.
- Years of implementation which had involved the substitution of tactics for planning
- The absence of strong leadership and direction for the project
- The need for Tembaletu to assume leadership and responsibility for the project
- The need for a more community-driven and needs-based approach which would see activities like literacy, numeracy and community projects emerging from engagement with community groups on the basis of their expressed needs.

The Embassy and CAE engaged with Tembaletu in different ways over the document and its proposals. There was general acceptance that Tembaletu needed to take full control of the project and the other partner organisations invited discussion on what roles they could play in a redesigned project. Such rethinking and re-positioning of relationships revealed some of the underlying tensions and ambivalences in the relationships. The *Emperor's new clothes* document commented on the Embassy's primary role as funder and that CAE's major interest in research was served irrespective of whether the project succeeded or failed (Rangiah, 2004). While these comments were received as fair and constructive critique of the project, they do appear to have allowed underlying tensions to surface. A response from the Embassy Project Officer noted their own difficulty in having sole direction over funds but not of project activities:

Uncomfortably I sit there with all the money locked behind my back ...  
There is very little else content wise that is expected of me ... We all learn from it [HRDD project], but maybe that has eaten away from focus? It obviously needs a strong driver, implementer like Tembaletu. I welcome your initiative to take more responsibility and power that goes with it (Embassy of Finland, 2004a).

In email correspondence in response to the *Emperor's new clothes* document, the Finnish Embassys Project Officer stated:

... I think you've done some brave springcleaning, whether all points about the past are accurate or not.

Along with some constructive criticism, every ship needs a captain, I happily welcome Tembaletu back to the control cabin. We continue being the funding party, with a great opportunity to learn about development through the project.

(Embassy of Finland, 2004c)

Both statements from the Embassy indicate support for Tembaletu to take firmer control of the project, which was up until then under the control of the working group. The statements also point to the importance placed on learning about development through the project.

From the perspective of CAE, there was also acknowledgement that Tembaletu should take the lead. Research conducted by CAE in 2002 had already identified the need for a champion of the project (Harley & Dlamini, 2002b). CAE undertook to continue to contribute to the project in terms of materials and research as required by Tembaletu. As CAE's funding within the HRDD project was drawing to an end it tabled proposals (Land, 2004) on how it could continue to support the HRDD project in the absence of funding from the Embassy.

Within the partnership, one can sense at this stage that the issue of power and leadership issues of the project were surfacing. The Finnish Embassy was acknowledging its reluctance to steer projects and CAE likewise was acknowledging its more secondary and supporting status in the project in relation to the core activities of ABET and IGPs which Tembaletu was primarily responsible for and dealing with on a daily basis.

The *Emperor's new clothes* document (Rangiah, 2004) and the discussions which it generated resulted in five fairly significant changes to the operation of the project from 2005.

#### *Shift from IGPs to livelihoods*

Flowing directly from the "emperor's new clothes" discussion was a shift in terminology and practice from IGPs to livelihoods projects. This shift attempted to deemphasise income as a primary goal in community projects and to get participants to explore various ways in which projects could satisfy their livelihood needs. Livelihoods projects promoted the idea that people should engage in development projects which satisfied their immediate needs and that if a surplus was produced, such a surplus could be sold or traded for

income. Several learners took up this funding to start vegetable gardens and other small projects.

*Emphasis on examinations dropped*

Another change associated with the “emperor’s new clothes” moment in the project influenced the role of ABET examinations in the project. Examinations were made a voluntary exercise, undertaken only if a learner so chose. This shift sought to remove the passing of an examination as the primary goal for attending and sign of learner success. It was also hoped that the removal of compulsory examinations would widen participation in ABET classes and provide access for learners who wanted to become literate but who were not interested in a formal qualification. This change in the project is highly significant in the light of growing formalisation of education in South Africa.

*Public seminars*

A further change in the post-“emperor’s new clothes” period saw the introduction of “public seminars”. These fora, held quarterly, to bring together learners, educators, members of the broader community and local leaders at each site, were initiated to broaden participation in the project in order that all people of an area could be addressed by invited speakers on key development issues affecting their communities and to have a dialogue about such issues. Topics covered in these public seminars included social welfare grants, child abuse, women abuse and health care, amongst others. The organisation of such fora, usually held in the HRDD resource centre (where these existed), was the responsibility of the local site coordinator. Coordinators chose topics which they believed were of interest to their learners and community. Coordinators from other HRDD sites were required to attend public seminars in the different sites as a way of facilitating the sharing of ideas and experiences, and networking amongst coordinators. The practice of having invited speakers at these seminars fostered greater networking between the project and other organisations, including government departments. In this way, the HRDD project played a brokering role by bringing potential service providers and development organisations into contact with the HRDD communities.

### *Project governance*

The final change related to project governance. As indicated earlier, this had been a difficult issue for the project from the outset. Earlier attempts to gain more community representation in project governance had not materialised.

In 2005, Tembaletu instituted a “stakeholder forum” made up of leaders from traditional structures and local government, which met four times a year with project staff and partners. At these meetings, project reports from each community site were presented and interrogated by those present. Solutions to problems faced in each community were jointly discussed. These meetings served to strengthen community leadership and ownership of the project and allowed for the participation of local coordinators and broader leadership from the communities in project governance. A highly significant feature of this forum is that it allowed for both traditional and elected leaders from communities to participate jointly in the project. Speakers from government departments also addressed these meetings for purposes of information sharing, resource brokering, relationship building and networking. The meetings were facilitated by Tembaletu’s ABET manager and HRDD project coordinator, again shifting responsibility away from the director of the organisation.

These meetings show impressive levels of control which the HRDD ABET manager and HRDD project coordinator assumed. Equally significant, is the level of interest and engagement of community leaders in the project affairs. A further notable feature of this forum was the manner in which it facilitated linkages between the local community leadership with local government and other developmental agents. At one forum, the programme included a presentation by the Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs in which the department’s perspective, framework and programmes were set out (Mazeka, 2006). There was much questioning and discussion by both traditional leaders, and local government councillors, after the presentation. In this way, this new forum in the HRDD project was playing a brokering role by bringing together various stakeholders in development. This is also a form of

bridging capital which the project was assisting to build (Putnam, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003). As discussed in Chapter Two, bridging social capital refers to value-added linkages and relationships with people and groupings outside of one's immediate social group, which allows one to benefit from resources of a broader, more diverse network. Bridging capital can thus enhance support, trust and has a positive influence on economic growth (Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003). Given the historical divisions between traditional and local government leadership, the project was also creating a space where some significant political boundaries could be weakened and crossed.

From the beginning of 2005 the original working group, made up of Tembaletu, CAE and Embassy representatives, ceased to meet formally as it had done prior to that year. Tembaletu assumed full control and responsibility for the project. CAE continued with research and materials development. Some occasional meetings took place for specific discussions. For example, a small subcommittee met to decide foci for the research. This marked a firm shift in governance in the project and a decreased influence of CAE in the overall operation of the project.

### **Perceptions of progress in the project**

As indicated in Chapter One, this case study does not aim to evaluate the HRDD project. The project has been subjected to ongoing evaluation, both the formative and summative kind and conducted both internally and externally. In this part of the project narrative, these evaluations are reviewed, not to draw conclusions on the success and failure of the project, but to convey how the various parties themselves judged the project in terms of progress and self-determined criteria.

An internal formative evaluation conducted in 2002 (Harley & Dlamini, 2002b) after about three and a half years of implementation provided a comprehensive view of the project as judged by the various parties involved. This evaluation is significant to the case study in that it served to take the

pulse of the project at a point midway in the period (1999-2005) considered for this case study.

The evaluation reported widespread satisfaction amongst learners in all HRDD communities regarding their ABET classes and IGP projects. In terms of self-determined criteria, learners felt that they were making progress and that the project as a whole was a success. Notwithstanding this general feeling of optimism, learners identified several problems which they experienced (see Harley & Dlamini, 2002b). While most projects were generating income, learners themselves were not benefiting directly from such income, choosing instead to build up certain amounts in the project's bank account before distributing. Educators were largely in agreement with learners' judgements on progress and success.

The evaluation also consulted various staff within Tembaletu and CAE regarding their perceptions of the projects' progress. Staff from these organisations reported mixed responses on progress. Several staff expressed the opinion that some progress had been made, and some objectives met, but that there was potential for greater progress. Generally it was felt that the ABET programme was meeting its objectives. With regard to the human rights, democracy and development component, staff felt that more work was needed in terms of integration of the project's different components. With regard to the IGPs, staff differed. Those who felt that income generation was a measure of success felt that the project was not successful at the time and would be so only once adequate amounts of income were being generated regularly. Some staff felt that income generation was not a primary objective and that it should not be used as a criterion to judge the project. The IGPs were seen as successful in facilitating learning as indicated in the following comment, "The projects have been successful in generating this dialogue - facilitators are asking, "What is our role in the project", learners are asserting control over the projects, and Tembaletu has experienced a lack of clarity about its own role" (Harley & Dlamini, 2002b, p.26).

There would appear to be broad consensus among the project partners that whilst the HRDD project had considerable potential, it had not quite lived up to this, and success had been mixed. It should be emphasised, however, that all the project partners viewed the project as an experimental one, and expressed considerable appreciation for the opportunity the project had afforded them to be creative and innovative, and the opportunity it provided for learning from it.

The external evaluation commissioned by the Embassy of Finland in 2002 also reported mixed success in the project (Ijas & Cartwright, 2002). This evaluation applauded the following strengths in the project:

- processes of staff development
- learners recognising and requesting the need for numeracy and communication skills on the basis of their experiences in the IGPs
- learners acquiring skills related to the income-generating projects
- learners making connections between the ABET classes and their IGPs
- a strong partnership developed between Tembaletu and CAE was seen as “breaking new ground in building a shared project that draws on the complementary strengths of both parties” [ibid, p.14].
- a good partnership between CAE, Tembaletu and the Embassy of Finland was also seen as breaking new ground and setting new standards in development practice.

While the external evaluators indicated that there was “plenty to celebrate” in the project, they raised the following concerns:

- facilitators’ [educators] insufficient involvement in decision-making structures
- new needs and challenges for facilitator training created by the IGPs
- lack of clarity about ownership and leadership of the IGPs
- uncertainty amongst learners about money generated and about determination of profit and loss

- money generated through IGPs being hoarded rather than re-invested or disbursed
- that the ABET classes and IGPs had “yet to be satisfactorily integrated in a sustainable way” [ibid, p.11].
- that ABET classes, IGPs, human rights and democracy were not being mutually reinforced
- that the IGP component had been “a deliberately laissez-faire experiment, with mixed results” [ibid, p.13]
- that the HRDD project as whole was not, at that stage, replicable nor sustainable.

(Ijas & Cartwright, 2002)

## **Reflections and theorisation of the project partners’ narrative**

This section of the chapter provides some reflections and theorisation on the project partners’ narrative. It identifies significant themes emerging from the narrative and discusses these in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and in relation to the contexts presented in Chapter Four. There are several significant themes in the project partners’ narrative, constructed largely from documents created or commissioned by the partners. The list of significant themes which could be discussed and theorised include project complexity, project genesis, project change, growing institutionalisation, project discourses, ideological positioning and learning in the project. Given the detail and length of the narrative in the first part of the chapter, this second part will limit comment and theorisation to a few themes, with a focus on the learning of project partners.

### **The complexity of the HRDD project**

The project partners’ narrative presented in this chapter provides a view of the HRDD project as a multi-site, multi-actor, multi-faceted and complex project.

The narrative description conveys a complexity which the many individual

reports or proposals generated within the project over the years, have not portrayed. Through the partners' narrative or *thick description* of the HRDD project, we can observe a project involving several people, community groups and organisations, all involved in a wide array of activities over a substantial period of time. We see multiple identities, discourses, ideologies and relationships in development and flux. This 'thick description' of the case has allowed for the complexity to be surfaced and for the relationships between a range of activities to be seen. The complexity of the project necessitated considerable flexibility on the part of the partner organisations. The description also provides a lively sense of action and change and some sense of the development of the project. Projects such as the HRDD regularly experience moments of tension, challenge and conflict. These moments can be seen to initiate change and realignments in power and leadership.

### **Ideological positioning of the HRDD project**

In reviewing the series of significant United Nations conferences held in the final years of the twentieth century (see Table 5 in Chapter Four), it was noted that such conferences provided a global framework for the decade in which the HRDD project emerged, and that they set the agenda for the forthcoming century. The series of conferences included a conference focusing on *education* (Education for All, held in Jomtien, 1990), on *human rights* (held in Vienna, 1993), on *social development* (held in Copenhagen, 1995), on *women* (held in Beijing, 1995) and on *food* (held in Rome, 1996). It was also noted that many of the key social concerns discussed at these conferences have found some expression in the goals and objectives of the HRDD project. The narrative presented in this chapter, allows for the HRDD project to be viewed as an example of local expression of some of the priority issues on the global development agenda. Several concerns expressed at global, regional and local fora can be seen to occupy centre stage in the HRDD project. These include concerns about poverty, social development and inclusion, democracy, human rights and women's empowerment. As revealed in early project conceptualisation documents, the agenda of poverty alleviation/eradication is a strong motivation and rationale underpinning the

HRDD project. Aspects of the HRDD project have focused on community-based income generation and livelihoods projects, the latter placing much emphasis on *food security*.

Strengthening the young democracy in South Africa, is a foundational motivation in the conceptualisation of the HRDD project, one shared by all three partner organisations. The human rights focus in the HRDD project gives special attention to the rights of women. This was facilitated through the use of the Women's Handbook (Centre for Adult Education/Midland Women's Group, 1999) as a major teaching and learning resource. Training in democracy and development took up the lion's share of the initial workshop for educators in 1999. Globally, there has been a focus on human rights and strengthening of democracy. In part, this global influence was carried to the KwaZulu-Natal context through the Embassy where it appears to have coalesced with similar interests of CAE and Tembaletu. These influences and interests appear to have gained momentum due to the particular historical moment in South Africa, with the transition from apartheid to democratic rule. In this regard the HRDD project was buoyed up in a confluence of global and local streams of influence with respect to human rights, democracy and development.

It was noted in Chapter Four that there has been some struggle to keep basic education for adults on the agenda. The expanded visions of the Jomtien and Dakar conferences and of CONFINTEA V which included adult basic education were subsequently narrowed to a focus on basic education for school age learners. An example of this shrinkage is the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which currently dominate the development arena but have dropped adults from basic education targets. The role and importance of adult basic education for development expressed at earlier fora has been a major motivator for CAE and Tembaletu and is given practical expression in the HRDD project. In this regard the HRDD project has countered a global trend represented by the MDGs.

## **Project genesis**

Social Capital theory (discussed in Chapter Two) points to the value which lies in one's networks and relationships. In terms of how the Tembaletu-Embassy of Finland connection was forged, the theory offers a useful lens for examining development-enhancing networking and relationship building. This lens is not limited to the Tembaletu-Embassy of Finland connection, but extends to how the early relationships between Tembaletu and rural communities, and between Tembaletu and CAE, facilitated the partnership around the HRDD project. In the light of such theory, the genesis of the HRDD project could be seen to have been facilitated by Tembaletu's relationships and connectivity to the other parties established in the course of its earlier engagements with these parties. This is a form of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), an asset of the organisation which helped to grease the wheels of HRDD project genesis. Bourdieu (1986, p.51) defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition". Some measure of trust and shared values established through prior engagements between the project partners provided a foundation for the development of a new project.

The genesis of the HRDD project is not only interesting but also somewhat unusual. The external evaluators (Ijas & Cartwright, 2002) saw this as breaking new ground and setting new standards in development practice. Rather than an entirely new set of objectives and activities emerging in response to a perceived need or in response to prospective/secured funding, as is typically the case in development projects, the HRDD was a coalescing of existing objectives and activities of different organisations. These objectives and activities coalesced under a broad umbrella of human rights, democracy and development, themes which each organisation had a pre-existing interest in, or a natural affinity to. As a project, the HRDD became a blending of old agendas and practices rather than a venture into something radically new. This brought some benefits to the organisations involved (Tembalelu and CAE) in being able to secure new funding for existing programmes of activity.

It also set up some challenges in terms of working within a partnership and particularly in terms of integrating project activities, and in fostering community ownership, governance and independence.

### **Partners' perspectives on learning in the HRDD project**

Learning is a major interest in this study, as indicated in the study's second aim which was, "To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning and civic action". The forthcoming chapters deal extensively with this interest, particularly in terms of the learning of educators and learners in the project. This chapter examines learning from the perspective of the project partners. Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999) will be employed as a lens for an examination of this type of learning in the project. Such a lens is employed again in Chapter Seven to theorise learning amongst educators. Chapter Seven will also provide a comparison of the different communities of practice in the HRDD project.

The form of the HRDD project at its genesis stage and at various stages of development reflects particular understandings of community education and development. Such understandings were influenced by the frames of reference which the three organisations brought to the project. We see through the narrative that each partner organisation drew on its prior practice and learning in fashioning the HRDD project. Lessons about development, education, social change and project management in different contexts were part of this collective experience which influenced the design of the new HRDD project. The shared understanding of the project partners that learning in practise and through reflection on experience is sound adult education pedagogy, is clearly apparent in the project partners' narrative. The income generation project was seen as contributing towards this goal. In line with this understanding of learning, were strong emphases on dialogue. The narrative shows such emphases in several places where project activities, be they ABET classes, income generation projects or ongoing research, were all seen

as spaces for all learners, educators and the partner organisations to engage in reflection and dialogue.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight discuss these features of learning in terms of the theories of Mezirow (1975; 1991) and Freire (1970) who both emphasise the central roles of reflection and dialogue in the learning. In this regard, the HRDD project could be seen as creating “dialogic spaces” (Rule, 2004) for learning, relationship building and identity development. Rule proposes that adult education projects with emancipatory agendas (such as the HRDD project) can become dialogic spaces where critical and authentic inter-sectoral, interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues can occur. Rule’s experience of such dialogues in an adult education project was that it “profoundly shaped our sense of self, our relation with others, and our understanding of South African society” (2004, p.333).

A significant metaphor appearing in the project is that of the HRDD project as a *window*. The external evaluators commissioned by the Embassy suggested in their report that the project should aim to “build an integrated, sustainable and transferable model of local capacity governance and community development through the ‘window’ of adult literacy and numeracy training” (Ijas & Cartwright, 2002, p.22). The first project officer of Embassy of Finland similarly and boldly suggested, “Let’s slug a bag of money into it and let rip … Or would that perhaps create a *window of opportunity* to genuinely alter some of the strategies of resource management?” Both these examples refer to an action-reflection mode of learning of the project partners quite typical of action research (John, 2003; McNiff & Whitehead 2002). The HRDD project, in addition to providing ABET, IGPs and opportunities to strengthen human rights and democracy, was also an opportunity to try new approaches and attempt to build models. The sense that the project was of an experimental nature also emerged in the project partners’ narrative and likewise conveys a sense of situated learning about development projects through the practice of the HRDD project (Lave & Wenger, 1999).

The narrative shows a strong interest of the partner organisations of wanting a project which could make some impact in poor rural communities but which could

simultaneously provide them with several views (windows) from which they could observe and learn. The learning about development projects occurred in the many informal, ongoing discussions and debates. It also occurred through sessions specifically designed for such purposes such as workshops and indabas. One important aspect of learning revealed in the project partners' narrative, relates to their attempt to combine ABET with life skills and livelihoods. The important lesson here was that such blending is not a seamless process and requires much planning and support.

A major feature of the learning about educational - development projects relates to the action-research process underpinning the project. A striking feature of the HRDD project is the substantial amount of experimentation and experiential learning based on research. Research was a starting point for the project (consolidated baseline research) and regular, planned research and reflection became the modus operandi in project conceptualisation and implementation. The project narrative aptly shows this central role played by research. The baseline research shaped the initial design in significant ways. The ongoing research likewise played a major formative role, creating the basis for deep reflections and dialogue and influencing decisions about future implementation. In several instances, project change was in response to such research and reflection. An important feature of the research was its practical and formative focus. However, at times the research also attempted to present its findings in relation to the broader literature. For example, in 2005 Memela (2005b) problematised the changes in the project after *The emperor's new clothes* document in relation to literature on livelihoods projects, and in 2002 Harley and Dlamini (2002b), considered the recommendations of a large study on literacy and livelihoods by Oxenham et al. (2002) when discussing the challenges faced in the project regarding integration of literacy and income-generation activities. Just as the project was strongly framed by the prior experiences of Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy of Finland, regular reflection based on empirical and theoretical research served to shape the project and make contributions to debates and discourses outside of the project (Memela & Land, 2006).

It is significant that at times the learning about project implementation and management lay in tension with other stated objectives of the project. This is apparent in the response of the project officer of the Embassy to *The emperor's new clothes* document when she asks, "We all learn from it [HRDD project], but maybe that has eaten away from focus?" (Embassy of Finland, 2004a, p1). These responses point to the need for a delicate balance between action and reflection in the project cycle. It also points to the need for the balance to be negotiated amongst the partners in a project as each may have different priorities arising from their historical and institutional locations. To illustrate this latter point we need to recall the argument made by Tembaletu at the point of the "emperor's new clothes" changes. Tembaletu correctly argued that CAE's research role in the project remained viable irrespective of whether the project was successful or not. CAE would always have something to research and report on. Tembaletu on the other hand felt that the viability of their role was less certain and that they therefore needed to assume greater control and direction of the project.

The following view on the relationship between CAE and Tembaletu points to the tension in perceived roles. An interesting characterisation of the action-reflection dynamic as "heads and hands" work was offered during an interview with the Director of Tembaletu:

What I didn't like about the bi-monthly meetings was that to me there was a kind of disparity between CAE and Tembaletu and the roles we are playing. I characterized it as head and hands. You know? And, I said I often feel that, CAE is coming in here like the intellectuals, the head, and they can talk about low learner enrolment or non-attendance ... all of that. We have a meeting to discuss the problems and CAE's there to give us ideas about that, and then we must go and implement the kind of thing. I didn't feel too happy about it. I said we should be able to engage with CAE you know, on an equal footing, and I didn't see any reason why we couldn't do that (Richard Rangiah).

Such tensions were managed rather smoothly, in part because there was general agreement that Tembaletu carried the greater responsibility in the project and should assume a leadership role. Mutual trust and respect amongst the partner organisations, a form of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) within the project, also facilitated constructive resolution of tensions.

One area of project learning relates to project design. It is clear in the project partners' narrative that for a few years into implementation, educators were still struggling to integrate the foci of human rights, democracy, and development, with the core activities of ABET and IGPs. Despite considerable attempts at educator development and materials development, this challenge remained. This was possibly a consequence of the "add-on" nature of project conceptualisation and development. The human rights and democracy foci were added on to ABET. Later, the income-generation projects became a further 'add on'. This raises the question of whether a fundamentally new project rather than the merger of existing projects would have created different experiences, trajectories and outcomes. A persuasive review of projects involving literacy and skills training by Oxenham et al., (2002) has shown that in projects where the literacy and livelihood (such as IGPs) components were simultaneously conceptualised and implemented, such projects were most likely to be successful. The continuous struggle in the HRDD project with integrating the human rights and democracy foci with ABET, and with linking ABET lessons with the IGPs, highlights the need for greater and early coherence to be established between project components. This is an important lesson for the design of future projects.

A crucial area of learning which the project partners grappled with but for which a viable solution remained elusive, relates to the transfer of ownership, power and control to structures within communities. It is interesting to note that the community centres were for a long time referred to as *satellite* centres. This metaphor stems from the project's headquarters being in the city of Pietermaritzburg. Turning the satellites into autonomous, self-directed centres remains a goal of the project but one that is still far from being achieved. Two trials with Stoffelton and Muden failed. The lack of capacity in

CBOs and the huge structural challenges in rural communities creates a context which allows for the domination by NGOs and more established organisations like universities and donors in development projects. The dominance of the community by outsiders reinforces the power asymmetries and lack of capacity. This factor is a key issue requiring further investigation and the development of viable models. The inability to capacitate and empower CBOs to an extent where they can take the reins in development projects, poses a major challenge to people-centred and sustainable development in South Africa's areas of greatest need. There are no easy solutions given the systemic nature of the barriers and the fact that NGOs and CBOs on their own have little influence over the major barriers such as poverty, patriarchy and power struggles. These issues are discussed further in Chapter Nine.

### **Learning in a rich community of practice**

According to Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999) people learn through activity and regular engagement with others in a shared practice developed over time. Learning and knowledge is seen as being socially constructed within a context.

The narrative shows that the three partner organizations formed a rich and highly effective community of practice. A community for Lave and Wenger is defined by the existence of a shared practice. Wenger (1998, p.125-126) provides a list of fourteen indicators of a community of practice, which include:

... sustained mutual relationships - harmonious or conflictual, shared ways of engaging in doing things together, the rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation, knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise, mutually defining identities, the ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products, specific tools, representations, and other artifacts, a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.

This list provides a good description of the interactions, communication patterns and relationships amongst the project partners.

While the community of practice literature originated from a focus on more homogenous groupings such as workgroups in a unitary organization, the HRDD project allowed for an examination of a community of practice involving a more diverse grouping, comprising people from an NGO, a university and foreign donor organization. This ultimately meant that quite distinct and separate learning, identities and practices coexisted alongside the existence of *mutual engagement* (relationships, doing things together), *joint enterprise* (negotiated activities, mutual accountability) and a *shared repertoire* (systems, tools, discourse, styles), which provided coherence for this community of practice in the HRDD project (Wenger, 1998). Wenger acknowledges that people belong to several communities of practice simultaneously. In the case of the HRDD, each organization could be seen to be involved in a primary community of practice outside of the HRDD project, such as Tembaletu, the university and the Embassy, while shared visions about educated and active citizens, mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoires brought them together into a powerful community of practice whose focal practice could be described as “community education for development”.

The concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* is a central idea in Situated Learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Communities of Practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1999). The concept describes the issue of access to a community and the evolving relationships which newcomers experience with members of the practice. According to Lave and Wenger (1999), learning is the increasing participation in a *community of practice*. The process of learning begins with *legitimate peripheral participation* where a newcomer is allowed access to a practice but spends some time at the periphery of the practice and then gradually moves to the center of the practice and becomes a full participant. The HRDD project shows learning and trajectories of participation which both conform to the process of legitimate peripheral participation and deviate from it. With the constant turnover of staff in partner organisations, highlighted in the narrative, the community of practice served a

vital role in inducting and developing new project staff. Through the practices of this community of practice, its meetings, workshops, documents etcetera, new staff acquired the practice, values, vision and discourses of the project. This occurred through the process of legitimate peripheral participation with project partner staff gradually moving to the centre, taking on greater responsibility and participation. This trajectory is typical of the process presented as legitimate peripheral participation.

*The emperor's new clothes* moment however, illustrates a quite different trajectory. The director of Tembaletu had only been in the position for seven months, and was therefore a relative newcomer in the partners' community of practice which had been in existence for more than five years. This person was a legitimate participant in the community of practice by virtue of his position as director of Tembaletu but he did not take up a peripheral position. Instead, he moved rapidly to the centre, initiating some of the most fundamental changes in the project's history. This was possibly because of the legitimate, formal power allowed by his position in Tembaletu and the major role played by Tembaletu in the HRDD project. His expert power, the type of power featured in community of practice and legitimate peripheral participation, was of a secondary nature, serving to bolster his formal positional power.

Engestrom and Miettinen (1999) pointed to the weakness in the notion of learning in Communities of Practice theory as a one-way trajectory from the periphery to the center of the practice. They argue that such a trajectory does not valorise outward movement and movement in unexpected directions. They furthermore find the theory inadequate on instability and contradictions of practice and on issues such as challenge to authority, criticism, innovation and stimuli of change. It is noteworthy, that many of the aspects of practice in Engestrom and Miettinen critique, deal with the power dynamics of a community of practice. Trowler (2005) has also identified the inadequate attention to the power dynamics in communities as a weakness of Community of Practice theory. The "emperor's new clothes" example in the HRDD provides support for the arguments that learning and change in a community

of practice can occur in different ways and that power is an important factor mediating this process. The argument for a dialectical view of communities of practice discussed in Chapter Two, would better accommodate both the transforming and transmission capacities of communities of practice and acknowledge the existence and important role of power in such processes. Further examples of such varied trajectories in a community of practice are discussed in Chapter Seven.

### **On satellites, windows and doors ...**

The concept of a satellite has been a longstanding metaphor in the HRDD project. The term predates the HRDD project as it came into use to describe the organisational structure and relationship between Tembaletu's main office and operation in Pietermaritzburg and its various learning and resource centres in rural communities. The term continued to be used during the life of the HRDD project. However, it is noteworthy that at the height of the HRDD project, the largest part of Tembaletu's programmes and activities were occurring at the satellites and in this sense *satellite* represented more its distance from the centre of control rather than substance of activity. The notion of centre and periphery is not uncommon in the development discourse. In the colonial and globalisation discourses, the periphery is often associated with marginalisation, weakness and lack of power. The use of the term in the HRDD project was adopted to signal a set of geographical positions and relations but it could also be seen to represent the other less neutral connotations in the colonial and globalisation discourses. This type of figurative analysis is interesting and worthy of further exploration particularly given the challenges in the project regarding project governance. At this point, a brief discussion is offered on the metaphor of a satellite in relation to two other metaphors, one internal to the HRDD project itself and the other within the country context. The first metaphor is the reference to the HRDD project as a *window*. This metaphor has already been commented on in terms of its representation of viewpoints or perspectives of different types of action-reflection learning. As a window the HRDD project allows for different gazes on the learning of the various parties involved.

The second metaphor of a *door*, located in the country context, is taken from a statement of the Freedom Charter which called for “The doors of learning and culture to be open to all” (Congress of the People, 1955). The Freedom Charter was a seminal document developed in 1955 at a historic gathering of South Africans in Kliptown, Soweto, outside Johannesburg. It served as a beacon of hope for the liberation struggle in South Africa and inspired some of democratic South Africa’s early programmes such as the RDP (discussed in Chapter Four).

Taken together the metaphors of *windows* and *doors* could be seen to refer to vantage points and access points for people living in marginal rural communities of KwaZulu-Natal. The HRDD project is clearly a remarkable window allowing for a myriad of perspectives on important aspects of learning and development. However, the learners, educators and their communities want doors, in addition to windows. They want to be able to exit some spaces and to enter new ones. These were the aspirations signified by the Freedom Charter in 1955 and promised by the birth of a new South Africa in 1994. The goals of the HRDD project developed in 1998/9 resonate strongly with the vision of the Freedom Charter and the promise of a new South Africa in terms of facilitating access to education and fostering civic participation. The extent to which the project was both a *window* for perspective and insight as well as a *door* to change and development can only be determined later, once the experiences of learners and educators have been considered. Likewise, the extent to which one can build effective windows and doors in satellite locations some distance from the centre of resources and power is a moot consideration emerging from this study.

## Conclusion

The detailed narrative of the HRDD project presented in this chapter shows the project being subjected to multiple shapings. There are macro shapings in terms of it responding to global agendas of poverty reduction, women’s empowerment and human rights. Included in this macro shaping are concerns

expressed in the region and the country about illiteracy, poverty and governance. A further level of influence or institutional shaping, would describe the extent to which the three organisations with their converging and diverging interests and ideology shaped the project from its conception onwards throughout its life. At this level of shaping, we can observe emphases such as active citizenship, critical reflection and dialogue, governance, accountability and learning through action. The influence of the works of Paulo Freire and Jack Mezirow are part of the institutional-level shaping. A final form of shaping would be the micro shaping where particular individuals, such as educators, learners, and project partner staff, influenced the project actions and outcomes.

A key purpose of this chapter was to describe an educational intervention by focusing on who was involved, how it began and evolved, and what it did. This narrative from the perspectives of the three partner organisations, Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy of Finland, was constructed mainly from project documents authored by staff of the three organisations. The story thus presented the understandings and intentions of the three organisations who partnered to create the HRDD project. The story reveals their understandings of the context and its needs, their motivations and the ideological and pedagogical assumptions underpinning their actions. The relationships amongst the parties and the different activities were discussed as a joint enterprise and shared practice, allowing for learning which is profoundly social and contextual. The three partner organisations constituted a rich community of practice. The story thus far covers how these organisations made meaning of the phenomenon under study, the HRDD project. This is an important part of the story about the HRDD project.

The remaining chapters complement this narrative by honing in on the perspectives of the remaining protagonists, the learners and educators. The present chapter has set up a background for examining how the learners and educators experienced the HRDD project and how they made meaning of and within the HRDD project. In presenting the perspectives of the learners and educators, their experiences of the HRDD project are examined in relation to

their whole lives. Just as the HRDD project is a phase in the longer histories of Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy, for the learners and educators too, the project is a phase in their lives. Their early, pre-HRDD lives were likely to influence how they received and participated in the project, and their learning, identity formation and actions within the project were likely to influence their lives after the project. For these reasons, examining project experience in the context of a full life can be a useful, albeit neglected, way of understanding educational projects. The concept of critical remembrance is used in the next chapter to connect individual life histories with project experiences.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Learners' perspectives and critical remembrances**

We did not know that we had rights ... (Zinhle)

I thought they were just helping us to know how to read and write...

I didn't know that this can help to build a future. (Eliza)

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter provided a detailed project partners' narrative, as well as some reflections and analysis on the narrative. This chapter focuses on the narratives of seven learners in the HRDD project. The first section of the chapter provides a brief narrative profile of each learner regarding the learner's life and experiences in the HRDD project. Greater detail on the learners' lives and project experiences are provided in the second section which is organized around key themes emerging from all seven narratives. This latter section employs the concept of *critical remembrance* as a framework for a discussion of the key themes.

