Moving forward

Measures were taken to address specific problems that arose from this debacle, including the implementation of a hotline for reporting incorrect deliveries; work with Statistics SA to improve reporting on school-level data; a management plan for timeous placement of orders, development of good working relationships with the Publishers' Association of South Africa and the appointment of a new distributor for Limpopo. These measures were undertaken within the overall framework of a stabilised budget and political changes in the province. Difficulties will remain, rooted in overall systemic issues, but attention now also needs to include the quality and use of textbooks and workbooks in schools.

The delivery process for CAPS-textbooks for 2013

UTi CL&D, a customer's information system called eWarehouse, worked with the Limpopo Department of Education under the Minister's Operations Team. It had three weeks in November 2012 to distribute textbooks to 4 055 schools, with a second phase of remedial action to address shortages as well as any other requests schools might have.

Publishers delivered textbooks to warehouses from 15 October where quantities were checked and errors remediated within seven days.

A high-tech system was adopted to track all facets of the delivery process.

Over 20 days, 72 trucks travelled 792 000 km per day; and four line-haul vehicles took freight to branch warehouses for further distribution daily. It was a 24-hour operation, with a total project staff of 771 people, who were provided with work and skills development for the duration of the project. Limpopo Department of Education staff were selected and trained as 'super trainers', who in turn trained the 88 Limpopo Department of Education pickers, manifesters and quality checkers. ■

Author: Dr Linda Chisholm is seconded to Angelina Motshekga, as an HSRC advisor to the Minister of Basic Education.

Listening before telling:
pairing indigenous knowledge with the school curriculum

A team of researchers set its sights on developing context-relevant teaching tools by using indigenous and local knowledge in the Cofimvaba district in the Eastern Cape. *Tebello Letsekha* relates the team's experiences.

South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 resulted in a number of changes to the schooling system. Following these changes, school learners had to learn in the context of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RCNS) from Grades R to 9, which was published in 2002, and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) from Grades 10 to 12, published in 2003. The NCS was designed in such a way as to ensure flexibility, so it could be adapted to local conditions and needs at school level.
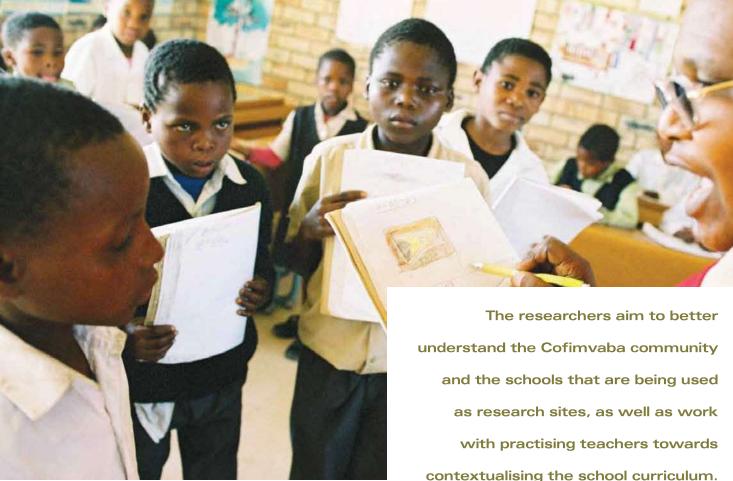
From its side, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) expected these curricula to be interpreted and implemented differently in diverse contexts. Yet, schools in so-called rural areas were still unable to take advantage of the opportunities created by the NCS owing to limited resources.

Applying indigenous knowledge to teaching

This article reflects on the journey of researchers involved in a three-year study that aims to develop context-relevant teaching tools using indigenous and local knowledge in collaboration with local teachers and community members, in the Cofimvaba district in the Eastern Cape.

The study, now in its second year, is titled 'Promoting and learning from Cofimvaba community's indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) so as to benefit the school curriculum'. It focuses on promoting the direct participation of teachers in planning, researching and developing learning and teaching support materials (LTSMs) for use in the classroom.

To realise this aim, the project first pursued ways of identifying and making use of local and indigenous knowledge (IK) that would benefit the school curriculum, and then forged links between the school and the wider community.

> The researchers aim to better understand the Cofimvaba community and the schools that are being used as research sites, as well as work with practising teachers towards contextualising the school curriculum.

Contextualising IK within the schooling system

In the South African context, IK refers to a body of knowledge embedded in African philosophical thinking and social practices that have evolved over the years. In the educational context, IK is understood as constituting a challenge to Western thinking and conceptualisation.

