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in view of Improving Student
Performance**

The Contribution of National Parent Organizations
to the Achievement of EFA

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The document is a working document still in the stages of production. It has been prepared to serve as a basis for discussions at the ADEA Biennial Meeting and should not be disseminated for other purposes at this stage.

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADEA	=	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
BoG	=	Board of Governors
BoT	=	Board of Trustees
CBOs	=	Community Based Organizations
DEB	=	District Education Board
DEO	=	District Education Officer
ECD	=	Early Childhood Development
EFA	=	Education For All
EMIS	=	Education Management Information System
ESSP	=	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FBO	=	Faith Based Organizations
FAPE	=	Federation Africaine de Parents D'Eleves et Etudiants (African Federation of Parent Associations)
FEDSAS	=	Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies for South African Schools
GBF	=	Governing Body Foundation
GER	=	Gross Enrolment Rate
GoK	=	Government of Kenya
KIE	=	Kenya Institute of Education
MOES&T	=	Ministry of Education Science and Technology
MPET	=	Master Plan on Education and Training
NASGB	=	National Association of School Governing Bodies
NARC	=	National Rainbow Coalition
NCF	=	National Consultative Forum
NFE	=	Non-Formal Education
NGO	=	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	=	Parents Association
PTA	=	Parents Teachers Association
RSA	=	Republic of South Africa
SASA	=	South African Schools' Act
SGB	=	School Governing Body
SSA	=	Sub-Saharan Africa
SMC	=	School Management Committee
TSC	=	Teachers Service Commission
TVET	=	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UPE	=	Universal Primary Education

Introduction

1. Despite substantial progress world-wide, millions of children, the majority of them girls, still do not have access to primary schooling in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). And, the majority of those children who are able to attend school often receive such poor quality education that they fail to acquire even the most basic skills of reading and writing. Even with increased government and donor funding and on-going reform efforts, the results in relation to quality, sharing responsibility and resource mobilization, though encouraging, have still not achieved critical mass.

2. In order to consolidate and deepen positive developments in a context of limited economic, financial and human resources, it is essential to use every possible resource. One such resource is parents and communities, who as partners and beneficiaries of the education system can play a substantial role in tackling these challenges. With the trend towards education decentralization, greater transparency in SSA school systems and growing attention to quality beyond access, there are encouraging signs of increasing opportunities for African parents to participate in education policy and decision and to make a difference in the quality of their children's education.

3. This was one of the conclusions of the ADEA Biennial Meeting in Mauritius in December 2003: "In experiments that attempted to improve quality through decentralization, the use of contractual instruments and the devolution of powers to the school and community level proved to be powerful levers of creative energy. … These experiments show that: (i) school environments have huge untapped resources that can be unleashed to improve the quality of education; (ii) trust, transparency and the promotion of community participation in the decision-making process are factors of success; (iii) constant social dialogue, the improvement of educational output and efforts to finance education domestically help promote quality in decentralization and devolution policies" (ADEA, 2003).

4. Similarly the Education For All (EFA), Framework for Action in Sub-Saharan Africa in recognizing that governments have the principal responsibility for ensuring adequate financing of basic education, includes in this responsibility government's role in facilitating partnership at all levels with civil society, agencies, the private sector, NGOs, religious groups, communities, parents and teachers' associations, teachers' trade unions, families. It emphasizes that such partnership is not limited to cost-sharing, but should involve the whole education process, including decision-making, management and teaching (EFA, 1999).

5. It is not surprising then, that from Mauritania to South Africa, parents are beginning to play a greater role in school governance and management through parent teacher association (PTAs), school governing bodies (SGBs), and school management committees (SMCs). Though they differ in name, structure, legal status and range of functions, in general, these

"parent organizations" are playing some role in school policy, management and decision-making, and more importantly contributing to the funding and resource base of their schools.

6.   A World Bank study found that PTA/Community contributions were common in 22 (81%) of 27 countries surveyed— Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia. In 12 (55%) of these countries, it is legally allowed—Cape Verde, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, and Zambia (Bentaouet Kattan and Burnett, July 2004).

7.   Although on the increase in the past decade, parental involvement in financing and managing basic education is not new. Community-managed schools were in place during the colonial period; and, community involvement was common in the post-independence period. The distinguishing feature currently, is its scale and depth. In Chad, for example, (as in other Francophone and Anglophone countries) parents' associations responded to the country's political and economic instability and to the government's failure to provide the most basic education for many rural children by taking full responsibility for managing rural schools. These associations not only took over schools that the government had abandoned but also built and operated new ones. Twenty percent of all primary school pupils in Chad are enrolled in community-run schools.

4.   While most decentralization initiatives and related attempts to involve local communities in school governance and management are driven by government actions this is not always the case. Benin, Mali, Malawi, Ethiopia, among others can be seen as African models for the "bottom-up" approach to decentralization. In these countries national and international NGOs have broken apart from the government structures and initiated schools at the grassroots level. These "community schools" founded on local management of the education process, develop and implement their own curriculum, and ensure local governance, accountability and better use of scarce resources (Naidoo, 2004).

5.   There have been a variety of on-going measures to address the many challenges facing education in Africa including lack of funds, teachers, classrooms, learning materials, and transparency. As pointed out above one measure has been the attempt to promote greater parent and community involvement in education management and governance particularly at school level. These attempts have in general positively impacted access to education ensuring more children in Africa attend schools than in the past. Greater community involvement has also contributed to some improvement in the quality of education provided and in student achievement, but this has been more limited.

6.   At the same time, parent and community participation and influence at national and intermediate levels have generally not matched the increase in

participation at school and local level. Within the current context of decentralization the participation of parents and other private citizens in policy-making whether individually, collectively, or organizationally does not, in general, appear to be substantial. It is rather sporadic and illusory, and, but for a few exceptions, ineffective.

7.   A heartening contrast to this pattern is the role of the African Federation of Parent Associations (FAPE), which constitutes a significant structure for civil society participation in education policy development in Francophone Africa. Although the national parent associations are still fragile, they are positioned as guardians of democracy in their efforts to maintain meaningful dialogue and consultation with all stakeholders in education: national authorities, teachers and teacher associations, development agencies, economic operators and other actors (Brunswic and Valérien, 1998).

8.   In light of this experience, this study moves beyond parent and community involvement in local school-based management and governance[1], to explore the issue of parent and civil society participation in education policy making at national level in three Anglophone SSA countries, Lesotho, Kenya and South Africa.[2] This implies a shift in focus from parents and communities as clients or consumers of education policies to a focus on them as active agents in the making and shaping of education policies at a systemic level.

9.   Questions considered in this study include: How do ordinary citizens, especially parents, affect education policies? What is the role of citizen participation in education policy development and implementation in the context of decentralization? What are the entry points through which civil society actors, especially parents, exercise voice and influence education policy?

The Three Cases: A Continuum of Participation and Influence

This section provides some details on the nature of participation in relation to national parent organizations in Kenya, Lesotho, and South Africa.

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[1] This is not to imply that that there is no need for more detailed study of parental participation at school level. School level studies need to be expanded and deepened to focus on such issues as: The various types of local parent associations and emerging grassroots organizations and their primary fields of activity; the missions and roles parents might be expected to assume as grassroots partners and stakeholders; the outcome of the participation of the local parents associations in school management and governance, and so on.

[2] A complementary study of national parent associations in Francophone Africa has been undertaken for ADEA by Boubacar Niane, and will be presented together at the ADEA 2006 Biennial in Gabon.