Whereas the project partners' narrative in the previous chapter was constructed largely from documentary analysis of the vast set of project records generated by the project partners over the life of the project and supplemented by interview data, this chapter is based solely on individual in-depth interviews with seven learners, one from each HRDD site. Learners were invited during interviews to tell the stories of their lives and experiences of the HRDD project. They were given the freedom to construct stories in terms of what they considered or remembered as significant. Just one of the seven interviewees was a male learner. The learner group is predominantly female at all the HRDD sites. The male learner interviewed was the only male in his learning group. Given the personal nature of some of the information

provided by learners, pseudonyms have been used and their learning sites and other personal details are not revealed.

The learners were purposively selected for interviews during literacy celebrations held in their communities at the end of 2005. Broader community profiles and general perceptions of progress across the learner group have already been provided in the previous chapter. By contrast, this chapter attempts to provide a non-generalized view of learners in the project by looking in-depth at seven individuals. In doing so, one gains a view of the project in relation to the fuller lives of learners. This is an important and somewhat neglected view of projects. The business of projects, its tools and discourses as well as the power of those who manage projects, often lead to a privileging of the project partners' narrative, which is usually better documented and remembered. In the project partners' narratives, learners (and educators) are typically authored as part of the project narrative. The dominant voices in such narratives are often those of project managers, partners and evaluators. This is clearly evident in the HRDD project partners' narrative constructed in Chapter Five. However, in this chapter and in Chapters Seven and Eight, the lives and voices of learners and educators are privileged and the project can be more correctly seen as merely a short phase in such lives. The narratives of learners and educators in these latter chapters both contrast with and complement the project partners' narrative of the previous chapter. In this way, the overall case study gains a layered, multi-voiced and multi-perspectival character. This chapter thus contributes significantly to aims two and three of this study, which are

2. To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning, identity and civic action.
3. To construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory.

The previous chapter began to explore the metaphors of windows and doors in the project. While the present chapter provides further windows for viewing

lives and learning in the project, it more importantly, provides the most emphatic description of the constraining structures of oppression from which learners seek exit doors. These include pervasive material and educational deprivation combined with oppressive relationships and traumatic experiences of violence. The chapter also indicates the kinds of spaces to which learners seek access, such as employment, further educational opportunities, community solidarity and better futures for their children.

## **Brief narrative profiles of learners**

### **Eliza's story**

Eliza is a married woman and mother of three children. Prior to joining the HRDD project, she earned a living by making mud building blocks for her neighbours, selling secondhand clothing and doing domestic work. Eliza's husband gets temporary jobs such as tiling in people's homes. He is unable to earn a regular income and because he has a drinking problem, his family sees little of the money he does earn. Eliza is thus the primary bread-winner and caregiver in her home and her family is dependent on her employment.

Eliza takes responsibility for not completing school as her parents were willing to support her and send her to school. She recalls that she was influenced by her friends to leave school and start work. She left school while she was in standard 6.

Eliza ascribes her motivation to attend ABET classes to the desire to get a better job. While working as a domestic worker, she remembered and retained her childhood dream of becoming a nurse. She believes that her participation in ABET and gaining an ABET level 3 certificate has changed her life as this led to her employment as a nurse assistant at a hospital. She stresses that she would not have been accepted into nursing without the certificate. The hospital has promised to assist her in furthering her studies, provided that she

obtains her matriculation. She is hoping that the HRDD project will assist her in writing her matriculation examination.

Eliza believes that some of her neighbours were jealous of her when she started working as a nurse assistant as they could not believe that a person of her background could succeed in life. She says that she is planning to study hard so that she can succeed and show those who looked down upon her that she can succeed in life. She hopes to save enough money to assist her children with tertiary education and to achieve their ambitions.

Eliza is proud of her achievements and speaks positively about the future.

### **Phumzile's story**

Phumzile reported that the reason she could not finish school was because she fell pregnant whilst still at school. Her mother was too disappointed to send her back to school. Later, her mother changed her mind and allowed her to return to school. However, political violence interrupted her studies and she quit her studies and went to a nearby city to find work.

Phumzile stated that there is political tension in her area. She spoke about how she was physically assaulted by the members of another party when returning from a meeting of her political party. At the time of the interview she was about to see a doctor to get a letter that she had to present to the local police station where she intended to lay a charge of assault. She is determined to seek justice as she indicated that an early attempt to open a case was stalled when documents went missing from the police station. She suspects that her attackers were able to influence the police and arrange for the assault docket to disappear.

One of Phumzile's leadership roles is that she is an agent for her political party during elections. She explained that she has to represent her political party in different meetings and in voting centers during elections.

Phumzile believes that the main reason the HRDD income generating projects (IGPs) failed is because they were not properly planned and that the members of the projects were not accountable to each other. She also claimed that most of the activities of the projects were taken over by the educators. In support of this view she noted that the learners did not know what was happening to their money and the project's equipment. She also reported that the learners of another HRDD site had told her that their educator gets angry whenever they try to ask her about their project's money. Phumzile is disillusioned with group projects and believes that working in groups is a waste of time and a recipe for disappointment. She prefers to now invest her time and energy in income generating activity which she has full control over and is buying and re-selling clothing to her community.

Phumzile revealed that she is a member of a government-supported co-operative. When asked about what made her choose to participate in the co-operative given her negative experience with the HRDD group project, she said that the co-operative was run differently. She pointed out that, unlike the HRDD Income Generating Projects, the members of the co-operative have to develop and agree on a business plan. Phumzile believes that a business plan can serve as a key tool for regulating project work, maintaining accountability and limiting conflict.

Phumzile also complained that some of the HRDD educators were not attending classes regularly. She spoke about one educator who would teach for only one hour instead of the prescribed two hours. She said that the learners were threatened whenever they tried to report that educator to the local co-coordinator.

### **Nothando's story**

Nothando spoke about her supportive mother who helped her during her early years in school. Her father had died while she was still young. After she had

moved to live with relatives, her schooling was affected because of the work that she had to do in her relatives' home and because of an incident of sexual abuse that she experienced in that home. She dropped out of school after the incident.

Nothando indicated that one of her achievements was to build her family a good home. Sadly, this home was destroyed during the political violence. She believes that political tensions in her community are delaying development. She believes that if politics could be put aside development could be realized.

Nothando has a son who lives with his father in a different city. She believes that her son's father has better resources to support him through school. Nothando is currently single and has no plans to get married. With regard to the HRDD project, Nothando believes that her site is marginalized. In support of this view, she reported that they had not received their stationery for 2006 although it was already February; she said they were not given any explanation for this.

Nothando reported that she had been playing leadership roles before she began participating in the HRDD project. As an example, she referred to a time when she was working in a furniture-making factory where the workers would not go on strike without seeking her opinion. She is currently a member of the development structure and peace committee in her community.

### **Dora's story**

Dora grew up in a home with both parents and seven siblings. She described her father as a strict man who sometimes came home in a drunken state. She said that her father suddenly removed her and her sister from school one day. He did so after seeing boys and girls playing together and thought that they would do the same. She was in standard six at the time and her sister was in standard five. After her father died, her mother supported the family by getting work as a domestic worker.

Dora says that she now discusses education with her children who are still going to school. She is active in different structures of the community such as the water committee. Before joining the HRDD project she had been playing a leadership role at her workplace. She believes that people elect her to represent them because they like her.

She feels that changes that have taken place in HRDD have divided the community. She referred to the fact that some HRDD classes like hers now fall under the Department of Education. This meant that they are no longer visited by people from other HRDD sites. She pointed out that such visits are important since they motivate the learners. She also mentioned that they are no longer involved in other HRDD activities. For example, although she asked the local coordinator to include her in the 2005 Literacy Celebration Programme, she was not given a chance to speak.

### **Zinhle's story**

Zinhle left school in grade two because her father said that he did not have money to educate her for someone else (a future husband). She said that their poverty meant that she did not have books, and as a result, teachers sent her out of the classroom during lessons. After her parents died, she looked after her siblings but could not support their education because she earned little money as a worker on a farm. Zinhle was married but divorced her husband because of physical abuse. She is very active in her church. Her three sisters have died in recent years and they have left all their children in her care.

Zinhle says that many people come to her for advice. She said that one of the reasons farm workers come to her is because she is a problem-solver. She is proud that she is a spiritual person and has skills in sewing and gardening. She stated that she helps others in her community to learn such skills.

Zinhle said that she is unhappy that the older learners are being excluded from HRDD classes in favour of new learners. She believes that they should be allowed to continue and she wants to continue with ABET classes. She felt that the HRDD project has the potential to improve the lives of the farm workers. Zinhle expressed dismay that the farmworkers were not taking advantage of the opportunity created by the HRDD project. She believes that there is a lack of community spirit. She also pointed to alcohol abuse and fighting as major problems in her community. She believes that parents in her farming community do not take enough interest in their childrens' education.

### **Khetiwe's story**

Khetiwe grew up in her uncle's home with his family on a farm. Since she had to work for about six months of every year as part of her payment for staying on the farmer's land, she could not go to school. She described her life as tough and said that she was not treated well in her uncle's home. She moved to her common-law husband's place where she is currently living. After some time, her husband took a second wife. Khetiwe mentioned that there was much fighting between her and the second wife. She says that her husband chased the second wife away after the second wife had "cheated". Soon after this, her husband decided to take another wife. She said that although she is not comfortable about the situation, she cannot do anything as she has nowhere to go. She fears that her uncle's family will not allow her back and take care of her.

Khetiwe completed standard one and despite her participation in the ABET classes she still struggles to sign her own signature. She said that she enjoyed attending classes and that it had improved her English. Currently the learners are no longer attending classes. She claims that most learners were let down by their teacher who was not coming to classes. She also feels that they were short changed with regard to their Income Generating Projects as they do not actively participate in the project which is located some distance away and no one informs them about what is happening in the project. In

Kethiwe's community, the IGP project operated at a central location and employed someone to do the work, a deviation from the practice in other communities.

Khetiwe spends most of her morning in the fields tending to the vegetables and then goes home at midday to attend to domestic chores.

### **Sipho's story**

Sipho's father passed away when he was young. His mother left him in the care of relatives in order that she could get remarried. Sipho states that he had no chance for education during his childhood as he had to take care of his uncle's livestock. While his uncle's children were sent to school, he was not. He recalls that he sometimes cried when he saw his uncle's children going to school. Sipho notes that by the time he left his uncle's place, he was too old to go to school, so he decided to work. He has worked in Johannesburg as a cook and as an assistant to a bricklayer. He has also run his own business selling small items such as chips and fruit. Sipho told us that sometimes he was forced to turn customers away if they offered him large notes. To disguise the fact that he was unable to calculate the correct change needed, he would lie to them and tell them that he did not have change. He states that although he had no schooling, he got married to someone who had passed standard ten. He met his wife in church.

After working in different places like Johannesburg, Sipho decided to go back to his home community. When he got back he was unemployed and struggled to make ends meet. Being without even a primary education, he decided to join HRDD ABET classes in 1999 as he wanted to get at least one certificate. Sipho says that he got more than he had bargained for when he managed to use his level 2 ABET certificate to get a job in a hospital kitchen. He says that when he was offered a job at the hospital he had to fill in many forms which he could not have completed without ABET.

As the only man who was attending ABET classes with women, Sipho recalls that it was not easy for him. He said that some of the local people accused him of being interested in other people's wives. He also struggled with terms such as 'examination' which were commonly used in the classes. He feels that his life has improved dramatically since he started participating in ABET. Sipho is planning to ensure that his children get the best education he can give them as he does not want them to struggle in the manner which he struggled without an education.

The above brief narrative profiles of learners serve as a backdrop for the discussion of key themes emerging from learner narratives, which follow. Before embarking on such a thematic analysis, the concept of critical remembrance is introduced and set up as a dual framework for organizing the remainder of the chapter and for theorizing narrative forms of research.

### **Learner narratives as critical remembrance**

The concept of critical remembrance is employed and promoted by critical educators (see McLaren & da Silva, 1993) as a way of addressing hegemonic discourses and systems which silence marginalised people, negate their experiences and subjugate their knowledge. Critical remembrance helps to counter the amnesia and voicelessness associated with oppression and alienation. Writing from a post-colonial perspective, Tejeda (2005, p.xv) refers to the value of critical remembrance for purposes of critique and for fostering hope when stating that we (the ex-colonised people):

... inhabit an *anterior-less present*, a space and time in which people have an arresting amnesia about a half millennia that has been taking place, in which indigenous and non-white peoples are reduced to ontological foreigners who are ideologically disconnected from the very space and time of their existence ... critical educators must construct a *critical remembrance* that serves to narrate and counter specific

histories of oppression and human suffering – a redemptive remembrance that serves as a form of critique and a referent for hope.

The dual goals of remembrance advanced by Tejeda of “remembrance as a form of critique” and “remembrance as a referent for hope” are also evident in the two reasons for ‘remembering’ offered by Rossiter and Clark (2007). In reflecting on their visit to Auschwitz, the Holocaust site, Rossiter and Clark (2007) state:

We must remember – to not lose sight of that ever present possibility of darkness so that we do not again, as a people, choose to act out of the basest of impulses. We must remember – to honor the millions of lives lost to such immense suffering. We must remember. And story is the vehicle of remembering. (p.3)

McLaren and da Silva (1993) discuss a number of concepts related to critical remembrance. These include the notion of *redemptive remembrance* which serves as a challenge to social amnesia and oppressive relations, Giroux’s notion of *liberating remembrance* to describe Freirean critical literacy, and the Foucauldian notion of *counter memory*. They argue that Freirean literacy involves critical remembering and state that critical remembrance is “something more than simply creating a mindful space for residues of the past to be activated”. Critical remembrance is an historically attuned ‘motive power’ blasting through the forgetfulness of all reification” (p. 74), allowing for a dialogue with the past. The literature on critical remembrance (Tejeda, 2005; McLaren & da Silva, 1993) thus deals with the concept in terms of its pedagogical and emancipatory merits. In this regard, critical remembrance is closely associated with the concepts of critical reflection and conscientization which lie at the heart of Freire’s (1970) critical pedagogy (see Chapter Two).

While endorsing such pedagogical value of critical remembrance, its use is extended in the context of this study, in particular in the data analysis processes of this study within a critical paradigm. It is the contention of this study that the storying of the lives and experiences of learners (and of the

educators in the following chapters) is fundamentally shaped by the motive power of critical remembrance. Following McLaren and da Silva (1993) who state that “making an experience into a story is perhaps the most fundamental act of human understanding” (p.73) the stories in this chapter are records of how learners understand their lives. In similar vein, Rossiter and Clark (2007) state that we “make sense of our experience, day by day and across the lifespan, by putting it into story form” (p.3). The contention of this study is that in telling their stories, learners were actively engaged in understanding their pasts differently. Many of the quotations presented below reveal a process of reinterpretation of experience and sometimes of discarding former understandings of oppressive experiences. It is in this sense that one can talk of learners engaging in a dialogue with the past. This is part of the rehistoricising process described by Dick (1999, p. 274) as one which “allows us to listen to the narratives of ‘ordinary people’, and so to challenge the dominant view of what counts as history”. It is possible then, that learners’ and educators’ narratives in this study could serve to mount challenges to both project history and South African history.

In the light of the literature on remembrance and related concepts just reviewed, critical remembrance has the potential for HRDD actors to engage in a dialogue with their past, to counter personal and social forgetfulness (amnesia), to critique the past, to identify remedial action and to signal referents for hope. For a researcher, critical remembrance can be an act of identifying societal narratives and constructing accounts which serve to counter social amnesia and challenge histories of oppression and injustice. In this study, learners’ narratives show them to be engaging in critical remembrance as a dialogue with the past and in some instances as a form of critique of the past. There is however, less evidence in learner narratives of critical remembrance as identification of remedial action or a call to action. In addition to the recorded learner critical remembrances, this chapter contains my analysis and theorizing of learners’ narratives which constitutes a further critical remembrance. The latter is the critical remembrance of a researcher within the critical paradigm, with an interest in surfacing critical accounts of experiences through in-depth interviews and in constructing accounts which

counter amnesiac discourses and histories, and which foreground oppressive patterns of relationships. This latter form of critical remembrance is based on a 'critical reading' and 'critical theorisation' of the narratives and the context in which they are embedded. Such a reading and theorization makes visible the structural oppression and systemic violence behind the narratives. This form of researcher critical remembrance allows for a foregrounding of the particularity of oppression enmeshed in the condition we call illiteracy. It gives effect to Freire's advice that:

We must not lose sight of the need to recognize multiple constructions of power and authority in a society riven by inequalities of power and exclusionary divisions of privilege (cited in Peckham, 2003, p.228)

The in-depth interviews conducted as part of this study presented a distinct opportunity for critical remembrance. This helps to explain the extent to which learners' narratives (discussed below) tended to focus heavily on multiple forms of painful oppression and struggle. When first working with the learner narratives, the depth and regularity of the oppression and struggle motifs in learners' narratives were striking and disturbing, particularly in how these combined narratives portrayed a larger story about the country, a South African narrative which signified its post-conflict status. This stimulated an interest in understanding why learners had chosen to story themselves in this fashion. One answer to this question which accounts for the regularity of the oppression and struggle motifs, illustrated below in this chapter and repeated in the next chapter on educator narratives, is the powerful underlying need of learners and educators to dialogue with their past and in some instances to critique their past. There is also the need that their story be told and not be forgotten in the new South Africa with its rainbow nation. Learners were taking the opportunity to author their lives, to name their world and to narrate their suffering as dialogue, as critique and as a referent for hope. The thematic analysis which follows will illustrate these processes.

Critical remembrance in this case study serves as a route to a heightened sensitivity to the historical and socially-situated nature of illiteracy and its

associated social markers such as poverty, patriarchy and oppression. A critical remembrance exposes and counters the forgetfulness about the ways in which illiteracy is enmeshed with multiple forms of oppression and marginalization while simultaneously revealing links between literacy, and empowerment and freedom. The promotion of critical remembrance is also an exhortation to place lived experiences as opposed to project goals and targets and externally-defined outcomes/standards at the centre of educational projects. Critical remembrance provides a lens for a more holistic viewing of learners' lives and, most importantly, for viewing educational projects as part of such lives. The long-term impact of ABET programmes can benefit from an understanding of the lives of the learners who participate and also of those who do not participate. In the HRDD project, it is clearly important to consider the lives of the learners targeted, not just in terms of their low educational status, but within a context of their historical and daily struggles, deprivations and marginalisation. Such a perspective can be achieved through critical remembrance. This perspective provides a view of the engendering of mass-scale illiteracy in South Africa and the conditions which have sustained illiteracy, and which currently serve as barriers to participation in ABET. These are conditions which need to be foregrounded in the undoing of illiteracy.

The next section presents the key themes which emerge from an analysis of the seven narratives of learners. These themes are discussed in two parts following Tejeda's (2005, p.xv) call for critical remembrance that serves "*to narrate and counter specific histories of oppression and human suffering*" and which serve as "*a referent for hope*". To reflect the richness of the interviews, to allow the learners to "*tell their stories*" and to reflect their critical remembrance, extensive quotations from the interviews are presented.

## **Critical remembrance: narrating histories of oppression and struggle**

### **Surviving tough childhoods**

The learners interviewed in this study show exceptional resilience and strength as survivors who have all overcome several social and educational barriers in their lives. One of the most common and striking features in the narratives of these learners is the extremely difficult childhoods that they have experienced. Their life stories are replete with incidents of hardships typically associated with growing up as a black child in rural, patriarchal, apartheid South Africa. The home contexts of all learners reflect: severe poverty; harsh child labour practices; physical, sexual and emotional abuse; fractured family systems; fathers who were mostly absent from the home; violence in the community, home and school leading to displacement, loss and trauma; and contexts where education, particularly for women, was not valued.

Most learners described their childhood and school-going years as a struggle, filled with many unhappy memories:

I had a problem because I was staying in somebody's house hence I did not finish my schooling through abuse. My schooling was going well, the problem is that my mother could not afford to pay for me to go to a boarding school which resulted in me leaving the school. I was not treated well at my aunt's in Umlazi . Her husband did not treat me well, he abused me... I was treated like an employee. I got up early in the morning, cleaned the house, ensured my uncles' clothes were prepared, bath the children. I went late to school. These chores resulted in me not having time to study. I came back in the afternoon and cooked when my aunt was not home. She would leave a note to say what I should cook. I cooked in the afternoon, bathed the children and took them to bed. You can see all that. I was abused, I don't want

to speak about all that. Her husband once wanted to rape me. I did not even want to tell my parent. I told her later. I went to sleep at my aunt's brother that night, they were next door to each other in the township.  
(Nothando, 2006)

I grew up in my mother's family. My uncles told me my father got sick and died while I was young. My mother got married to another man. That man did not want her to bring me with her. I was brought up by my uncle and grandmother, there were two uncles... I wanted to go and stay with my uncles from my father's side because my uncles from my mother's side wanted me to look after cattle. I didn't go to school until ... 12 years [of] looking after the cattle. Those are just estimates because I'm not sure of the exact ages. (Sipho, 2006)

The only learner who was able to describe her childhood in positive terms, attributed this to the presence of her father and the fact that he was working and supporting them.

We grew well because my father was working and supported us until I got married. I got married after I left school in standard 7. (Eliza, 2006)

For many learners, fathers were absent from the home and they relied solely on the support generated by their mothers and other caregivers. Poverty, exacerbated by the fracturing of families, presents a major barrier to participation in ABET. The project narrative in the previous chapter highlighted learner recruitment and retention as a major challenge in the HRDD project. The productive and reproductive roles of women, who form a majority in literacy classes, are likely to negatively affect participation rates unless given special attention through mobilization, recruitment and retention strategies.

## **Displacement, loss and trauma caused by violence**

A number of learners have survived violent experiences as children and adults in both home and community contexts. Political violence has meant that learners have been displaced (sometimes repeatedly). Many lost their meagre possessions through political violence. (Their additional exposure to violence in the school is covered in the section below on, "Adverse schooling environment". )

A learner spoke about the loss of her home which she had worked so hard to build:

I went to find a job. I worked for 14 years. Violence began after that. I lost everything I had through violence. I was only left with what I wore on that day. Times did not go well. My mother suffered from a heart attack, she eventually died ... Most of the things were destroyed when violence started. That resulted in my house not becoming a good house. (Nothando, 2006)

Another learner spoke about a nomadic existence caused by political violence and intimidation:

I didn't stay even a year in my new place when the political violence started. The people from Sobantu used to attack the people in Sweetwaters. [I] felt unsafe because I am from Sobantu. We decided to relocate to Emkhambathini at Ntembeni just underneath Maqongqo Mountain. My husband was busy working on a site when he was approached by four men. They asked him why we relocated. They said to him that he must not build any further because they will kick all the new residents out. They said we would be the first one to be kicked out. We had bought all the building material at the time. We left everything there and relocated to Howick. We bought the building material. I discovered that when a child did something wrong she or he was punished by the community along political party lines [lack of tolerance

for opposition party]. I then decided that was not a home for me. I also left and came [here]. (Dora, 2006)

Domestic violence is a common occurrence in the lives of learners:

I struggled a lot because their father abused me until I decided to leave him. The farmer advised me to find another place so that we can live separately because he [her partner] attacked me with a cane knife and did anything to me until I quit the relationship. Therefore, my three children did not get much education. (Zinhle, 2006)

Learners' experiences of violence are similar to those of educators discussed in Chapter Eight. Through more focused attention on the experiences of violence in Chapter Eight, the implications of such violence is conceptualized as fracture in community relations and theorized in terms of depleted social capital.

### **Alcohol abuse by fathers, partners and the broader community**

A lot of violence and abuse experienced by learners is associated with alcohol abuse of their fathers, partners and neighbours. In the case of Zinhle, she suffered physical abuse from her father. Later in life, her husband abused alcohol and also beat her and the children. She then had to also contend with her son who started drinking, turning to crime and was imprisoned. She says:

The father of my children was a drunkard, he had girlfriends and came back home and beat me so that he can sleep with other women. As I said, I sometimes slept in the bush. I got up at 3 in the morning to go to work. My boss used to first go out to the bush looking for me because he knew that I sleep in the bush. (Zinhle, 2006)

Another learner spoke about the physical abuse meted out by her drunken father:

He was drinking, he would beat us when drunk. He sometimes came home drunk and [would] crack jokes. We would laugh until we have sore stomachs. Sometimes he would come home drunk and ... ask you to leave home on that night. It happened as he said, you would sleep out of the house and come back in the morning. (Dora, 2006)

We can view learners' remembrances of familial relations, particularly the way they story their fathers in their lives, as statements about systems of patriarchy and gender inequality. It is quite likely that learners would not have had many opportunities to voice such critique of their fathers' roles as they were growing. Critical remembrance offers a way to engage in such critique and to understand such relations differently. In this way critical remembrance can also become a contestation of relationships of domination.

### **Education not valued in the home**

Most learners expressed regret about the termination of their own schooling and the cause of their low level of literacy attainment. Learners report that they enjoyed school but were often forced to drop out because of a combination of factors such as poverty, gender discrimination and the generally low value placed on education within the family. For the girl child, patriarchal values strongly influenced the amount of schooling which they were allowed. Many of the learners' remembrances presented below involve implicit critiques of the systems which led to them being denied an education. Zinhle however, offers very explicit critique of the values her father subscribed to:

My father was primitive; he believed that girls should not be sent to school ... I left school in second year, I didn't even finish it. I thought I would not continue because my father said he cannot spend his money educating me for someone else [reference to her joining a future husband's homestead]. I was attending at Mthizane and my school fee

was 5 cents. When I needed school fees my father said I should tell my teacher that nobody gives him money. (Zinhle, 2006)

School was good for me. I was passing. I used to get position one, two and three. I was disturbed by my friends when we influenced each other to leave school to go to work. We killed ourselves ...I got married after that... but I loved school. I used to dream of myself being in class. I didn't know how I can get back to class because we are in the rural areas. It was very difficult because women were not allowed to go to school once they were married. I thought my life had come to an end, then my only dream was to find a job. When the idea of school [literacy classes] came, I thought I should give myself a chance to learn, maybe I will benefit from attending the class. I never realised that this school can get to this stage [gaining employment as a nursing assistant]. I thought they were just helping us to know how to read and write. I didn't know that this can help to build a future. (Eliza, 2006)

We were staying at my granny's at Mpolweni. My father was drinking one day. When he was drunk he saw little girls of my age playing with the boys. He said his child would do the same and vowed to take us out of school...In the olden days, husbands were the only people who could give a final word, the wives could not argue. He came to school, I was with my younger sister, he took me out of class in standard 6 and my sister in standard 5. We went out of class and stayed at home until today. I'm now keen to attend adult classes because I like to have knowledge even though I'm old. (Dora, 2006)

Child labour in farming communities also disrupted education as in Khetiwe's case:

It was because I was a seasonal worker. I worked six months and spent six months at home, that would mean I would not be able to attend throughout the year. That is why I left. (Khetiwe, 2006)

Remembrance as a form of critique is evident in several of the above quotations regarding gender-specific terminations of education. Elize, however, also provides an example of remembrance as a referent for hope when she contrasts her lost opportunity to learn with the new opportunity presented by the HRDD project. She says, “I thought they were just helping us to know how to read and write. I didn’t know that this can help to build a future”.

### **Adverse schooling environment**

While learners recall some aspects of their schooling years as joyful experiences, a number of experiences were painful for learners. Control and authority in schools were achieved through corporal punishment, emotional abuse, and stigmatization of learners’ poverty and inability to purchase school requirements. Corporal punishment was widely accepted as a normal part of school life, and even in adulthood, learners showed no negative reaction to early beatings received in school.

Dora spoke about her favourite teacher:

Yes, for sure, there was a teacher who liked me who was teaching my younger sister. If my sister did not do her homework the teacher would call me and ask me why she did not do her homework. I would stumble and mutter and apologize on her behalf. He would say he would hit me. Sometimes he hit me. One day the teacher told me that he was doing that because he loved me. I thanked him because it was unusual to tell you that he loves you. I said that out of foolishness. (Dora, 2006)

In the quotation above, Dora’s final sentence reveals critical remembrance as a dialogue with the past but also a process which leads to new understanding. Dora recognizes the inappropriateness or “foolishness” in thanking someone who had unfairly punished her and displays an awareness of the sadistic and abusive nature of the teacher.

In Zinhle's case, her promising school career was cut short because of poverty and the way in which her poverty was stigmatized in her school and used as a basis of exclusion. Zinhle's critical remembrance shows evidence of her engaging in a dialogue with her past and offers a critique of the injustice in the way she was treated as a poor learner without resources:

During our time each person bought their own book. I was told to leave the class due to not having a book during the lessons. The teacher said I am disturbing other learners because I do not have books. All those things led me to take a decision to leave school so that I can work and fend for myself. Eventually my parents died and I looked after my siblings. I could not support their schooling because I earn little money here in the farm ... I was really disturbed until I decided to leave school. It was not my parents who said I should leave. I took the decision to leave because I realized I was not learning anything. The teachers were also cheeky in the olden days, when they saw me sitting outside the classroom they would ask me why I was outside during class. They would pass bad comments such as, "aaag, what school resources do you have, you don't have anything"... I was very disturbed during class time because even the other children were laughing at me when they saw me sitting outside during class. They were laughing at me because I did not have anything. I was like a fool because each and every lesson I was sent outside ... (Zinhle, 2006)

The extent to which poverty features in the narratives of learners is matched by similar accounts from educators in the following chapters. Poverty thus emerges as major feature of the context in the conceptual model presented in Chapter Nine.

## **Critical remembrance: a referent for hope**

This next part of critical remembrances shifts focus to more positive and hopeful aspects of learners' lives which they attribute in large measure to their participation in the HRDD project. These remembrances present learners as survivors of oppression and point to their assets, agency and their purposeful use of learning. This perspective has relevance for ABET interventions as it represents a different aspect of learners' lives, one which could serve as a referent for hope. Literacy interventions, irrespective of scale, are often plagued by large learner dropout. The project narrative presented in the previous chapter showed this to be a major challenge in the HRDD project as well. The stories of learner success, though limited, can serve as a source of motivation for learners, educators and programme designers.

## **Community involvement and leadership roles**

Some of the learners in the project are involved in a range of activities within their communities and also play advisory and leadership roles. Some learners hold formal positions in their church and in development-related committees, and some are serving as advisors and conflict resolvers in informal positions associated with their seniority and success as learners.

In discussing the local municipality's awareness of their needs in terms of electricity and water, Sipho responded:

Yes, they know that very well. We have been writing letters to that effect but nothing has ever happened. (Sipho, 2006)

Sipho also spoke of his advice to his fellow learners when a conflict arose within their income-generating project. His advice reflects insights about project management and democratic decision-making:

The decision was not well planned. They divided the money in the absence of the others. Those who were absent when the decision was taken demanded their money as well. That resulted in a big argument, the argument was heated. We also failed to assist because we were not present at the meeting where a decision to divide the money was taken. We did not know what their agreement was. I only advised them to record who is present and who is absent every working day so that if they distribute the money it must be according to the work they put in. That is what I advised them to do I don't know how they divided the money. (Sipho, 2006)

Phumzile spoke of several roles she plays in her community and of her leadership within her class:

Yes, I'm secretary at the church. I'm in the youth group, politically I'm ...campaigner and party agent.

The ladies I attend with always bring copies of *Learn with Echo* to class. I sometimes go in front of the class to lead a discussion using *Learn with Echo* when the teacher is late or absent. (Phumzile, 2006)

Dora, too, holds a number of positions in various development-related committees and is clearly an effective mediator in community conflicts. She spoke with a fair amount of detail about the careful steps that she had taken in two recent conflicts which she was able to help resolve,

Nothando also plays an advisory role in her community:

They call me Mamkhulu, people come and ask for advice because they know I attend meetings, they want to know what will happen, what are the job prospects, since I serve the community in my reserve.  
(Nothando, 2006)

Zinhle spoke of her skills in sewing and gardening and of the informal training that she provides:

Yes, it happens, people came for help as I was sewing. They asked ... me, "Teach us how you plant vegetables since you have such a nice garden". I told them if you enjoy something you get the best out of it. You must first devote yourself to whatever you do.

Not all of the leadership and civic activity reported by learners can be attributed to participation in the HRDD project. Several learners were already assuming such roles in their communities prior to the HRDD project.

### **Critical reflection and critical voices**

In many of the stories of learners there is evidence of critical reflection on their education and social contexts and their critical voices also emerge. These are important aspects of transformative and emancipatory learning as proposed in the learning theories of Mezirow (1975; 1991) and Freire (1970), discussed in Chapter Two.

It is noteworthy that this sense of learners' critical reflections and critical voices did not feature in the project documents used to construct the project partners' narrative in Chapter Five. In those documents, learners largely reported satisfaction with their educators and the project in general. It is likely that the individual interviews which generated the data analysed in this chapter created greater freedom for learners to declare more openly their views on the project and to engage in critique.

Phumzile's statement below indicates learners' critical voices and agency in the project. It also reveals aspects of the micro dynamics of power and control within local project settings. The retarding effect of political power struggles on development raised here by Phumzile, is echoed in other learners' narratives and also features in educator narratives in Chapter Eight. Power struggles

thus emerge as a major contextual factor in an emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project discussed in Chapter Nine.

When we complain, she [their teacher] didn't want us to complain when we asked if she can teach level 1 to 3 in one hour. She felt we backstabbed her when we told this to the coordinator, but we would first talk to her about these problems. She used to say we are causing her to fight with the coordinator because she [the coordinator] told her to keep to time. (Phumzile, 2006)

Nothando's comments on the income generation project reveal both reflection and her ability to critique the original project design:

Maybe Tembaletu made a mistake by saying that the teacher should not be involved in the work [reference to the IGP] we are doing, can you see that? For example, the teacher ends up not involving themselves, can you see that? (Nothando, 2006)

Nothando is likewise critical of the involvement of political leaders in development and of how conflict retards development. She raises a serious issue, repeated in educator narratives, regarding the politicization of development. This is an instance of the essence of critical remembrance as a form of critique. Nothando invokes a powerful image of the futility and rewardless nature of power struggles in her community through the metaphor of animals competing for a meatless bone:

The politicians ... Inkatha, ANC, NADECO, they stop whoever brings development in the area because everyone wants to bring development under the umbrella of their organizations. This is what disadvantages us .... There should be no fighting over a "meatless bone" through politics, because it takes us back. (Nothando, 2006)

Phumzile is also critical of how political differences affect development and forge division. She argues for solidarity in her community and for identities which transcend political affiliation:

The community must unite and leave politics aside because it is not always needed because the community involves everyone, whether you stay in a particular area, where[ever] you work, but you are needed by the community. The community needs individuals not politics.