A number of studies have expressed the value of IK, and the need for educational processes to be properly contextualised within the local knowledge and language. Such a status quo would lead to linkages between the school or education system, the home, and the wider community of schools.

While the value of IK in education has been recognised, this recognition is yet to translate into practical curriculum processes.

Employing participatory action research, the researchers aim to better understand the Cofimvaba community and the schools that are being used as research sites, as well as work with practising teachers towards contextualising the school curriculum.

The research site: Cofimvaba's sociocultural and economic background

This study is located in Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape, which is predominantly rural and characterised by high levels of poverty and unemployment. The community is characterised by critical skills shortages, small scale subsistence farming, a reliance on indigenous plants, food insecurity and a high incidence of HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the Eastern Cape performed the worst in the 2011 final senior secondary examinations; the five worst performing districts were all located in the Eastern Cape.

Giving teachers a voice

Study methods are qualitative in nature, adopting participatory action research methodologies. The research team is working collaboratively with teachers and indigenous knowledge holders, who serve as community-based researchers.

Values of collective inquiry and experimentation are employed, informed by approaches to indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), and grounded in the experience and sociocultural history of the Cofimvaba community.

In order to understand the Cofimvaba community's IKS and at the same time attempt to integrate it into the school curriculum, a series of workshops were held. For the most part, the workshops took the form of a dialogue between the participants and the research team, and between the participants themselves. These conversations were important in bringing to the fore the opinions of the participants in their understanding of IKS, and the value it could add to their teaching. The discussions also gave the research team a deeper understanding of the teachers' needs and how best to engage with them in working together to meet these needs.

One-on-one sessions between teachers and the research team were also held. During this process it was realised that although the teachers were excited about being involved in the project, they were concerned that the Eastern Cape Department of Education and its officials might deem their involvement an added responsibility that would take them away from their teaching duties.

The team attempted to allay these fears by pointing out that the project was in line with what they needed to be doing in the classroom. This cautious attitude towards the project was found to be an impediment towards robustly instilling the concept within the classroom and the school curriculum.

The team is working collaboratively with teachers and indigenous knowledge holders, who serve as community-based researchers.

Finding the focus

During the first year of the study, in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible, researchers worked with more than 40 teachers from seven schools in the Nciba Circuit in Cofimvaba, without putting limitations on who could and could not participate. This meant the team had to develop teaching and learning materials for eight learning areas (subjects) for 12 grades (Grade R-12). At the suggestion and request of the teachers, the scope and focus were narrowed down to a single phase over two terms. During that phase teachers chose their own learning area.

The researchers have since developed and delivered the first set of teaching and learning materials for the foundation phase. These materials were informed by the data and conversations held with various Cofimvaba people and included posters and number charts (Figure 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Examples of flashcards developed for use in the classroom.

The team adopted a dynamic approach to planning and activities, allowing the project to adapt to the context and continuously learning from it.

Figure 2: Examples of flashcards developed for use in the classroom.

The research team believes that the path it has travelled so far can provide useful lessons for researchers and scholars involved in educational interventions, particularly in rural contexts. During the implementation of the project the team adopted a dynamic approach to planning and activities, allowing the project to adapt to the context and continuously learning from it.

Conclusion

Knowledge, and in turn content that finds its way into school books, is fluid and complex. However, it is essential that it is shaped by local contexts. The fact that local knowledge is valued by all and is beginning to 'see its way into the classroom' has further strengthened the team's relations with the community. It has also led interested parties in the community to take a more active role and greater responsibility for the development of context-relevant teaching and learning materials.

During this process it is important to constantly bear in mind that collaborative research among groups with various skills and education levels can lead to manipulation of participants, where those perceived to possess better skills and higher social status can dominate those perceived to be weaker. Manipulation and power relations that can stifle progress, even with participatory methodologies, must also be guarded against.

The team acknowledges that being consciously sensitive to power is crucial to maximising the use of such methods for truthfully empowering targeted beneficiaries. Drawing on the principles of IKS, it also recognises that it is crucial to respect local people's knowledge and experience. ■

Author: Tebello Letsekha, researcher, Education and Skills Development programme, HSRC.

Incomprehension follows the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme

In mid-2009, when the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme was unveiled, Rural Development and Land Reform Minister Gugile Nkwinti, stressed this as 'a novel approach to rural development in South Africa', ringing in a new dispensation that would transform the rural landscape. But three years down the line, local interventions and the participation of local communities remain a concern as the programme seemingly repeats many of the mistakes of previous initiatives, write *Tim Hart* and *Peter Jacobs*.