Kenya

Background

10. The provision of quality education and training has been a central policy issue in Kenya since independence in 1963, with the Government of Kenya (GoK) devoting a substantial portion of its resources to education. Public expenditure on education now accounts for 29% of total government expenditure; and, as a result Kenya has a comprehensive network of over 52, 000 educational institutions (19, 496 pre- and primary, 3, 999 secondary, 55 tertiary) that provide impressive coverage and access to education. Adult literacy rates have almost quadrupled, from 20% in 1963 to 76% in 1997, and the average person in the working-age population (age 15–64) has about 6 years of formal education. [3]

11. Kenyan education is based on an 8-4-4 system introduced in 1985: eight years in primary school, four years in secondary and four in tertiary education. The gross enrolment rates are: Pre-primary–32%, Primary-104%, Secondary- 22%, Tertiary-3%. Owing to the steady decrease in enrolment rates the primary level GER dropped to about 87 % in 2000 from 105 % 1989. In response the new the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government abolished the cost-sharing policy and declared Free Primary Education (FPE) in January 2003. The implementation of FPE led to an influx of 1.3 million more children in schools, and enrolment climbed to 7.2 million pupils (Bedi et al, 2002).

12. While FPE has increased participation, the sudden influx of pupils created considerable pressures that have negatively impacted teaching and learning, and parent and community interaction with schools. Most schools have to deal with overstretched physical facilities and extremely high pupil-teacher ratios. Many school management committees (SMCs) are unable to improve learning facilities or recruit extra teachers through the PTAs, owing to the ban on school levies. If they wish to charge additional levies, school heads and committees have to obtain approval from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOES&T) through a lengthy and cumbersome process that involves a request to the District Education Board by the Area Education Officer, after agreement among parents and the Provincial Director of Education (GoK/MOES&T, 2003).

13. Capitation grants to cater for the costs of providing teaching and learning materials and support services have alleviated some problems but are inadequate to deal with the enormous backlog in the availability of instructional materials after years of neglect under previous administrations.

14. That Kenya has made enormous progress in education quantitatively-increased number of schools and students- is not in doubt. However, declining completion rates, increased school drop-out, reduced quality and

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[3] These statistics are provisional for 2003 as supplied by the MOES&T.

relevance of education and inadequate financial and management capacities have increased public concern. Despite increased expenditure on education and the introduction of FPE, Kenya is far from achieving full school enrolment for both girls and boys. Of those who do attend primary school, the majority does not complete the primary cycle with only 55% of boys and 35% of girls entering standard 8, and enrolment and completion rates are continuing to fall, especially for girls.

15.   In addition there are questions about the quality of education given that the National Curriculum has remained unchanged for some time, class sizes are generally 40 plus, and the teaching style is generally talk, chalk and learning by rote. In order to revitalize education and training the Government appointed a "Commission of Inquiry into the Education System of Kenya" in May 1998. The Commission which adopted a comprehensive "multi-strategic approach" to facilitate the participation of as many Kenyans as possible in the inquiry released its report (popularly referred to as the Koech Report) in March 2000 (GoK/MOES&T, 2001).

16.   As result of the Koech report, subsequent dialogue and a review of the education sector, the NARC government that came into office in the December 2002 elections recognized that inadequate policy and legal frameworks had negatively affected the development of quality basic education in Kenya. In one of its first actions the NARC government introduced the FPE policy and embarked on a variety of policy reforms as reflected in its Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP). These reforms aimed at achieving the goal of quality *Education For All* (EFA) by 2015, includes a decentralization policy involving major changes in the structural arrangements for the delivery of education services. The changes represent the response by the GoK to the challenge of ensuring that the education system addresses national concerns about relevance, quality, access, and enhanced service delivery (GoK/MOES&T, 2003).

Government Education Policy and Civil Society Participation in Education

17.   In terms of existing regulations (the Education Act [1968] and other related Acts of Parliament), MOES&T has overall responsibility to manage all aspects of education and training, which includes policy development and formulation of standards and guidelines, planning, development of sector strategies, regulation of the provision and the overall supervision and monitoring of education. At the provincial level, the Provincial Director of Education (PDE) coordinates education activities. At the district level, District Education Boards (DEBs) and the District Education Officer (DEO) are responsible for education management, planning, registration and monitoring of schools, and teacher management. At the primary school level School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) are responsible for the management of resources, infrastructure development, and provision of learning and teaching materials. Boards of Governors (BOGs) play a similar role in secondary schools (GoK/MOES&T, 2005).

18.   The GoK is committed to devolving greater responsibility to lower level structures, recognizing that decision-making had remained highly centralized at the MOES&T headquarters yet most services were delivered in the field. It is a policy priority, therefore, to decentralize decision-making authority to the district and institutional levels, and to strengthen the capacities of the lower level structures. MOES&T stresses strong partnerships with all stakeholders including communities, civil society, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), NGOs, religious organizations, other Government institutions, development partners and the private sector are critical in meeting the EFA challenge. In particular, it suggests greater parent participation in the management and delivery of education services (GoK/MOES&T, 2003).

19.   The GoK has also determined that education legislation has not kept pace with new developments. For example, the expanded role of parents and communities through PTAs in management and financing, and the role of other civil society actors are not covered. Hence it proposes new legislative arrangements to regulate parent and community participation in education, and the establishment of "clearly defined consultative and coordination channels". Accordingly the ministry is proposing a formal mechanism such as a "National Education Board" for consultation and coordination of all stakeholders in the education sector (GoK/MOES&T, 2005).

Role of National Parent Organizations: The Kenya National Association of Parents

20.   PTAs have long had an important role to play in Kenyan primary schools. Parents and community representatives as well as government representatives at all levels indicated that with FPE the role of parents is ever more important to ensure that "funds are carefully monitored through respective PTAs". From various interviews it is obvious that, despite varying capacity to do so PTAs across the country are playing some role in monitoring funds as well as undertaking other management functions at school level.

21.   However, a number of respondents commented on the absence of other district, provincial and national level forums where parents and civil society representatives may be consulted when "crucial educational policies are being formulated". For example, it was pointed out that the District Education Boards comprising the DEO, the District Commissioner, an MP, a County Council Member, and representatives from a religious body and from an NGO were dominated by bureaucrats and elected officials. Parents and communities in this arrangement are represented by the Religious Body or NGO representative. Whether they actually represent the interests of PTAs from the district schools or of parents and communities more broadly is questionable in the absence of any district level consultation between them and parents.

22.   This is in sharp contrast to teachers who have multiple opportunities to influence local school policy through participation on SMCs and PTAs, and in turn are well represented at other levels. Teachers in Kenya, for example, have access to the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and other consultative and bargaining forums where they are represented by structures such as the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and the Kenya Union of Post Primary Education Teachers (KUPPET). KNUT is content with the centralized TSC structure which is responsible for teacher policy including recruitment. At the same time they do not oppose decentralization, but point out that only certain functions such as teacher deployment should be devolved to lower levels with appropriate safeguards. From their perspective parents should not play a substantive role in teacher appointments, monitoring teacher performance or in classroom curricular decisions. According to a KNUT official they do not oppose parent participation in education as it is their right in terms of "harambee"[4], and since parents contribute financially they had to have a say. He added, however, that their role should be consultative.[5]

23.   Despite the absence of a formal mechanism for consultation on education policy at a national level in Kenya, PTAs have enjoyed some "voice" through the Kenya National Association of Parents (KNAP).[6] KNAP which was formed and registered as a National PTA under the Societies Act in 1999, represents over 5000 PTAs across 50 districts and divisions. The organization was initially launched as the Kenya Parent Teachers Association (KNPTA), but subsequently changed to the KNAP, as it was felt that teacher interests were already better represented through their "own" teacher organizations. Both parent and teacher representatives also acknowledged that parent and teacher interests did not always align making it necessary that they be represented by their "own structures".

24.   The KNAP comprises a National Governing Board (NGB) of members drawn from the 8 provinces, and a National Governing Council (NGC) made up of 256 members who are elected for 5 years by PTA representatives at regional, district and zonal level. The NGB meets quarterly, while the NGC convenes annually. KNAP is financed primarily through individual PTA subscriptions of Kshs.700 per year[7], but also raises funds through projects and from donors such as the Commonwealth Education Fund.