(Phumzile, 2006)

### **Empowerment and accessing rights**

As indicated in the quotations above, some learners are demonstrating levels of empowerment which they attribute to their involvement in the project. A number of them refer to moments, usually of crisis, when they have been able to access their rights as workers and citizens. As role models and advisors, they have also made others in their community aware of their rights and have helped others to access such rights. In such examples, critical remembrance involves critique, new understandings and propels action.

The following extracts from Zinhle's story exemplify the attainment of a number of goals of the HRDD project. Zinhle shows evidence of a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), construction of new knowledge, and a level of empowerment which has freed her to take action. She has been able to access her rights as a farmworker and as a woman in an abusive relationship. Zinhle offers the clearest example of transformative learning leading to action (Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2007). In a patriarchal society where women have low status and find it difficult to access their rights, Zinhle's story offers much hope:

The farmer does not want us to have similar knowledge to him. He wants to be above you. I have mentioned that the school [literacy classes] has helped us in knowing that they have hidden information

from us, which we did not know. We did not know that we have rights to do certain things. When I asked for ...time to go somewhere else, even though I have worked here for over 30 years, then that would count as unpaid leave... I did not know that it is important for the employer to relieve me to do my personal things. All I knew is that if the employer says, "no", then that means no, I don't have any rights. But because I know, I tell them it is my right to do what ever I want to do and they don't argue. I did not know anything about education. I was ignorant... There are things that they [farmers] hid away from us which we did not know. (Zinhle, 2006)

Zinhle sought help from the court regarding abuse in her marriage and about support for her children. Through learning and reflection, she indicates that she is now also gaining new insights into her rights as a woman:

My teacher told me that I have rights as a woman, I should not succumb to abuse from a man. I have rights that I can do something so that he can face the law. It doesn't mean that a man is the only person that can tell you to stay out of the house. We, from the olden days, thought that we did not have the right to oppose whatever the husband says. We thought we did not have the right to say anything. But I learned from the classes that I have a lot of rights which I did not know. I now know when I was abused. I know there are places where I can get help, I used to keep whatever problem I had to myself, which I did not know how to deal with.

Through a process of critical reflection, Zinhle has been able to name her oppression. She offers a truly powerful pronouncement and affirmation of her learning when she says, "I now know when I was abused". This is a stunning declaration of Zinhle's conscientization (Freire, 1970), of her awareness that the treatment from her former husband was oppressive and unjust, and most importantly, that her status as wife and woman did not justify such treatment.

In addition to critical reflection and conscientization, Zinhle identifies a further crucial element of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1975) and emancipatory learning (Freire), which is dialogue. She says, “I used to keep whatever problem I had to myself, which I did not know how to deal with.” The important role of dialogue in the learning theories of Mezirow and Freire was discussed in Chapter Two. Here, Zinhle is demonstrating how important dialogue was for the development of knowledge of rights and oppression and for considering corrective action, that is, for learning “how to deal with” her oppression. The importance of critical reflection and dialogue in learning in the HRDD project is discussed further in the following chapters when considering the learning of educators. Such is the importance of reflection and dialogue that they feature as two of the pedagogical devices in the emergent conceptual model discussed in Chapter Nine.

Zinhle’s regretful sense of her past behaviour of keeping problems to herself is a comment on the prevalence of a “culture of silence” (Freire, 1970, p.12) which permeates and buttresses gender oppression. In discussing a culture of silence, Freire indicated that it bred an “absence of doubt” (1970, p.18) which created a form of cognitive imprisonment amongst oppressed people which prevented them from recognizing the possibilities for transformation and liberation. Awareness and dialogue in Zinhle’s case appears to have allowed her to break the culture of silence in which she was trapped and to seek possibilities for transformation and liberation.

In the next quotation Zinhle is explicit about how her reflection generates new understanding of the hardship in her previous marriage and of herself as an abused woman. There is also the sense of her new identity as an educated person who is better than her uneducated former husband.

There are times when I reflect back, I think I was living a barbaric life. It is hard to build an uneducated person [her former husband] because he does not know anything. A man knows that when they come back from drinking alcohol they must eat, [but] he does not know where it

[the food] comes from. Because the money they earn is spent on alcohol. (Zinhle, 2006)

Zinhle offers an account of learning, identity development, personal change and social action which best illustrates what has been discussed in Chapter Two as transformative learning (Mezirow, 1975; Mezirow, 1991) and emancipatory education (Freire, 1970).

### **Positive attitude to adult education**

Phumzile explains the barriers to participation in adult education in her community and how learners can help to change such attitudinal barriers. Her comments indicate a high level of agency in terms of overcoming attitudinal barriers which are known to affect adult education. She offers a critical remembrance which involves both critique and an alternative vision:

... it's because most of the time the people in the township where we live tell themselves that there is no need to learn at their age; how will it help them? They have that belief ... The problem is that nobody has appraised the community on how adult education is done. Nobody had done that, even to explain to the people why do adult learners learn and for what purpose. There are very few people who can answer these questions ... but the learners must be the ones to tell the community on what happens. (Phumzile, 2006)

Sipho, who was the only man in his class and had dealt with considerable negativity about his participation, spoke positively about what he has achieved through participating in ABET classes and about his ambitions to continue learning:

I have registered to learn ABET at the hospital because they also have classes. I was very determined because [the HRDD project] helped me from the elementary stages. That helped me to have knowledge about

education. ...I am continuing with learning, I have not given up ... yaah, I want that 4 QF [reference to a level 4 qualification on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)]. I don't know if I will get there but I am hopeful that I will get there. That's how my story goes. (Sipho, 2006)

The following comments by Zinhle refer to the importance of adult education in terms of the opportunity it creates for reflection on life, for building social relations and for the nurturing of support networks:

Education can benefit us greatly because if you explain to the bosses they understand what you say .... We sometimes have opportunities to stop learning and talk about life and provide advice to one another. Attending school [literacy classes] helps you to get help with other things. (Zinhle, 2006)

### **Hope and aspirations**

Many of the learners in this sample have been able to improve their livelihoods (see brief profiles earlier) which have led to a new stage of hope and ambitions. They not only express goals for themselves (as Sipho indicates in the section above) but are also seeking a better education and life for their children. For a number of learners their remembrances of their own difficult childhoods serve as a referent for hope and what they wish to avoid in raising their children:

I have plans for my children. I don't want my children to experience what I went through. I went through a lot of hardships as their mother. I never had happiness since I got married. I have never been comfortable. All that I have comes from my own sweat. I don't want my children to be the same as me. They must like school and not be like me. I left school while my father was still alive supporting my education. I like them to fulfill their dreams. They tell me what they want to qualify

in. I wish I can save money so that I can support them beyond high school to the level at which they want to reach. (Eliza, 2006)

Zinhle pointed to the need for parental involvement in the education of children. Earlier in the interview, she had lamented the fact that only two children from her farm community had reached grade 12:

Parents are careless because a child cannot go to school on their own if the parent does not support or care about their education. The parent must take a lesson from life and educate their children. I can say the parents on the farm are not educated, they accept just that ... The problem is with parents, children will attend school if a parent is serious about it. (Zinhle, 2006)

Phumzile is proud of her daughter who is in grade 12 and is doing well at school. As a single mother, Phumzile has taken the decision not to get into a new relationship for fear that it may impact negatively on her daughter:

It [marriage] is not something I am wishing for that much because it will hamper my future. I also don't like to get married because I have a girl [child]. I don't have a mother or father - who will she stay with when I get married? That is one of the reasons why I don't want to get married. I need to think for myself and my daughter. That husband might tell me that he does not want the child. I would be caught in between if that happens ... (Phumzile, 2006)

The literature on Social Capital theory discussed in Chapter Two indicated that parental aspirations and involvement in the education of a child was a powerful positive influence on the child's educational attainment. In this regard, such social capital in the family was seen as the key determinant for bolstering students' aspirations and serving as a conduit for their parents' values, norms, knowledge and expectations to be transmitted. Khattab (2002) argues that low socio-economic status and minority status do not automatically lead to low educational aspirations as the family's social capital

and perception of education as an escape route from poverty and marginalisation strongly influences aspirations.

### Perspectives on development

Most learners see development in their community in terms of government-provided services and infrastructure. They report some progress in this regard but want to see more happening. The notions of people-centred development and development as freedom (Sen, 1999), which underpinned the project partners' vision and design of the HRDD project, are largely absent in these learner narratives. Learners are, however, aware of state-led development opportunities and are actively involved in a number of such development-related committees and projects:

There is limited development. As you know that people like to criticize that they are not getting anything. We now have electricity. We have free electricity, I mean street lights. We have electricity in our homes which we pay for, we have water and street lights. We now want water because most people can't afford to buy water ... We pay for water but if there can be at least 2 community taps for those who can't afford to buy water. Because people walk a long way to draw water. Sometimes you find that there is no water because of excessive heat or drought.

(Eliza, 2006)

I would like to see [my community] blooming, for example, there would be a nice school like other schools, clinic, a hall, the sports ground, and so on. (Notando, 2006)

There is nothing because we don't have most of the things ... We don't have things like electricity which they have in other places. There is no electricity here. There is no water. (Khetiwe, 2006)

I would like to see us having water at home ...We want to see electricity - for us to use light like those people who live in urban areas so that we can buy fridges and sell ... We want to run businesses but we don't have electricity. (Sipho, 2006)

Last year in August there was development. We had no roads, the roads were gravel most of the time. But the change of Municipality changed things. The two roomed houses were built, they have started putting slabs. There are pavings, sidewalks, these have just been done. There is another project, houses are being painted, houses are being roofed, they took corrugated iron out and used asbestos, changed toilets. (Phumzile, 2006)

In contrast to other learners, Zinhle's view on development focused more on the need to build relationships amongst people in her community. In critiquing the state of division or fracture in her community, she also identified the need for new identities of independence and solidarity. Her remembrance serves as a basis for both critique and hope:

I wish to see us prospering like everybody else. We must not be needy, live comfortably where we would be able to plant and grow vegetables. I want to live in a community where you can get help from the neighbours in case of need; a community that builds each other. There is no building of each other as it is now. You cannot help a person even if you see that things are not going okay because people view things in another way, which can lead to conflict. (Zinhle, 2006)

Zinhle's vision of a community in which members help each other and build each finds support in some of the key tenets of Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) discussed in Chapter Two. What Zinhle is seeking, is what Bourdieu (1986) describes as, "resources which are linked to ... membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital." Her identification of the current absence of such capital and of the fear of offering help to people

who are in need because of the potential of conflict is a serious barrier to education and development work in the post-conflict context of KwaZulu-Natal. This emerges as a central finding in this study and is theorised in Chapter Eight using the concepts of *community fracture* and *depleted social capital*.

## **What can we learn from learner's critical remembrances?**

In the light of the heightened attention which illiteracy is currently receiving both internationally and within South Africa (see Chapter Four) it would be prudent to consider what lessons could be derived from the experiences of this group of learners in a small-scale literacy-livelihoods project.

As set out in Chapter Five, the HRDD learners have been participating in a literacy intervention which is quite different to other government-initiated or private sector-run ABET programmes in scale, approach, ideology and timeframes. The relevance of findings from a small-scale, purposively sampled qualitative study for other programmes raises the question of external validity or what is commonly referred to as generalisability. While no claims to generalisability can be made from such a study, an argument can be mounted that the life experiences and conditions remembered and revealed in this small-scale study resonate strongly with those emerging from other large-scale studies. In a study investigating HIV and AIDS as a barrier to learning, John and Rule (2006) found a similar picture emerging from one area in KZN, where poverty, violence, fractured families, and substance abuse stood out as key themes when investigating barriers to learning in that context. A comprehensive study of education in rural South Africa, (Human Sciences Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005) has also documented similar conditions of chronic deprivation and exclusion. This latter study identified as its singular finding:

that the great majority of children in rural poor communities are receiving less than is their right in a democratic South Africa ...

Moreover, the communities in which they live will continue to suffer the debilitating effects of poverty and inequality for as long as these problems remain (Human Sciences Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005, p.viii-ix).

This statement applies equally to adults who are also receiving less than their constitutional right (Rule, 2006). The HRDD project and these other studies have marked out the contours of a hostile learning environment in terms of the historical and socio-political context for learning in KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of this chapter is not to make claims of generalizable trends, but to highlight the need to consider the fuller lives of learners when addressing that aspect of their lives identified as illiteracy. A perspective generated through critical remembrance points to several potential barriers to participation in ABET. In this regard, the experiences and perspectives of learners in the HRDD project could be instructive for other projects and programmes, including those of government such as the Masifundisane literacy campaign in KwaZulu-Natal and the Kha Ri Gude national literacy campaign. This point was recently made by Nelson Mandela (2005, p.vii) when he called for the acknowledgement of "the voices of members of rural communities across South Africa" in order that "policies undertaken to improve the quality of rural education are informed by the powerful insights of the people in those communities".

At a practical level, the themes in learner narratives point to a number of social issues which could receive attention in recruitment strategies, facilitator training, lesson planning and materials development. These include attitudes to adult education, context-determined parenting modes, child labour practices, alcohol abuse and most notably, violence in the home and community. All of these issues can receive attention through consciousness raising and dialogue in literacy interventions which are constructed within ideological models that centre on human rights, social justice and community development. To do so would be to craft programmes and curricula which

connect to, rather than unhinge from learners' lives. It is noteworthy that all of these key challenges facing learners are strongly gendered. The multiple ways in which girl children and women are discriminated against and oppressed are in need of urgent attention in all educational interventions. In a context of high unemployment, most severe in rural KwaZulu-Natal, ABET programmes cannot be premised as preparation for entry into the formal economy or as preparation for widespread entrepreneurship. In the absence of such aspirations programmes must serve aspirations of other freedoms for learners.

The experiences discussed in this chapter provide reminders of the layered oppression and marginalization faced by adult learners in largely rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. Such a milieu must be expected to be a well-spring of barriers to participation. Ongoing research with learners in the HRDD project, discussed in Chapter Five, identified a long list of factors which were negatively affecting their participation: the need to earn an income, the search for temporary jobs or seasonal work, hawking, irregular work hours on farms, pregnancy and childcare, household chores, old age, ill health, hearing or visual problems, distance and transport difficulties, lack of interest in learning, or losing interest in learning, discomfort of attending class in someone's home, men's reluctance to attend classes with women, classes not seen as important, classes clashing with drinking time, people leaving the area, facilitator absence (because of death, dismissal, or some other reason), irregular attendance of facilitator.

The large number and wide range of reasons affecting participation reveal the serious challenges generally faced in adult education and some which are peculiar to education in resource-constrained rural areas. The many factors identified by learners are discussed in the literature as physical, psychological and social barriers to participation (Lind, 2008; Rogers, 2006). Amongst these, HRDD learners report significant psychological and social barriers stemming from the gendered nature of work and study, an aspect given particular attention by Rogers (2006). Entrenched systems of patriarchy and extremely demanding livelihood demands underpin many of the barriers faced by women

in rural KwaZulu-Natal. These barriers are discussed in forthcoming chapters. In addition, patriarchy surfaces as a major contextual factor in the emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project discussed in Chapter Nine.

As evident in learner narratives, the economic, social and educational deprivation experienced by learners in their early years was followed by similar and often worsened conditions in adulthood. They have spent the better part of their lives in constant struggle and survival mode. In the current context of addressing illiteracy via large scale campaigns it is from contexts similar to those of the learners involved in the HRDD project that learners will be invited to become participants in campaigns. Their responses to such invitations, motivations and actions (or inaction) must lead to a situated understanding. Literacy campaigns delinked from the struggles people face are unlikely to attract many learners and unlikely to sustain their engagement. People will need to be convinced that learning can lead to improvements in their lives. Bhola (cited by Lind & Johnston 1990, p. 87) makes the important observation:

It is not enough merely to teach skills linked to general economic development if the poorer classes remain as exploited and disadvantaged as before. A literacy campaign must be seen as a necessary part of a national strategy for overcoming poverty and injustice.

Experiences of political violence and power struggles in KwaZulu-Natal appear to hold a historical and contemporary significance in learners' lives. Following massive and enduring deprivations and dislocations caused by colonial and apartheid rule, the period of political violence in the 1980s and 1990s has compounded and extended the material, social and psychological vulnerabilities of people in KwaZulu-Natal. The narratives of learners in the HRDD project are strongly marked by political violence. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter Eight when political violence again emerges as a strong theme in educators' narratives.

Iris Young (1990) has developed a plural categorization of oppression which captures both material and cultural forms. She identifies five faces of oppression, namely, marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, violence, and cultural imperialism. The lives of learners in the HRDD project show ample evidence of all of Young's faces of oppression. In Freirean (1970) terms these learners' early experiences as children and young adults can be understood in terms of alienation, oppression and dehumanization, processes which all contribute to social exclusion and which strongly determine aspirations and abilities to participate in education. These are the conditions which ABET programmes inherit and which may manifest as obstacles to mobilization and sustained participation. While ABET programmes on their own cannot solve these problems they can become a space for dialogue about such problems and for imagining new lives. Notably, with the select group of learners discussed earlier, their experiences seem not to have led to fatalism where they accept their exclusion and inability to change their life circumstances. This is unlikely to be the case for most people facing such harsh experiences. Critical remembrance provides a route to understanding the experiences and motivations of learners. Learners' present attitudes and their approaches to education, development and civic engagement, are all framed by their early experiences in the home, community and school contexts. In this sense backgrounds become foregrounds (see John & Rule, 2006), shaping what happens in the educational interventions we call literacy projects and campaigns.

HRDD learners reveal, with deep pathos, how the condition of illiteracy in South Africa is part of lives involving major and repeated trauma. The conditions giving rise to and supporting illiteracy were not just benign neglect by an unjust state. They were part of a pervasively cruel system in which fathers and husbands became implicated in brutalizing practices which disrupted normal educational trajectories. Tapping into the narratives of learners through critical remembrance reveals how literacy interventions fit into or relate to the lives of the learners. Against contexts of severe oppression, dislocation and exclusion, literacy interventions and post-literacy initiatives could contribute to civic action, social learning, solidarity and hope.

For the small, select group of learners in whose lives the HRDD project has had a positive impact and has led to changes in their identities and lives, the project has brought a glimmer of hope, and to some small extent has served as a catalyst for a level of empowerment and achievement after many years of oppression and struggle.

Although modest, the messages of hope communicated through the narratives of learners presented earlier are important and could also serve as motivation for other learners. They reveal what is possible in terms of development and transformation. Literacy interventions can be important levers for change. However, the huge challenges faced by learners suggest that change requires considerable time and sustained effort. The short time frames of some programmes and campaign agendas by contrast are unlikely to allow for such sustained engagement with learners. Post-literacy interventions are vital and would likewise have to be sensitive to the lived experiences in order that literacy gains are sustained and remain relevant to people (Bhola, 1997). It must be highlighted though that such interventions would be hopelessly inadequate on their own. There is an urgent need for such work to be supported by macro-economic planning and through the transformation of institutions which buttress oppression.

A different lesson and remembrance which this chapter signals, relates to the notion of project genesis. A section of the project narrative in the previous chapter discussed project genesis from the perspective of the project partners. Within that discussion the interests and prior organizational histories of the partner organizations were presented as shaping what was called project genesis. The narratives of learners in this chapter tends to trouble such a notion of project genesis. It is abundantly evident that learners have for a long time, decades before the official HRDD launch date, been engaged in action and reflection during many struggles which are primarily about human rights, democracy and development (hrdd). In this sense, their “lived hrdd project” has a much earlier and distinctly gendered project genesis! Adopting a gender lens to the meaning of human rights and democracy, the South African Women’s Charter makes the important point:

Conventionally, democracy and human rights have been defined and interpreted in terms of men's experiences ... If democracy and human rights are to be meaningful for woman, they must address our historical subordination and oppression (Seidman, 1999, p.287).

It is also significant that the project partners' narrative which was constructed from project documents, did not highlight the experiences of oppression and struggle. The motifs in Chapter Five were about project design, learning and project management. We could see these as a focus on project goals, maintenance and project survival. The motifs in this chapter are about individual struggles and survival, and about learners' hopes. These are complementary perspectives and when added to the narratives of educators in the next chapters, provide a more holistic understanding of the HRDD project and its participants. Such is the value of case study methodology.

## **Conclusion**

Viewing illiteracy and attempts to address illiteracy through critical remembrances foregrounds histories of oppression and struggle. The stories of illiterate people are stories of historical and contemporary exclusion, with strong gender undertones. It is clear that against the context of their lives, learners need to and want to break some of the social patterns which have beset them, and they want to chart new trajectories for their children. These learners want to open new doors. Such change once initiated and supported is crucial for sustained transformation of South African society. The benefits which adult literacy could bring for the education and well-being of children in the care of adult learners, a family literacy model, could be harnessed as a strategy to recruit learners. Mamphela Ramphele (2002, p.162) has pointed to the importance of this work when she writes:

South Africa cannot afford to let young people steer by the stars. They need to be provided with reliable compasses to enable them to develop self-confidence and face the future with hope ... The full extent of the impact of apartheid on society needs to be accepted. Families are in crisis. Schools are in crisis. Communities are in crisis. The triumphalism of the immediate post-apartheid period has led to a delay in appropriate interventions.

Literacy interventions in KwaZulu-Natal should be forged with such a sense of crisis in mind as part of a critical remembrance of where we have come from, and the struggles which ensue. They must embrace this crisis as focal points of resistance, as sources of inspiration and as pedagogical resource material. It must also signal a bold post-crisis vision.

In-depth qualitative research of the form that could be achieved through critical remembrance could be valuable in highlighting learners' histories and social milieu, as well as, their resistances and aspirations regarding education.

The next two chapters focus on the lives and experiences of educators in the HRDD project. These chapters discuss educators' critical remembrances and theorises their learning, identity development and project-related relationships.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Educators' perspectives on life, learning and identity development**

In 2001 when I started, it was dark, since I did not know anything ...about working with the community. (Khosi)

#### **Introduction**

This is the first of two chapters dealing with educators' perspectives on their lives and experiences in the HRDD project. The present chapter focuses on the dimensions of learning and identity development amongst educators. The next chapter focuses on educators' perspectives on various relationships and how they have negotiated the relational spaces of the project. The present chapter follows a similar structure to the previous chapter on HRDD learners and has two sections. The first section, entitled "Brief narrative profiles of educators", presents a summary of the story provided by each educator participating in this study, with regard to their lives and experiences in the HRDD project. Greater detail on the educators' experiences in the HRDD project follows in the second section which identifies the main themes emerging from educators' narratives and then discusses some of these themes within a broader, integrated discussion of learning and identity development.

The two chapters on educators' perspectives are based on individual in-depth interviews with seven educators. The purposively drawn sample of educators included four women and three men, representing an educator from each of the seven HRDD sites. During two separate interviews with each educator, educators were invited to tell the stories of their lives and experiences of the HRDD project, respectively. They were given the freedom to construct stories in terms of what they considered or remembered as significant. Given the

personal nature of the information provided by educators, pseudonyms have been used and their learning sites and other personal details are not revealed.

In the eight years of the HRDD project which yielded several rounds of evaluation and hundreds of documents, the life stories and project experiences of educators had become somewhat eclipsed by what could be deemed to be ‘project stories’ presented from the perspective of the project partners. This gaze of the project was provided in Chapter Five. The present chapter provides an understanding of the HRDD project in relation to educators’ lives and life contexts. In so doing, this chapter allows for the voice of these key actors in the project to be surfaced and for their experiences to be featured within an holistic understanding of the project. The narratives of educators provide a means for understanding their motivations to join the project, their learning and identity development within the project, and their many challenges, hopes and fears in relation to historical and contextual forces. This chapter contributes significantly to aims two and three of this study, which are,

2. To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning, identity and civic action.
3. To construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory.

As with previous chapters, this chapter uses a combination of a narrative and a more analytical genre in presentation style.

## **Recurring critical remembrances**

The narrative accounts of educators show a striking resemblance to the critical remembrances of learners discussed in the previous chapter. The

dominance of the oppression and struggle motifs in learners' narratives discussed in the previous chapter are repeated in the narratives of the HRDD educators. Again, this chapter bears witness to a powerful underlying need of HRDD actors that their story be told and remembered. Educators too, were storying their lives in a manner that is fundamentally shaped by the motive power of critical remembrance, both as a form of critique and as a referent for hope.

The previous chapters have explored the metaphors of windows and doors in the project. The present chapter provides further windows for viewing lives and learning in the project. It once more provides a vivid description of the structures of oppression from which educators seek exit doors. As with the learners, these include pervasive material and educational deprivation combined with gender-based oppression and traumatic experiences of violence.

## Brief narrative profiles of educators

### Malindi's story

Malindi is a single, 37 year old woman who lives with friends in a rural community. She and six siblings were raised by both her parents. Both parents were illiterate but had briefly attended adult literacy classes. Her father worked as a gardener and earned very little money. She enjoyed a very positive relationship with her parents. Speaking about her father she says:

My father was friendly. He didn't act like those fathers who are just lions in their families. When my mother was working as a domestic worker for another white lady, she used to come home late. My father taught me to cook. When he was on leave we found him cooking for supper when we returned from school. He was our friend. He even taught us to wash our clothes.

Malindi's father died while she was in standard ten and her mother, who took up hawking to support the family, died shortly after that. As the eldest girl child, Malindi assumed most of the responsibility for raising her siblings. She is still the chief breadwinner in the family as most of her siblings have been unable to find employment. One of her elder brothers disappeared many years ago and the other has severe learning disabilities. Even though she does not earn a good income from her HRDD work, Malindi manages to support her siblings and believes that her faith in God is her strength.

Although she enjoyed learning and passed examinations easily, Malindi has painful memories of school, saying:

I wasn't happy at all. I wish I was accepted for who I was. I had no uniform, no books, no shoes, you see? ... Teachers had a very bad tendency of looking down upon us just because we were poor. Maybe we were not lucky to have good teachers. If you did not have uniform you would be made to stand in front.

Malindi's family was twice displaced by political violence, which disrupted her education. She completed matric (grade 12) but did not get a good quality pass which prevented her from securing bursaries for tertiary education. She had a deep desire to become a teacher and made several attempts to get access at three institutions, all without success. She recalls that as a little girl she would play teacher with her uncle who would pretend that he was illiterate. After failing to get into teacher training, Malindi then tried for two years to find a job but was unable to get even a temporary position. She heard about the HRDD positions from an adult educator in her community and decided to apply for a position.

She describes her role in the HRRD project as:

need to put myself in their [learners] shoes and be part of them.  
Working and understanding older people was the skill I wanted to

broaden. Be with them, be like them, do as they do. Make blocks with them and go with them to the classes.

Malindi feels that the HRDD project is making a positive difference in the lives of her learners. Their income generation project generates money for learners and keeps learners motivated. Malindi participates actively in her learners' block-making project and also plays the role of counsellor, assisting them with their problems. She is also an advocate for ABET classes, sometimes needing to visit learners' homes to encourage them or plead with their husbands to allow them to participate. Malindi identified learner recruitment and retention as two of the key challenges she faced in her HRDD position. Malindi does not hold any other leadership positions in her community and did not manage to secure a position as the manager of a public adult learning centre in her area due to lack of awareness of the availability of the position.

Malindi believes that she has learnt and developed a lot through the HRDD project. She completed a university Certificate in Education and is currently registered for a higher diploma in ABET through a distance learning institution.

### **Orvil's Story**

Orvil is a 34 year old man living with his wife and child at his birthplace, a rural community of KwaZulu-Natal. He grew up in a family with both parents and three other children. Both parents and two siblings are now deceased, leaving Orvil, the second born, and his elder brother as the remaining members of his immediate family. His father worked as a petrol attendant who later had to leave the family to work in the mines in Johannesburg. He came back from the mines in poor health and spent his remaining years with his family tending to his livestock. Orvil recalls that his father had completed Standard 4, which he describes as a "royal education" and that his mother had never attended school but could read and write, abilities which puzzle him and fill him with pride. The family was able to provide his elder brother with tertiary education allowing him to get a degree and good employment at a hospital. Orvil

describes his family as being religious and free. He says that they “like to live with people and discuss issues of importance in the lives of people”.

Like his brother, Orvil did well at school and was part of the debating society. He was inspired by two teachers, one who taught him English and another who taught him Zulu and developed his interest in writing poetry. One negative memory of school was corporal punishment but he says, “we did not take corporal punishment seriously because even at home we grew up being punished ...” Orvil’s high school education was interrupted when political violence broke out and he was forced to stay at home for a year. He returned to complete his matric (grade 12) year and went on to a college of education to study to become a teacher. These plans were also disturbed by the political violence which forced him to return home. Speaking about his career dreams while at school, he says:

It wasn’t easy to choose my future career in those days, but taking what I was being told by my parents, and listening to their advice, and remembering a poem I wrote whilst in school which read:

*I was born in poverty,  
born by poor parents,  
from the wisdom that God will give me  
I am supposed to lead poor people  
and teach them to be people who can be independent.  
Showing them the correct way to be better people in future.*

People who were close to me were working in development, so they influenced me, and I ended up liking to work with people. Meaning what I liked the most is becoming a facilitator in development ...

Orvil is one of the longest serving educators in the HRDD project. Through the project he completed a university Certificate of Education and is currently engaged in studies with another university. He serves in a number of leadership positions in his community and was also employed as a manager

of the public adult learning centre in his community. This appointment ended his formal relations with the HRDD project. Orvil is central to a number of development projects in his community and networks extensively with various government departments. He believes that his command of the English language has allowed him to gain influence and power in his community. He is a key source of information for his community and has used his links with various development agents to the benefit of his learners and wider community. As he says, his learners “ended up using me as a social worker, but the main challenge was that these elders could not write and could not interpret especially government issues and things concerning their lives”.

Orvil believes that the HRDD project has served an important role in his community. Speaking about the purpose of ABET, his advice is, “Don’t teach them only to read and write. Encourage them to form organizations whereby they will generate income because of this unemployment and poverty alleviation that should be in places where we stay”.

He believes that the human rights focus of the HRDD project is very important for communities such as his as people are unaware of their rights. His own understanding of human rights has improved through the project and he indicates that his behaviour, particularly his treatment of women, has been changed because of such learning.

Orvil is critical of some leaders, who, he believes, use people like him to secure their positions in the community. He is also critical and disappointed with changes in the HRDD project through which some classes in his area were closed. He advises that “change of the program should be sensitive about the historical perspective of the targeted areas”, referring to the history of political division in his community.

Orvil’s dream for his community is that it would be developed in terms of both infrastructure and people. He has clear plans for his daughter’s education, is supporting his wife’s studies in nursing and is positive about the future.

## **Nokthula's story**

Nokthula is a 31 year old woman. She is a single mother who lives in a rural part of KwaZulu-Natal. Nokthula is the eldest of three children. Her parents divorced when she was five years old. Her father used to regularly beat her mother in the presence of the children. She moved to a township outside Durban with her mother and siblings. She lived with her grandmother until her mother found temporary jobs and raised enough money for them to build a home. While in school, she and her siblings cleared the plot where their home was built. She recalls that on some days there was no food to eat as her mother's earnings were erratic. She was taken back by her father to live at her rural birthplace but suffered abuse at the hands of her aunt who did not feed them if any of the livestock that they were looking after did not return home. Her mother then took them back to their home near Durban. When violence broke out the family was forced to flee. Nokthula was questioned about her political allegiance by a group of youths who then threatened to necklace (the "necklace" is a brutal method of killing by placing a burning tyre around a person's neck). She was rescued by a neighbour who was subsequently killed by these youths. Nokthula then returned to her birthplace and lived with relatives.

Nokthula says that she did well at school but was disturbed by the attempt on her life while in standard 8 (grade 10). She failed and had to repeat standard 9 (grade 11). In that year she fell pregnant and had to leave school. She later returned and completed her matric (grade 12). While at high school a person in her church bought her a uniform and supplied her with food. She experienced some verbal abuse in school and was teased by her Geography teacher about her weight. This she says caused her to avoid Geography as a subject as she felt, "that all Geography teachers had as bad a personality as that teacher [who teased her]".

Despite her painful experience with a teacher Nokthula says that, "I wanted to be a teacher when I was still at school. It is the thing that I loved ... to be a

teacher. But my mother did not have power for assisting me in furthering my studies". After working in a clothing factory for a short time, she readily accepted a position in 1991 with a local NGO as an ABET teacher in her community, even though the pay was very poor. The NGO trained her as an ABET teacher. This work was later incorporated into the HRDD project in 2001.

Nokthula was promoted within the HRDD project and now serves as a local coordinator for her area, and manages an information and resource centre as part of her HRDD work. She sees her role as assisting her community to develop themselves and believes that she is also learning all the time. Nokthula sees the purpose of the HRDD project as:

to teach the community about life... It is to teach the community and to develop it intellectually. So that a person can be developed and be able to write and read but, at the same time, be able to understand other things happening in the world that we live in.

Nokthula believes that it is important to help learners address the barriers which affect their participation in HRDD activities. She provides advice and information to learners and community members and is trying to develop links with leaders in the community. She notes that the training she received in peace education has assisted her a lot in her work.

With regard to the income generation project of her learners, Nokthula says that it was successful for a while but is not functioning well now because of disagreements between the learners.