By way of background, the government of South Africa has undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the lot of the rural poor since 1994. The first attempts at land reform – especially agricultural land redistribution – focused on the rural poor. As the land redistribution programme and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) changed focus, the government started implementing programmes aimed at the poorest rural districts.

The first of these was President Mbeki's Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP), concentrating on 13 rural nodes. In 2009 this programme was superseded by the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP), introduced by the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (DRDLR) under the Zuma administration.

More of the same

When the CRDP was introduced, it was considered novel, largely because of the proposed active participation and engagement of officials with local communities, other line departments and local private sector and municipal actors.

This participation was to be accompanied by the willingness of officials to learn from experiences and address shortcomings as the process unfolded. But this does not seem to be happening and the CRDP appears similar to its predecessor, the ISRDP, in that much of the activities appear to be ad hoc, rather than comprehensive or integrated. Furthermore, under the CRDP existing activities are often refunded, or those that have collapsed, rekindled.

Clearly, the government is not stingy about spending money on rural development; this is evident from Table 1, which illustrates the notable increase in expenditure on the three core components of the CRDP between 2009 and 2013. Rural development spending, as part of the overall budget, has increased almost ten-fold during this period. However, what is not clear is exactly what this money is being spent on: salaries, consultants or actual rural requirements?

Table 1: Direct fiscal spending on rural development through the DRDLR, 2009-2013.

Sub-programme expenditure	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Rural infrastructure development	39 498	145 499	270 064	368 060
Social, technical rural livelihood and institutional facilitation	32 619	211 969	420 352	259 246
National Rural Youth Services Corps (NARYSEC)	4 686	3 023	95 836	413 902
Total rural development spending (R'000)	76 803	360 491	786 252	1 041 208
Total DRDLR spending (R'Billion)	5.86	7.12	7.99	8.97
Rural development spending (%)	1.31	5.06	9.83	11.6

Source: National Treasury, 2013 (Vote 33, p13)

Rural development spending, as part of the overall budget, has increased almost ten-fold between 2009 and 2013. However, what is not clear is exactly what this money is being spent on.

Little progress made

In October 2012, the DRDLR made a presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Rural Development and Land Reform, highlighting the drafting of a Green Paper on Rural Development. The portfolio committee urged the DRDLR to align its strategic vision, plans and programmes to the National Development Plan Vision 2030.

The rollout of the programme has continued, but with very little feedback about progress. Currently, and perhaps belatedly given the upcoming 2014 elections, the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency and the DRDLR are busy with a national evaluation of the CRDP. Unfortunately, this updated information is not yet available, so we have to turn to the DRDLR Strategic Plan for 2011-2014 (DRDLR 2013), amended in February 2013, and other documents obtained from the DRDLR for information about the programme's progress since 2009.

The date for completion of the programme is set as 1 April 2014. By the third-quarter of 2009, the DRDLR had identified nine CRDP pilot sites, consisting of a total of 20 wards, with the village of Muyexe in Greater Giyani Rural District Municipality, Limpopo, as the flagship. At the end of the 2009/10 financial year, the number of wards was increased to 29 in total.

However, most intervention activities remained in the original nine sites and continued to do so for the next period. During the course of the 2010/11 financial period, another 45 wards were added to the CRDP. By the end of the 2011/12 period, a further 13 wards and five entire local municipalities were added, bringing the total number of wards and local municipalities included in the CRDP to 92 (or 58%) out of the intended target of 160 poorest rural wards in the country. From the perspective of expanding the CRDP, these figures initially appear relatively impressive; especially if one considers that the DRDLR is a new ministry, with several new chief directorates whose mandates are no longer confined exclusively to land reform but more broadly, to drive rural development across South Africa for the entire rural population. In reality, this expansion is quite simply an expansion of the ISRDP of the Mbeki era. Furthermore, very little service delivery has taken place in these 'old' and new areas. It seems the primary activities are the identification of more wards, discussions with traditional leaders/ward councillors and the rolling out of ward-level household profiling using the War on Poverty survey questionnaire.

DRDLR 2013 confirms the rather limited progress. Out of the identified 92 wards and local municipalities, only 60 have been profiled along with 90 land reform farms in these areas. More worrisome is the fact that only 25 status quo reports have been 'more or less' completed as some are still awaiting finalisation of the identified interventions, indicating that not even the preliminary scoping, planning and mobilisation work for the first 29 wards, identified in 2009, has been completed.

These activities are supposed to contribute towards participation by the rural communities, although the profiling and planning process is clearly more extractive than participatory.