25.   KNAP's goal is to "enhance an organized constructive and active participation of parents in the leadership and management of public educational affairs in Kenya" KNPTA, 1999). To this end the National and

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[4] Owing to the harambee tradition embodying joint effort, mutual social responsibility and community self-reliance, civil society in Kenya has always been involved in education. A consistent manifestation of this tradition has been community self-help activities including the construction of schools.
[5] The position of KNUT is derived from an interview with Mr. F. M. Ng'anga the Secretary General of KNUT
[6] Much of the information on KNAP is drawn from interviews with Mr. Musau Ndunda, the Secretary General of KNAP, and fro various organizational documents including its constitution and a number of project proposals.
[7] At the time of writing 1 US Dollar = 75.80000 Kenyan Shilling.

Regional Structures of KNAP, are responsible for representing parents at national and provincial forums in order to secure their interests at these levels. The KNAP at national level has therefore attempted to unite PTAs and create a sustainable organization structure through which local national issues and concerns can be channeled. In turn KNAP's District PTA councils are expected, among other functions, to monitor the decisions of the District Education Boards (DEBs) with the view of safeguarding the interests of parents at that level.

26. KNAP has been able to represent parents in policy development has it has enjoyed a fair amount of access to policy makers including successive education ministers and deputy ministers as well as senior MOES&T officials. At the same time they have participated in various consultative forums and national conferences on education. One outcome of this interaction is the move to officially recognize the status of PTAs in new legislation.

27. In addition to playing this representative role, KNAP has been fully involved in various campaigns to build the capacity of individual PTAs. Of particular note is its role in educating parents on their role in SMCs, BOGs and PTAs and their interaction with DEBs. This is of great importance within the context of FPE. It is playing a key role in trying to address the pressures created by FPE arising from inadequate facilities and shortage of teachers is helping to ensure that is policy which is important for the realization of EFA remains on track. It is also involved in mobilizing parents nationally to involve PTAs in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Again this presents an opportunity for government to engage parents both at policy and operational level to confront a challenge that may hinder the achievement of quality education for all.

28. A major challenge facing KNAP or other national organizations that wish to represent parent interests, and ensure greater civil society participation in education policy beyond the school level, is the lack of formal consultative forums. Currently opportunities for participation, depends on the commitment of individuals within government and the enthusiasm of parent and civil society leadership. The GoK is committed to establishing a formal consultative forum, the National Education Board (NEB) for broader stakeholder participation in development, management and coordination of education services (GoK/MOES&T, 2005). There is no guarantee that parents will be able to enjoy equal access and participation on the NEB. Here again, the role of a national parents organization may be key to ensure that there is authentic participation of parents in what may become a very influential body in the education sector in Kenya.

29. The uncertain education policy environment in Kenya makes the participation of zonal, district, regional and national parents' organizations in education management and policy development critical, if Kenya is to achieve the six EFA goals. This is particularly important in a context where parent representatives at local levels are often intimidated and over-

ruled by teachers, the principal or education officers. According to various MOES&T officials the situation is complicated by the lack of uniform powers and responsibilities of SMCs, PTAs and BOGs. In general most of the structures are not fully involved in "asking questions about quality", as their activities tend to be limited to fundraising and supporting the school management.

30. The challenge becomes greater in the context of decentralization as DEBs are given greater powers to not only implement but also to determine and make policy. This means that there needs to be greater mobilization and capacity building of parents and other civil society actors to engage DEBs. While, the government has initiated a programme for training of key stakeholders such as primary school heads and school committees on financial management, procurement of materials and use of funds and resources (goK/MOES&T, 2005), it is limited in its resources and ability to provide support for parent and community involvement in policy development. This is a function that can be more effectively undertaken by national, regional and district PTA structures of an organization like KNAP.

31. The importance of national, regional and district parent organizations is also vital in a context in which there are renewed calls from teachers, administrators and policy-makers for DEBs, SMCs, BOGs and even PTAs to have a minimum educational qualification as a criteria for participation. It is being suggested that new policy regulations require that DEBs are headed by education professionals, appointees to School Committees by the respective DEB have a minimum education level and that the members of DEBs and SMCs are exposed to adequate training in all areas of educational management. In such a context, a truly representative national parents' organization may be able to safeguard the interests of marginalized parents, and ensure that it is not only the more affluent and more educated who are afforded opportunities for participation in education policy and decision-making.

32. Whatever, direction Kenya pursues with regard to decentralization and education reform, in general, PTAs at school level and beyond have an important role to play. As acknowledged by key education policy makers in Kenya, parent organizations should be consulted regularly and their views given consideration since they represent the parents' views at any particular time. PTAs and BOGs and other structures such as KNAP, representing parent and community voices should be given ample formal and informal opportunities to hold regular consultative meetings with government and other actors on policy. This is vital in order to meet EFA goals and steer forward the development agenda for individual schools, the education system and the country.

The Kenya National Association of Parents: A National Voice for Parents

The Kenya National Association of Parents (KNAP) formed in 1999, represents over 5000 PTAs across 50 districts. The organization was initially launched as the

Kenya Parent Teachers Association (KNPTA), but subsequently changed to the KNAP, as it was felt that teacher interests were already better represented through their own structures. The KNAP structure comprises a National Governing Board (NGB) of members drawn from the 8 provinces, and a National Governing Council (NGC) made up of 256 members elected for 5 years by PTA representatives at regional, district and zonal level. KNAP's goal is to "enhance an organized constructive and active participation of parents in the leadership and management of public educational affairs in Kenya" KNPTA, 1999). The KNAP at national level has attempted to unite PTAs and create a sustainable organization structure through which local national issues and concerns can be channeled.

KNAP has been able to represent parents in policy development has it enjoys access to policy makers including successive education ministers, deputy ministers and senior MOES&T officials. It also participates in consultative forums and national conferences on education. One outcome of its efforts interaction is government intentions to officially recognize the status of PTAs in new legislation. In addition to playing its representative policy influence role, KNAP actively supports capacity building of individual PTAs. Of particular note is its role in educating parents on their role in SMCs, BOGs and PTAs and their interaction with DEBs. Of note is its role in alleviating the challenges arising from the declaration of Free Primary education (FPE) and to ensure that the FPE policy which is important for the realization of EFA remains on track. It is also involved in mobilizing parents nationally to involve PTAs in the fight against HIV/AIDS. A major challenge facing KNAP in representing parent interests, and ensuring greater civil society participation in education policy beyond the school level, is the lack of formal consultative forums. Currently opportunities for participation, depends on the commitment of individuals within government and the enthusiasm of KNAP's leadership.

Lesotho

Background

33.   Lesotho has, for many years, experienced serious problems of unemployment, crime, poverty and increased vulnerability for the poor. To address these challenges, Lesotho is focused on economic growth and investment in human resource development. The Government of Lesotho has set an ambitious agenda of expanding enrolment and achieving universal primary education by 2011, and improving the quality education for all. The introduction of Free Primary Education in 2000 is one of the means of achieving this goal.

34.   Primary Education in Lesotho covers seven years of basic education in which a Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) Certificate is awarded at the successful completion of standard 7. The official school age for primary is 6-12 years.

35.   The Free Primary Education policy effectively reversed the declining trend in primary enrolment. Enrolment increased from 364,951 in 1999 to 410,745 in 2000, an increase of 12.5 percent. This reflects a primary school gross enrolment ratio of 124%. Yet a third of school-aged children,

the majority from poor families, remain out of school. Hence we see much lower net enrolment ratios (88% for girls, and 62% for boys). Unlike in other African countries, primary school enrolment rates in Lesotho are higher for girls than for boys. This may be attributed to boyhood in Lesotho, which traditionally involves the herding of livestock with no or intermittent school attendance (Government of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, 2003).

36. Traditionally all schools used to charge fees although the primary school fees have been comparatively low. For example, according to 1996 statistics primary school fees contribution to the total expenditure was 11%. In 2000 Free Primary Education (FPE) was introduced starting with standard one and rolling annually standard by standard. However, most vulnerable children are still unable to access education and there are a variety of problems in the implementation of FPE. The standard of education is deteriorating as classrooms are now over crowded. The pupil-teacher ratio which was as high as 60 to 1 before FPE is expected to rise even higher. To add to the challenge many school proprietors (97% of primary schools are owned by the churches) are resistant to the FPE, and feel that they cannot effectively operate their schools and provide quality education if they are unable to levy fees.