Nokthula feels that she has learnt and developed considerably through the project, noting:

Before, I did not even know how to address people. I always told myself that, OK, I will just come to the classroom and just present what I have to present. But now I can talk with people and feel what they are

feeling. Hey, it is like when you are uneducated you are like a blind person. I know how to talk now.

Nokthula says that going to church and being part of the choir is the highlight of her week. Speaking about her plans for her child she says:

I give her the best education. I wish to invest money for her so that she will be educated. In my heart I told myself that I do not want her to [experience] school as I did. I do not want her to run out of school fees. I do not want her to go to school without exercise book covers, as it happened to me.

### **Khosí's story**

Khosí is a 37 year old woman who lives in a rural area. She is the single mother of two children, a 20 year old girl and a 15 year old boy. She grew up with both her parents and four brothers, two of whom are deceased. Khosí is the youngest of her siblings. She grew up in relative comfort as her father ran his own general dealership and owned taxis. She describes her parents as not having much education. Her father had completed standard 2 and her mother had completed standard 4. She lost her father and one brother tragically when they were attacked and killed.

Khosí was sent to a Catholic boarding school at the age of 14 years. She describes this as a positive experience but experienced a huge culture shock with the Catholic system of education and worship. She fell pregnant in her matric (grade 12) year and had to repeat this year in order to get an exemption pass for university entry. She describes her pregnancy as a major disappointment for her parents who had brought her up very strictly. She says that whilst in her parent's home she was only allowed out of the house for school and church. She enjoyed the freedom and independence allowed by boarding school. After school Khosí registered at a university to study law.

She was doing well at university but had to drop out when her parents died while she was in second year. She then became an insurance salesperson.

Khosi joined the HRDD project in 2001 and says that she thought of it as a temporary occupation. She recalls the early challenges faced in recruiting learners:

In 2001 when I started, it was dark, since I did not know anything about things related to the community and working with the community.

I was on my own, no one was there to give me support. Sometimes you found that people were saying “ No, what makes you think we want to learn. We survive without learning”. You see? ... But through attending workshops and talking with colleagues things became right. You learnt different ways of doing things from other people.

Khosi used to be a member of a peace committee but had to withdraw because of political divisions in the committee. She says that development projects initiated by the committee are stalled because of political divisions. She also experienced some difficulty with the local counselor who suspected that her work would involve driving particular political agendas. As a local coordinator, she now focuses on helping individuals with advice on things such as pension applications and on career options. She believes that ABET has an important role to play in her community. In identifying challenges faced in the ABET work, she says that “in many cases people who are not qualified to teach adults are recruited to teach adults. Such a situation forces adults to run away from ABET classes. It is just that they become bored in classes. I have experienced that.”

Khosi reports significant changes in her level of confidence to interact with the leadership in her area. She says, “At this moment I know how to address people, such as Indunas and Inkosis. I am no longer afraid. Before I would not dare to speak with Indunas and Inkosis (traditional leaders). I had nothing to do with them”. She feels that the project has allowed her to learn and develop

but she finds the money that she earns from such work is inadequate for her needs.

Khosi's eldest child is studying nursing and her plans are that her son will study at an FET college once he completes school. Khosi has a deep involvement in her church.

### **Welcome's story**

Welcome is a single, 26 year old man living at his birth place, a rural part of KwaZulu-Natal. He is the eldest of five children. Welcome describes his father as "irresponsible" and says that he does not know him as he abandoned the family while he was still young. He was raised largely by his grandmother as his mother was a farm labourer who only came home on weekends. His mother has a standard 1 education. Welcome worked on a farm during school vacations to supplement the family's meagre income. He started working at the age of 10 years and continued such part-time work until he completed matric (grade 12).

Welcome's area was a site of extreme political violence during the 1980s. He and his family were forced to flee the area after four family members were killed in 1998. They moved to another community where they set up home for six years but had to flee again when the violence erupted at their new place. One day his political allegiance was questioned by a group of gun-wielding residents who wanted to know why he had not attended a rally. With his life threatened his family returned to their original community but had to find a new building site as their original home had been taken over by another family during their absence.

Despite these dislocations, Welcome completed his matric (grade 12) but did not get good results. This was a disappointment to him as he had always done well at school. He says, "Honestly, I was very intelligent in school. I was in the forefront ... Those days, we were given positions. I always got 1 and 2. I never

had a problem at school". His poor matric results ended his aspirations to apply for bursaries to study at university. His initial career dream was to become a doctor, but since his school did not offer science he changed this to wanting to become an accountant. Welcome remained at home for about three years before the HRDD position became available in 2003. He says that he took up the position as an educator because nothing else was available and he needed to earn an income.

At the time of the first interview, Welcome had only been involved in the HRDD project for a little over two years. At the second interview (a week later) he announced that he would be leaving the project having found a better-paying job at a sugar mill. Welcome understands the purpose of HRDD as:

assisting learners to learn in such a way that they are able to make a living out of learning. They should also develop their knowledge in different spheres of their lives. For an example, they have to know about their rights. They also have to know about, maybe, knowing how to access different government departments such as welfare.....which grants one can get from welfare.

Welcome believes that the HRDD project has not achieved much and that it still has a lot to do. He is critical of the lack of communication between educators and the NGO partner and sees the NGO as an "eye" that monitors their work. He also feels that learners were not prepared adequately to manage income generation projects. As a new recruit, Welcome had not started teaching human rights as he was waiting for training. One of the main challenges he has faced in the position is with recruitment and retention of learners. He spoke of considerable political interference, where political leaders discourage learners from participating. He believes that such leaders do not want to see people initiating development related activity for fear that their power will be usurped. He described this barrier to participation in the HRDD project by saying:

People who are not part of it [HRDD project] are not encouraging [learners]. They are always criticizing. They say, "So and so's son is pushing you around like puppets. Since when does this boy have qualifications for teaching you, since he grew up here?" They think this is just a joke.

The political divisions in his community have discouraged Welcome from getting involved in development-related activity and structures in his community. He chooses to remain on the periphery of the civic sphere in his community and says that his learners or other community members do not approach him for advice or assistance. He also does not have much contact with other educators. Welcome feels that the project has allowed him to develop some skills and provided him with the opportunity to complete a couple of courses at the University.

### **Nonjabulo's story**

Nonjabulo is a 24 year old woman who lives on a farm with her mother. She is single and has a 4 year old daughter who lives with her (the daughter's) paternal grandmother. Nonjabulo's father died while she was still very young. She grew up in an extended family and says that she did not enjoy living with relatives as her mother became responsible for food and school uniforms for her aunt's children.

Nonjabulo describes school as a largely "enjoyable" experience. However, she says:

... when I had to go to school without money....that was tough. Sometimes you would find that children would eat lunch and I had nothing to eat. Sometime I felt like giving up... And corporal punishment was really discouraging.

Nonjabulo completed her matric (grade 12) and fell pregnant soon after that, at the age of 20. She joined the HRDD project in late 2002.

Regarding her career aspirations, Nonjabulo explains:

To tell the truth I did not want to be a teacher when I grew [up], but I wanted to do something else. Because of financial problems I ended up teaching in adult education. But I like teaching.

Nonjabulo believes that the purpose of her work in the HRDD project is, "to make improvement in the lives of this community". She attributes the lack of development in her community to the fact that they live in a farming area and because the councillors do not do their work. She says that her learners learn about their rights through the project but still live in fear as they are unable to assert their rights as farmworkers because they fear dismissal and/or eviction. Nonjabulo explains that, "I still have a lot of work to do to eradicate fear. I always explain to them that they have rights. Whites [farmers] do not have a right to just fire you from work without any tangible reasons, you see?"

Nonjabulo has experienced a range of challenges with her ABET classes. Learner retention has been a major challenge. She believes that the work schedules of her learners are not conducive to attending ABET classes and her learners are afraid to request time off from their bosses. Some people in the community also do not want to participate as "some of them are afraid of being seen that they are uneducated". Nonjabulo has also experienced conflict with some learners who reported to the NGO partner that she was not coming to class. She says that this was done because a group of learners wanted her to be replaced by a friend of theirs. The learners' income generation project has been stalled. Nonjabulo believes that the learners need more training in sewing and in cutting patterns.

Nonjabulo says, "When I started I was more into getting money. In 2004 and 2005 I worked out of passion.....now I enjoy it because I know how people live". She mentions that she would "also like to get a job that is permanent and

paying a better salary so that I can build my family and mother a house". In 2006, the year after being interviewed, Nonjabulo's contract for HRDD work was not renewed. She claims that she is unsure why her contract was not renewed.

### **Cosmos' story**

Cosmos is a single 26 year old man who lives with his mother and sister in a deeply rural part of KwaZulu-Natal. He has a child whom he supports financially but who does not live with him. Cosmos begins the interview by letting us know that the surname we are familiar with and which appears in his identity document is not his real surname. He indicates that his father's surname is his real surname but he had been given his maternal surname because his father divorced his mother when he was two years old and he has lived with his mother ever since. He reveals that doubts about his paternity were the cause of his parent's divorce. These doubts were initiated and fuelled by his father's first wife in the polygamous family system into which he was born. This led to his rejection by his father. Cosmos sees this as the main reason for his inability to embark on tertiary education. The first interview with Cosmos is strongly framed by the painful experience of his parents' divorce.

Cosmos sees himself as exceptionally bright and above his fellow schoolmates in educational terms. He passed matric with an exemption. This potential has been frustrated by his family's poor financial circumstances. His mother is a farmworker who is illiterate. Cosmos and his brother, who is employed at a clothing store in the city, are now supporting their mother.

Cosmos joined the HRDD project in 2002 after reading about the opportunity in an advertisement. He says that the HRDD work brings "small money" and some recognition in the community. It provides some status and a sense of purpose. It has also given him a voice as a young person at community meetings. However the HRDD work is clearly just a temporary phase in Cosmos' life. The HRDD work is better than the farmwork he was doing but is

clearly a stopgap option to develop himself and earn some money. He would leave the HRDD project if something better came up. The project has provided him with access to study and to acquire some credentials and work experience but some of his friends have left the project and have secured better jobs. Cosmos wanted to be a chartered accountant while he was at school. On the basis of his matric results, his school principal suggested that he consider becoming a teacher but he says that he did not want to become a school teacher. He prefers teaching adults because, "they know why they are learning".

Cosmos' sense of a good teacher is someone who can speak English fluently. He refers to such a teacher at his school who was a role model, not for his abilities as a teacher, but for his command of the English language. Cosmos prides himself on his English language skills and demonstrated this by speaking in English for most of the interview. He would often deliberately attempt to demonstrate quite sophisticated use of the language and show his wider vocabulary. He did this most successfully.

Cosmos describes the HRDD project as a "heavenly sent opportunity for adult learners". He sees ABET as one way to redress past inequality. He believes that increasing access to education will lead to changes in economic and social development. Already some of his learners have started businesses because of the skills and confidence gained in the class. He also sees changes in the position of women in his community. The chairperson of the development committee is a woman who was a learner in his ABET class. He believes that the classes allowed her to take on this role in the community. Cosmos sees this as a sign of change as in the past women were not able to hold such positions. Cosmos teaches his learners about human rights but is concerned that teaching women to assert themselves as equal to men creates a tension for them in their homes and can lead to divorce.

Cosmos is highly critical of politics in development. He believes that it has deprived his community of development. He has had to ask his learners not to show their political affiliations in class because of the deep political divisions in

the community. Cosmos' status in the community has been improved through his involvement in the HRDD project. People see him as an educated person who can help with their educational and social problems. He is sought as an advisor and assists his learners to help their children with their homework.

Cosmos' story offers insights into how the HRDD curriculum is mediated and transformed by educators. His story is expanded and analysed further in the next chapter.

### **Significant characteristics of HRDD educators**

The table below offers a summary of the significant characteristics of the seven HRDD educators discussed in this chapter. This summary will aid forthcoming discussions of the educators in the project.

**Table 12: Summary of significant characteristics of HRDD educators**

	Age	Sex	Career dream	HRDD Start	Primary stated motivation	Employment status in 2007
Orvil	34	M	Teacher/ Leader	1999	Service	Employed by Department of Education
Welcome	26	M	Doctor or Accountant	2003	Money	Left for a better job at a mill
Cosmos	26	M	Accountant	2002	Money	Retrenched
Malindi	37	F	Teacher	1999	Service	HRDD Educator
Nokthula	31	F	Teacher	2001	Service	HRDD Coordinator
Khosi	37	F	Lawyer	2001	Temporary job	Retrenched
Nonjabulo	24	F	Something else	Late 2002	Money	Retrenched

## **Significant themes in educator narratives**

As conveyed in the brief profiles presented above, educators' narratives are poignant accounts of deprivation and struggle but also of survival and hope. As indicated earlier, there are considerable similarities between the narratives of educators and learners, particularly their experiences of multiple forms of oppression. Educators' remembrances about their lives and experiences in the HRDD project are rich accounts of the extraordinary challenges they face and of the learning and personal development which has taken place. These narratives allow for an examination of how educators have made meaning of their experiences within and outside of the project and how they have variably developed understanding of themselves as educators, development workers and members of a community. The immediate context of the HRDD project and the influences of broader contexts and history on the activities of the project are also illuminated through these narratives.

The following significant themes emerge from the narratives of educators' lives:

- Educators demonstrate huge resilience and coping strategies in the face of adversity and are, most importantly, survivors of some of the harshest life circumstances in South Africa.
- They have grown up in conditions of poverty and continue to live and work in contexts of inadequate resources and growing inequality.
- Living in a marginal rural area with few opportunities and slow development has shaped educators' identities and aspirations.
- Most educators belong to fractured families where fathers were absent.
- Educators' memories of school include several negative experiences which have fashioned their life chances.
- Despite negative experiences and disruptions to their schooling, educators generally consider themselves to be above-average learners who did well at school and held ambitions of professional careers.

- Educators have personal experiences of the political violence in KwaZulu-Natal which they describe as traumatic and as having enduring consequences.

The following significant themes emerge from narratives of educators' experiences in the HRDD project:

- Educators have been involved in significant learning through the project.
- Educators have learnt through formal and non-formal programmes, and informally through reflection and dialogue on their experiences, and through participation in a nascent community of practice.
- Learner recruitment and retention have posed major challenges for educators and have been a source of critical experiential learning.
- Educators have had to respond to various social, political and economic factors which have affected learner participation in HRDD activities.
- There are varying degrees of engagement with the project and community life amongst the educator group.
- Educators have experienced some level of personal transformation in which their identities have been transformed through involvement in the project.
- Becoming an educator-community worker in the HRDD project is emotionally engaging work.
- Educators have developed different forms of relationships in their practice and many educators have been able to engender relationships based on care and empathy with their learners.
- Political division and local forms of hegemony in educators' communities are serious challenges and barriers to HRDD activity and goals.
- Educators appear not to have engaged in collective action, nor have they been able to facilitate such action with their learners.

- The level of change at which educators appear to have directed their efforts is at the level of personal transformation rather than social transformation.
- Most educators remain hopeful despite the slow pace of change.
- The levels of income and job security in project work such as the HRDD project is a source of vulnerability for the educators and the project.

As indicated earlier, there is considerable similarity in the narratives of educators and learners. Many of the themes discussed in the previous chapter using the organizing framework of “Critical remembrance: narrating histories of oppression and struggle” and “Critical remembrance: a referent for hope” could be repeated here. Within the critical remembrance framework, the themes of “surviving tough childhoods, displacement, loss and trauma caused by violence, adverse schooling environment, community involvement and leadership roles, critical voices and reflection, empowerment and accessing rights, positive attitude to adult education, and hope and ambitions”, also feature in the narratives of educators.

Instead of repeating the format of the previous chapter where each of the significant themes was discussed individually and illustrated with extracts from learners’ narratives, I have chosen to discuss a selection of significant themes in the educators’ narratives in a more integrated manner and with reference to the learning theory discussed in Chapter Two. This analysis and discussion of educator narratives is spread over two chapters. In the present chapter, the focus of the discussion is on the processes of learning and identity development amongst educators. These processes are theorized in terms of Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 1975; 1991), Freire’s critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; McLaren & Leonard, 1993) and Communities of Practice theory (Wenger, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1999). The next chapter will explore the multifaceted nature of relationships within the HRDD project and offers theorization of the relational space of the project in terms of Social

Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990).

The selected focus in the remainder of this chapter is educators' learning and identity development. This case study of the HRDD project provides a rather unique opportunity for exploring the development of largely novice adult educators within a community-based project in relatively marginal contexts. The case allows for an examination of formal, non-formal and informal learning and the emergence of new identities. Drawing on the narratives of the seven educators, the next section attempts to story the process of becoming an adult educator within the HRDD project, whilst simultaneously providing analysis and theorisation of the educator development process.

### **Becoming an adult educator in the HRDD project: a story about learning and identity development**

Becoming an adult educator within the HRDD project appears as a slow and challenging process, which for some educators, involved transformative learning, emotional engagement and caring dispositions. The initial entry into the role of adult educator was strongly influenced by the limited career prospects associated with life in a marginal rural context. It is little surprise that none of the educators report early ambitions of wanting to be an adult educator in their communities. This reflects the marginal status of the field of adult education generally. People know of few jobs for adult educators in community settings and, when such jobs do present themselves, they often lack permanence and good salaries. The field of community-based adult education does not offer many role models, particularly in under-resourced rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The field also lacks the professional status associated with teaching at a school. Generally, this state of affairs is a major barrier to the growth of adult education in a developing context like South Africa where adult education is so necessary. The low status of adult education as a field of practice and as a viable career, in relation to becoming

a school teacher for instance, can be seen as a significant frame of reference (Mezirow, 1975; Mezirow, 1991) which guides career aspirations in local contexts. For the HRDD educators such as Malindi, Orvil and Nokthula, who expressed early desires of wanting to be of service and of having an interest in becoming an educator, all only expressed interests in becoming school teachers. Malindi made approaches to three teacher training institutions and Orvil actually registered at one such institution. There is a serious need for the status of the adult education field to be raised to the level where it is seen as providing valuable and viable opportunities for people to work within their communities.

Against this background, the HRDD project attempted to recruit and develop a largely novice cohort of community-based adult educators. The context of rural KwaZulu-Natal (see profiles of HRDD communities in Chapter Five) features strongly in the accounts provided by educators regarding their motivations for applying for positions in the HRDD project and how they initially understood their roles. Most had meagre sources of financial support, had been struggling to find jobs and had some experience of poorly paid labour on farms. Most educators had also not been able to access tertiary education which posed a serious limitation to their life chances in a country with high unemployment. As presented in Chapter Five, poverty and high unemployment are defining features of the communities in which educators live and work. A few of the educators had attempted some post-school education but could not complete this for a range of reasons, their financial position being the main obstacle. Some had worked on farms and others spent years trying to find employment. The news of an opportunity to become a teacher of adults signaled for most HRDD educators a chance to break out of precarious existences. It promised training, employment, occupations and a way to be of service to their communities. Significantly, it provided a means to distinguish oneself from the multitudes of unemployed people and farm workers in their communities, as well as prospects for mobility. For the educators, who had completed matric (grade 12), the HRDD project signaled some hope in a context where little change had taken place despite a new democratic government, universal franchise and early promises of pro-poor

policies such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (see Chapter Four). Cosmos conveys the extent of the change and hope ushered by the HRDD project when he says:

I enjoy being an ABET teacher. It keeps me busy. Without HRDD I think my life would be, I can't say. But if there was no ABET, I think I would be just working, I would be still working on farms as before ... But because of this ABET, you see, today, I am doing a diploma, on a learnership, through ABET.

Educators' views of their learners and the purpose of their work also reflect the context and history of their communities. They describe their learners as illiterate and uneducated and initially saw their role primarily as addressing such educational deprivation in their communities. The educational ideology (discussed below) which educators were initiated into was about redress and access to education for those previously deprived. The educators became aware of advertisements for ABET educators and applied for positions which they understood to be primarily about teaching illiterate adults to read and write. As will be illustrated later, there was an initial understanding among educators that their work would be classroom-based.

Soon after being employed, trained and commencing with their jobs in the HRDD project, the educators' perspectives of their roles broadened. Largely through the challenges faced in practice, they learnt that they would need to be active beyond the classroom. In recruiting learners and trying to overcome the obstacles preventing learners from participating, educators began to see that an important part of their work lay outside of the classroom. They report having to speak to husbands and community leaders to facilitate and encourage participation. In several instances they were drawn directly into advocacy roles as they attempted to deal with social and political barriers to their work. The challenges posed by recruitment and retention of learners emerged in some of the brief profiles of several educators earlier in this chapter. Further evidence of the centrality of this challenge is provided in the following statements by educators:

Firstly, to find learners is problematic....it is still problematic.....Sometimes you find that there are more learners who come to the class but later they disappear. You end up asking yourself if you are the one who is not doing your job properly. Or they just listen to those who discourage them from coming to classes. (Welcome)

But when it was time for ABET classes, she [sewing instructor] would stop them from going to classes. Intimidating them. The learners were afraid of her. Unfortunately, I would end up with only one learner in my class ... So the school [HRDD classes] was closed. But the learners complained and told Tembaletu ... So the school was re-opened. (Nonjabulo)

You have to solve that problem. For instance one [learner] does not come to class because he/she has to look for a job because he/she does not have food to eat with his/her children at home. You should find a way maybe of advising him/her ... to come to class, not end up looking for jobs that is not there. Those are the challenges ... Sometimes I advise them to go and work in the ... community gardens ... they save money and they eat (Nokthula)

At first when the classes started, Ja, women, many people came to the classes. Then they stopped because other people in the community were criticizing and laughing at them. They say "Why are you learning at school". This side I am recruiting them to come to class [but] there are others who are pushing them backwards to say, "At your age are you learning just to die". You see, then, as I was building they were destroying. But I was patient to say, our people are illiterate, I want them to be literate, you see, I went on begging, telling them to come to class, come to class. They would come, others you find them coming, then stop again. Others had the problem that there is no income at home, they then stop to go and find work. That would upset me, that as I am building, then they stop coming. They would tell me reasons,

"Miss, I am going to stop now at home since there is no food". I have to go and find food for people to eat. Then this block making came, then they stayed ... (Malindi)

When the income generating projects were introduced, educators were once again confronted with supporting activities and learning taking place outside of the ABET classes. In order to make the curriculum relevant to learners' lives, educators have attempted to draw on learners' life experiences in their classrooms. Khosi explains this when she says:

You see, the first thing is that you should teach people what is relevant to their lives because once you teach them what is not relevant to their lives they become bored ... Once adults are in the class you should always teach them what is of relevance to them.

As relationships developed, the educators' roles were broadened even further. Learners started to trust them and bring their personal problems to educators. Several educators were now playing the roles of advisors, counselors and information brokers. Orvil's recognition of such broadened roles for educators is expressed as, "Learners ended up using me as a social worker". As news of educators' roles in solving problems grew, non-learners in the community also began seeking their help. After some engagement in HRDD practice, the identity of *community worker* emerged and can be seen to coexist with that of educator. Talking about themselves and their work in the HRDD project after several years of involvement in the project, the sense of educator-community worker appears as a unified identity for some educators, particularly for the longest-serving members in the educator ranks. Such educators are identified and discussed as the HRDD *stalwarts* later in this chapter.

Several educators have thus come to view the purpose of their work in broader community development terms. This is a highly significant shift in perspective which underpins many of the goals of the HRDD project. Such a shift also has important implications more generally in terms of the purpose and ideology of adult education in developing contexts. Khosi recalls that she

was not prepared for such a community development-oriented role when she says:

In 2001 when I started it was dark since I did not know anything about things related to the community and about working with the community. It was the kind of work that I had not done before.

Khosi's use of a vision metaphor ("it was dark") powerfully conveys her sense of a transformed perspective. Nokthula, in the quotation below, also uses a vision metaphor ("like a blind person"), to describe her increased confidence in addressing people and her discovery of 'voice' when she says:

Before, I did not even know how to address people ... But now I can talk with people and feel what they are feeling. Hey, it is like when you are uneducated you are like a blind person. I know how to talk now.

The educators talk of making people independent and self-sufficient, and of supporting sustainable livelihoods. There is a stronger humanist ideology evident in how they have, after some engagement in practice, come to understand their work and who they are. These shifts in perspective regarding the purpose of adult education and their role within such educational purpose are important transformations. The shift to more humanist and pro-development ideological positions aligns remarkably well with the overall goals of the HRDD project and the need for education to be relevant and meaningful for learners. At a theoretical level, the shift can be understood in terms of Freire's (1970) recommendations for education which humanizes and conscientizes. Nokthula conveys such a distinctly Freirean understanding of her HRDD work of teaching people to read the word and the world, when she describes her role as:

to teach the community about life... So that a person can be developed and be able to write and read but, at the same time, be able to understand other things happening in the world that we live in.

These shifts experienced by educators could also be theorised in terms of Transformative Learning theory (Mezirow, 1975; Mezirow, 1991; Taylor, 2007; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008). The movement from the identity of educator to educator-development worker, which incorporates the shift from understanding ABET as classroom-based technical skills of reading and writing to one which connects with peoples' livelihoods and community life, is an example of what Mezirow presents as a perspective transformation in his theory of adult learning (Mezirow, 1975; Mezirow, 1991). In terms of Transformative Learning theory, HRDD educators appear to have come to question previously held assumptions about what it means to be an HRDD educator, in terms of purpose, roles and identity. Such former assumptions could have been influenced by their understanding of what it means to be an educator in a school environment. Recall that several educators had early career aspirations of wanting to be a school teacher. Educators appear to have revised their perspective of an HRDD educator through processes of reflection and discourse, and were subsequently taking action in terms of a new perspective centered on the practice and identity of educator-community worker. A fair amount of their reflection and discourse revolved around the challenges faced in their practice and the sharing strategies for resolving challenges.

This process of learning to be and do educator work in the HRDD project appears to follow several of the phases identified by Mezirow (1975; 1991) in Transformative Learning theory. As discussed in Chapter Two, Mezirow (1975) described a ten-step process of transformational learning starting with a disorienting dilemma which causes one to question one's worldview or underlying assumptions. This is followed by engaging in reflection and discourse in which one shares thoughts and thus explores new ways of thinking, being and acting. Finally, experimenting with new identity and roles allows for such new ways of being and acting to become part of one's transformed self.

Important outcomes of transformative learning include a more integrative perspective and a greater sense of confidence (Clare, 2006). Merriam and

Ntseane (2008, p.185) describe individuals who have undergone transformative learning as being “more empowered, more independent, and more capable of taking charge of their lives”. In terms of their HRDD work lives, elements of the transformed perspective of educator role and identity discussed earlier are clearly evident in descriptions provided by Nokthula and Khosi who had used vision metaphors. The following quotations from two other educators portray growth in confidence and the discovery of voice as important aspects of transformed educator perspectives and identities:

You see I have a say in the community now. But before, before I joined ABET. I was so inferior ... You see, a person like me, of my age cannot say anything in the community ... you just take what you are given, you don't say anything. So today I have a say and people respect me.  
(Cosmos)

I was a person who will just keep quiet even when I would see a problem; I would just ignore and leave it up to that person to solve it. Now if something happens, I stand up and talk and say “this is correct”, “this is wrong”, you see. (Malindi)

As with Nokthula and Khosi, Cosmos and Malindi also express increased confidence, agency and control over their work lives. Identities were being reshaped in the context of practice and the challenge of educator-community developer work.

Educators' accounts of making meaning of their work and of coming to be educator-development workers with a sense of a broader, humanist-oriented role and with a new sense of confidence to engage in the community arena appears to be a gradual process rather than a dramatic transformation in response to some epochal event as has been described by Mezirow (1975; 1991). Taylor's (1997; 2007) reviews of studies of transformational learning have also found evidence of what some have termed a “slow burn” transformative process. In the HRDD project this process occurred over some time through engagement in practice and in attempts to overcome the barriers

which prevented learners from participating. The next chapter, which focuses on relationships in the HRDD project, will illuminate further aspects of educator work in terms of emotional engagement and caring. Through emotional engagements, reflecting on their practice and through dialogue with fellow educators (as conveyed by Khosi in the quotation above), educators have come to understand their roles in broader and more engaged terms. The barriers faced by educators in their own lives are likely to have provided first-hand felt connections with the challenges faced by their learners. The extent to which experiences of struggle, common to both educators and learners, foster authentic, empathic relationships of the type advocated by Freire is worthy of closer examination and discussed in the next chapter.

It would seem that the community worker role, identity and competencies in the HRDD project were implied and not explicitly articulated (foregrounded) in project plans, recruitment advertisements and initial educator training programmes. The CAE partner (Land, 2008) responsible for a major portion of the formal educator training programme which the first cohort of educators undertook, acknowledged that the focus of the ABET component of the programme was on classroom and curriculum competencies. Recruitment was not included and retention of learners received minor attention, largely in terms of its classroom dimensions rather than the structural impediments. The initial series of ongoing non-formal training workshops for educators likewise appear to have neglected the issue of recruitment and retention. Yet this issue appears as a major challenge and theme in educator narratives. It is also central to the development of the broader identity of educator-community worker. Educators appear to have been under-prepared for a major part of their role in the HRDD project. In retrospect then, the project partners' perspective constructed in Chapter Five, does not shed light on an important aspect of the HRDD project. This would be an example of "seeing like an NGO" or when the project partners' perspective is also a form of "project fiction". Such "fiction" only became visible through the depth and richness of educators' narratives within this case study.

Closer examination of the serious challenges of recruitment and retention is an opportunity to explore the barriers to participation in ABET in rural KwaZulu-Natal, many of which have been illustrated in the narratives of learners discussed in the previous chapter. The serious difficulties which these newly-trained educators faced in their communities very quickly introduced them to a major problem faced in adult basic education all over the world (see Lind, 2008). As discussed above it also triggered important learning and identity development. Educators had to grapple with the problems of recruitment and retention of learners, understand the underlying influences, consult colleagues, develop strategies, take action, evaluate actions and develop further strategies based on their reflections. Can there be a more powerful pedagogy for exposing educators to an understanding of a key aspect of their work and to the challenges they must face? Most formal training programmes for adult educators would find it difficult to match such a richly experiential and authentic form of learning. This process of learning in and through authentic situated practices is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. It is most unlikely that larger scale efforts to reduce or eradicate illiteracy in South Africa, such as government programmes and the current literacy campaigns, could foster such rich and authentic practices.

## **Emergent categories of educator**

On the basis of the seven stories told by educators, two broad categories of HRDD educators can be distinguished. The categories of educators identified are presented as emergent because the nature of this study does not allow for firm or conclusive categorization. A larger sample of educators would need to be tracked over a period of time in order to verify the trends noticed in this case study.

With the exception of Khosi, the remaining six educators can be placed in one of the two categories. The first grouping is made up of educators such as Orvil, Malindi and Nokthula. These are the 'stalwarts' of the project. They

have been involved in the project for between 4 and 10 years. They are all in their 30s. Of significance, they are the only three educators in the sample who had ambitions of becoming teachers while at school. Orvil, Malindi and Nokthula also speak of desires of being of service to their communities as what motivates them. All three have direct experience of political violence which appears to have affected them deeply. All three are also deeply religious individuals and are active in their respective churches. Orvil and Nokthula have progressed in the project and were just assuming more senior coordinator positions in the project at the time of the interviews. These three stalwarts show a deeper sense of involvement in the project and appear to have developed caring and empathic relationships with their learners. As explained later, all of these educators have developed identities of educator-community worker.

Three of the remaining educators in the sample belong to a second category of educators, 'the transient newcomers'. These educators present a markedly different combination of attributes and levels of engagement with the project. This group is represented by Welcome, Cosmos and Nonjabulo. They are relative newcomers to the project (2-3 years), belonging to subsequent cohorts of educators recruited into the project. They are younger, all in their mid-20s. Welcome is the only member of this group who spoke of direct experience of political violence. Significantly none of these educators have held long-term ambitions of wanting to be teachers, instead they had ambitions of wanting to become a doctor (Welcome), an accountant (Cosmos) and something other than an educator (Nonjabulo). All three emphasise the need to earn money as being a primary motive for becoming involved in the project. Welcome and Cosmos declared their intentions to leave if better employment became available. In the year following the interviews, all three were no longer involved in the project, Welcome had found another job at a mill, and Nonjabulo and Cosmos were effectively retrenched as their contracts were not renewed. Also of significance, these three educators show the least involvement and connection with community life. They demonstrate an identity of adult educator in an early stage of development. The identity of community worker has yet to develop with these educators.

Khosi presents a mixture of characteristics which prevents her from being placed in any one category. She is similar to the stalwarts in terms of length of service, age and religious commitment but also similar to the transient newcomers in not holding early career aspirations of wanting to be a teacher, and in seeing her involvement in HRDD as a temporary position until something better comes along. She also has fewer connections with life in her community. A year after the interviews, Khosi, too, was no longer involved in the HRDD project, following the trajectory of her three colleagues who make up the transient newcomer group.

A possible implication of the proposed educator categories relates to the selection of educators. In a context of widespread unemployment and limited opportunities, selecting people who have a deeper interest in the project and who are likely to spend some time in the project is of utmost importance to the sustainability of the project. Huge turnover amongst project staff, particularly after substantial investments in training such staff, is detrimental to projects working to tight budgets and timeframes. The characteristics of educators in the two emergent categories may point to a particular mix of personal characteristics and histories which could guide the selection of project staff. The stalwart group were relatively older, held ambitions of wanting to be teachers, expressed desires of wanting to be of service and are deeply engaged in faith-based activities. While not necessary a factor that could guide selection, a further noteworthy characteristic, is that all the stalwarts had had direct experience of the political violence.

Having examined the process of becoming an adult educator within the context of the HRDD project and the emergent educator categories which the process has produced, the next section discusses in greater detail the processes of learning and teaching which educators reveal in their narrative accounts of the project. The focus here is on learning in communities of practice.