37. Despite substantial changes from pre-colonial times to the present, the churches continue to play a prominent role in education in Lesotho. As far back as the mid-1970s, the then Minister of Education and Culture observed that "the Lesotho government decided to continue to give the churches substantial powers over education and wishes to do so even in the future" (Muzvidziwa and Seotsanyana, 2001). It seems the post independence governments have found it difficult if not impossible to disentangle Lesotho's education system from church control.

38. The 2001 statistics showed that there are 1,295 primary schools in the country, of which 508 belong to the Roman Catholic church, with the remainder owned by either the Lesotho Evangelical Church, the Anglican Church or (in a few cases) the communities themselves. Only 59 primary schools are owned by government (Kingdom of Lesotho, 2005). The churches who own 97% of schools in terms of facilities and management determine the basic education values, while the government pays the teacher's salaries and sets the education standards, including designing of curriculum. Syllabuses and educational materials are developed through the National Curriculum Development Centre in conjunction with subject panels on which teachers are represented.

Government Education Policy and Civil Society Participation in Education

39. Recent changes in structure and policy have been made to respond to the challenges of national development. As a result, there is now an increased focus on promoting education and training as a means of creating skills as reflected in The Education Sector Plan (2002 – 2015). The plan which is

guided by the Government Vision 2020, reaffirms the government's commitment to free primary education, and feeds into its Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP).

40.   The Government of Lesotho and the Ministry of Education is committed to wide stakeholder involvement in education policy, planning and decision-making. To this end, unlike in the past, there were consultations with key stakeholders in developing the current Education Sector Plan (2002 – 2015). However, consultation with civil society and particularly parents is still limited. The few NGO representatives who were involved in the process only participated in certain parts of the process.

41.   At the same time, especially in the past decade teachers represented by the Lesotho Teachers Union and the Lesotho Association of Teachers are fairly active, and have some opportunities to influence policy beyond the school level. Representatives from both teacher organizations indicated that there is systematic engagement of government resulting in greater attention to teacher working conditions, salaries, and teacher interests in general. They also acknowledged that while their interaction is for the benefit of the education sector as whole, the interests of teachers and of parent and other community members don't necessarily correspond.

42.   The Education Sector Plan is aimed at establishing linkages between the provision of early childhood care and development (ECCD) and primary education, and with secondary, technical and vocational education as well as higher education. The administration and management of schools is to be improved through ongoing training of advisory school committees, school boards and management committees. Clearly, a key principle of the plan is the idea of strong parent involvement in education decision-making, which is in accordance with the government's commitment to greater stakeholder participation.

43.   The existing legislation (Education Act No. 10 of 1995 and the Education [Amendment] Act No. 5 of 1996) makes provision for District Education Boards and Boards of Governors. The Education Act also vests the responsibility of the management of primary schools on School Committees, the appointment of which is the responsibility of the respective Local Authority/District Education Boards. Education legislation (Education Act No. 10 of 1995 and the Education Amendment Act of 1996), which is under review, provides for Advisory School Committees (ASCs) for church primary schools under the same parish which are in turn under the supervision of a Management Committee (MC), and School Boards for post-primary schools. This has led to some tension in school management and governance arising from conflicts between MCs and ASCs, lack of clarity on roles, and poor accountability of MCs to parents, teachers and the government.

44.   The Review of the Education Act No. 10 of 1995 and the Education [Amendment] Act No. 5 of 1996, states that the act needs to be revisited to clearly articulate (among other aspects such as provision of free primary

education and protection from discrimination), "the obligation to democratic, transparent and accountable management the education by all those involved in the provision of education". As a result the draft White Paper suggests that each school has its own committee named the School Board, similar to that of post-primary schools (Government of Lesotho, Ministry of Education and Training, 2004).

45.   The participation of parents in education in Lesotho, beyond a support role (providing funds and resources to individual schools), is also constrained by teacher attitudes to parent participation. In general, even though they state they welcome parent participation, teachers tend to define such participation in a limited way. Teachers tend to view parents as "unqualified to monitor school affairs or to make decisions regarding teaching and learning". A NGO representative who works with parents at a local level suggested that there needs to be a change in teacher training such that teachers are "taught to respect parents' views".

46.   Feedback from the two leading teacher organizations (Lesotho Teachers Union and Lesotho Association of Teachers) suggests that their focus on improving the status of teachers and securing their professionalism, may in fact conflict with the interests of other civil society actors including parents. They pointed out that it is easier for parents and teachers to be represented together at school level, where they can work though competing interests. At school level cooperation between teachers and parents on BoTs, SMCs and PTAs may be facilitated by the common goal of advancing the interests of the individual school, and ensuring quality education for all within a defined community. In such a localized context, competing interests may be managed and subsumed by the force of working for the common good. At higher levels, the tensions and divergent interests are so severe that a teacher organization representative suggested that "at district and national levels the interests of parents and teachers have to be separately represented through different channels of interaction".

47.   At school and intermediate levels such as the district, while parents are increasingly involved in education through the MC, ASC and PTAs, participation is dominated by the proprietor (church) or principal and teachers. According to a number of respondents, these structures are generally focused on ensuring efficient school management or the interests of the proprietor. While PTAs can make recommendations, in most cases final decision-making powers over policy resides with the proprietor (generally church diocese) within certain guidelines set by the ministry of education.

48.   The central role of the proprietor limits the participation of parents and the PTA, as their interests can be in opposition. Furthermore, many of the schools are small community based institutions where parent participation is defined primarily in terms of the resource support they can provide. Actual decision-making is the purview of the church or school authorities especially the principal. In most cases according to a School Board chair,

even when parents are involved they are merely consulted and don't play a role in planning, policy setting or decision-making.

49.   Another obstacle identified by different stakeholders as limiting parent participation in education policy and decision-making was "the lack of knowledge about rights and responsibilities". While there is training for School Board members much of it focused on day to day management and support for schools.

50.   At the same time, at least at school level, there is wide variation in parent participation by level (primary and secondary) and by location (rural/urban). There appears to be greater participation beyond merely providing resources at the secondary level because of the legal provisions regarding Boards of Trustees (BoTs). In the urban center (Maseru) parents especially in secondary schools appear to play a more active role. One Maseru BOT chair described their functions as ranging from disciplining teachers to making curriculum input. However, this is not generally the case and is only common in the more exclusive high fee charging secondary schools.

Role of National Parent Organizations: Batsoali Thuthong

51.   While a variety of civil society grassroots structures (NGOs, PTAs etc) represent the Basotho people at school or village levels, few are seriously involved in the education policy development process at district or national level. One national parents association which has played some role, even if minimally over time has been *Batsoali Thuthong (BT)*, which means "Parents in Education".

52.   Batsoali Thuthong formed in the early nineties, by a group of concerned parents led by Mr. Monyape Sehapi was registered under the Societies Act of 1966, in November 1994 (Botsoali Thutong, 1994). It was formed as result of the crises and disruption in schooling in Lesotho at this time. After discussions with government representatives, a decision was reached to form BT in order to provide a "voice for parents views and help resolve the education crisis".[8]

53.   BT has in the past had an executive of 7 members who volunteered their services and were not elected by any lower level parent structures. Initially BT was quite active in making representations to politicians and senior education ministry officials. According to most respondents (including the BT Chairperson) it now exists mostly in name only. It functions mainly to highlight problems that exist through the media. The Chairperson is still sometimes called on by individual school parent structures to intercede when problems arise between school authorities and parents. As a nominal parent leader he is also occasionally consulted by some politicians and administrators. The demise of the BT as an active national parent

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[8] This was expressed by Mr. Sehapi of Botsoali Thutong.

organization may be due to it not having a formal representative constituency and a structure that linked it to local level parent associations. In addition it lacked the financial resources to organize formally.

54. Despite the experience of BT, by all accounts the general feeling was that there was a need for an active and effective national parent organization that was linked to, and accountable to district and school level boards, management committees, and advisory committees. There were some suggestions both within government and outside that such an organization should be formally constituted and funded through legislation.

55. The Forum for the Campaign for Education, an initiative to organize civil society to monitor whether the government is meeting its commitment to EFA, further illustrates the lack of an "organized parent voice" in education Lesotho. Participants in the forum in 2004 and 2005 included NGOs, church based organizations, and teacher organizations but no parent organizations per se. Yet, its chief aim was mobilize parents, civil society and government to ensure government commitment to EFA, and to "educate school boards". An important structure in this process is the NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGOC) which has tried to work at national level to coordinate NGOs, CBOs, Faith Based Organizations (FBO) and government departments which work with and for children. Civil society actors involved in the Campaign, including the NGOC have been consulted by the government in the development of the Strategic Plan and in the Review of the Education Act.

56. Almost all respondents in the study from parents to policy makers agreed that an active representative national or regional parents' organization/s had an important role to play in the education sector in Lesotho. As some said, "it is needed to help conscientize parents about their responsibility, but also to ensure that policy makers take heed of parents' concerns and interests". It was emphasized that because of the enormous challenge facing Lesotho in terms of human resource development, there was a need for a "convergence of forces" to ensure that all children have access to quality education.

57. A major challenge in ensuring that parents and the broader community are involved in education policy and decision-making at local school, district and national levels requires training of ministry officials and teachers, parents and community members as all are not clear about the role and mandate of parents. However, training needs to go beyond developing skills in day to day management duties and support of schools, and should include a focus on relationship building and truly empowering parents and other civil society actors' capacity to participate in higher level policy initiatives.

The Forum for the Campaign for Education: Involving civil society in EFA in Lesotho
Parents to policy makers agree that an active representative national parents' organization has an important role to play in the education sector in Lesotho, noting

that it will help conscientize parents about their responsibility, and ensure that policy makers take heed of parents' concerns and interests. The need for a powerful national parent organization was made clear in relation to efforts to support access to quality education. The Forum for the Campaign for Education, an initiative to organize civil society to monitor the government's commitment to EFA, illustrates the lack of an "organized parent voice" in education Lesotho. The participants in the forum in 2004 and 2005 included NGOs, church based organizations, and teacher organizations but no parent organizations per se. Yet, the Coalitions activities included mobilizing parents, civil society and government to ensure a commitment to EFA, and "educating school boards". Together with Teacher Union representatives, NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGOC), tried to work at national level to coordinate NGOs, CBOs, and Faith Based Organizations (FBO) and various government departments involved in providing children services. Civil society actors involved in the Campaign, including the NGOC were consulted by the government in the development of the Strategic Plan and in the Review of the Education Act. In future, the Campaign may be a starting point for broadening consultation, and involving parents in national level education policy.

South Africa

Background

58.   In 2003 there were 12,038,922 pupils and 362,598 educators in 26,845 public and independent ordinary schools in South Africa. Of all the schools, approximately 6 000 are high schools (grade 7 to grade 12) and the rest are primary (grade 1 to grade 6). In 2003 the gross enrolment rate was 105% for the primary phase (grades 1-7). The net enrolment rate indicated that South Africa was close to reaching universal access to education shows that four grades (grades 1, 2, 6 and 10) were over-enrolled and that grades R (33.7%), 11 (70.6%) and 12 (44.8%) were under-enrolled (Republic of South Africa, Department of Education, 2005). School is compulsory for those aged between 7 and 15 or grade 9, whichever occurs first, and parents are responsible for ensuring the attendance of their children.

59.   While there is close to universal primary enrolment in South Africa, other challenges, particularly in relation to quality and relevance of education, remain. The backlogs from so many years of apartheid education are immense. Teachers in township schools are poorly trained, and there are serious concerns about the culture of learning and teaching in the majority of schools. Some progress has been made since 1994 in redressing the resource imbalances, but the apartheid legacy lingers on. Rebuilding the educational environment and retraining teachers is a slow and difficult process. The greatest challenges lie in the poorer, rural provinces like the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. In the more affluent provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape, schools are generally better resourced.

60.   Since 1994, there has also been a profound restructuring of the South African education system, including significant decentralization, in attempts to overhaul of the apartheid education model. As a result, today South Africa has a vastly different structure at all levels of the education

system. Old institutions of governance and administration – notably the former homelands and racially-based education departments have been replaced by the education departments of the nine new provincial governments. The provinces have in turn reconfigured the old regional and district level administrations to create new ones with different roles, powers and functions. The powers and functions of schools have also been redefined within a new system of school governance based on new policy instruments, legislation, and an overall ethos of co-operative governance (Pampallis, 2002).

61. The restructuring of education has been part of the larger – and still unfinished – post-apartheid process of creating a democratic society. In part it represents a response to the demand for representation and greater citizen participation that has a long history in South African education stretching from the early 17th century through to the intense and bitter student protests of the 1980s and the constitutional settlement of the nineties. All along, central to the struggle was the notion that decision-making in schools and school governance structures should include all stakeholders.

62. In the decade before the historic 1994 settlement, civil society had begun to play a key role in education through the "People's Education" movement and the growth of educational non-government organizations (NGOs) and PTAs that were generally anti-apartheid in orientation and very active. They had an important impact during the eighties and nineties in providing services that the disintegrating state school system failed to deliver, and ensuring that students continued to have access to some form of education. Many of these NGOs and PTAs, working through the National Educational Crisis Committee which served as a focal point, were also involved in representing civil society interests in education and in developing alternate policies (NECC, 1987).

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63. The new South African Constitution of 1996 includes an unequivocal commitment to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency, and public involvement (RSA, President's Office, 1996). The essential vision is that people should participate, beyond periodic national elections, in shaping their destiny. It is not surprising therefore, that post-Apartheid education legislation proposed a school governance model based on stakeholder representation, citizen participation, partnerships between the state, parents, learners, school staff and communities, and a redistribution of power within the education system towards the individual school and community.

Government Education Policy and Civil Society Participation in Education

64. In accordance with the Constitution, and subsequent education legislation the national Minister of Education, determines national policy for planning, provision, financing, staffing, co-ordination, management, governance, programmes, monitoring, evaluation and well-being of the

education system. Provincial governments make provincial policy within the parameters of national policies, frameworks, norms and standards; and, the provincial Departments of Education are responsible for establishing, managing and supporting schools. This arrangement reflects the principle of co-operative governance as required by the constitution and National Education Policy Act of 1996. The Act also obliges the Minister to consult a range of other stakeholders before determining national education policy. Section 11(1) of the National Education Policy Act obliges the Minister to establish an advisory body known as the National Education and Training Council (RSA, 1996). However, such a structure is yet to be established.

65.   Except for teacher organizations such as SADTU and NAPTOSA, the role of national and provincial level community, parent and other civil society organizations in education is quite limited. Although the national Education Policy Act and related legislation makes provision for national and provincial consultative forums these have not been widely established. The District Education and Training Councils that exist in some provinces, including Gauteng. These stakeholder bodies, appointed according to criteria determined by the MEC for Education have advisory powers and cannot make binding decisions.[9] In any event, by most accounts these councils are marginal structures playing a limited consultative role.

66.   The situation is somewhat different at school level. The South African Schools Act (SASA) requires the establishment at all public schools of governing bodies with considerable powers. School Governing Bodies (SGBs) are comprised of the principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and, in secondary schools, learners. Parents must be in the majority and chair the SGB. These measures are intended to "advance the democratic transformation of society" (RSA, 1996b) by devolving power to stakeholders who participate in the "democratic governance" of schools by granting schools.

67.   To guide the exercise of democratic governance, SASA stipulates a basic set of functions for all School Governing Bodies (SGBs). The SGB has extensive powers in areas such as admission and exclusion of pupils, recommendation to the province on teaching and non-teaching appointments, administration and control of buildings, the determination of school fees, and budgetary and financial management of the school. In addition, in terms of Section 21 of the Act, if the Provincial Head of Department (HOD)[10] deems that an SGB has the requisite capacity it may be allocated additional functions that include the power to: maintain and improve school property, determine the extra-mural curriculum and choice of subject options, purchase text-books, and/or pay for services (RSA President's Office, 1996a).