## **Educators' learning through a nascent community of practice**

As indicated earlier, educators' accounts of their experiences in the HRDD project indicate that significant learning and identity development have taken place through the shared practices of the HRDD project. In comparison, the various planned formal and non-formal programmes of educator development discussed in Chapter Five appear not to be emphasized in educator narratives. Valorisations of formal programmes were mainly in terms of the qualifications (cultural capital) which they yielded. As illustrated in the earlier discussion in this chapter, informal learning in the practice of HRDD work appears to be a significant source of learning and identity development for educators (see also Walters, 1998; Schugurensky, 2006). Some educators have acquired the competencies of an educator-development worker and some have learnt to become educator-development workers within a community of practice which is deemed to be in its early stages of development. The practice of the community constituted by educators is centered on the activities of adult basic education classes, income generation projects, some broader engagement with the community regarding recruitment of learners and negotiation of support for the project and educator development processes. Some of these activities occurred on a daily basis while others took place less frequently.

The HRDD project is an interesting case allowing for the examination and theorization of communities of practice within a marginal development context. As indicated in the literature review in Chapter Two, such contexts rarely feature in applications and theorisations of communities of practice. The literature on communities of practice is predominately about the functioning and value of relatively well-established communities of practice in more mainstream sectors of society such as workplaces and learning institutions (see Wenger, 1998; Brown & Duguid, 1991). Over several years the HRDD project can be seen to have brought together a group of people and set of activities which eventually evolved into a community of practice for the educators. As such, the HRDD project provides an unusual opportunity for

understanding the development of a community of practice from inception through its early stages, in others words, a nascent community of practice in a marginal context. This community of practice has served the project in terms of inducting and developing new educators.

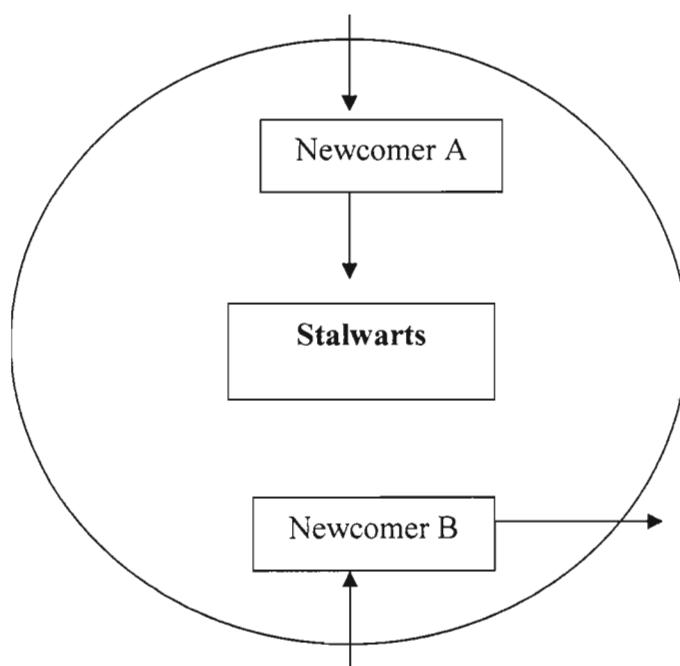
Over the years, educators developed their individual learning communities at various sites and came together regularly to share and reflect on their experiences. As discussed in Chapter Five, these project events, which included workshops, seminars, public fora, imbizos, celebrations etcetera, became important moments of learning, identity development and solidarity building for educators. Such events, other informal interactions amongst educators and the engagement in HRDD practices, gave rise to a nascent community of practice of educators spanning seven rural sites. As discussed below, with project growth and change, the community of practice became a primary site of learning and development for new educators. The project design and budget did not allow for new educators (subsequent cohorts) to receive substantial formal and non-formal training prior to their engagement in the project, as did the first cohort of educators. Many new educators joining the project in subsequent years attended some formal and non-formal types of training but were immersed into the project and a substantial portion of learning and development occurred through the practice, with support from fellow educators and coordinators at their sites.

New educators in the HRDD project were thus inducted into the project by the old-timers, the stalwarts discussed earlier. Some of the old-timers, such as Nokthula, moved into coordinator positions which involved some gains in status, money and mobility and became important resources for the newcomers. The relationship between new staff and old-timers, both old-timers who gained formal recognition by becoming coordinators, and old-timers who did not gain such formal recognition, can be understood in terms of the process described by Lave and Wenger (1999) as legitimate peripheral participation. According to Lave and Wenger (1999), learning is the increasing participation in a *community of practice*. The process of learning begins with *legitimate peripheral participation* where a newcomer is allowed access to a

practice but spends some time at the periphery of the practice and then gradually moves to the center of the practice and becomes a full participant. The newcomer eventually makes the practice her/his own and thus becomes an old-timer. It is quite likely that some of the differences between the stalwarts and transient newcomers identified earlier, such as their levels of engagement with broader community life, may be accounted for by their peripherality in the community of practice. Their transient status would, however, mean that for such individuals their trajectory is not to the centre, but from the periphery to outside the practice. Such trajectories can be seen as contributing to vulnerability for such educators and for the project as a whole.

Figure 2 below illustrates the different trajectories of HRDD educators within the community of practice. For Newcomer A, typically educators such as Malindi or Nokthula, the trajectory is from the periphery to the centre of the practice where such educators then serve as a resource for other newcomers. For newcomer B, typically Welcome and Cosmos, the trajectory is from the periphery to a relatively early exit from the project. This is the trajectory of the transient newcomer.

**Figure 2: Different trajectories in the educator community of practice**



The educators' community of practice thus became a local, community-based training academy for new educators who through direct engagement in project activities and from dialogue with fellow educators, slowly developed the competencies, values and identities required by the project. Lave and Wenger (1999, p.33) state:

... development of identity is central to the careers of newcomers in communities of practice ... learning and a sense of identity are inseparable: they are aspects of the same phenomenon. Participation in social practice within a community is thus simultaneously a generator of knowledge and of the self.

The existence of a community of practice is crucial for a project where most of the partner organizations also experienced serious staff turnover. The community of practice became an important reservoir of knowledge and memory of the project. Communities of Practice theory views knowledge and learning as being constructed in the process where people negotiate meaning within a community. This sense of knowledge reflects its dialogical genesis, its social character and its embeddedness in practice and context.

Much of the literature on communities of practice tends to focus on relatively stable and harmonious communities (Wenger, 1998; Trowler, 2005). The HRDD community of practice underwent continuous change as the project evolved and people changed. The old-timers in the project provided a measure of continuity to the practice and were at times also a source of resistance to change. This is most evident in the shift from income generation projects to livelihood projects. The change in practice was externally driven by the NGO partner but required educators to communicate and facilitate the change within the project. This change caused unhappiness for many educators but this unhappiness appears to lie somewhat below the surface. Other changes like the closure of HRDD resource centres or learning sites, when some were taken over by the state, also caused discomfort and covert resistance on the part of the educators. Such unhappiness was clearly

indicated earlier in Orvil's brief profile. In all these instances, however, educators eventually had to comply with project policy and changed practices despite their unhappiness. The handling of such change and lack of overt resistance reveals the power dynamic in communities of practice, as discussed in Chapter Two, issues of power and ideology are relatively under-theorised in Wenger's work (Cooper, 2006; Trowler, 2005).

Wenger (1998) describes mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire as being the sources of coherence in a community of practice. In the case of the HRDD project however, the educators' community of practice appears to have cohered significantly in terms of joint enterprise and a shared repertoire, and less so in terms of mutual engagement. Because of the great distances between the HRDD project sites and the fact that interaction amongst educators is determined by project funding, the amount of mutual engagement has been limited. Educators clearly learn from and support each other when they meet at the end of each month and through the occasional telephone call (which they have to pay for), but cannot benefit from the sort of sustained engagement typical of communities of practice described by Wenger. A new feature in the project design in 2006, made it compulsory for each coordinator to attend all public events organized by their colleagues at other sites. This requirement has served to strengthen the engagement between coordinators and has allowed for situated and experiential forms of learning.

The next section looks at the formation of multiple communities of practice within the HRDD project, compares such communities of practice and offers some critique of the theory and how it has been utilized in understanding community development projects in South Africa.

## **Constellations of communities of practice?**

The previous discussion introduced the notion of a nascent community of practice for educators in the HRDD project. In Chapter Five, the learning and

participation of the project partners was also theorised in terms of a 'rich community of practice'. The contention in that chapter was that a powerful community of practice had developed and had become a source of substantial learning for project partners. This community of practice was centered largely on the practices of project planning, implementation and management.

There is a temptation and danger in conceptualizing projects such as the HRDD project as *a single community of practice* or as *a merging of different communities of practice*. An example of the latter conceptualization of merged communities of practice can be found in van Vlaenderen (2004). The present case study of the HRDD project allows for a critical challenge to van Vlaenderen's theorization to be mounted (see John, 2006b) and for the alternative conceptualization of constellations of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), rather than merger, to be proposed. Given the identification of two communities of practice within the HRDD project, namely that of the project partners discussed in Chapter Five and that of the educators discussed in this chapter, it would be appropriate to raise some of the debate contained in the Van Vlaenderen (2004) and John (2006b) articles at this point.

Van Vlaenderen (2004) discusses the challenge facing university-based researchers who want, and are increasingly being encouraged, to work with local communities, usually poor marginalised communities surrounding the university. A central proposition developed in the Van Vlaenderen article is the notion of two communities of practice merging in the context of a joint university-local community project. The argument developed from such a proposition is that such a conceptualisation of the project offers benefits which traditional university-local community interactions do not.

Among a list of fourteen indicators of a community of practice, Wenger (1998, p. 125-126) suggests the following indicators of the existence of a community of practice:

sustained mutual relationships - harmonious or conflictual; shared ways of engaging in doing things together; substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs; knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise; mutually defining identities; specific tools, representations, and other artefacts; a shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world.

A new merged community of practice would therefore need to satisfy these criteria. It is fairly clear that the university academics and the local community members in Van Vlaenderen's projects and those in the HRDD project, do not achieve the type of formation suggested by the indicators listed above, despite their joint engagement in common tasks and processes. Most importantly, there is simply not the sustained engagement needed to constitute a new or merged community of practice. The practices, discourses, identity formations and types of learning of the different groupings or stakeholders in such projects do not constitute a shared repertoire.

On the basis of the data in this case study, it would therefore be inaccurate to speak of a community of practice shared by educators and project partners. A compounding of the difficulty would arise if learners were to be thrown into the mix. Although the learning of the practice of an ABET educator did occur through interaction within settings created by the NGO-university partnership, the educators did not learn through the process of legitimate peripheral participation in the communities of the NGO or university. As discussed earlier, the educators constituted their own separate community of practice.

With community treated as a construct, it would appear that Van Vlaenderen's use of the construct slips between the specific conceptualisation advanced by Lave and Wenger and a more common-sense conceptualisation of "community" as referring to those inhabiting a particular geographic space. The community development field requires a good measure of conceptual fidelity in this regard. Brent (2004, p. 213) writes that "community is constantly invoked as an 'answer' to problems of power, voice and social peace, yet never arrives" and suggests that the term community is sometimes used to

“fetishize the face-to-face”. Chapter Eight extends this discussion by presenting HRDD communities as spaces of *fracture* rather than *closure*.

Communities of Practice theory is useful for development interventions and development-serving research. It helps one understand the social process of learning and identity formation. It creates opportunities for intervention and research to understand localised practice, tacit learning, meaning making and indigenous knowledge. However, the strength of this conceptual framework is dependent on adherence to the inherent specificity regarding concepts like community and practice. The value of the framework is lost to the development field if multiple conceptions of community are interwoven. The theory does not provide epistemological space for talking about academics or academic-NGO-donor partnerships and under-resourced, marginalised community members forming a merged community of practice. Such use of community of practice seems to be using more conventional or common sense notions of two separate terms, namely, “community” and “practice”. Furthermore, such usage tends to ignore the possibility that a local community may actually comprise several communities of practice (a constellation) and that an individual could belong to several communities of practice simultaneously.

Reflecting on the sustained interactions within the HRDD project, it is clear that after seven years there is only *joint activity* between very distinct and separate communities of practice. Such joint activity could be seen as a gravitational force for a constellation of communities of practice, such as those of the project partners and the educators. It therefore means that academic communities such as those that Van Vlaenderen and the HRDD-university partners belong to can, at best, only talk of playing a *brokering role* between two or more communities of practice within a constellation. In discussing the boundaries of communities and relationships between communities, Wenger (1998, p. 105) describes *brokering* as the ‘connections provided by people who can introduce elements of one practice into another’.

Any discussion of community participation or activity needs to see community as a social construct and to reflect the endogeneity of communities and how power is embedded in these structures. An analysis of power between communities of practice is worthy of some attention in this study. Comparing the two communities of practice identified in the HRDD project, both can be seen to have provided important learning spaces. The community of practice of the project partners does however appear to have greater coherence and mutual engagement. Recall that its formation was based on substantial social capital in terms of prior relationships amongst the different partners (see Chapter Five). With more resources at their disposal, as well as being the holders of project funding, the partners were afforded considerable opportunity and discretion in fostering mutual engagement. By comparison, the community of practice shared by educators, located great distances from one another, is largely dependent on scheduled project gatherings for mutual engagement. The power dynamic is thus one of the project partner community of practice steering and determining the educator community of practice, with the latter having less of an organic character. The combined dynamics of peripherality and transience would furthermore undermine, in the educator community of practice, the possibility of sustained mutual engagement that was identified by Wenger as a key signifier of a community of practice. These features of the educator community of practice are what lead to the sense of its being fragile and nascent in character. The implication of this for the field of adult education is one of lost opportunity in that such nascent communities of practice are unlikely to develop fully and will most likely dissolve when the project ends. South Africa's preoccupation with short-term, project-style development can arguably lead to perpetual nascence, but never full development, of communities of practice.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the learning and identity development amongst educators within the HRDD project. Particularly for the group of educators

identified as stalwarts, significant transformations and progressions in their learning and identity development can be observed. The development of educator-community worker identities was found to be slow, emotionally-charged, and the product of situated learning within a nascent community of practice.

While educators' perspective transformations and progress are important for the goals of the HRDD project to be realized, the instability of their positions and their consequent vulnerability as educators, can be seen to be undermining the long-term benefits of the significant investments in developing a cadre of new community-based educators. With histories of disadvantage and inequality, the incomes which educators earn from their HRDD work are insufficient to sustain them and their families. Most educators expressed difficulty in making ends meet. Added to this, educators have an acute sense of the temporary nature of their work and know that funding for the project will end. They also were aware that there would not be many opportunities for them to secure work. Several educators left the project when they found better employment, and those who remain were open about their need to secure more money and more stable employment. This state of affairs undermines the development, commitment and relationships built in the project. The contribution that such projects can make to growing the adult educator base in the country is also thus weakened.

The HRDD project shows some promise in stimulating the formation of a community of practice for educators with benefits of learning through authentic practice. However, such a community of practice has little chance of being sustained. The broader context in which the HRDD project is located (see Chapter Four) does not offer much in terms of sustained support and development for new educators in predominantly rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal.

The next chapter extends the discussion of educator roles and practices by focusing on the different forms of relationships involved in being an educator-community worker in the HRDD project.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Educators' perspectives on negotiating the relational spaces of the HRDD project**

Ja, then I saw that and I was hurt because ... this is my sister,  
I need to help her so that she can live better. (Malindi)

#### **Introduction**

A significant portion of educators' narratives are about various relationships in the project. This chapter discusses educators' negotiation of the relational spaces of the project and project context, and theorises such relational spaces in terms of Social Capital theory (introduced in Chapter Two). The HRDD project is premised on the cultivation and strengthening of different forms of relationships amongst project participants and between project participants and the broader community. The project actively sought to get people participating in education, in income-generating and livelihood projects, and in broader civic life, for purposes of improving their livelihoods. All of these activities involve and depend on effective and productive sets of relationships being formed and nurtured. Relationships of support, trust and conflict in education and development projects are important and warrant focal attention in this study. Such relationships shape project activity in both positive and negative ways. The HRDD project and its community context, conceived of as relational spaces, are the focus of this chapter.

Freire (1970) advocated for learning environments based on relationships of trust, love, respect and equality. In essence, Freire's advice on educator-learner relationships is about democratizing the learning environment and about flattening traditional expert-novice hierarchies which he saw as part of banking education. Freire (1970, p. 46) argued that education "must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students".

He believed that such relationships promote the quest for freedom in learning environments and in society at large. Freire argued that through relationships of mutual respect and balanced power, both the educator and learner could learn from each other. The possibilities for praxis were also served through relationships which create solidarity.

Mezirow's original work (1975; 1991) on Transformative Learning theory (introduced in Chapter Two), has been the subject of considerable critique because of inadequate attention to the role of relationships in learning. Several studies have since accorded a central role to relationships in transformative learning (Taylor, 1997; Taylor, 2007; Merriam & Ntseane, 2008). Taylor's (2007) extensive review of transformative learning studies highlighted the centrality of positive relationships by noting that it was, "trustful relationships that allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding" (p.179). It is worth recalling that the concept of dialogue, discussed earlier, also implies relationships. In this regard, Taylor (2007) identified dialogue as an inherent feature of relationships and an essential part of transformative learning.

Relationships do not imply interactions which are only trusting and harmonious. The HRDD project involved positive relationships but also some characterised by neglect, conflict, discrimination, marginalization, as well as those which were at times clearly un-democratic and abusive of power. Such relationships also influence learning and change. The relationships shared by educators in the project reveal a full range of different relationship types or social exchanges. In Chapter Two, Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1988) was presented as primarily a theory of relationships and social networks and how such structures affect education, development and change. Social capital theory provides a lens for understanding and theorizing relationships in the HRDD project and how educators have negotiated the relational spaces of the project. It allows for discussions of how relationships influence learning and identity development in the project. Likewise, it provides a basis for discussing the role of

relationships in action and change in the HRDD project at personal, community, organization and societal levels.

In Chapter Five a range of relationships amongst project partners and between project partners and communities was discussed and also theorized in terms of Social Capital theory. This chapter will examine relationships primarily involving educators within the HRDD project. This discussion is complemented by discussions of relationships in other sections of this study, for example when discussing learning, dialogue and communities of practice.

### **Educator – learner relationships: educator work as care work**

Although they have lived within the HRDD communities and grew up experiencing challenges similar to those faced by their learners, educators speak of new or renewed awareness of the plight of their learners and the barriers they face. This realization appears not to be solely based on a cognitive, reflective process. There is a strong element of emotional engagement, affective learning and caring relationships underpinning the transformed perspectives of educators' introduced in the previous chapter. This finding in the HRDD project resonates strongly with that reported in the reviews of empirical studies of transformative learning (Taylor, 1997; 2007).

A striking feature of becoming an adult educator within the HRDD project appears to be the development of relationships based on trust, empathy and care. Malindi says, "I had to put myself in their shoes and be part of them. Working and understanding older people was the skill I wanted to broaden". Most learners speak of the pain and struggle in their communities and wanting to be of service to their community through their HRDD work. Merriam and Ntseane (2008) also identified community responsibility and relationships as important factors shaping transformational learning among their African sample. The present study, involving a South African sample and context, contributes to Transformative Learning theory in identifying transformative

learning involving both rational and affective processes. This finding is supported by neurobiological research into learning (Taylor, 2001).

Women educators, in particular (such as Khosi and Malindi), identify counseling roles and problem solving roles as part of their work. They hold a sense of the *whole person* being considered, not just the *illiterate learner* in their class. Some of these educators have taken action to assist their learners with their problems. Malindi spoke of a learner who was being abused by her husband and how she confronted the husband, to no avail. She then reflected on this action and adopted a more diplomatic approach. She found that creating a dialogue with the husband of her learner was more effective. She described the process of becoming aware of her learner's personal problem and reason for her intervention as:

It is because it was affecting me because this person was a learner you see and she would arrive in class and was very quiet. I realised that, man, this person has a problem. Some days she would learn, other days she would battle to learn. Then I asked, "Exactly what is your problem?" She said, "Miss, I have a problem at home. Things are not going right". Then I told her that I used to notice [that she was troubled] but that I ignored it. I asked her why is she not saying anything. She said she can't, she is a woman and she is married. Ja, then I saw that and I was hurt because it was also affecting me to find that, no, this is my sister, I need to help her so that she can live better.

Malindi's story shows clearly how her empathy and care for a troubled learner led her to taking action to find a solution. Her account reveals both critical reflection and a felt understanding based on a deep connection with her learner. Malindi's close personal connection with her learner, indicated by statements like "it was affecting me" and "this is my sister, I need to help her so that she can live better" reveals a process involving empathy and emotional engagement. It also reveals the enactment of a pedagogic relationship which presents *educator work as care work*. The process Malindi describes of learning, acting and being has both affective and reflective components. Her

response is initially intuitive but also rational. She senses that something is wrong, feels the pain of her learner, feels a need to respond and through a process of reflection, action and further reflection attempts to facilitate a solution to the predicament of her learner. This deep empathic connection between Malindi and her learner is the type of pedagogic relationship advocated by Freire (1970; 1998). The inextricable connection between feeling and cognition which Malindi has demonstrated in her pedagogic encounter with her learner is explained by Freire (1998) as two types of knowing. Freire (1998, p.125) powerfully affirms the notion of *educator work as care work*, and of the affective-cognitive dimensions of knowing when he says:

What is to be thought and hoped of me as a teacher if I am not steeped in that other type of knowing that requires that I be open to caring for the well-being of my students and of the educative experience in which I participate? ... What it does mean is that I am not afraid of my feelings and that I know how to express myself effectively in an appropriate and affirming way. It also means that I know how to fulfill authentically my commitment to my students in the context of a specifically human mode of action. In truth, I feel it is necessary to overcome the false separation between serious teaching and the expression of feeling.

Malindi's experience with her learner is part of the transformative learning process, discussed in the previous chapter, leading to the development of the identity of educator-development worker. In Malindi's case the transformative learning process is clearly not principally a rational one, as initially proposed by Mezirow (1975; 1991), but one which has strong affective and intuitive components as reported by Taylor (2001). Malindi's example is supportive of the position emerging from a neurobiological perspective which reveals strong links between affective and rational dimensions of learning. In this regard, Taylor (2001, p.219) notes that "Recent research has revealed that emotions are indispensable for rationality, such that one cannot reason without emotions or feelings". In Malindi's case, her emotions can be seen as a rudder which has steered her cognition and action. The evidence of new brain

research and the example of Malindi's interaction with the particular learner examined here, is also strong support for the type of relationship advocated by Freire for pedagogical encounters which are based on trust, love, empathy and human solidarity.

While Malindi considers her actions as necessary and as producing a solution to the difficulty faced by her learner, what is questionable is the extent to which she has truly assisted her learner or contributed to her learner becoming independent and autonomous. Did her actions empower her learner to take charge of her life and to respond to the oppression she faced as recommended by Freire (1970; Mackie, 1980)? Was Malindi's intervention justified in that it secured the participation of her learner in a programme which could eventually empower her to become assertive and able to take action to overcome her problems? Can Malindi intervene in such ways with all of her learners and the people in her community? In the light of the suggestion by Merriam and Nsteane (2008) that a more collective and interdependent positionality may be more appropriate in an African context, it must be asked whether the notion of an independent and autonomous learner (Mezirow, 1991) is an appropriate frame of reference in the HRDD context? These are difficult but important questions as they go to the heart of the issues of ethical and compassionate practice, and also relate to the goals of personal and social transformation in the project. Freire (1970) advocated for a learning environment which allows for critical reflection, dialogic learning and solidarity (relationship building) which fosters taking action. The extent to which personal and social transformation has been attempted and/or achieved in the project is discussed in the next chapter.

The development of deep productive relationships is important in adult basic education as they allow for educators to be sensitized to the lives of their learners and allow for linkages to be established between the class, home and community domains of the learner. Educators show a sense of pride and personal fulfillment with being able to assist their learners with problems that they are experiencing outside of the classroom. In addition to Malindi, whose caring practice was just discussed, Nokthula, Thulani, Khosi and Cosmos all

provided examples of similar practices and emotional engagement. Educators see such action as a way of making their practice meaningful to learners and as a means of attracting other learners. Such actions, in turn, help to reinforce the educator's status within the community. The capacity to assist learners in their day to day struggles is also important in terms of HRDD goals of empowering people to improve their lives through learning and action about human rights, democracy and development. It furthermore creates a rich basis for experiential learning (Wildermeersch, 1992; Le Cornu, 2005), where action taken by the learner with assistance from the educator becomes relevant material to reflect on and learn from. When such actions lead to positive changes in the lives of the learners, as was the case with Zinhle in Chapter Six, other learners can become motivated to also attempt such action.

This case study cannot comment on the extent to which the HRDD project was able to foster positive relationships which facilitated transformative learning and action across the entire project. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, there is some indication that educators were able to develop trusting relationships with their learners which allowed learners to share their personal problems, build a level of solidarity and to engage in some individual action towards resolution of problems. The interviews with learners (discussed in Chapter Six) confirms this finding. Recall Zinhle's approach to the court for assistance and protection from her abusive partner. She stated:

My teacher told me that I have rights as a woman. I should not succumb to abuse from a man. I have rights that I can do something so that he [her partner] can face the law. (Zinhle, 2006)

However, not all relationships between educators and learners were harmonious. In some instances, as in the case of Nonjabulo, educators experienced conflict with their learners. At times such conflict was specific to a particular educator's behaviour as in the case where educators were late for classes or when they did not turn up at all. In these instances, learners asserted their power as a collective and held the educator accountable. In a couple of instances, when learners could not resolve the conflict, they turned

to Tembaletu and reported the educator's misconduct. While this tended to initially aggravate relationships it also caused such educators to become more punctual. Later in the project's life, Tembaletu decided to strengthen the hand of learners by asking them to keep a register which was used to verify educator's claims for payment. This is an interesting realignment of the traditional educator-learner power dynamic. It is also an instance of learner-triggered bureaucratisation and reification (tool-development) within the HRDD project.

A more general relationship problem which all educators experienced, stemmed from a particular design feature of the project. When the income-generating projects (IGPs) were introduced into the HRDD project, learners were told that such IGPs were for them only and that they needed to participate in them, control them and reap any benefits from them. Educators were not allowed to participate in the IGPs for fear that they would use their power as educators to dominate. This project rule was vigorously enforced by the learners and caused educators to feel marginalized from this aspect of the project. Educators were generally of the view that the NGO had erred in this decision as they believed that they could assist learners with their IGPs. They also pointed to the fact that learners had not received training related to managing their IGPs and pointed to IGPs which had failed as evidence of this. Learners had been offered training in the skill aspects of their IGPs such as block-making or sewing. When projects encountered problems, many educators appeared reluctant to intervene. This exclusion of educators from the IGPs seems to have also caused a separation between the IGPs and literacy lessons. While this was not the plan, the strained relationships between educators and learners with regard to the IGPs meant that learners were empowered in terms of project ownership but that important learning opportunities which could emerge from linkages between projects and classes were lost. Interestingly, Malindi who enjoyed extremely good relationships with her learners was able to defy the project rule which excluded educators from participating, and played an active role in the IGP in her community. This income-generating project was also one of the more successful IGPs in terms of income generated and project lifespan.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the educator narratives generated in this case study have opened up a vista on becoming an adult educator and community worker within a community-based project. This chapter adds to such an understanding by portraying educator-development work as emotionally-charged work and as care work. It is worth noting that this dimension of educator work is relatively neglected in academic and policy discourses. Also of significance, is that this dimension of educator work did not feature in the project partners' narrative in Chapter Five. As such, the present chapter has introduced a different and complementary perspective towards an holistic understanding of the HRDD project.

## **Educator-project partner relationships**

Educators' relationships with the project partners in the project such as Tembaletu, CAE and the Embassy appear to be based mostly on formal accountability processes and structured meetings. Little interaction outside of these project systems occurred. The NGO partner in particular was seen as a monitoring body for which educators showed some measure of fear. One educator reported that, if her teaching venue was locked, she would sit outside for the duration of the lesson in case the NGO representative made an unannounced appearance. Welcome's view of the NGO being the "eye that checks that the work is conducted properly and check the projects" conveys this perspective of educators remarkably well. The university partner was seen by educators as mainly a provider of materials and was seen to be most visible to educators for purposes of research.

Educators often report incidents which revealed their marginality from project decision-making. They present themselves as employees of the NGO rather than representatives of a community working in partnership with the NGO and other partners. At one stage in the project (see project partners' narrative in Chapter Five) a plan was developed to constitute a broad-based

'governing council' for the project. It was envisaged that this structure would include educators in the decision-making structure of the project. The donor partner was keen on this broader governance structure as it would democratise the project and allow for community voices to be given more prominence in project planning and management. As discussed in Chapter Five, the proposed council was never implemented. The notion of educators being employees of the project rather than partners was reinforced when the contracts of Cosmos, Nonjabulo and Khosi were not renewed in 2006. When asked about this in follow-up interviews, all three indicated that they did not really understand why their contracts were not renewed. Cosmos surmised that the reason may have been inadequate funding.

## **Relationships amongst educators**

On the basis of educators' accounts of their mutual interactions, educators do not appear to have formed strong personal bonds with their fellow educators. As discussed in the section on communities of practice in the previous chapter, educators indicated that they assisted each other on project related matters and the group thus became a work-based resource for educators and an important resource for new educators. However, in times of personal need, educators report that they turn to other networks such as family, friends and the church for support rather than their fellow educators. It is likely that physical distances and limited opportunities to meet and socialize did not allow for stronger relationships to be formed amongst educators. Each community only had a few educators and their places of work (learning centres) were often some distance from each other. The seven HRDD communities were also spread across the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands with distances of a hundred kilometers or more between some of them. With limited resources, educators have not been able to visit each other or contact each other telephonically outside of project-funded interactions. When they do meet at scheduled HRDD fora they are usually confronted with a full agenda which does not allow much "free time". The distances that they have to travel

for such meetings, using public transport, also creates a very short day for interaction. The need for unstructured, free time for educators to share and socialize could assist in creating stronger work and social bonds amongst educators to the benefit of the project and individual educators.

## **Educator relationships with the broader community**

As discussed earlier the extended family system is a form of bonding social capital (Putnam, 2000) which has brought some relief and refuge for educators. However, due to fractured family systems, labour migration and displacement caused by political violence, educators have often had to sever ties of support built up around them. Some have ended up in communities where they are relative newcomers. This has meant that their networks are also not as strong as they could have been if they had not been forced into such nomadic lifestyles. This is an understanding only revealed by adopting an in-depth and critical gaze at educator's lives. Such a perspective stands in contrast to the project partners' perspective (in Chapter Five) which represented the educator cohort as a homogenous group of community-based, novice adult educators.

Educators' critical remembrances trouble the generalised notion of recruiting "community-based educators" in the HRDD project and shows up the assumption that all "community-based educators" have strong, longstanding connections with their communities, in other words, that they possess considerable social capital which could benefit the project. The level of bridging social capital, that is social capital outside of the family system (Putnam, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Knudsen et al., 2005) which educators possess and can deploy to their benefit and to the benefit of the project is actually relatively low when compared to the capital within the family system (bonding capital). The fractured and transient nature of their family systems have not allowed for some educators to have built adequate bridging social capital. Orvil and Khosi appear to be the exceptions in this regard, both having

returned to the places where their families had well-established ties with the surrounding community.

Forging both formal and informal relationships with the broader community is a necessary condition for HRDD activities to take root and grow. Over the years, several design features of the project have attempted to develop links between the project and the wider community. The emergence of educator-community worker identities is also related to this aspect of the project's goals. Part of the original and ongoing planning for the project emphasized the goal of embedding the project within the life and systems of the communities. The rationale or goal of this was about project relevance, ownership and sustainability.

On the basis of educators' experiences of building relationships with community structures and representatives, several observations can be made with regard to this important objective of the HRDD project. Firstly, relationship building is an ongoing process, not an event or step in the project design. The duration of the process varies and is subject to characteristics of the individual and the community context. Individual characteristics of the educator include gender, age, confidence, status and perceived political affiliation. Important community context factors include political stability, governance, authority and prior experience of development projects in the community. Secondly, a range of types of relationships are required and each type may require different strategies and capabilities. Thirdly, the relationships between the educator and the community prior to the HRDD project can influence project-related relationships positively or negatively. The latter can be treated as the educator's social capital prior to their involvement in the HRDD project. It is noteworthy that in recruiting educators, emphasis was placed on the fact that they lived within the communities targeted by the project. As discussed above, some fairly generalised criteria and assumptions appear to have influenced educator recruitment. The accounts of educators indicate that a more nuanced understanding of each educator's position within the community and their pre-HRDD status within the community are required. Such positioning will be shown to have significant influence on how educators function within the

project. As illustrated in the previous chapter and given all the factors influencing relationships, the educators in the HRDD project vary in the extent to which they have been able to forge ties with their communities.

To illustrate the influence of different combinations of personal and contextual factors influencing relationships, the positions of Orvil and Malindi will be compared. Before discussing the differences between Orvil and Malindi in terms of how they relate to their communities, it would help to note some similarities in their lives which are relevant to this discussion. Both Orvill and Malindi have lived outside of their home communities when displaced by political violence. Both educators also lost both of their parents while they were still very young. Orvil and Malindi are also deeply involved in the activities of the churches they attend.

Orvil has substantial status within the community having served on many of its structures and having been involved in numerous previous development projects. He has close ties with both systems of governance in his community. He enjoys good relations with the tribal authority leader and the local government structure. Orvil eventually became the local government representative for his community. These relationships are a source of power for Orvil which he uses within his HRDD work. Orvil can be seen to bring substantial social capital to his HRDD work. He is part of influential networks and has developed crucial skills in networking and information brokering from his previous involvement in development work. As a man, despite his relative youthfulness, he appears to have fewer difficulties with relating to authority figures and to playing leadership roles. Orvil is at the centre of things in his community. He is married and has his own home. He has returned to work in a community where he and his family were well-established. Orvil's relative success is a result of better bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Knudsen et al., 2005) which he enjoys in both private and project domains. His gender is clearly a major part of such beneficial positioning and power.