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[9] See the Gauteng Education Policy Act, No. 12 of 1998, Sections 9 and 12.
[10] Head of Department here refers to the head of the provincial department of education, who has different titles in different provinces. For example, in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal, the HOD is the "Chief Executive Officer" (CEO), while the HOD in the North West Province is the Superintendent General.

68.   Since 1994 there have been at least two rounds of SGBs elections. The vast majority of schools now have SGBs with parents as chairpersons, secretaries and treasurers, serving alongside principals in redefining how schooling on the ground is taking shape. In a number of schools parents have embraced their responsibilities and are fully involved in governance. In these cases they are accepted by educators as part of a shared governance environment, and have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

69.   Yet there are also enormous obstacles facing many schools and communities in realizing the new form of participatory governance and management. Problems include: the marginalization of black parents in schools that are now racially mixed, insufficient capacity among many SGB members in managing accounts, appointing educators, developing school policies, conflicts between parents and educators regarding boundaries, communication between SGBs and provincial and district authorities. These and other problems have prompted a variety of calls for new legislation and regulations, and a review of the SGB model. The Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance, which was convened as a result of these concerns, found that there is much frustration, anger and demoralization with the new system. However, it also notes that "nobody wants to change the system of school governance and the broad framework that currently exists". But it also emphasized that the system of governance needs to be improved, with a focus on development and equity (The Ministerial Review Committee, 2004).

70.   There is considerable variation in the extent to which the different schools have begun to implement the governance policy as officially conceived; and, in the involvement of school communities and stakeholders. A number of studies[11] including the Review Committee, and views expressed by most respondents during the course of this study, indicate that school governance at school level is playing out in various ways owing to such factors as: the school and community history including racial make-up, location of the school, level of expertise, resources and support that the school has access to, SGB and school relationship with the community, and education and socio-economic level of parents In addition, governance in practice depends greatly on the theory of action or frame of the most dominant actor nature of the school's leadership and especially the principal (Naidoo 2004).

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[11] For example, CASE/WITS. 2001. *Report on the implementation of Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) school governance policy.* Johannesburg, South Africa: CASE/WITS; Grant Lewis, S., Naidoo, J., and E. Weber. 2002. *The Problematic Notion of Participation in Educational Decentralisation: The Case of South Africa.* Paper presented at the Africa in an Age of Globalisation Conference, Teachers' College, New York.; Karlsson, J. 2002. The Role of Democratic Governing Bodies in South African Schools. *Comparative Education, 38* (3), 327–336; Kgobe, P. 2004. *School Level Change in South Africa. The CEPD Education 2000 Plus Report*. Johannesburg: CEPD. McPherson, G. 2000. *Governance in Public Schools: Four Case Studies.* Durban, South Africa: Education Policy Unit, University of Natal.

71. In part owing to these conditions, it appears that there is greater participation of parents in ex- House of Assembly schools (i.e. schools formerly reserved for whites only), and to lesser degree ex-House of Delegates schools (i.e. schools formerly reserved for Indians only) and ex-House of Representatives schools (i.e. schools formerly reserved for whites only) than in the ex-Department of Education and Training and ex-Homeland schools (i.e. schools formerly reserved for Blacks only).

Role of Parent Organizations: NASGB and FEDSAS

72.   Participation of parent structures at intermediate levels and beyond is more limited than participation at school and local level. This not is not to say that there is no for participation of organized parent structures and civil society actors in education policy development at national or provincial levels. SGBs do have linkages with other entities including the national SGB associations and teacher unions that give them some entrée to higher level policy arenas. Teachers (owing to legislative stipulations and the power of teacher organizations) do participate in consultations on policy at the higher levels of the system. While few formal mechanisms for participation of parents at intermediate or national levels, individual parents and parent organizations may make representations to politicians and administrators through a number of forums.

73.   In some ways, the general pattern that exists with regard to parent participation at school level is also evident at other levels. Parents and educators have affiliations to their respective district, provincial and national structures, often taking their policy cues from their "parent" organizations. Individual SGB contact with these organizations may be stronger or weaker, given their history, location and the circumstances in particular schools. Besides direct contact with the SGBs through membership links, the teacher unions and the SGB associations influence the broader policy discourse at each level, and often regulate exchanges of information and resources.

74.   The main national SGB associations are: the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), whose membership is mainly from the "Black" schools[12], and the Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS) and the Governing Body Foundation (GBF), which represents mostly ex-Model C, ex-HOR, and ex-HOD schools. Representatives from FEDSAS and NASGB emphasized the importance of school level SGBs and regional associations as

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[12] Most of the schools that served Black students under apartheid continue to be "segregated", while the schools (ex-Model C, ex-HOR, and ex-HOD) that previously served only White, Coloured, and Indian students are generally "integrated". Note that these racial categories are Apartheid definitions which are outlawed but still surface in practice.

important vehicles for enhancing democratization and civil society participation in education policy-making.

75.   FEDSAS is a national organization of SGB's that has been in existence for twelve years with the primary aim to represent the interests of SGB's in particular and those of parents in general. This is achieved by engagement with the National and Provincial Departments of Education, making inputs on amendments to education legislation, representing parents in national and provincial bodies, and providing training for and advising SGB's on all aspects of school governance. A FEDSAS representative stressed that his organization saw itself as an "agitator for parental control and ownership of education" and is involved with its membership on an ongoing basis through training, assisting with SGB elections, legal advice, and assistance with interpreting regulations. At various times since 1994 it has challenged legislation that it deemed to be not in the interest of its members. FEDSAS has provided legal opinions on: Acquisition of Learning Materials and Equipment, Functions of Governing Bodies, School Transportation, Withdrawal of Section 21 Functions, Appointment of Temporary Educators, Composition of Governing Bodies, Language Policy in Schools etc.

76.   One of FEDSAS' biggest campaigns is to promote consultative forums in every province to advise the minister on issues of school governance. This is in line with FEDSAS's decentralized structure comprising a national executive and corresponding provincial executives made up of officials elected by member SGBs within each province. The national executive is made up of 3 representatives from each province elected by provincial representatives. While the majority of its membership is from the ex-model C, ex-HOD and ex-HOR schools, there has been a concerted effort by FEDSAS to attract township and other "Black" schools.

77.   In contrast to FEDSAS, which represents mostly ex-Model C schools, the National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB), formed in 2001 has representatives from governing bodies in mostly the "Black" schools and includes members from the South African Democratic Teachers Union, the Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Monitoring (CEPD), the Wits Education Policy Unit and the Department of Education. The NASGB sees itself as playing a key role in the transformation of education and "to promote participatory democracy by supporting school governing bodies in the implementation of SASA" (NASGB, 2002). The NASGB also has a comprehensive campaign plan for free and compulsory quality education that involves its membership across all nine provinces.

78.   According to a national NASGB official, "*one of its greatest concerns is the non-involvement or minimal involvement by parents in real decision-making at schools*". The NASGB has been particularly vehement in its attack on the governance discourse that regards parents as deficient. The NASGB argues that while the majority of "black" parents may not have formal education (reading, writing and numeracy) qualifications, it does

not mean that they cannot think logically, conceptually and contextually. According to the NASGB, many communities country-wide have always participated in community activities that involved intellectual inputs, defining traditional laws and value systems, provided leadership and informed life decisions.[13]

79.   In addition to providing training and support for parents at school level to ensure their active participation in governance and to challenge misconceptions about parents' ability to govern, the NASGB is also involved in policy dialogue. Its National Executive Committee (NEC) holds formal meetings annually to discuss policy issues that affect governance and school communities in general and comments on policy through a variety of media campaigns. This is supplemented by submissions to special committees established by the government to inform legislation.

80.   In addition to the difference in which schools they represent, the NASGB and FEDSAS also differ in their financial viability. NASGB expects dues of about $100 (equivalent to US$ 15) per year from its SGBs but many of its members are unable to pay even such low membership dues. FEDSAS membership dues, by contrast, involve a once-off joining fee of R250 and annual membership fees of R2 per learner and an additional levy for the funding of exclusively provincial activities which average R3 per learner per annum. In effect in a school with 500 students fees may total R2500 (equivalent to US$ 400).While many of its campaigns have suffered as a result of a lack of funds, the NASGB remains as voice for SGBs in many of the former black schools. Through support from other NGOs, SADTU and access to the ruling ANC government, they are able to make presentation to policy makers, comment on legislation and conduct training for members.

81.   The Education Management and Governance Development Directorate (EMGD) in the national Department of Education (DOE) established a consultative mechanism for national governing body associations, The National Consultative Forum for School Governing Body Associations (the "NCF") in 1999. The NCF comprises the Department of Education and the three national SGB associations: FEDSAS, the NASGB and the Governing Body Foundation (GBF) all of whom meet agreed on criteria for inclusion in the NCF. The criteria include the number of schools represented nationally, a presence in a minimum number of provinces, and a registered constitution.

82.   The NCF's mandate is to engage with the Department of Education in line with consultation processes outlined in the National Education Policy Act of 1996. The NCF which meets every quarter is not limited in its field of discussion and is a forum to share new policies, proposed initiatives, and new materials. The discussions and inputs often center on policy and on Constitutional rights and particularly those related to language, culture and

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[13] These views were communicated by a former coordinator of the NASGB, Victor Mathonsi who is currently seconded to the National Department of Education.

religion. Other discussions have centered on the establishment of posts, the funding model, fees and subsidies to schools to meet basic needs (e.g. municipal charges for water and electricity). In the last 3 years FEDSAS alone has tabled some 200 questions and requests for information within the NCF (RSA, 2005).

83.   Government and parent representatives concurred that the NCF which was set up to enable stakeholders to sit with the Ministry to discuss school governance matters in a formal and structured manner at a national level is effective in facilitating consultation between the DOE and stakeholders. However, there is a feeling among some stakeholders that the NCF is losing its focus and lacks the status it deserves. [14] A number of stakeholders argued that its proper role on consultation on policy and laws must be restored if parents are to contribute to quality education. Another concern of SGB representatives on the NCF is their perception that there is a tendency of consulting teacher unions on matters concerning SGBs and education policies more generally, while SGB associations are ignored. They cited the consultations on the Education Laws Amendment Bill 2004/2005 as an example.

84.   The teacher organizations are able to engage government through the Education Labor Relations Council (ELRC) established by the Education Labor Relations Act of 1993, and with current authority drawn from the Labor Relations Act of 1995. The ELRC is a bargaining council for the education sector, composed of equal representation of the employer (the national and provincial departments of education) and the employee (trade unions representing educators and other employees in the sector). The LRC facilitates negotiations between the unions and the departments of education, and is involved in the resolution of disputes.

85.   The largest teacher unions are: the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) with an estimated membership of around 140 000, mostly from the "Black" schools, and some ex- HOD and ex-HOR teachers; the National Professional Teachers' Organization (NAPTOSA) which claims to represent about 80 000 teachers, and the Suid Afrikaanse Onderwysers Unie (SAOU), representing mostly teachers from the ex-Model C schools. Discussions with teacher organization representatives and public statements indicate that their policies and primary actions with regard to school governance center on securing on educator rights.

86.   SGBs experience a certain degree of conflict as a result of their diverse linkages, the diversity of membership and the nature of constituent participation in its activities. The teacher unions, for example, find themselves in a dubious position with regard to SGBs - they represent and have to protect teacher interests but at the same time they do not want to be seen as resisting democratic participation of parents in decision-making. Representatives of both the teacher organizations indicated that they initially opposed the SASA provision that parents be in the majority, but

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[14] See Minutes of the National Consultative Forum meeting held on 8 February 2005.

have to be sensitive to parental representation, and therefore encourage their members to accept this provision. They added for SGBs and school governance work, there was a need for better relations between teachers and communities.

87.   A SADTU official pointed out that as part of its advocacy program in support of school governance, SADTU was, in fact, involved in the efforts to establish a representative national association of governing bodies. While acknowledging that parents have an important role to play in national education policy formulation, a representative of NAPTOSA said that their focus was on how the SGB system can support the school and ensure better working conditions for its membership. In a report on teacher morale, NAPTOSA suggests that the SGB should: campaign at district, regional, provincial and national level to improve educators' conditions of service, salary packages and security of employment; ensure that schools are physically well-resourced and maintained by motivating the school community to provide support; and, assist the SMT in ensuring that educators have minimal evening and weekend duties (NAPTOSA, 2002).

88.   In contrast to Lesotho and Kenya, there are more national and regional organizations representing parents' interests in South Africa. Reasons for this include the history of resistance to apartheid, as well as the very Apartheid divisions themselves. For example, in addition to the national engagement parent associations are also active at district level in support of quality initiatives. One such example is The Paarl Association of School Governing Bodies (PASGB), an association of school governing bodies in the Paarl and Wellington regions of the Western Cape Province. It is an example of how parents can become actively and constructively involved in supporting quality education. With the financial support of the Shuttleworth Foundation, the PASGB is involved in attempts improve the performance of their children in Maths and Science. Their project involves the placement of Maths and Science assistance educators in schools to help educators manage overcrowded classrooms and ensure students undertake practical investigations and project work (WORTH-E, 2005).[15]

89.   Despite the active involvement of some regional and national associations in education policy dialogue some commentators argue that, by virtue of SASA and the role it assigns to SGBs, "civil society is atomized into discrete individuals" (Sayed, 2002) whose interaction with the state on educational matters is confined primarily to the school level for the benefit of a local constituency. On one hand the SASA's school governance model strengthens avenues for local participation in education decision-making. Yet, on the other hand, it may weaken participation by mass based civil society structures and limit their ability to impact educational decisions and policies at a broader systemic level.

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[15] WORTH-E - The Shuttleworth Foundation Newsletter, January, 2005.
http://www.shuttleworthfoundation.org/newsletters/TSF8.htm

90. While the NCF does indeed provide a mechanism for consultation, this study reaffirms the need to establish a National School Governance Council (or similar structure) as a statutory institution, comprising representatives of SCB associations and the state, as recommended by the Review Committee (The Ministerial Review Committee, 2004). [16] Such a mechanism is necessary to give coherence to policies and procedures for school governance, including procedures for resolving conflicts between SGB and the state, and for developing and reviewing governance and broader education policies, relating to teacher accountability, costs of education, and equity, access and quality.

A Mechanism for National Consultation on School Governance in South Africa

The National Consultative Forum for School Governing Body Associations (NCF) established in 1999, is a consultative mechanism that enables participation of the major national governing body associations in South Africa, in school governance matters at a national level. The NCF brings together representatives of the Education Management and Governance Development Directorate (EMGD) in the DOE and the three national SGB associations: The Federation of Associations of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FEDSAS), The National Association of School Governing Bodies (NASGB) and the Governing Body Foundation (GBF) who meet certain criteria for inclusion in the NCF. The criteria include the number of schools represented nationally, a presence in a number of provinces, and a constitution.

The NCF which meets every quarter serves as a forum to share new policies, proposed initiatives, and new materials. Its discussions and inputs often center on policy and on constitutional rights related to language, culture and religion, and on operational issues relating to establishment of teaching posts, and on the funding model, fees and subsidies to schools. Government and parent representatives concurred that the NCF which was set up to enable stakeholders to sit with the Minister to discuss school governance matters in a formal and structured manner at a national level is an effective structure facilitating consultation between the DOE and stakeholders. However, there is a feeling among some stakeholders that the NCF does not enjoy the adequate legislative stature, and thus lacks real power to influence education policy, and to contribute to quality education.

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[16] Another option was proposed by Firoz Patel (who is at present a senior official in the National Department of Education- at the time he made this suggestion, he was the Director of the Education Foundation [an NGO] and a representative of the NASGB), at an Education Conference on District Development governance. In a presentation entitled, Autonomous Districts for Enhanced Educational Delivery, he suggested provincial or national legislation establishing autonomous districts, each with a district governing body (DGB). The DGB would be elected either by members of institutional governing bodies (governing bodies of schools and other institutions including FET colleges, ABET institutions and, curiously, even independent institutions) in the district or by the parents and learners in the institutions.