Malindi, on the other hand, is a young, single woman who lives with her friends. The length of her involvement in the HRDD project matches that of Orvil. Malindi enjoys good relationships with her learners but has few ties with her community outside of her church. She does not have a relationship with the governance structures of her community. As a young woman, her opportunities for leadership roles are minimal. Even when a government position for an ABET manager in her area arose, she was unable to secure this despite being the longest serving HRDD educator in the area. The DOE representative claims that Malindi did not apply for the position and Malindi claims that she was not invited to apply as were educators in other areas. Malindi's lack of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000; Campbell, 2003; Knudsen et al., 2005), reinforced by her position as a woman restricts her mobility, status and functioning within the HRDD project. Apart from her church membership, Malindi appears to be considerably marginal in relation to her community. It is quite possible that Malindi, who does not live in her own family homestead, is not being seen as a full member of the community in which she works and has adopted as her own.

The differences between Orvil and Malindi's positions in their communities seems to be a product of multiple factors which include gender, family status, and previous development-related activity and networking. All of these factors influence the amounts of social capital which they bring to their HRDD work in terms of the relationships and networks established and the trust, coordination and information flows inherent in such relationships. A lot of what each of these educators can achieve in their HRDD work is shaped by such bridging social capital. The sense that bridging social capital is necessary for "getting ahead" (de Souza Briggs, cited by Knudsen et al., 2005, p.7) is very evident in the comparison between how Orvill and Malindi negotiated the HRDD-community relational space. This comparison also highlights the distinctly gendered character of bridging social capital within a patriarchal context.

The challenge that this situation of variable social capital raises for project planners is whether to recruit individuals who enjoy high levels of social capital and status within their communities. While selecting greater numbers of such

individuals into a project may bring benefits of the type which Orvil brings, it could possibly also introduce other less desirable consequences. Leadership, power and status in a patriarchal society is strongly gendered. Selecting individuals with high pre-existing social capital may introduce disproportionate numbers of men and thus reinforce gender disparity and marginalization of women in the development sphere. In a project such as the HRDD, where the large majority of learners are women, such a gender profile could be detrimental to the learning endeavor and broader transformation goals.

Mansuri and Rao (2004) have noted the problem of *elite capture* in development work, where more powerful sections of a community, capture large proportions of project benefits. Actively privileging individuals with greater social capital will favour elite capture. There is a need for serious attention within the HRDD project and more generally within society to the gendered nature of leadership and power within communities. What impact can one expect from a project like the HRDD, with a small number of change agents, on the well-entrenched system of patriarchy in which it is immersed?

While personal social capital can be seen to vary amongst educators, their narratives painted a picture of extremely low social capital within the communities in which they work. Of all the common themes in educators' narratives, their accounts of political violence and divisions within their communities were amongst the strongest. The narratives of all seven educators conveyed a consistent message of fractured and divided communities, lacking in trust and cooperation. Learner narratives also concurred with such an assessment of community relations. Given the strength of this theme and its links with the HRDD project's foundational ideas on human rights, democracy, development and social change, detailed focal attention is paid to the political division of KwaZulu-Natal in historical and contemporary terms. Once the condition of political violence has been discussed as a dominant feature of educators' (and learners') lives and the immediate project context, it will be theorised in terms of "fractured communities" by contrasting the notion of *fracture* in the HRDD context with Coleman's (1988; 1990) concept of "*closure*" in Social Capital theory.

## **Remembrances of political violence in KwaZulu-Natal**

People were being slaughtered there, just like goats.  
I don't really know how I escaped. (Welcome)

The province of KwaZulu-Natal, home to the HRDD project, is a province marked by political division and violent power struggles. During the 1980s and early 1990s, this division manifested in some of the worst violence in South Africa. The main protagonists in this conflict were the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), supported by the apartheid state, and the United Democratic Front (UDF) associated with the then banned African National Congress (ANC) (Aitchison, 2003c; Aitchison, 2003d; Jeffery, 1997). Currently, the division only occasionally leads to violence (like during election time), but tends to permeate all aspects of civic life in more enduring and subtle ways. The history of political violence has left a seemingly permanent scar on communities and individuals which is visible in how people relate to each other, value each other and negotiate daily activities within the HRDD project and the rest of their lives.

The violence is therefore not just a historical, background feature, but has implications for contemporary life and is therefore very much at the foreground of people's lives and psyches (John & Rule, 2006). The stories told by HRDD educators about their lives and experiences in the project allows for these multiple dimensions of the violence to be heard and understood. The history of violence and its present day effects feature significantly in the stories of all seven educators in the sample and has thus been identified by educators as a significant frame for viewing the HRDD project. For many of the educators the violence appears as a critical event in their lives and has shaped much of who they are and what they do or cannot do in the HRDD project. As such, KwaZulu-Natal's history of political violence emerges as a key theme in the narratives in this study and is therefore presented as an important frame of reference for understanding the project. Beyond its significance as a remembrance, the ongoing impact of the violence warrants detailed analysis

and discussion. Such a discussion and theorization follows. The manner in which this feature of the KwaZulu-Natal context shapes the HRDD practice is explored in depth at the end of the chapter, using the story of Cosmos.

### **Painful memories of loss, displacement and trauma for educators**

Most of the educators in the study were directly affected by the political violence either through attacks on their family members and homes or through threats to their own lives. Some lost family members, their homes and other possessions in the violence. A number of the educators had to flee their homes and take refuge in other communities, sometimes repeatedly. The experiences of loss and displacement have been traumatic for educators and their loved ones.

Welcome speaks of the loss of four relatives which caused his family to seek refuge in another area. When violence began in their new community they decided to return to their original community, where he subsequently worked as an HRDD educator. On their return they found that their home had been taken over by another family and they were allocated a building site which was less suitable in comparison to their original one. He says:

Violence, hey, it was really very bad ... yes, it was very bad really, because four members of my family died ... my uncles and cousins. That disturbed us a lot, as we even relocated from [community 1]. At [community 2] then, I also nearly died. Another organization spotted me having not attended a meeting. The following day when I was walking from school, they stopped me and asked me, "Why did you not go to that meeting?" ... I said, "I did go". They said, "Do not lie". They took out ... guns. They said, "You are fooling us, why are you lying?"... Then they asked, "What party are you"? I said, "I am not yet in parties".... Then they said, "No, go home and think carefully what you are then come back and tell us". On that very day I left, because I could see my

life was, my days are over. People were being slaughtered there, just like goats. I don't really know how I escaped.

Nokthula also recounts the traumatic loss and displacement caused by violence. She too, was questioned about her political allegiance and had her life threatened. A family friend who intervened was later killed. Her story reveals the gendered nature of the violence and the particular difficulties which young women faced during times of violence. She says:

We left all our belongings, we did not even manage to come with a piece of our belongings. We only managed to bring our clothing. It was common during the time of violence that people would force you to be their girlfriend, expecting you to do their wishes ... I heard when he [family friend] came to check the situation at my home they killed him.

### **Disrupted schooling and community life**

One of the strongest themes in the narratives of educators is the disruption caused to their schooling by the violence. Several educators moved to different locations in search of a peaceful area to continue their schooling and sometimes had to move a second time. The change of schools meant that some educators were forced to take new subjects which they had not studied before. The disruption and trauma of the violence had negative effects on their performance, with some failing for the first time in their school careers. Some educators view the disruptions caused by the violence as having longer-term effects in the ways it intersected with poverty to create a serious barrier to their post-schooling education and ambitions.

Nokthula recalls:

We stayed in our shack ... behind the Stadium... violence erupted. Where I was staying....whenever I went to school there were these boys who were always asking me why I was not coming to them when

they were calling me. They accused me of being anti-ANC... One day they decided to necklace me with a car tyre ...fortunately there was a person who was my mother's friend...that person saw me....the painful part is that eventually they killed that person. My mother decided that we should leave ... since she was about to lose me too. We came here ...in 1992. It was difficult for me at school. I think my mind was disturbed because I did not pass. I repeated ... Eventually I passed standard 9 until I found myself passing standard ten.

Malindi's schooling was likewise disrupted by the violence. Her family moved twice and her high school education was completed in three different schools.

Orvil's schooling follows a similar pattern. In his case, the violence also disrupted his post-schooling education:

I started school at [community 1] ... then I went to ... [community 2]. Whilst I was at [community 2], the political violence occurred in the whole province of KwaZulu-Natal. Then I couldn't finish my matric there. Then I came back home. I spent most of the year at home, then I went to the new school in my area ... That is where I completed my matric [grade 12]. Then after that I spent another year at home. The following year I went to ... College of Education. There too, I couldn't finish a year since violence erupted ... I couldn't proceed. Then I came back home and stayed there. Then came a chance ... when Tembaletu introduced the programme of teaching adults.

### **Deeply divided communities**

As indicated earlier, the history of the violence is not just a background contextual factor in the lives of educators. The violence, embedded in personal remembrance, is a sad and painful experience which is seen as being critical to who the educators are, what they have in material and educational terms (economic and cultural capital), in how they relate to those

around them and in what they can do as citizens and educators. The violence continues to influence their present lives. The violence thus has everyday implications and features in the foreground of the HRDD stage. The stories told by educators of their violence-racked lives are significant for understanding their roles, learning and identities within the HRDD project.

Several educators spoke of the absence of trust and solidarity in the communities in which they conduct their HRDD work and of how these conditions hamper their efforts. For many, they not only deal with the general barriers which bedevil ABET such as attitudinal barriers, financial barriers etcetera, they also have to contend with ongoing suspicion and fear about their motives and the purpose of their work. Their political allegiance is often questioned and this constrains their efforts. The political tensions make recruitment and retention of learners, described by educators as a serious challenge (see Chapter Seven), extremely fraught. The levels of trust and solidarity, vital for effective HRDD implementation, is muted in a context of political division and historically violent power struggles. As indicated in the quotations which follow, the history of violence and political division has created a climate which hampers development. This has impacted on the level of social capital in the HRDD communities.

Khosi explains the need for a peace committee in her community:

I think what creates a necessity for a peace committee here ... like in other areas is because there were wars when we grew up. People always resorted to violence whenever there were problems to be resolved, with guns. You see? Therefore a peace committee would bridge the gap that opened during that time.

She later explained how the political divide and suspicion affects her HRDD work:

Since I am under another Inkosi [traditional leader] there are people of this area who do not understand what I am doing here ... Some people

have a tendency of thinking that I work for political parties. For instance, one man said that he thought that I was working under [party A].

Cosmos also talks of the political divisions and power struggles which hamper the work of development committees in his community:

Our committee is not working ... People focus on the politics ... because the members of our committees are not of the same party ... you find that I come from A, another from B, another comes from C. So we hate each other. Right here in the committee, so where is progress if we hate each other? We must love each other first, then we can work together. We can't work together if we hate each other ... Here, it is mostly politics that divides people. Only politics I see as a stumbling block to development. It is just it. There is no harmony.

The HRDD project encourages relationships with community structures and development-related fora. However, the history of violence and current power struggles make it difficult for educators to forge such relationships in the context of their HRDD work. Nokthula explains her difficulty in this regard:

... most of the time I am involved here in ABET. I can no longer manage to attend community meetings. Another thing is that it will always be in my heart that I did not have a good experience with organizations. When I got to [community 2], it was [party A] that ill-treated me. In [community 1] I was ill-treated by [party B]. So I will just stick with church, because I have never been attacked there.

Nokthula has managed to develop a good relationship with the traditional leader in her area and gets his support for her work but has experienced enormous difficulty in establishing a relationship with the ward councillor (the local government representative for her area). The councillor has repeatedly avoided her and fails to attend meetings. Nokthula's explanation for the councillor's behaviour is:

Maybe she thought that I am here to take her job. Sometimes the councillor, when they hear that there is someone who is working with the community, she just tells herself that maybe you are against her according to political affiliation or you want to take the job that she is doing in the community.

Orvil also reveals distrust of the local councillor. His statement below also points to how community work generates the kind of social capital which can be hijacked for political ends:

Ja, we live in times of transformation that involve councillors. For someone to rule better in his area he is always looking for people to use to achieve that. To me, specifically, I have been used by someone who used my achievements to have a better image in the community.

Welcome is likewise skeptical of the politicians' influence in discouraging learner participation, saying:

Because they [councillors] are the ones who want to come up with everything. They don't want somebody else to come with his own idea. They are the ones who want to come up with everything. If somebody comes up with other things they think he is going to overpower them... I wish that maybe politics should be put aside for a while in order to carry on with development.

Nonjabulo has experienced similar difficulty in trying to garner the support of the local councilor:

I have tried several times to invite her to meetings but she does not come. I am not sure how one can make her to come to meetings. If you invite her to a meeting she would say she is coming, but she would not come. I would be lying if I said that I know what she has done for this community.

Nonjabulo also spoke of how the location of her learning centre affected the participation of learners:

They [learners] started at 18:00 and finish at 20:00. That was problematic since this school is in isolation, near houses for white people. White people do not just come and help if they hear you screaming for help, you see? There was a time when people were killed coming from school ... if you had an enemy he/she could just ambush [you]. So it had to be closed during those days.

The depth of the scars left by the violence has meant that even peace related activities and committees are ineffective because of suspicion and fear. Two educators spoke of how peace processes in their communities have been thwarted by political divides. Welcome says:

At home they are not happy with working with [the peace committee] because of [political] parties. When you are in [a peace committee], you are considered as being in a particular party. Yet [a peace committee] was not started as a party. But what causes that is that many, the majority of people [in peace committees] are in a certain party. Now if you are in it [the peace committee] you appear to be the party, whilst you are not that party.

Likewise, Khosi explains the lack of progress with the peace committee in her area:

No, it is not biased. What makes it look like it is affiliated is because most people who started it were [party B] members, but there were also non-[party B] people. When [the peace committee] had just been formed, it suggested that the government should be approached so that a technikon or technical college should be built. But that idea was resisted by those who believed that such a college would be for [party B] members only, you see? ... Even if the government was trying to bring some developments, some people resisted them on grounds that

they were brought by [party B]. Those are things that made me withdraw from [the peace committee] ...

## **Relationships in post-conflict communities: depleted social capital**

Clearly, the problem of political division and power struggles dominate the narratives of educators (and of learners as well) when they speak about their lives and work. There is a sense that the physical violence of the past remains as long-term socio-psychic violence and manifests in division, suspicion and lack of trust. The experience of violence has been a critical event with enduring and multiple ramifications. For the HRDD project and the work of educators specifically, the violence and division has to be seen as a central frame of reference. Ironically, the violence and current division run against project goals of fostering human rights and democracy and, are also counter-productive to community development. It is also noteworthy that this major theme highlighted through educator and learner narratives did not feature in the project partner's gaze or narrative in Chapter Five.

There is a major incongruence between the HRDD project's goals and the political climate in which the project exists. The project seeks to develop and, reinforce productive relationships in contexts where relationships are fragile and potentially life-threatening. In Social Capital theory productive relationships and networks based on trust and norms of reciprocity are beneficial to development. Social capital in development is attributed to the social glue it brings in the form of trust, reciprocity, coordination, information sharing and control (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990). These features of social capital make development work easier, more productive and more sustainable. While the project benefited from reasonable amounts of social capital amongst the project partners (discussed in Chapter Five), the lack of social capital in the broader community context can be seen to be hampering several project efforts. The history of political violence can be seen to have

drained communities of the social capital needed for development action and social change. It is in this regard that this study suggests the notion of *depleted social capital* as a significant characteristic of the post-conflict status of the HRDD context.

Bourdieu (1986, p.51) defined social capital as:

the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - or in other words - to membership in a group - which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

As indicated earlier, several educators report that they are treated with suspicion by authority figures in their community. Their political allegiance and motives are called into question. In the light of Bourdieu's conception of social capital, educators are lamenting the lack of "the backing of the collectivity-owned capital" and the absence of the "credential which entitles them to credit" in the social sense. This absence of a Bourdieuan credential to perform their work appears to have similar negative effects in the lack of legitimacy within Communities of Practice theory, as discussed in the previous chapter. These context-imposed deficiencies pose a serious challenge to educators working with a human rights, democracy and development agenda.

Smith (2001, p.10) noted that social capital has the effect of "enabling people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric". In the HRDD project, however, educators and learners repeatedly report that their efforts are not supported if political leaders in their community cannot show that it is the leaders who are bringing such initiatives to the community. Two educators spoke of the difficulties they have experienced in getting an audience with the local councillor, both referring to such leaders as avoiding them or "running away from them". These findings highlight the importance of considerations of socio-political climate and social

capital in planning and implementing development work in post-conflict societies. Did the HRDD project planners give sufficient attention to the fractured nature of communities and the disarming effect of power struggles? With respect to the goal of getting people to practice democratic citizenship in a micro project context as preparation for a broader community and societal context, was such a project goal realistic in such a fractured context?

The extent to which the condition of being a *post-conflict society* with ongoing power struggles shapes project planning in South Africa, and particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, warrants greater careful scrutiny. The findings of this study point to the need for tapping into the lived experiences of project actors when making such assessments rather than the more popular discourse which speaks of freedom, democracy, ubuntu and a rainbow nation. The findings also call for a serious reassessment regarding expectations of change agents who have to work in divided contexts, especially when they themselves have had traumatic experiences of some of the most devastating consequences of such conflict. The important questions that these findings raise are:

- What levels of social change can one realistically expect educators to facilitate in such conditions of a post-conflict society?
- Can educators who do not themselves feel free, work successfully to facilitate empowerment and freedom with their learners?
- What levels of transformation can one reasonably expect in an oppressive and violent context?

Educators appear to have achieved some measure of success in developing relationships with their learners which promote learning and personal transformation. However, the socio-political climate of division and fear, and lack of social capital appears to have limited their potential to effect broader social transformation. The next chapter returns to this important issue when discussing personal and social transformation.

Freire's (1970) discussion of learners building solidarity and taking action to challenge forms of oppression tends to be premised on situations where there are clear distinctions between the oppressed and the oppressor. In such contexts the educators are advised to side with the oppressed in fostering reflection and action against an external oppressor or system of oppression, for example, a government, employer or racial/ethnic group. The HRDD context, however, lacks such clear demarcations between oppressor and oppressed. The divisions in the HRDD context run along political lines where within a community and even a family, party political affiliation is not uniform. In terms of the levels of mistrust, suspicion, lack of cooperation and sabotage of development efforts, it is the community itself that is often both oppressed and oppressor. Freire (1970) refers to the internalization of oppression where the oppressed become oppressors, but this too does not seem to capture the HRDD context where an external oppressor cannot be identified. Apart from local councillors, who can be seen to represent government, the forms of oppression prevalent in the HRDD communities are enacted and sustained by fellow community members. The laws of the country and the public discourse are characterized by the language of reconciliation and development, yet the lived realities as evident in repeated comments from the educators, are characterized by division and low intensity political strife which hampers development. John and Rule (2006) see this as a difference between what they call liftground and underground discourses, where the positive public discourse promoted by the state and sections of the media (liftground) stands in sharp contrast to or contradicts the private lived discourses of people (underground).

The work of the educators and their attempts to develop relationships in order to further project goals are severely hampered by political division, power struggles and fear which arises from remembrances of violence. These are fertile conditions for a culture of silence rather than dialogue (Freire, 1970). This reality has to be factored into the conceptualization and design of development projects in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly projects which rely on community-based workers as agents of change. Such workers are often sought, as in the case of the HRDD project, because of their local knowledge

and presumed social capital (community ties). However, such assumptions in project planning are in need of careful scrutiny. A closer examination of Cosmos' practice, provided at the end of this chapter, reveals how his personal sense of context and life experience shapes his practice in the HRDD project. Cosmos' inability to support his learners in asserting their rights as women contributes to a culture of silence on gender equality in a strong patriarchy.

### **A relational space of fracture rather than closure**

As indicated in Chapter Two, Coleman's (1988; 1990) concept of *closure* has been seen as a useful concept in Social Capital theory (Portes, 1998; Burt, 2001). Closure according to Coleman refers to the density of a structure or network which can be beneficial for social and economic development. Closure offers a useful lens for theorizing the post-conflict, divided conditions in the HRDD communities.

How is closure a source of social capital for members of the network or community? Closure, as the density of relations within a structure, helps to cement expectations, norms, obligations and trustworthiness amongst members of the structure or community. In this way, closure can be treated as a community asset which can be acquired and grown. This is similar to the notion of *solidarity* advocated by Freire (1970) and also akin to the collective energy and symbolic power associated with social movements. However, closure can also be weakened and destroyed! The violence and power struggles recorded in this study indicate that the latter has occurred in the KwaZulu-Natal context of the HRDD project. As community relations weaken, in the manner described by educators and learners in this study, social capital can be seen as having dissipated. In terms of Coleman's view of closure, a community's social capital is greater when there is greater inter-connectedness or density of relationships. Closure carries the benefits of

better information sharing, increased trustworthiness and collective sanctions, all of which contribute to social capital and benefit community development. However, in the development context of the HRDD project, the level of disconnectedness or what I have termed *fracture* in his study, denotes a distinct lack of closure! The earlier-introduced notion of *depleted social capital* stems from the condition of *fracture* and is presented in this study as the antithesis of *closure*.

This chapter, like the chapter on learners, portrays HRDD communities as relational spaces of fracture rather than closure. If thought of as a position on a spectrum ranging from fracture to closure, the HRRD communities would be located at the fracture end of the spectrum, denoting a space where education and development activity takes longer than those at the opposite end of the spectrum, and are more fraught. This is because such a space is short on trust, coordination and efficient information exchanges, all those characteristics associated with closure. In this space of fracture, educators and learners become frustrated and fearful, and their energies are constantly sapped. The consequence of this is a slowing of the pace of development and change. The HRDD project has the potential to move communities along the spectrum but its reach, lifespan, resources and influence appear to be too limited to make a meaningful and sustained impact. Could social movements, by comparison, hold greater promise in terms of their size and ability to foster greater closure? Should projects like the HRDD project play a brokering role between communities and social movements and other progressive organizations? These questions are pursued in the next chapter of this study.

## **Dynamic interactions between context, life experiences and educator practice – a deeper gaze into the story of Cosmos**

This final section of the chapter provides an in-depth analysis of how one educator, Cosmos, negotiates the relational space of the project at the level of pedagogy. This focus reveals the dynamic interactions between context, life

experiences and educators' practices. It also reveals how Cosmos' practice is shaped (structured) and negotiated (enacted). The example of how Cosmos makes meaning of his role as an educator illustrates the value of a deeper understanding of educators' lives and their critical remembrances when considering educator development and practices. It furthermore points to the importance of seeing educator development and practices as socially situated and context-bound.

As indicated, the context of educators' lives and the critical events in their life histories are not just background features. They continue to shape educators' lives, beliefs and practices and are thus very much at the foreground of experience (John & Rule, 2006). At a theoretical level, such shaping could fruitfully be explored in terms of Mezirow's discussion of "frames of reference" (1991), Freire's discussion of "worldviews" and "limit situations" (1970) and possibly also Bourdieu's discussion of "habitus" (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002; Dison, 2004). Cosmos' story demonstrates how his early life experiences and his context frames his HRDD practice and how he makes meaning of his practice. Cosmos' practice further illustrates how powerful affective learning during his life has shaped his understanding and negotiation of the HRDD curriculum.

As presented in the brief profile of Cosmos in Chapter Seven, the first interview with Cosmos was strongly framed by the painful experience of his early life (pre-HRDD) and the consequences of his parents' divorce and his father's polygamy. This led to his rejection by his father and is seen as the reason for his inability to study further and the lack of resources in his home. Cosmos sees himself as exceptionally bright and above his fellow schoolmates in educational terms. This potential was frustrated by his family and financial circumstances.

Cosmos's story about his life and experiences in the HRDD project provides a good example of how frames of reference, shaped by life experiences prior to his involvement in the HRDD project, have influenced his practice within the project. His reflections on the critical events of his father divorcing his mother,

rejecting him as a child and supporting only his first wife, reveals that these life events constituted a significant trauma for Cosmos. These events have influenced Cosmos' perspectives on divorce, polygamy and women's rights which present some ambiguity and contradictions when lined up against project goals. On women's rights and gender equality, Cosmos believes that teaching women to assert their equal status in the home could lead to domestic problems and divorce. He believes that men will not accept this. He has therefore resolved this tension by teaching women to believe that they are equal but to keep this to themselves. He explains:

When we teach our learners about human rights, Ja, even in the books they say people are all equal. But people here, especially the men, don't accept that. They [men] say, "I can't be equal to you, because you left your home to live with me and I paid a lobola [bride price] for you. So you are not equal to me". So that is something they don't accept. So we have, we have now advised our learners not to use that right, because it causes a split between them in their marriage,

What Cosmos appears to be attempting with his learners, is information sharing and a muted form of personal transformation which neither allows for action nor contributes to social transformation. From his own experience as a child, Cosmos has learnt that divorce is not a good thing. He does not want his learners to face the prospect of divorce because of what he may teach them. This is a tension between the text and context of the HRDD curriculum. What Cosmos' experience of his parents' divorce adds to the curriculum equation is a subtext which causes him to believe that educating women about their rights should not lead to divorce. Such subtext features, the ways in which educators mediate the text and context with their own life-world understandings is often invisible in educational projects and not available to the planning processes. Critical remembrances about educators' lives makes such subtext features visible. This allows for educators' personal experiences and understandings to be surfaced and considered in project planning and educator development processes.

From a feminist perspective, the above-mentioned practice of Cosmos could be criticised for separating the pedagogical from the political. Walters and Manicom (1996, p. 7) argue that in feminist popular education, "The pedagogical choices implement the political objectives. The pedagogical cannot be separated from the political, unless popular education is to be reduced to a series of formats, games and techniques".

Some of the subtexts align with project goals and values, others jar with them. There is a further example of strong subtexts features which Cosmos brings to his class, which jars with project goals. The community context in which Cosmos teaches has a recent history of deep political divisions which manifested in violence over a number of years. Political identities are strong in his context, perhaps stronger than identities of educator and learner. The learning environment and curriculum faces challenges and doubts regarding its political motives. To reduce the overt politicization of the classroom, Cosmos has requested that his learners not wear the T-shirts of their political organizations when attending class. He explains:

So people who support [party A] here, they think we are preaching to our learners to join [party B]. So now we have realised that there is a need for us as teachers to tell our learners that they must not wear [party] t-shirts in our classes, or even in the street because people think we, we teach them to wear those things they are wearing ... So, we are very, very committed to teach. We are advising them not to wear t-shirts in our classes, even in the street, unless they are going to meet their comrades in rallies or in meetings.

In a project which aims to foster tolerance, respect for diversity, rights to freedom of association and speech, Cosmos' actions could be seen to be counter-productive and not serving the democratic goals of the project. However, in a context where an educator has personal experience of people being killed because of their political affiliation and where his own political identity is under scrutiny it can be expected that he would not want to take many risks, irrespective of the importance of these within the curriculum text.

It is worth recalling that Cosmos was identified as one of the transient newcomers in the educator ranks. This transient status is likely to have influenced how he has come to understand his practice and the levels of engagement and change that he could facilitate and support amongst his learners.

Cosmos' story highlights the importance of focusing not just on the practice and its reifications such as the "official HRDD curriculum" presented in Chapter Five but also on the actors in the practice. Mutch (2003) has pointed to the neglect in the literature of life histories of actors and the dispositions they bring to the community of practice. This study endorses such critique and in some measure, through critical remembrances and rich narratives of HRDD actors, addresses this neglect. In doing so we are able to better understand Cosmos and his practice, and we may consider the tension in the multiple identities he holds. Kilgore and Bloom (2002) also note that in contexts of crisis, the "fragmented self is a more appropriate organizing structure" (p.123). Cosmos has a pre-HRDD identity of a young man disowned by his father in a polygamous and fractured family system, as well as an HRDD educator identity with enactments of attempting transformative learning about rights and gender equality. Such identities are difficult to blend into a unified sense of self. Through Cosmos' in-depth narrative we can observe multiple identities and more importantly, we can observe how life history and context can blunt the transformative edge of the HRDD project!

### **The value of depth perspectives in a case study**

Taking an in-depth look at educator practices via Malindi's and Cosmos' narratives provided significant insights into educator practices. Emotional engagement and traumatic life histories feature in these cases as necessary dimensions to understanding educator practices. Malindi's account of an example of her work relating to a central human rights issue about gender

equality reveals a practice involving deep emotional engagement, care and some action.

Moving on to a further in-depth examination of educator practices, we see how Cosmos negotiates the learning-action dimensions of his practice. His account, also on a central human rights issue about gender equality, is quite different, involving reflection (including painful self-reflection) and some dialogue but it does not lead to action. In fact, Cosmos' practice purposely discourages and disables transformative social action.

## Conclusion

This chapter examined a particular aspect of educators' experiences within the HRDD project by focusing on how educators negotiated multiple relationships within the project and community contexts. Social Capital theory offered a fruitful way for theorising educators' negotiation of what has been called the relational space of the project. Personal narratives and critical remembrances provide insights into levels of social capital which preceded the project. Project work also generates new and different forms of capital for educators.

The chapters ended with a special focus on the ways in which the political violence in the province persistently punctures educators' narratives about life and the project. Educators' experiences of the violence are offered as both a background and foreground frame to understanding the project and what it can achieve. Assessments of communities characterised by fracture rather than closure demand focal attention in South Africa's development and political arenas.

The focus on empathy and care in learning to do and become an educator-community worker points to the emotionally-charged character of such work. The focus on experiences of violence, fracture and power struggles point to

the politically-charged character of such work. These affective and political dimensions of community-based adult education are somewhat neglected in academic and policy discourses.

The next chapter provides a conclusion to the study and introduces an emergent conceptual model.

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Concluding and emergent perspectives: many windows, few doors ...**

Adult education in the South has always been trapped between  
meagre attention and resources and overly ambitious expectations  
(Torres, 2004)

#### **Introduction**

In reviewing the multiple perspectives of the HRDD project presented over the past four chapters, this final chapter will summarise, highlight and conclude the main findings and theorisation of the case study. It therefore adopts gazes of looking back, looking deeper and looking forward. There are three sections to this chapter. It begins with reflections on the methodology employed in this study and considers some of the exceptional views and understandings of the HRDD project achieved because of the adoption of case study methodology.

The second section of the chapter is framed by the earlier-introduced metaphors of *windows* and *doors*. This section considers several *windows* which the HRDD project has provided for examining adult education and development in South Africa. The rich discussions in the preceding chapters show that the HRDD project offers many excellent windows for viewing and understanding learning and development in remote and marginalised parts of post-apartheid South Africa. The preceding chapters also point to some *doors* which learners and educators identify as passages between lives of struggle and hopeful futures. In contrasting these metaphors of windows and doors, the implication is that the project is a rich source of windows. The project, however, does not appear to offer many doors for people in HRDD communities.

The metaphor of *windows* employed in this case study is similar to the metaphor of *lens* introduced by Crowther, Martin and Shaw (1999) and employed by Walters (2005; 2006) who see a case as serving dual purposes of being both a *mirror* which reflects certain phenomena and a *lens* through which to examine such phenomena. Drawing on the metaphor of the *window* which arose in Chapter Five of this study, this chapter highlights the various windows or ways in which the HRDD project serves as a lens through which to examine phenomena such as learning, educator development, project management and social change. The HRDD project also serves as a mirror reflecting and illuminating key challenges facing adult education in KwaZulu-Natal in its early years of democracy, a period of hope following decades of debilitating Apartheid social engineering and a decade of devastating and fracturing civil violence. The most powerful of these reflections in the present case study are poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and a post-conflict society.

The final section of the chapter introduces an emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project. In addition to heuristic and dialectic properties (discussed later), the model contributes to synthesis in this study by allowing for an integrated discussion of project goals (as expressed in Chapter Five), theoretical framework (as expressed in Chapter Two) and case study findings (as expressed in Chapters Five to Nine). In discussing the characteristics of case study research, Sturman (cited by Bassey, 1999, p.26) identifies its “focused attention on the holistic nature of cases and the need for the study of them to investigate the relationships between their component parts.” The emergent conceptual module addresses this concern with holism in case study research (Bassey, 1999; Stake, 1995).

## **What views of the HRDD project has case study methodology made possible?**

A case study has allowed for a view of the HRDD project as an interconnected, complex system of activities. In the busy life of NGO work, the

whole is often blurred by foci on particular aspects of a project and by regular crises and challenges faced. The threads between project activities such as ABET, income generation projects, livelihood projects, resource centres, educator training, materials development and research can become less visible, particularly as the organisational identity of the project grows and divisions of labour, hierarchy and bureaucracy strengthen. A case study has allowed for historical and contemporary linkages between project activities to be brought to the fore and for the project to be seen as a whole. A further blurring which this case study has refocused, relates to project genesis and to the confluence of ideological currents in which it arose. The case study has illuminated the dynamism and liveliness of the HRDD project as it flexibly and creatively responded to contextual and ideological forces. In these ways, aim 1 of this study which was, "To understand the genesis and processes of change in the HRDD project in relation to its wider context", has been addressed.

Related to this first opportunity, a case study has made possible a public record of a form of adult education practice that lies at the margins of educational work. NGOs rarely have the opportunity to convert their numerous functional records and documents, compiled over several years, into a single comprehensive account. This case study, through document analysis combined with personal narratives and perspectives, has attempted to convey such an account. In doing so, aim three of this study which was, "To construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory", has been met.

The case study has allowed for the practices and identities which constitute the HRDD project to be viewed against the broader layers of contexts that include KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. Here, the situated understanding of educational project work is well served by the case study approach.

A particularly important research perspective which the case study approach makes possible is for the fuller lives of key actors to be considered in relation

to contexts, history and project activity. This is a perspective which is not unique to case study research. Life history and ethnographic research also allow for such perspectives. However, within a case study, there is the opportunity to relate, integrate and contrast such a perspective with other perspectives on context and project activity. In the present study a depth perspective, achieved in part through critical remembrances, was a somewhat neglected perspective in the project. The project documents focussed on project activity, as most projects do, and thus came to see project participants and their lives as parts of the project. Project reports (internal documents) and reports about the project (external evaluations etcetera) tend to focus on perceived value and progress in projects. Over the years, these statements and records come to constitute an official project history and discourse. The HRDD project has such a historical record, much of which was presented in Chapter five. This study attempted to go beyond and beneath such a project partners' gaze. It attempted to tap into the lives and lived dimensions of the main project actors. Adopting such a perspective allowed for an alternative and complementary perspective where we can see *the project as part of the lives of individual learners and educators*. This important inversion of perspective has allowed for more nuanced understandings of the project life and participants' lives and shows up the areas of synergy and tension where these life courses intersect. Such a perspective implies that educational practices, such as the HRDD project, embedded in the socio-cultural, are part of personal life histories, and hence become more meaningful when analysed from this perspective. Through this case study, the phenomenon under study also became *the HRDD project as a 'lived project'*. This addressed aim 2 of this study, "To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly with respect to learning, identity and civic action".

A further reflection on the value of case study relates to the contribution of critical studies which focus on the personal and micro contexts of people's lives. While much of the literature in the critical paradigm looks at systems and structure of inequality and oppression (Giroux, 2005; McLaren, 2003; Torres, 1998; Stromquist, 2001b), case studies within a critical paradigm can

illuminate the lived dimension of such systems of inequality and oppression. Such studies complement the more common system-wide gaze.

## **The many windows of the HRDD project**

### **A window on adult learning and barriers to participation**

The project affords us a multifaceted view of adult learning. Adult learning is identified as one of the main dimensions in the emergent model presented at the end of this chapter. In as much as we observe adults learning, we are also reminded of the multitude that have not had such opportunities. We are thus afforded a view of the multiple barriers which adult learners in rural KwaZulu-Natal have to negotiate. We see and feel their struggles in life and learning, both historical and contemporary, and how these periods intersect, reinforce each other and reproduce. We hear of learners' hopes and aspirations for better lives for themselves and their families, most poignantly expressed by Nokthula when she reveals her plans for her child's education, "In my heart I told myself that I do not want her to school as I did. I do not want her to run out of school fees. I do not want her to go to school without exercise book covers, as it happened to me".

We are exposed to a range of serious physical, social and psychological barriers to learning. Malindi identifies one of the major barriers to participation when she says, "This side I am recruiting them to come to class [but] there are others who are pushing them backwards to say, 'At your age are you learning just to die?'" In addition to such social and psychological barriers, this study also zooms in on the political nature of some barriers, a particular characteristic of the post-conflict KZN context and its violent history.

The HRDD project became a space for reflection, dialogue, and hope which facilitated learning. In several of the learners' narratives we can detect

evidence of critical voices and reflection (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 1991) on their education and social contexts. The learner Zinhle, who is a farmworker, illustrated this several times with statements such as, "The farmer does not want us to have similar knowledge to him. He wants to be above you". Through their critical remembrances, learners were not only telling their stories of oppression, but were simultaneously representing their right to speak against such oppression and asserting that such histories not be forgotten. They were engaging in a narration which Tejeda (2005, p. xv) described as a counter to "*specific histories of oppression and human suffering*" and which serve as "*a referent for hope*" (my italics). Importantly, learners were at times also understanding their experiences and themselves in new ways. These moments were thus constructive processes in terms of learners' knowledge and identity.

There is a level of confidence which learners and educators display which they attribute to participation in the HRDD. This is a significant shift given the prevalent climate of fear and oppression. We observe some level of change but mostly in the personal domains and for so few of them. Zinhle, for example, was able to act on her new awareness about her rights by seeking relief from the court in relation to her abusive husband. She recalls that, "My teacher told me that I have rights as a woman, I should not succumb to abuse from a man." Sadly, we see little evidence of transformation at the level of communities and society. The doors to authentic empowerment, citizenship and freedom are not presently visible or remain tightly shut. The project has not facilitated structures for ongoing civic participation, development and lifelong learning. The project appears to be a small phase of learning, dialogue, reflection, community engagement and hope, sandwiched between periods that constitute a long struggle to survive. And the learners are incredible survivors! The strength and perseverance of women, mothers and grandmothers in particular, have been crucial in such survival narratives.

This window on adult learning and barriers to participation contributed substantially to the second aim of this study which was "To capture the understandings and experiences of key role-players in the project, particularly

with respect to learning, identity and civic action". The window discussed next, likewise, contributed to the second aim of the study.

### A window on educator development

The project allows for nuanced observations of community-based adult educators' lives and practices within resource-constrained and fragile contexts of work. Here, as with their learners, we see their struggles in life, learning and work and observe the powerful interplay between historical and contemporary forces that shape who they are, who they want to be, and their interactions with learners and their communities. We are excited by signs of some perspective transformation (Mezirow 1975; 1991) and the emergence of new identities which integrate educator and community developer roles and visions. This dimension of identity development in the project also occupies a central position in the emergent model presented later. A striking feature of educator development in the HRDD project relates to relationships built on empathy, dialogue, care and social justice concerns. We note educators' struggles and substantial experiential learning (Kolb, 1993; Wildermeersch, 1992; McCormack, 2008) in the course of mobilising and retaining learners and in attempting to negotiate the web of power relations in their communities. Khosi describes such transformation in vivid terms when she says, "When I started it was dark since I did not know anything about things related to the community and about working with the community".

Clare (2006, p.380) states that there is agreement between Freire and Mezirow with regard to perspective transformation involving three elements, namely,

- (a) an empowered sense of self that is made manifest in greater self-confidence,
- (b) a more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture shape one's belief and feelings, and
- (c) more functional strategies and resources for taking action

Using these criteria, a number of the educators, and clearly all three of the stalwarts, can be seen to have undergone perspective transformation in terms of the transition to educator-development workers.

However, the fragility of educators' work and their resource constraints mean that there are also too few doors to sustainable educator careers and improved lives. For some, new skills, confidence and the attainment of social and cultural capital, provide a door to exit their community. The project provides a temporary structure for learning about being an educator, for being immersed in new discourses and for developing new identities but is not a sustainable structure for this early stage of development to be nurtured and continued. The project has been a launching pad for a new trajectory in the lives of some of the educators but it has not facilitated a durable community of practice (Wenger, 1998) which could serve as a home for their ongoing learning and development. The project model of centre and satellites is not suited to the formation of such structures. Of concern also, is the absence of accessible institutions or associations in South Africa which could provide this function - so important for a developing nation. So the important work started in the HRDD project of building a new group of community-based adult educators is left to the vicissitudes of the market and individual perseverance. Many of the investments in training and development are likely to be lost as educators move on to different fields of work which may arise, or as they return to the masses of the unemployed in their communities. The weak state of adult education and community development, particularly those with a transformatory agenda, will thus be perpetuated.

This case study very effectively exposes processes of learning and identity formation amongst educators which are social and situated (Lave & Wenger, 1999). It is clear that the HRDD project propelled educators towards greater engagement with their broader communities. Chapters Seven and Eight showed that such engagement varied in terms of educators' gender, social capital and stalwart versus transient newcomer statuses. The project appears able to prepare educators and provide them with legitimacy for ABET practices. The organic and highly desirable extension of the ABET practitioner

role to that of educator-community worker, while appearing to have received less formal planning and training within the project, serves the project and shapes identity development amongst educators. However, it would appear that gaining legitimacy for the extended role could not be achieved solely through the project. This legitimacy is dependent on the climate and social capital in the community context. In the post-conflict context of KZN, such legitimacy is entangled in local webs of power which are framed by historical divides, community fracture and memories of personal trauma. Educators therefore struggled with gaining legitimacy for a broader community development role. The post-conflict context of KZN is distinctly anti-dialogical. This requires that project planners give more attention to this dynamic, particularly when attempting to foster learning with transformation and empowerment agendas. To fulfill such agendas, educators need to be prepared and supported in negotiating local webs of power which they regularly identify as barriers.

### **A window on development projects and project development**

The HRDD project allows us to understand both development practices and project development. This window contributes towards aims 1 and 3 of the study which are, “To understand the genesis and processes of change in the HRDD project in relation to its wider context” and “To construct a rich, reflective and holistic account of the HRDD project and to present such an account in relation to relevant theory”.

As already indicated, the project allows for a good view of project genesis and change and for the identification of the factors, both local and global, influencing conceptualisation and change in projects. In this sense, the global discourse, which highlights poverty reduction, human rights and gender equality, can be seen to have featured in the HRDD project. Likewise, local interests such as income-generation were added onto the project. The interests of the project partners also appear to have converged in the space created by the HRDD project. The timing of project genesis, that is, the early

years of democracy in South Africa, has also been a strong factor at this confluence.

We have gained an excellent opportunity for seeing education and development as an NGO does. This is a form of practice which is in decline and which often remains unrecorded. From this perspective we can observe the harnessing of remarkable social capital (Bourdieu, 1997) amongst project partners in the pursuit of their ideological and social justice oriented goals and visions. Social capital in development is understood as the social glue it brings in the form of trust, reciprocity, coordination, information sharing and control. These features of social capital make development work easier, more productive and more sustainable (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990). While the project showed substantial amounts of social capital within the project, particularly amongst project partners, the lack of social capital in the broader community context was identified by project participants as impeding several project efforts.

Equally remarkable is the formation of a strong and enduring community of practice (Wenger, 1998) about adult education and community development, shared by the project partners. According to Lave and Wenger (1999), learning is the increasing participation in a *community of practice*. We note the advantages enjoyed in this arena of the project accruing from better resources and power and how this stands in stark contrast with those of the learners, educators and their communities. We see the tensions about project accountability, governance and ownership and how desires and plans do not always translate into practice. The construction of a rich and lively project narrative has allowed us to track project genesis, growth and change and to identify the ways in which these processes have been shaped by ideologies, personalities and constant readings of context and action via research.

Standing further away, we can see the project occupied with and investing in two parallel sets of activities. In the first, and more visible, there are activities like ABET, materials development, research, educator training and income-generation. In the second, and less visible, there is a huge effort in project

design, institutionalisation and re-design. The latter endeavour is also an ongoing attempt to simplify, routinise and make legible what we call development projects or NGO work. This latter aspect of HRDD practice and discourse did not extend beyond the project partner organisations. The types of learning of the project partners were different and largely separate from that of the educators and learners. Recall the statement from a partner which said, "We all learn from it [HRDD project], but maybe that has eaten away from focus?". It is noteworthy that the HRDD did not spawn a single community of practice which involved project partners, educators and learners. From a critical paradigm perspective, this absence in the project points to the hierarchical relations in project ownership and partnership and to the power imbalances in donor – university – NGO - community projects. In spite of stated intentions to move ownership and governance to community-level structures and participants, the HRDD project remained largely within the control of the project partners. The HRDD case shows up distinctions and reproductions of centre-periphery relationships in geographical, discourse and life dimensions. Rural communities remain at the margins in all these dimensions. The project's aspirations for bridging divides are only partially realised. Its hopes of setting up learning centres and community projects which are owned and maintained by community people have not been fully realised.

We witness separate discourses and learning communities rise and wane in the course of the project. If the goals of learning and development, as broadly intended in the HRDD project, are the strengthening of participatory democracy and active citizenship, together with the removal of major sources of "unfreedom" (Sen, 1999, p.1), then such work needs to be owned and maintained by people in local communities of South Africa. There is a critical need to build capacity and to develop partnership models which allow for this to happen. The case of the Self-Employed Womens' Association (SEWA) in India (Rose, 1992) is an inspiring model of such bottom-up collaboration, ownership and governance. Stromquist (2002) provides further examples of women-led projects in the Philippines, Nepal and Bolivia. She highlights the importance of combining cognitive and economic dimensions of

empowerment, stating that successful projects have provided women “with material resources (credit, food) in addition to the symbolic and cognitive resources (education, information, training)” (Stromquist, 2002, p. 33).

Against broader country, regional and global backdrops we can discern divergences and convergences between what happens in the HRDD project and its broader layers of context. With this frame we can contrast growing concerns and agendas for poverty alleviation, women’s empowerment and human rights aligned to visions of a literate and active citizenship, with inadequate implementation and resourcing. As a small example of such implementation, the HRDD project shows up the complexity and challenges in learning for personal and social change.

### **A window on ideology and social action**

The educators' views on the purpose of the HRDD project are quite revealing in terms of the dominant ideology prevailing in the project with regard to citizenship and people-centred development. The source of this ideology appears to be the official project discourse (see project partners' narrative in Chapter Five) developed by the project partners and communicated, both formally and informally, to educators in their initiation, training and ongoing engagement in project activities. As indicated in Chapter Two, part of this discourse included a strong Freirean epistemology and pedagogy. The Freirean theoretical frame to the project, introduced by project partners was also adopted by educators. This is clearly evident, for example, when the educator Nokthula explains the project's purpose as:

So that a person can be developed and be able to write and read but, at the same time, be able to understand other things happening in the world that we live in. (Nokthula)

Nokthula's perspective captures Freire's (1970) early idea that literacy should involve reading the word and the world. Several other educators also spoke of

the HRDD project in humanist terms which prioritise people and their survival needs. Within such ideology typical comments refer to the project as:

- Educational redress – providing educational opportunities for those deprived of such because of Apartheid and/or patriarchal power
- Empowering people in communities to become independent – to be able to lead development and not wait for the state to provide for them.
- Sustaining livelihoods – capacitating people to create and sustain livelihood practices.

However, this project discourse of participatory citizenship and people-centred development is often overwhelmed by a more powerful discourse of state-led development. The latter promises, albeit with moderate delivery, greater benefits in terms of infrastructure and social welfare. Many educators and learners thus also came to define development and measure progress in their communities using indicators of state-led development such as the provision of roads and electricity.

Furthermore, the absence of a radical ideology in educator narratives is noteworthy. Educators appear not to be proponents of an ideology which challenges the power and authority systems governing their lives, be it in family, work, project or community arenas. Their narratives do not portray them as promoters of forms of active resistance. They do not overtly assume identities of agents of social change. For educators like Cosmos, (see discussion in Chapter Eight) attempting to foster personal transformation with learners lies within the realm of safe educator work. He is therefore comfortable to teach women about equality and their rights. However, educating for broader transformation in society is more risky. Cosmos is nervous about his learners asserting their rights in their homes or wearing their political party T-shirts to class. Why is this so? Is this because educators have not been sufficiently empowered and supported to foster both reflection and action as advocated by Freire (1970)? Can educators be truly supported in the face of personal threats to them in our violent society? Do educators

require more time before they can take on such action? Do the types of change promoted in the HRDD project appear too risky in the post-conflict context of the project? This latter question is pursued later in this chapter.

## A reflection of poverty

Taking a broader focus, we are able to see with remarkable clarity the dense poverty web of KwaZulu-Natal and much of South Africa reflected from the HRDD case. The socio-economic profiles of communities presented in Chapter Five and the narratives of learners and educators in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight present quantitative and qualitative evidence of the HRDD context being marked by conditions of poverty and deprivation. The HRDD project is located in one of the poorest provinces of South Africa and targets people living in the poorest and most marginal parts of this province, namely, rural KwaZulu-Natal. The HRDD educators and their learners, discussed in the preceding chapters, belong to that large sector of society who constitute South Africa's underclass (McCord, 2007). These individuals mostly participate in what has unfortunately come to be called South Africa's second economy (Skinner and Valodia, 2006) where the main source of income is state welfare. Many live in dire poverty and survive on social welfare grants. Poverty thus emerges as a central defining characteristic of life, community and the learning context in the HRDD project. Through the HRDD project, we are afforded a reflection of poverty in its lived reality. Such a view is quite different from the view of poverty presented in statistics exchanged at conferences and agenda-setting fora. We see poverty as an enduring feature of the lives of learners, educators and their communities and how it both constrains and propels their learning, actions and hopes. This allows us to interrogate notions of transformative learning in conditions where hope is either absent or rapidly dwindling. Likewise, we can challenge idealistic notions of civic participation which fail to account for the costs of participation in conditions of poverty.

Educators' and learners' childhoods involved severe and life-shaping poverty. Their schooling was influenced by inadequate resources in the family. This was the case with the learner Nothando who tells us, "My schooling was going well, the problem is that my mother could not afford to pay for me". Their post-schooling opportunities and aspirations were circumscribed by lack of financial resources and the need to contribute to household incomes. This is illustrated in the educator Nokthula's story when she says, "But my mother did not have power for assisting me in furthering my studies". Educators' initial involvements in the HRDD project were driven by the need to earn incomes and develop themselves via the project. The experience of work within the HRDD project is also influenced by the struggles they face in supporting themselves and their extended families. Poverty is thus a central factor shaping learners' and educators' pre-HRDD and HRDD life situations and thus appears as a significant frame to the HRDD project. Living in poverty and the entrenchment of this condition over several generations is likely to shape a class consciousness characterized by feelings of low self-esteem, hopelessness, dependence and desperation (Freire, 1970; Maathai, 2005). These feelings can powerfully influence the climate of learning and development, and become part of what Freire (1970) refers to as one's worldview or Mezirow (1975) as one's frame of reference. Such a worldview does not promote educational change, gender equity and active citizenship, all goals of the HRDD project. Over several generations the conditions of oppression and domestication, promoted by systems such as colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy, can be seen to have inscribed the minds and bodies of the main HRDD actors and have torn the social fabric of the HRDD communities.

However, despite such barriers and difficult life circumstances revealed through critical remembrances, the people featured in the HRDD case study did choose to be a part of the project and to be counted as learners and educators. This must be acknowledged as a remarkable feat! They are remarkable survivors who have used their meagre assets, social capital and substantial human spirit, to survive and create opportunities for themselves and their families. In this they demonstrate impressive wisdom, caring and

agency. When the project is storied as a phase in their lives, their participation in the project and in other arenas of community life represent periods of admirable agency and hope in their lives. This was a period when doors to new ways of being were envisioned.

The most comprehensive review of Adult Basic Education in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean by Rosa Maria Torres (2004) currently stands as a landmark study in the field, involving a review of approximately 1000 documents, a survey of 100 key respondents, an online forum discussion with 300 participants across the world, personal interviews and field visits. The wealth of data gathered is matched by the richness of analysis and the value of synthesis achieved by Torres in mapping the status and trends in Adult Basic Education in the South at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Amongst several important findings, Torres offers a clear and decisive position on the relationships between poverty and adult education. This position is also endorsed by Lind's (2008) more recent and very thorough analysis of the factors hindering universal literacy. I offer two quotations from Torres' important study which have sharp bearing on the HRDD project within its poverty-ridden context:

Poverty is today the major impediment to educational access, retention, completion and quality. Thus, combating poverty has become a requisite for, much more than a potential result of, education (Torres, 2004, p.12).

Adult education in the South has always been trapped between meagre attention and resources and overly ambitious expectations (self-esteem, empowerment, citizenship-building, community organization, labor skills, income generation, and even poverty alleviation). If governments and donors expect literacy and adult education to have important impact on the lives of adults, children and families, they must invest more – not less – in Adult Basic Learning and Education, and accompany it with major and broader economic and social reforms. Innovation and pedagogical improvement can do little in a hostile

economic and social context. One must not forget that poverty is not the result of illiteracy but very much the contrary. The most effective way to deal with poverty is dealing with the structural economic and political factors that generate it and reproduce it at national and global scale (Torres, 2004, p16).

The above quotations capture several of the critical issues and challenges faced in the HRDD project, namely, enduring poverty, inadequate resources and ambitious expectations. Torres' clear position on the relationship between poverty and literacy is fully endorsed in the present study and has been vividly amplified by the critical remembrances of learners and educators. Projects such as the HRDD can be useful opportunities for providing practical, experienced-based training of adult educators. Likewise, such projects can provide important opportunities for learning, building relationships and improving the self-worth and confidence of learners. Projects like the HRDD can be useful for conscientising learners and educators about the structural, economic and political forces shaping their lives. Such projects can, however, only be effective when combined with broader economic and social programmes which seek to address poverty and discrimination. South Africa's macro-economic policies and programmes such as GEAR and ASGISA (see Chapter Four) are not addressing poverty and the various forms of marginalisation faced particularly by its rural citizens (Human Science Research Council & Education Projects Unit, 2005). Projects like the HRDD and campaigns like the Masifundisane Literacy Campaign in KwaZulu-Natal and the Kha Ri Gude National Literacy Campaign can only be effective within broader economic and social programmes to address poverty, women's empowerment and active citizenship. Ignoring such relationships is part of the social amnesia regarding the genesis of illiteracy in this country and the forgetfulness of how illiteracy is maintained and reproduced within lives of deprivation in the current socio-economic policy regime. Learners' and educators' critical remembrances in this study serve as a powerful force challenging such amnesia.

Women in the poor, marginalised parts of KwaZulu-Natal need, and do benefit from educational spaces like the HRDD project for gaining and strengthening literacy, confidence and active citizenship. However, such benefits are more likely to accrue and be sustained, when combined with programmes which address the multiple economic, social and political barriers they face on a daily basis. The role of men in maintaining many of these barriers also needs honest and systematic attention through programmes of government and civil society. The promise of a new South Africa with more substantial freedoms requires much further work and resources supporting such transformation.

### **A reflection of gendered relations in a strong patriarchy**

South African society is characterised by a well-established system of patriarchy and gender inequality. Women face substantial discrimination, domination and abuse in this system. Rural KwaZulu-Natal presents some of the clearest evidence of this system in all arenas of life, particularly in family and community relations, but also within the educational arena.

The majority of learners in the project were women who experience multiple forms of discrimination and oppression. Recall Zinhle's sad but critical assessment regarding the termination of her education:

My father was primitive; he believed that girls should not be sent to school ... I left school in second year, I didn't even finish it. I thought I would not continue because my father said he cannot spend his money educating me for someone else.

Educators in the project, most of whom were also women, were employed to facilitate learning and change with learners such as Zinhle. They were expected to tackle gender-based discrimination and to foster conscientisation, critical reflection and empowerment (Freire, 1970; Mezirow 1975), in order that learners could take action to address different forms of oppression they

faced as women. The human rights, democracy and development focus in the HRDD project foregrounded the rights of women. It is noteworthy, that the educators had themselves experienced and continue to experience quite severe forms of gender-based discrimination and violence. Recall the life-threatening experience shared by Nokthula who said, "whenever I went to school there were these boys who were always asking me why I was not coming to them when they were calling me. They accused me of being anti-ANC... One day they decided to 'necklace' me with a car tyre". It is quite likely that many educators had not been able to fully overcome their own oppression as women and yet were attempting to foster change in the lives of their learners through education. How effective can educators be in facilitating transformative learning when they themselves have not been able to shed gender-based frames of reference which limit women? This study highlights the tensions created in using community-based educators who themselves have experienced and are experiencing violence and oppression as change agents for transformative learning. Educators, as indicated in the case of Cosmos in this study (see Chapter Eight), are struggling to reconcile their own trauma and personal histories of struggle with project goals and discourses. Insufficient attention appears to be given to this dynamic in educator development work. A possible response to this could be the inclusion of more social justice education in educator training programmes, with perhaps, a strong focus on educators' own personal experiences of, attitudes and responses towards oppression.

The relationships in the HRDD project, amongst educators and learners and in their interactions within their families and communities reveal the entrenched nature of the patriarchal system which frames the project. The framing of patriarchy is likely to be significant in any educational case study in KZN. However, in a project such as the HRDD project where human rights and democracy constitute key components of the curriculum and overall project goals, patriarchy and gender inequality assume a greater significance. The barriers to learning and to educating are more severe for women. Women return from project activities to roles and statuses which continue to demean, disempower and exhaust them. In nourishing such barriers, patriarchy has to

be tackled as one of the most serious challenges to development and freedom in South Africa. Legal frameworks and institutions promoting women's rights are inadequate on their own. The most fundamental change required has to do with how men, often those intimately related to the learners, think and behave. This is an area of cardinal importance in terms of creating a truly free South Africa. Literacy studies in Africa tend to emphasise the importance of educating women, often motivated in terms of spin-offs for children's health and education. There is a corresponding neglect of the social benefits of educating men.

## **A reflection of a post-conflict society and power struggles**

An important reflection provided by the project allows for the critical realisation and remembrance that KwaZulu-Natal and indeed South Africa, has to be seen as a post-conflict society. Past power-struggles in the province were devastatingly violent. Current power struggles, although not as violent, create a development context characterised by tension, fear and fracture. Gaining legitimacy to participate in or lead development activity in this context requires frustrating and skilful negotiations of local webs of power. Development action and citizenship agency appear to be constantly entangled in patronage rituals and local hegemony.

The euphoria surrounding the birth of a democracy, constitutionally enshrined rights, a Human Rights Commission and promises of a Reconstruction and Development Programme have all tinted the new South Africa's windows with a rosy hue. The doors to learning, culture and freedom demanded in the Freedom Charter (Congress of the People, 1955) were only partially opened and have not provided passage for a large majority of the citizens of this country. Historical and contemporary oppression have too easily been forgotten. The fractures in family and community still haunt learners and educators and stifle engagements in learning, development and citizenship. The HRDD project offers learners and educators new opportunities in a micro

context and some success in this domain. However, these successes do not articulate sufficiently with broader contexts where they really matter. There appears to be no ongoing support for newly-gained insights, skills and freedoms. All development planning, by state and civil society, needs to give central focus to the post-conflict condition which characterises South African society and how power has been reorganised within communities. This requires honest acceptance and conscientisation amongst leaders, policy-makers and development planners, in all sectors, that the fractures of the past are deep, enduring, debilitating and in need of urgent attention. This phenomenon was described as *fracture* and theorised in this study in terms of depleted social capital. We cannot celebrate a rainbow nation or a world-renowned constitution while ignoring the division and fracture in society and how these propel fear and apathy amongst learners and educators, indeed all development actors, and frustrate and retard what little development action is taking place. The concentration of power, its use and abuse in the local development arena, is in need of urgent attention and careful theorisation. A reminder of the senselessness and destructiveness of power struggles was provided by the learner Nothando, when she wisely concluded that, "There should be no fighting over a 'meatless bone' through politics, because it takes us back."

The characterisation of the country context of the HRDD project in terms of fracture, fear and a post-conflict status opens a further window into the potential role of learning and development for purposes of peace building. This is a purpose which was not envisaged in the original conceptualisation of the HRDD project although learning about human rights, democracy and citizenship are regular components of peace curricula and programmes (Harris, 1999; Maxwell, Enslin & Maxwell, 2004). The narratives of educators and learners also show some evidence of taking on roles of peace-makers, particularly in domestic and small group conflict situations. However, as indicated earlier, learners' and educators' narratives point to deep fractures at community level and to a serious politicisation of the local development arena. At this level, learners and educators appear to be unable to lead peacemaking and peace-building initiatives. And the HRDD project did not fully envisage nor

prepare them for such roles. The extent to which the fractures impeded project activities and goals indicates a need for greater attention to the post-conflict status and power struggles, as well as to the broader peace building impacts of educational interventions.

It is noteworthy that of all the conferences at the close of the last century (see review of these in Chapter Four), many of which highlighted the role of adult learning in addressing various social problems, little attention was provided to the themes of conflict and peace. This seems a neglectful oversight given that the century which was drawing to an end was the bloodiest in history (Firer, 2002). The absence of a strong and explicit peace agenda at education and development fora at the global level appears, to a smaller extent, to be reflected at the project level. But what about doors to sustainable peace? Learners' and educators' narratives reveal widespread and multiple exposures to violence and severe trauma. Can projects such as the HRDD become a space for healing, reconciliation and learning to live with diversity? In a context of division and fracture should ABET be given a strong, explicit peace agenda or would this be encumbering it with a further heavy social goal along with poverty alleviation, empowerment and citizenship development? These are important questions, particularly in a global context where poor developing countries, usually with high levels of illiteracy, have become the main arenas of violent conflict. A recent UNESCO initiative working under the banner of *Learning to Live Together* (Sinclair, Davies, Obura & Tibbitts, 2008) is attempting to raise global attention to the role that education can play in peace building and active citizenship. This initiative is developing resources and drawing attention to the curriculum dimension of learning to live together. As with poverty, sustainable responses to peace building require broader socio-political commitments. Education can only play an important supportive role.

It would seem that the hopes of a new South Africa, the local and global celebrations of a non-violent transition and the euphoria associated with political freedom and a Nelson Mandela-led reconstruction and development programme have masked a widespread and insidious power dynamic in local communities which disarms programmes with radical and transformatory

agendas. The rhetoric and visions of people-led development are muted in this context. These are immensely fertile conditions for passivity and disempowerment. Memories of violence create new trepidation regarding participation in development-related projects and broader civic engagement. The transformatory discourse of the HRDD project appears to be overwhelmed by a more powerful development discourse which links infrastructure development and service delivery with political allegiance and civic passivity. If left unattended, new forms of marginalisation and subjugation will be normalised amongst South Africa's new citizens, creating new false consciousness and frames of reference which maintain and reproduce inequality. Local forms of hegemony, buttressed by historical political division and painful memories of violence, emerge as one of the central themes running through narratives of learners and educators in the HRDD project. The pervasive presence of this barrier and its constraining effect on local development actors, like Cosmos, warrants urgent political and academic attention. Projects like the HRDD project on their own, with small reach, limited resources and fragile staffing appear to be an insufficient vehicle for social change in such contexts.

A major question thus raised through this study relates to the transformative potential of small scale NGO-led community projects in post-conflict KwaZulu-Natal, perhaps also the rest of South Africa. It would appear that the project served as a useful catalyst for personal transformation amongst educators and learners. In this regard the learners and educators have been involved in significant learning and personal development. They are more aware of their contexts and the opportunities, rights and limitations affecting their lives. Some have acted on the basis of their learning to attempt change. However, the impact of the project appears to be limited to these personal domains. The project partners' vision that the project would also serve as a catalyst for civic action leading to possible broader social change does not appear to have been realised. Change at community and society levels are not evident in the multiple perspectives of the project presented over the previous four chapters. Given the huge economic, social and political barriers to such change, perhaps a different vehicle is required. Is the answer to be found in popular

social movements? A social movement formation over a more sustained period has the potential to impact both personal and social transformation. Walters (2005, p.55) correctly notes that through “participation in social movements, people prepare for change or resistance to it by challenging or confirming the ways in which they think and feel and act politically.” Such participation has a strong resonance with Freirean-inspired praxis. Crowther, Martin and Shaw (1999), Stromquist (2007; 2000), Kilgore (1999) and Welton (1993) all provide useful discussions on the importance of social movements for learning and social action which can mount sustained challenges to structural inequality. Such movements provide spaces for authentic praxis.

South Africa has a rich history and vast experience with change effected through popular movements. Perhaps through deliberate alliances with relevant social movements, the personal transformation and empowerment achieved through projects such as the HRDD could be harnessed for purposes of social transformation. In this way, the mobilisation, learning and personal development achieved in projects like the HRDD project could complement the collective power achieved through social movements.

This study did not set out to discuss and theorise the history of violence and current state of fracture in communities in KZN. The weight of critical remembrances in learner and educator narratives about these experiences is what has allowed these issues to gain significance. Twelve years of democracy has not erased the memories and material conditions which the violence contributed to. The euphoria of the ‘new South Africa’ seems to have engendered a forgetfulness, the “arresting amnesia” which Tejeda (2005, p.xv) referred to, about these key life-altering events within the public discourse, yet again and again, they emerge in private discourses when opportunities for critical remembrance are offered. The weight and significance of such remembrances prompted the inclusion of Social Capital theory as part of the theoretical framework.

This case study about an educational project has reflected a major phenomenon in South African society, namely, its endemically violent

character. But stories of historical violence and current development-impeding intolerance and fracture are not separate and unrelated aspects of personal narratives. They convey a societal narrative of a deeply embedded culture of violence, in its physical and systemic manifestations. In reflecting this aspect of South African society, the HRDD case study serves as a mirror in two ways. At the level of form, the microcosms of the project reflect a central feature of the broader society. However, at a temporal level, there is also a reflection of the past in the present; a picture of the reproduction of violence. Several educators and learners have not only shared critical remembrances on violent power struggles of the past, they also identified power struggles which currently affect them and their participation in the project. Some of these struggles evoke both covert and overt threats of violence and fear.