Overview – Findings and Trends

91.   In assessing community participation in education in the 60s and 70s, Samfoff (1979) concluded that "'fifteen years of public emphasis on citizen participation ... seem to have had little impact on the structural exclusion of ordinary citizens from most decision-making settings or on the authoritarian orientation of administrators". Despite some improvement, by and large this still holds true today, especially when it comes to parent participation in education policy at a national level.

92.   While this study (in line with the terms of reference) did not delve into the complexities of parental participation in local school governance, it reaffirms that school autonomy and parental participation is on the increase at the school level at least; participation varies enormously within countries; and, decentralization in practice depends more on local context than on nation-wide decree or legislative fiat (Gunnarsson et al, 2004). Variation in participation levels is due to many factors including history of involvement in local governance, nature of legislation and regulations that govern local participation, broader decentralization initiatives, location (rural/urban), socio-economic and education status of communities etc.

93.   The study also points to the fact that local control or governance authority is increasingly diffuse and that the involvement of parents in decision making at the local level does not alone determine what will or will not occur in schools. Administrators and teacher unions at intermediate and higher levels, and principals and teachers in individual schools all share authority and make decisions. Despite the increasing involvement of parents and other community members in local school governance and management, overwhelmingly, administrators and teachers (supported by organized and powerful unions) still determine the direction in which school systems go, the extent of involvement of parents and community members, the degree to which the interests of students and parents prevail, the level of knowledge and understanding of educational issues within communities, the kinds of accountability required, allocation of resources, and so on.

94.   When it comes to higher levels of the system, there appears to be far less involvement of parents owing to the absence of an enabling environment that supports parent involvement in education policy making. Except for South Africa and its NCF, there are no formal mechanisms for parent participation in national policy dialogues. Even in the case of South Africa, it is not a statutory mechanism and its success depends on the commitment individuals in government and among parent association stakeholders.

95.   Furthermore, even where opportunities exist for participation in policy matters it is often limited to consultation on marginal issues or resolving problems. Most consultation hardly seems to focus on policies that directly impact access or quality of education. Most interactions appear to be on

resolving conflicts and attending to very particular interests of teachers, or of specific parents (usually the more affluent).

96.   Clearly parent participation in education echoes Arnstein's "ladder of Participation", ranging from "consultation" (where the views of a community are obtained through attitude surveys, neighborhood meetings and public enquiries) to partnership (where power is redistributed in negotiation between citizens and power holders and planning and decision-making responsibilities are shared), and through to highest rung of citizen control (where citizens handle the entire job of planning, policy making and managing a programmes). In all three cases parental or community participation in education policy making often translates to little more than sharing information or consulting parents on issues deemed to be in their interest. Such participation, corresponding with rungs 3 and 4 on Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation," represents tokenism, which allows have-nots to hear and to have a voice, but denies them the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful (Arnstein, 1969). This raises questions about what is meant by participation and its connection to spheres of influence.

97.   The question arises then: Should we stop talking and writing about participation and get on with the real issue - providing education for all? The answer is a definite "no", as community participation in education from school to national levels, is not only important for ensuring that we meet EFA goals, but it makes a valuable contribution to democratization and strengthening the role of civil society in development. The active participation of parents and other stakeholders in decision-making and in policy formulation in schools and at higher levels of the system may help foster a sense of political efficacy, nurture a concern for collective problems and develop a more knowledgeable citizenry that is committed to equity and social justice.

98.   All participants emphasized that their governments must bear the prime responsibility, and need to show greater commitment to EFA. At the same time they acknowledged that such commitments do not rest with governments alone. Repeatedly they pointed out that "the people must be totally involved," The idea of bringing all sectors into the campaign for basic education -- parents, teachers, local communities, NGOs, churches, business, a key feature of the strategy initiated in Jomtien and reiterated in Dakar was echoed in all three countries.

99.   The nature of such participation remains a subject of debate, however. Parents associations, teachers' unions and other local organizations who have been pressing for greater decision-making input over the hiring of teachers, accountability, the quality of education and other matters do not always share the same goals or welcome equal participation. At the same time many cash-strapped governments tend to view community involvement primarily in financial terms, as a form of "cost-sharing", tend and limit community involvement to the support they provide at school

level, and loathe to involve parents in higher level policy development. Where such opportunities are created they remain the preserve of a few influential parents and community members, and interest groups like teachers.

100. One of the main reasons for parent and community involvement in education not having a greater systemic impact is that such involvement has generally not been apparent in a sustained way at higher levels of the system, namely at district, provincial or state and national levels. The lack of civic involvement in education at intermediate and national levels means that education policy is developed apart from the community, and parents who do not have the knowledge, skills, or structures needed to increase their involvement beyond the local school level. This situation leads one to question whether governments are really genuinely interested in effective consultative mechanisms with a broad range of stakeholders or whether the participation/consultation/partnership model is just part of the international community's received wisdom.

Conclusion

101. The considerable broadening of involvement of parents at the school level has not -with South Africa being the exception to some extent- resulted in any substantive involvement of national representative organizations of parents in policy making processes. This raises the question why not. The reasons suggested by this preliminary study include the weak organizational structure of the national parent organizations, their limited capacity and experience with participation in policy making fora at district and national level and a lack of financial resources. Teacher unions, on the other hand, who represent a smaller constituency than parents, at least numerically, have organized themselves far more effectively and are not shy about using their political influence. This begs the question: What would it take for parents to organize themselves as effectively as teachers?

102. It is clear that one issue that is affecting parents' ability to participate in policy making is the "representativeness" of national parent organizations. In all three cases, one is left with some doubt about how representative the national organizations of parents really are. Is there a legitimate constituency to which these organizations are accountable? One has to also question whose interest these organizations really serve: those of the office holders who are often motivated by political ambitions, interests of marginalized parents whose children do not have access to school or who have access to poor quality schools, or the local upper/middle/urban parents or some other interest or elite group with a vested interest in participation in the national policy arena? Sometimes, there is no clear cut or either situation, and interests may overlap. In other cases officers of these organizations may be sincerely committed to improving education opportunities for all children, and promoting the interests of the majority of parents. More detailed in-depth studies are clearly necessary to answer

these questions and to provide pathways to enhance representative parent participation in education policy making.

103.   In addition, in most cases such parent organizations often lack financial and other resources to operate consistently and effectively. Unless, it serves relatively affluent schools as is the case with FEDSAS in South Africa, who can contribute dues for paying staff, undertaking advocacy campaigns, conducting training and so, such organizations have to depend on volunteers and on donors which makes its tenure somewhat tenuous. Similarly teacher organizations are much more financially organizationally secure, getting dues from its membership and in some cases also supported by governments.

104.   A clear message from this study is that education management and policy development should not be a "monopoly of the government" or of "isolated local communities". The development of relevant education policies requires that all interested parties, that is, students, parents and other community members, teachers and government participate effectively from at local sites to the national arena. Genuine dialogue and partnerships among education stakeholders is needed in order to improve the quality and relevance of education and achieve universal primary education by 2015. There needs to be attention to civic education and dialogue, in order to empower communities to play a more meaningful role at all levels of increasingly decentralized systems. Communities, especially marginalized sectors of the community must have a means to express their voice directly to politicians and administrators at all levels of the system.

105.   The opening up of decision-making processes to stakeholders is a powerful means for broadening participation but in the absence of a fair distribution of resources, it serves to empower the already mobilized or advantaged, and those who traditionally enjoyed access to policy-makers. Civil society actors may lack the cultural capital to participate effectively in the decision and policy-making process. Gender and other inequities may constrain full and effective participation of particular groups. A tendency to accept definitions of participation constructed by administrators and politicians, may further limit participation. Therefore, it is important that, in setting up public advisory forums and other opportunities for civil society structures like parent associations to participate in the policy making process, we take into account differential capacities and other obstacles that may hinder their participation.

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