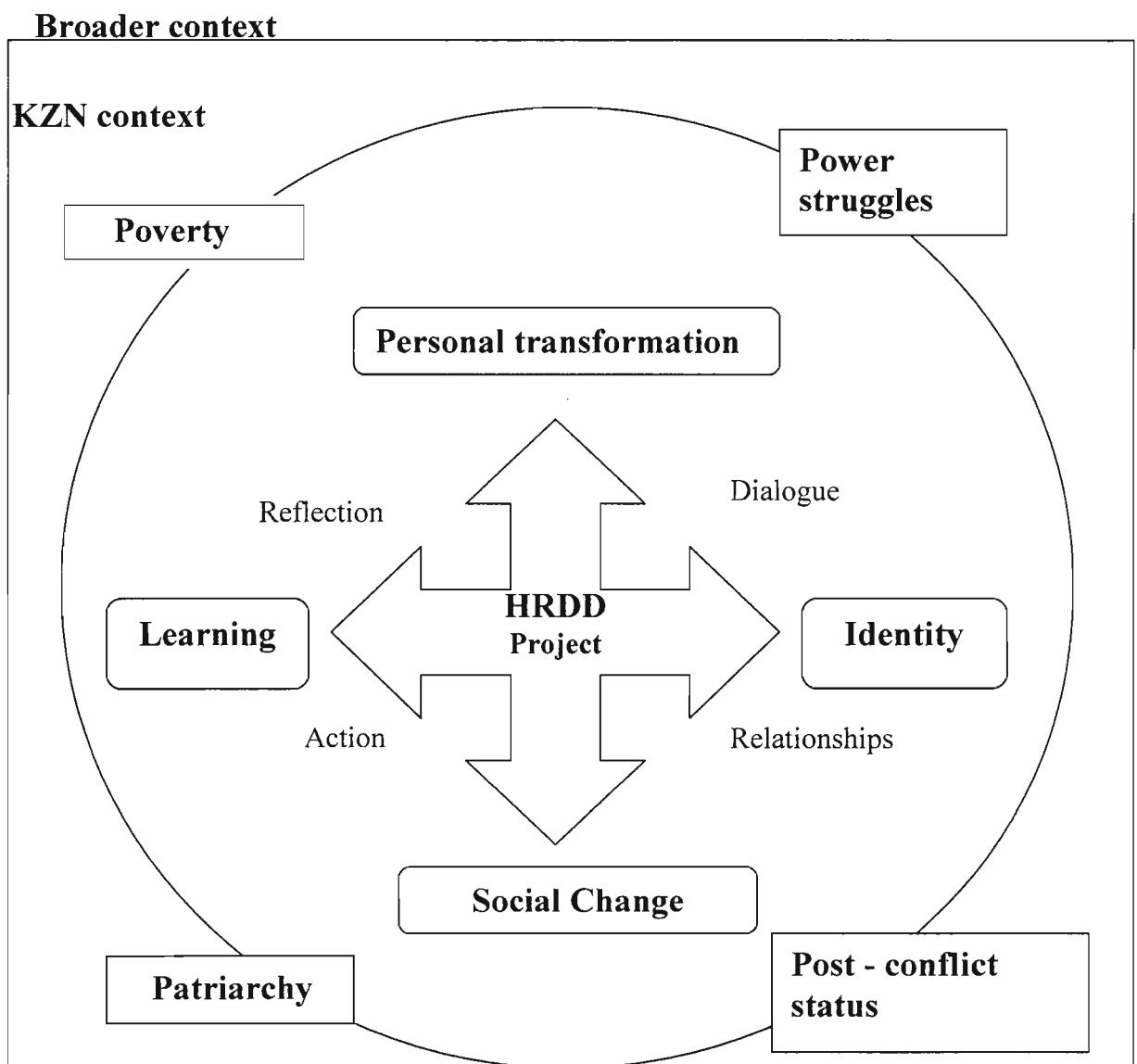
## An emergent conceptual model of the HRDD project

In this part of the chapter, a final representation of the HRDD project as an emergent conceptual model is provided. The model, represented in the Figure 3 below, has an emergent character and serves multiple purposes in this study, all of which are explained below. The model is both descriptive, in the sense that it emerges from the data of the case study, and normative, in indicating how such a project might ideally operate. It also incorporates the dialectical and potentially generative tensions between what is and what might be.

The model reflects four key dimensions of the project discussed at various points in the preceding chapters and also highlighted in this chapter. These project dimensions are ***learning, identity development, personal development and social change***. The model includes four pedagogical devices discussed as significant in mediating learning and development within the project, namely, ***reflection, dialogue, action and relationships***. A final component of the model captures four significant contextual features of the HRDD project, which are ***poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and a post-***

**conflict status.** Together, these dimensions, pedagogical devices and contextual features provide a holistic representation of the project based on the multiple perspectives of the project conveyed by project partners, educators, learners and myself as case study researcher, and supported by the theoretical framework of the study. In addition to this purpose of synthesis served by the model, the model has heuristic and dialectic functions.

**Figure 3: The HRDD project: an emergent conceptual model**



## **Nature and purposes of the emergent conceptual model**

Before explaining the constituent parts of the model, the nature and purposes served by the model are discussed.

The conceptual model presented here is seen as emergent in two ways. Firstly, it emerges from foci in the preceding chapters of this study. Secondly, it has emergent theoretical and heuristic potential for future research. Taken together, the model is emergent in relation to what has occurred in the HRDD project (looking back) and in relation to what roles it could play in the future in other similar interventions (looking forward). Such emergent properties and processes are discussed in the research literature as grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), that is, theory generated inductively from data which helps explain the data and simultaneously serves as a lens for future data analysis in other studies and interventions. The latter property of grounded theory is expanded below in discussing the model as a heuristic.

## **How has the model emerged through this case study?**

### **Emergence of the project dimensions**

The project partners' narrative in Chapter Five set out various project goals, according to these partners, which are expressed in the model as four project dimensions. Chapters Five to Nine have commented on whether such dimensions have been realized in the project, the varying extents of such realization and, more importantly, how the four dimensions have been experienced by different HRDD actors. The four project dimensions together, reflect common agenda, ideology and transformative focal points of radical adult education interventions.

### **Emergence of the pedagogical devices**

Likewise, a theoretical understanding of pedagogical devices, which foster and support the project dimensions, emerge from the theoretical framework in Chapter Two and are illustrated through case study findings in Chapters Five

to Nine. These devices constitute an enabling pedagogical environment for the project dimensions to be realized.

### **Emergence of the contextual factors**

Finally, the contextual factors in the model emerge from findings throughout the study. These factors appear principally as constraining forces which serve as barriers to the realization of project dimensions. They are, however, also a catalyzing force in the project and provide points of reference for the project dimensions. In other words, poverty, patriarchy, power struggles and the post-conflict status of KwaZulu-Natal provide the rationale and reference points for learning, identity development, personal transformation and social change in the HRDD project. This latter property is expanded below in discussing the model as a dialectic.

### **Difference purposes of the model**

The next part of this introduction of the model considers three purposes served by the model in this study and possible future studies.

#### **The model as a summative device**

The previous discussion of how the model emerged has already pointed to the properties of summary, synthesis and holism which the model brings to a conclusion of this study. In this regard, as a synthetic construct which helps conclude this study, the model serves the purpose of providing a composite picture of the project in terms of project goals (intended and achieved), pedagogical devices (in theory and practice) and contextual features (historical and contemporary). The model thus provides a useful frame of reference for looking back at the HRDD project.

#### **The model as a heuristic**

As a heuristic, the model provides a tool for looking forward. The model has potential for evaluation and planning of transformative projects and interventions in KwaZulu-Natal and similar contexts. In this regard, the

model's dimensions provide useful points of reference for generating evaluation questions and criteria.

For purposes of planning transformational education, the project dimensions, pedagogic devices and contextual features, all raise key planning considerations about project goals, curriculum and the learning environment.

There is rich potential for such a model serving as the conceptual framework of an action research project for an educational project (John, 2003). In such a project the model could frame, the planning, evaluation and re-planning phases. For purposes of more general scholarship of community education projects, the model could likewise serve as theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The appropriateness of the model for these purposes would need to be tested in further research.

### **The model as a dialectic**

A third purpose served by the model arises from its dialectical character. In this regard, the model has substantial space to illuminate the tensions, contradictions and conflicting positions regarding community-based educational work. This dialectical character is best illustrated in how the model simultaneously surfaces the needs for and constraints of transformative education. This provides fertile ground for critiques of policy and practice and for envisioning more just and human societies. In this regard, the model also illuminates the dialectic of *struggle and hope* which has been a major motif and thread running through this study.

### **The components of the model and how they work**

With the HRDD project located at the centre of the model, the various components of the model are explained next.

## **The four dimensions of the model**

A central part of the model involves four inter-related dimensions, namely, learning, identity development, personal transformation and social change.

These dimensions arise from various understandings of the project discussed in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight and are supported by the literature on learning theory reviewed in Chapter Two. As illustrated below, the theories of Freire, Mezirow and Wenger give focal attention to all four of these dimensions in the model.

### ***Learning***

The HRDD project is foremost an adult education intervention which sought to foster learning within rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal. This dimension of the model includes formal, non-formal and informal learning, among different groupings of HRDD actors. This dimension also covers different modes of learning such as rational cognitive learning via reflection and dialogue; social learning via practice, action and relationships; affective learning based on engagement with emotions; and learning through and in relationships (see Chapter Eight). The dimension of learning is a major goal and outcome of the HRDD project.

Learning is also a major area of theorization in this case study. The theories of Freire, Mezirow and Wenger focus on adult *learning* by examining how adults make meaning of their experiences and how they create knowledge. The centrality of experience and experiential learning is a notable feature in all three theories. Another aspect of commonality in the core theoretical framework, discussed in Chapter Two, is that learning is seen as breaking through or overcoming current structures/frameworks of thinking and of acquiring new/revised thought structures. Mezirow's notion of meaning structures and Freire's notions of false consciousness and limit situations, deal with this dimension of the model. A further commonality is the inherently constructivist understanding of learning in all three learning theories. All three theories take the view that knowledge is constructed by adult learners through

reflection on experience and through participation and dialogue with others around them.

### ***Identity***

The HRDD project sought to develop new identities, strengthen some existing identities and to also transform some identities. For example, the recruitment, training and support of a new cadre of community-based adult educators clearly involved significant identity work for such educators. Likewise, the attempts to get members of local communities to reflect on their circumstances and to explore social action in the realms of family and community life, also involve strengthening and transforming identities of citizen, woman, leader etcetera. This dimension is sensitive to the multiple-identities of actors and to the fluidity of identity.

The notion of identity development is a second (in addition to learning) major consideration in each of the three learning theories reviewed in this study. Each theory in different ways and to different extents gives attention to the notion of *identity* and identity change in and through learning. Freire and Wenger are explicit on identity formation in their discussions of *doing* and *being* in the world or becoming through engagement in practice. Freire focuses on becoming more human and a free subject as goals of identity formation. Wenger focuses on the identity of the full participant in the practice as the goal, defined largely by the community. Several of the studies employing Mezirow's Transformative Learning theory have focused on the notions of a transformed self and a sense of 'becoming' through learning. Perspective transformation is also often presented as involving significant identity changes. (Courtenay, Merriam & Reeves, 1998; Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves & Baumgartner, 2000; Baumgartner, 2002).

### ***Personal transformation***

Working mainly with women in contexts marked by poverty, patriarchy and power struggles, the HRDD project attempted to lever various types of cognitive, behavioural and attitudinal change amongst learners and educators. Personal transformation is an explicit goal of the project. Its visions of

fostering transformative learning, empowerment and active citizenship relate, in part, to the personal level of HRDD actors. Mezirow's theorization on perspective transformation informs this dimension of the model, as do Freire's views on conscientisation and empowerment. This dimension of the model opens significant space for discussions of class, gender, and rurality, and how such social categories relate to power and empowerment in the HRDD project.

### ***Social change***

The HRDD project was conceived at a particular historic moment in South Africa. It was fashioned to serve as a catalyst for social change within families, communities and the country. The different parts of the project name, "human rights, democracy and development", reveal the aspects of social change envisioned by the project.

Like personal transformation, this dimension of the model refers to processes of envisaged change in the project and is thus also informed by the work of Freire (in particular), Mezirow and Bourdieu. This dimension provides a further opening for discussions of class, gender, and marginalisation and how such social categories relate to collective action, social capital, power and empowerment in the HRDD project. The notion of social vision, hope and social justice goals (Kilgore, 1999) are also related to this dimension of the project.

Both Freire and Mezirow developed theories of learning for change or transformation. As discussed previously, Mezirow's theory prioritises individual transformation over social transformation. For Mezirow, perspective transformation of individuals is first necessary before such individuals can take action which may transform their social worlds, if they so choose. Mezirow believes that the educational encounter should not be premised on social change, as this would constitute indoctrination. As discussed earlier, this position which Mezirow has held steadfastly has come under considerable criticism (Newman, 1994). Mezirow's (1997) position tends to rest on an uneasy sense of neutrality with regard to the educator, ideology and action.

Mezirow's position can be contrasted with that of Freire who argues convincingly that no education is neutral. For Freire and other radical educators (Torres, 1998; Gadotti, 1996) neutrality is a political choice which privileges and entrenches the status quo. There is an unambiguous relationship between personal transformation and social change in Freire's thinking. He encourages the development of critical consciousness for working against oppression (internal and external) and for the radical transformation of society. Freire's notion of praxis presents a stronger and closer unity between the activities of critical reflection-consciousness (individual cognitive transformation) and critical social action (social transformation). For Freire then, social transformation and personal transformation lie in dialectical relationship to each other. People who are able to free their minds can free the world and greater freedom in the world facilitates free thought. Freire's radical humanist perspective sees the purpose of education as that of building a freer and more just world. He believes that the oppressed can, through education, empower themselves to liberate themselves and fulfill their ontological purpose of becoming more human. This ideological and ontological position is eminently relevant for a project such as the HRDD which works with the most marginalised section of KwaZulu-Natal's population.

### **Linking the dimensions and dynamic interactions**

The four-way arrow at the heart of the model connects the four dimensions of the project just discussed.

The four-way arrow depicts an interconnectedness of learning, identity, personal transformation and social change as conveyed by both the theoretical framework and findings of this study. Each dimension of the model influences the other in dynamic ways. Learning and identity formation are seen as simultaneous processes which influence each other and which in tandem create energy for personal and social change. Likewise, personal

transformation and social change (or the lack of such) influence learning and identity development.

As a heuristic, it is possible to use this model to depict arrows of varying lengths to reflect the relative strength of the relationships between the different dimensions. For instance, shorter horizontal arrows could represent the relative closeness of the relationship between learning and identity as conveyed in the theories of Wenger, Mezirow and Freire. The longer arrows between personal transformation and social change could, on the other hand, represent the more attenuated relationship between the two dimensions of change, as is the case in this study. Future studies may thus also harness the heuristic properties of the model for purposes of evaluation of educational projects and for theorization of such interventions.

### **Pedagogic devices in the model**

Interspersed amongst the four dimensions and surrounding the four-way arrow are four pedagogical devices, namely, reflection, dialogue, action and relationships. These devices mediate (enabling and constraining) the four dimensions.

#### ***Reflection***

The concept of reflection in the model is integral to the four dimensions. The project placed emphasis on fostering critical reflection on the life circumstances of actors, their roles and potential roles as citizens in a country embracing freedom, democracy and human rights, their positions as women in marginalised contexts, their practices in ABET classes and livelihood projects and a range of other activities within and outside of the HRDD project. The research activity in the project was also part of an overall design of reflective practices. In these ways, reflection is a pedagogic device which mediates learning, identity formation, and personal and societal change. Reflection becomes a source for new meanings, for becoming (identity formation) learners, educators, active citizens, leaders, assertive women etcetera, and

thus facilitates change at individual and social levels. Reflection on such change, the lack of it and the need for further change, all provide new material and experiences for further learning and identity development.

The theories of Freire (1970) and Mezirow (1975; 1991) give special attention to the central role of reflection in learning. For Freire and Mezirow, critical reflection is essential to the goal of transformation. By comparison, Wenger tends to devote less attention to the role of reflection in learning. In his study of medical claims processors, Wenger (1998) does make the observation that "claims processors spend a lot of time in informal reflections" (p48). He also refers to moments of reflection in classroom interaction (p. 50) and to reflection as part of educational imagination (p. 272). Wenger states that the combination of engagement (action) with imagination (reflection) is needed for learning.

### ***Dialogue***

The concept of dialogue operates as a pedagogic device in similar fashion to reflection. The HRDD project set out to create spaces for dialogue to occur throughout the project and amongst various actors and community groups. Some project activities also sought to create dialogue across the boundary of the HRDD project. Dialogue is integral to the four dimensions in the model. Dialogue mediates learning and identity formation as actors construct shared and new meanings. Dialogue shapes the becoming of learners, educators and active citizens. Dialogue allows for action to be tested, planned and evaluated and thus mediates personal transformation and social change. Change and the lack of it also fosters further dialogue amongst actors. In this manner, dialogue in interaction with the four dimensions, allows for the HRDD project to be described as a dialogic space (Rule, 2004).

As discussed previously, the concept of dialogue is also central in Freire's, Mezirow's and Wenger's theorisation of adult learning and practice. Each of these theories sees learning as a social process and therefore, explicitly or implicitly, makes reference to a process of dialogue as being

important in learning. Amongst the three learning theories Freire gives the most attention to the importance of dialogue for democratizing the learning environment, constructing knowledge and for building solidarity. Mezirow sees dialogue within the process of perspective transformation as the step in which learners test new meanings and planned actions. Dialogue is implicit in Wenger's theory by virtue of discussions of the processes of negotiation of meaning and identity between members of a community of practice.

### ***Action***

The HRDD project is an action-oriented project. It sought to develop active learners and educators who would feel confident and able to take action to improve their lives. The project activities were designed to provide safe spaces for people to consider and take both individual and collective action, and thus develop the capacity to take action in the wider world. Action together with reflection, makes the HRDD a space for learning the art and power of praxis in order that personal and social change become lifelong endeavors for HRDD actors. People learn and become through acting within the HRDD project and the wider world. The project's goals on human rights, democracy and development provide a social vision and catalyst for action in the project. Action in the HRDD project is seen as being primarily about personal transformation, social change and social justice.

As indicated earlier, Freire (1970) sees action as essential and necessary for learning and identity. By comparison, Mezirow (1975; 1991) viewed action as a non-essential step in his theory of transformative learning. Wenger (1998) sees the centrality of action in theorising learning and becoming in and through doing, but does not specifically promote actions for social change or social justice. All three theories place considerable emphasis on experience or activity as being central to learning.

### ***Relationships***

Chapter Eight showed relationships to be an important aspect of learning and identity development. Relationships also shape personal and social change.

The learning theories of Freire, Mezirow and Wenger all point to the importance of relationships in the learning environment. Furthermore, the concept of relationships receives focal attention in Social Capital theory (Bourdieu, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Putnam 2000; Coleman, 1998). Social Capital theory is about the value inherent in one's relationships and networks and how these structures influence learning and personal and social development. Social Capital theory is useful for examining the types and structure of relationships and networks within the HRDD system and how these formations (or lack of them) influence the four dimensions in the model. Learning is directly related to the relationships in families, organizations, communities and broader societal structures. Learning activities in the HRDD project create new relationships. In this way, relationships also shape identity formation by being tied to learning. The potential and capacity for personal and social change can also be seen to be tightly connected to notions of trust, reciprocity, rules which flow from relationships and networks. In return, engagement in dialogue and action taken for purposes of personal transformation and social change can generate new trust, rules and relationships, thus changing one's capital, alongside one's ability to learn and grow. The concept of social capital has also allowed for the gendered nature of change and development to be illuminated (see Chapter Seven). This device in the model also creates a space for examining how different forms of capital relate to inequality and of the influence of the darker side of social capital (Portes, 1998; Fukuyama, 1999).

### **Layers of context in the model**

The area immediately outside the HRDD circle represents the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) context. This layer of context is of critical importance in making sense of the HRDD project, its actors and their practices. As indicated in the dialectic properties of the model, the features of the KZN context underscore the rationale of the HRDD project, inform the ideologies in the project and have significantly influenced (enhancing and constraining) the project's activities. The dimensions of learning, identity, personal transformation and social

change are all tightly framed by the KZN context. The character and significance of this layer of context have been discussed in detail in the preceding chapters and have been highlighted in this chapter with regard to **poverty, patriarchy, power struggles** and a **post-conflict status**, and how these features simultaneously propel (by virtue of serving as a rationale) and retard (by virtue of serving as barriers) the project.

The outer box in the model represents the boundary of the HRDD system, framed by the KZN context, with the broader context in South Africa and the world. If the HRDD system is conceived of as a micro-system and the KZN context the meso-system, then the outer box marks the border of these systems with the macro-system of the country and the world. The inclusion of this layer of context in the case study of the HRDD project also allows for an examination of the local-global nexus and opens up a space for discussions of globalisation in education and development. Although much of the HRDD is enacted in the local micro-system, this study has demonstrated how it is influenced by and also influences the meso and macro-systems.

## Conclusion

This chapter serves to highlight, review and refocus the multiple perspectives on the HRDD project. The many windows provided by the project have allowed for much learning and scholarly understanding of the project. The chapter ended with a final, new perspective which attempts to present the key concepts within a single model.

The HRDD project and this study of it have generated many stories of struggle, of hope, of learning, of compassionate education, and of new ways of understanding and being in the new South Africa. The project has been the source of important learning and personal development for many HRDD participants. This study also served to voice and record participants' critical remembrances.

These critical remembrances of the HRDD participants are constant reminders to society of the injustices people have endured and continue to endure. They are a reminder that such injustices are both systemic and personal. The country's reconciliation and reconstruction era into which the HRDD project was born appears to have opened too few doors. Critical remembrances are a constant reminder that citizens have not forgotten and do not want to be forgotten. Critical remembrance helps to counter the amnesia and voicelessness associated with oppression and alienation – and illiteracy.

The levels of fear and frustration which emerge through this case study present a portrait of life circumstances and learning contexts which are distinctly anti-dialogical. Critical remembrances of educators and learners are tales of learning in contexts of fear and of such learning being disrupted or terminated through abuse of power. The educational deprivation which is represented in illiteracy statistics in this country is not just the outcome of benign neglect and systematic social engineering. For many, educational deprivation is a painful tale within a broader life story of fear and powerlessness. The identities and educational statuses of HRDD actors were profoundly shaped by fear and injustice which they experienced within their homes, the homes of relatives in which they were raised, their schools and their wider violence-wracked communities. Sadly, the narratives of these same actors indicate community contexts of deep fracture, perpetuating a milieu of fear. The HRDD project, with its envisaged learning for transformation and hope, is but a slice within the lifespan of educators and learners. It appears to represent a brief period within lifelong learning in fear. In this regard, the HRDD story is a tale of learning in fear!

The examples of transformational learning and levels of compassion and hope which also emerge through this case study are inspiring. They reveal tenacity, agency and enormous survival competencies which rarely get due regard in society and scholarly writing. The labour, struggles and hopeful participation of women in the HRDD project who maintain livelihoods while also attempting to learn and participate in community projects are a testimony to what is holding

South Africa together, despite the fractures and power struggles. In this regard, the HRDD story is a tale of learning in hope! These women embrace the hope expressed by Welton (2001, p. 28) who stated that the “human spirit will triumph over tyranny in the end. What other belief is open to us in the face of an old, ruthless world that refuses to leave?”

In the end, this case study became an account of attempts to foster critical thinking, and dialogism in a context of historical and contemporary anti-dialogism in South Africa. It also serves as a reminder of the unfinished business of creating life and learning contexts which match the visions and hopes of a new, free nation. This case study serves as a reminder that the doors of learning and freedom still need to be opened for many of this country’s ‘new citizens’. It would be fitting then to end this study with the words of Orvil, the HRDD educator whose poem so powerfully conveys the context, struggle and hope expressed in this study,

*I was born in poverty,  
born by poor parents,  
from the wisdom that God will give me  
I am supposed to lead poor people  
and teach them to be people who can be independent.  
Showing them the correct way to be better people in future.*

(Orvil, 2005)

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## **Participants interviewed in this study**

### **Learners**

Dora – Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 15 February, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Eliza - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 15 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Khetiwe - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela on 20 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Phumzile - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 17 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Nothando - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 14 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Sipho - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela on 20 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Zinhle - Interview with HRDD learner by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 14 February 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **Educators**

Cosmos – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 24 June 2005 and 4 July 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Khosi – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 18 July 2005 and 25 July 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Malindi – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 29 April 2005 and 6 May 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Nokthula – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 19 July 2005 and 26 July 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Nonjabulo – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 18 July 2005 and 25 July 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Orvil – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 29 April 2005 and 6 May 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Welcome – Interview with HRDD educator by Bheka Memela and Vaughn John on 1 July 2005 and 8 July 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcripts at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **Project Partners**

Bheka Memela – Interview with CAE, HRDD researcher by Vaughn John on 20 May 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Busi Goba – Interview with Tembaletu ABET Manager by Vaughn John on 17 March 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Khulekani Mathe – Interview with former Director of Tembaletu by Vaughn John on 7 September 2005, Johannesburg. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Maarit Laitinen – Interview with current Project Officer of the Embassy of Finland by Vaughn John on 16 November 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Richard Rangiah – Interview with current Director of Tembaletu by Vaughn John on 17 March 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Sandra Land – Interview with CAE, ABET Programme Coordinator by Vaughn John on 13 March 2006, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Ville Luukkainen – Interview with former Project Officer of the Embassy of Finland by Vaughn John on 18 August 2005, KwaZulu-Natal. Transcript at the Centre for Adult Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **Appendix A: Questions and checklist/probes for interviews with Learners and Educators**

1. Please tell us a story about [learner's or educator's name]. You can start anywhere and tell the story of your life in any order. Please remember that no one else will get to listen to the recording of your life story. We will only use your pseudonym when we write about your story.

Name:	Checklist & Probes	Covered	Notes/Comments
Birth place, date			
Family Parents: education & work, Siblings			
Childhood, friends			
Schooling: experiences, best teacher, role model, dreams & ambitions			
Sources of income			
Post school: relationships, marriage, children			
Adult life: work, study, community involvement, current challenges, hope & dreams			
Other?			

2. We want you to tell us a story about the HRDD project and how the HRDD project relates to your life? You can begin anywhere and tell the story as you like. There are no right or wrong answers. We want to hear your views on the HRDD project. This is your story about the project. Please remember that no one else will get to listen to this recording.

<b>Name:</b>		
<b>Checklist &amp; Probes</b>	<b>Covered</b>	<b>Notes/Comments</b>
Start date, motivation and length of participation in HRDD		
Participants view on the purpose of HRDD		
Impacts of HRDD on participants life (positive and negative)		
Changes in how the learner/educator sees herself/himself		
Change in how other people see the learner/educator		
Impacts of HRDD on the community		
Challenges faced in HRDD		
Relationships with educators/learner		
Relationships with community		
Relationships with project partners		
How the HRDD could be improved		
Perspectives on ABET classes		
Perspectives on the Income Generating Project		
Perspectives on development in the community		
Involvement in community activities		
Visions/dreams for the future		
<b>Other?</b>		

## **Appendix B: Questions and checklist/probes for interviews with project partners**

1. Please tell us your story about the HRDD project, from its conception phase to the present (or point of your departure)

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Checklist &amp; Probes</b>	<b>Covered</b>	<b>Notes/Comments</b>
Origins of the HRDD			
Purpose of the HRDD project			
Role/s played in project			
Main challenges experienced			
Main achievements			
Perspectives on partnership			
Perspectives on ABET classes			
Perspectives on Income Generating Projects			
Perspectives on community needs, relationships and assets			
Perspectives on development in community			
Views on how HRDD could be improved			
Vision/dreams regarding project & communities			
<b>Other?</b>			

## Appendix C: Certificate of Ethical Clearance Approval



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

14 SEPTEMBER 2005

MR. VM JOHN (842848666)  
EDUCATION

Dear Mr. John

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/05124A

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Communities of learning and action? A case-study of the Human Rights, Democracy and Development (HRDD) project, 1999-2005"

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
MS PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

cc. Faculty Officer  
cc. Supervisor (Dr. P Rule)

## Appendix D: A chronology of adult education in South Africa, 1910 – 2001

<b>Year</b>	<b>Event</b>
1910	Union of South Africa: a unitary state within the British Empire. First 30 extension lectures delivered by professors of the University of Cape Town.
1912	Formation of the African Nation Congress (ANC) and associated political education of members and the broader public.
1915	International Socialist League (later to become Communist Party of South Africa) formed and began worker education.
1919 - 1929	Communist Party began night schools and offered literacy classes in various provinces. State repression took the form of court action against night schools.
1938	African College emphasising skill development started by some university students.
1945	Formation of Witwatersrand Federation for Non-European Adult Education. It recommended that night schools receive state subsidies.
1946	State subsidy for literacy provision in vernacular languages, English and Afrikaans.
1948	National Party government in power. Reversed support for night schools for blacks and discouraged NGO and community literacy projects. A Division of Adult Education was created by government to address white interests.
1952	University of Cape Town organised extramural lectures for the public.
1955	Department of Native Affairs given control of African adult education. Makes registration of all classes (irrespective of subsidy) compulsory. The Freedom Charter calls for the doors of learning and culture to be opened for all (Congress of the People, 1955).
1958	Many night schools close due to administrative and financial difficulties.
1961	South Africa becomes a Republic and leaves the British Commonwealth. An illegal night school is opened at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, providing matriculation classes for working black students.
1966	Operation Upgrade of Southern Africa begins with government approval and supplies primers and readers in many African languages.
1969	One of the first commercial literacy providers, Communication in Industry, stated in Natal. It aimed to teach black workers through the English medium.
1970	The University Christian Movement begins community education and literacy classes using Freirean methods.
1971	An Extension Department was established at the University of Natal, Durban. This later became the Centre for Adult Education (CAE)
1973	The Institute for Adult Education and External Studies was established at the University of Witwatersrand. (became the Centre for Continuing Education in 1976)
1976	The Department of Bantu Education established a new section for adult education, literacy and night schools. Surveys of activity and evaluations were commissioned.

	<p>Government revised regulations and made registration of literacy classes compulsory.</p> <p>Regulations about the Afrikaans medium provoked protest and the Soweto Uprising.</p>
1977	Night schools re-opened. 20 Adult Education centres set up. 15 590 learners enrolled.
1979	The Education and Training Act replaced the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The University of Natal's Extramural Studies and Extension Unit expands to the Pietermaritzburg campus.
1981	Non-formal adult education identified for development by state commission. Manpower Training Act addresses training for all workers and provides incentives.
1983	Government White Paper addresses equality of opportunities and standards. The Department of Education implements its own curriculum. The United Democratic Front was launched and began political education work.
1984	The General Education Affairs Act empowers the minister to decide on non-formal education policy and establishes an Advisory Council of Education.
1985	Department of Manpower funded a training scheme for the unemployed. The first anti-apartheid National Consultative Conference was held and gave rise to the call of 'people's education for people's power'. The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education was established up at the University of the Western Cape.
1986	Progressive literacy organisations formed the National Literacy Co-operation. A Department of Adult Education was established at the University of Transkei.
1988	The Independent Examinations Board was set up. It later responded to the needs of adult education.
1990	The ANC and other political organisations were unbanned.
1991	The Congress of South African Trade Unions adopted a resolution on the basic principles of the education and training system, which also emphasised literacy. The state held that a certificated, vocationalised, non-formal system should articulate with formal education and abandoned the field of literacy.
1992	The progressive National Education Conference called for special redress in ABE. A consortium of 4 universities (DEAL Trust) worked on the development of ABE. The South African Institute for Distance Education was launched as an NGO.
1992 - 1993	The progressive National Education Policy Investigation published 12 sectoral reports including reports on ABE, human resource development and adult education.
1993	The National Training Board published reports on ABET and trainer development. The Congress of South African Trade Unions published <i>Consolidated Recommendations on Adult Basic Education and Training</i> . The progressive South African Committee for Adult Basic Education was launched.

1994	<p>The ANC was voted into government in South Africa's first democratic elections.</p> <p>A new constitution was adopted which enshrined the right to basic education for all.</p> <p>The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training was issued for discussion.</p> <p>The National Training Strategy was published by the National Training Board which promoted the integration of education and training and idea of an education, training and development practitioner.</p> <p>The Association of Tertiary Sector Adult Educators and Trainers was formed.</p> <p>The new government's Reconstruction and Development White Paper was published. ABET was identified as a presidential project and a task team was formed.</p> <p>The Draft White Paper on Education and Training was published.</p> <p>The Association of Adult Educators and Trainers of South Africa was launched.</p> <p>The National Investigation into Community Education published its report.</p> <p>The first Independent Examinations Board examinations for adults took place.</p>
1995	<p>The University of South Africa established an ABET Institute.</p> <p>A Directorate for Adult Education and Training was formed within the Ministry of Education with a sub-directorate on ABET.</p> <p>The <i>Interim Guidelines</i>, South Africa's first ABET policy was published.</p> <p>The National Stakeholders Forum for ABET was established to work with the Directorate.</p>
1996	<p>Sub-directorates of ABET were established in all 9 provinces.</p> <p>The government announced the Ithuteng Campaign, the first literacy campaign, which targeted 90 000 learners with a once-off budget of R50 million..</p>
1997	<p>The Interim Guidelines were replaced by the Policy document on Adult Basic Education and Training and operationalised through the Multi-Year Implementation Plan and 9 Provincial Multi-year Implementation Plans.</p> <p>The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) was established which began identifying the main outcomes for all learning programmes.</p> <p>Some night schools were transformed into community learning centres.</p> <p>The NGO sector involved with ABET started to decline due to funding shortages.</p>
1998	<p>The Interim ABET Advisory Board was established and replaced the National Stakeholders Forum.</p>
- 1999	<p>Conditions of Service for Adult Educators were developed.</p> <p>Adult Educator qualifications for remuneration purposes were registered.</p> <p>The first unit standards-based qualification for adult educators was developed.</p> <p>Policy for ABET materials was developed.</p> <p>Draft learning programmes for provincial implementation were developed.</p> <p>Qualifications and unit standards in 8 sub-fields were registered with SAQA.</p> <p>The first assessment of ABET learners via the S.A. Certification Council took place.</p>

	<p>The Ikhwelo Project which aimed to provide ABET to 3000 learners in the Eastern Cape and Northern Province was launched in 1999.</p> <p>The Rivoningo Project which aimed to develop good PALCs in the 9 provinces was launched in 1999.</p> <p>The Skills Development Act (SDA) was promulgated in 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act followed in 1999. These acts provided a statutory basis for training of employees and for the funding thereof.</p> <p>Twenty five Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were established by the SDA to regulate workplace education and training.</p> <p>The Minister of Education promises to "break the back of literacy" within 5 years.</p>
2000	<p>The South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI), a literacy campaign targeting 500 000 learners in its first year was launched.</p> <p>The Adult Basic Education and Training Act 52 of 2000 was completed.</p>
2001	<p>The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was launched. It aimed to raise the level of basic education of workers in the workplace.</p>

**Sources:**

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