FOCUS SCHOOLS AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this thesis was to better understand the role and function of the focus schools project in the Western Cape, to explore the reasons for their emergence in 2006, and to locate the policy initiative within historical and policy developments around vocationalism in the province. The study focused in particular on how one focus school experienced the roll-out of this policy decision, what the impressions of the learners and educators at a case study school were, and also how officials attached to the Western Cape Education Department described the emergence and implementation of the policy.

Further goals of the study were to contextualize the policy process that led to this form of provision, and to conceptualise how this fitted in with educational development issues in the province. A brief backdrop of historical developments and its role in the education of communities in the Western Cape, particularly the coloured community, was provided to contextualize the policy initiative. The main contribution of the thesis is its description and analysis of policy documents and the viewpoints of a range of people connected to a new provincial initiative, focus schools, with regard to what a focus school is meant to achieve and how it is experienced. Data was collected by studying a range of unpublished policy documents, and to link these to interviews conducted with departmental and district officials, educators, learners, and one principal in relation to one case study school.

The study showed that focus schools were regarded mainly as a form of vocational education provision to accommodate the desire of the Western Cape economy for intermediate skills in the mid-2000s. It illustrated how the focus school band has run its own unique course within educational structures since 2006, and highlighted how they have fulfilled their goal of getting more learners from historically disadvantaged communities into further study or into positions that better serve the needs of the local economy.

The thesis suggested that the policy focus of getting learners into higher education seemed misguided and contrary to the goals of vocational education provision. This policy confusion was further highlighted by learners interviewed in the study who noted that they would have preferred to follow a more academically-based path. Few believed they could either get to university (as claimed by policy officials) or into a viable employment poisition by following a vocational route at school.

Keywords: *focus schools*, historically disadvantaged communities, *human capital development*, *vocationalsim*, educational redress, history of Western Cape

OPSOMMING

Die hoofdoel van die tesis was om ´n beter begrip van die rol en funksie van die fokusskool-projek in die Wes-Kaap te verkry, die redes vir die ontstaan van hierdie skole in die jaar, 2006 te ondersoek, asook om die beleids-inisiatief binne die historiese en beleidsontwikkeling rondom beroepsonderwys (vocationalism) in die provinsie na te speur. Die navorsing konsentreer hoofsaaklik op hoe een fokusskool die implementering van die beleidsbesluit ervaar, en in hoe ´n mate die leerders en die opvoeders verbonde aan die gevallestudie-skool die onderwysvoorsiening beleef. ´n Gedeelte van die ondersoek gee ook die sieninge van sleutelpersone in die Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement weer.

Verdere doelwitte van die ondersoek was om die beleidsproses wat gelei het tot hierdie onderwysvoorsiening te kontekstualiseer, en om dit te konseptualiseer in hoe ´n mate dit inpas in die opvoedkundige ontwikkeling binne die provinsie. ´n Kort agtergrond skets van die historiese ontwikkeling en die rol wat onderwys in die gemeenskappe van die Wes-Kaap, spesifiek die van die bruin (kleurling) gemeenskap was aangebied om die beleids-inisiatief te konseptualiseer. Die belangrikste bydrae van die tesis is die beskrywing en analise van beleidsdokumente en die standpunte van 'n verskeidenheid van mense wat betrokke is by die nuwe provinsiale inisiatief, fokusskole, met betrekking tot wat fokusskole beoog om te bereik en hoe dit beleef word. Inligting was versamel deur die bestudering van 'n reeks van ongepubliseerde beleidsdokumente, en dit verbind met onderhoude wat gevoer was met departementele- en distriks-amptenare. Opvoeders, leerders, en 'n skoolhoof verbonde aan een gevallestudie skool was ook ondervra.

Die navorsing het getoon dat fokusskole ´n vorm van beroepsonderwys is om die strewe van die Wes-Kaapse ekonomie vir intermediêre vaardigheidsvlakke te verhoog. Die planne was gedurende die middel 2000´s in werking gestel. Die navorsing het ook getoon dat die fokusskool-projek sy eie unieke verloop binne die onderwys strukture sedert 2006 gehad het. Die ondersoek het ook getoon dat die strewe om meer leerders uit die historiese benadeelde gemeenskappe sover te kry om verder te gaan studeer of posisies te vervul om die plaaslike ekonomie te bedien, nie so suksesvol is soos die beleid dit vooruitstel nie.

Die tesis stel voor dat die beleidsfokus om leerders na hoër onderwys te lei, misleidend is en teenstrydig is met die doelwitte van beroepsonderwys. Die verwarring wat deur die beleid veroorsaak was, was verder belig deur die leerders wat onderhoude mee gevoer was. Die leerders se mening is dat hulle liefs verkies om die meer akademiese-gebaseerde weg te volg. Min van hulle het geglo dat hul weg oop is na hoër onderwys soos wat amptenare van die Wes-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement beweer of dat beroepsmoontlikhede daar is nadat hy beroepsonderwys in fokusskole gevolg het.

Sleutelwoorde: fokusskole, historiese benadeelde gemeenskappe, die ontwikkeling van menslike kapitaal, vocationalism / beroepsonderwys, opvoedkundige regstelling, die geskiedenis van die Wes-Kaap

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

In twenty-first century South Africamany questions are being asked about how the educational system is responding to changes in labour markets, social systems, and aspects of unemployment (Kraak et al 2003. 2007; Ashton et al 1996).That is because a number of different forms of employment and training pathways have emerged (Kraak et al, 2007; Raffe 2003; Ashton et al 1999) that have challenged the ways in which the educational needs of young people are being addressed. These developments have also happened at a time when the youth labour market has been quiet and has resulted in many school learners either staying on longer in school, or leaving school and entering low skilled jobs.

Many learners have stayed on at school because of limited job opportunities that are available when they leave school. They say that without the appropriate credentials that they have little chance of success in the formal labour environment. National and provincial education departments have also identified this as a problem and have tried to deal with this, along with unemployment and skills shortage challenges, by starting a number of vocational and skills development programmesfor learners. Such programmes are mostly based on a vocationally-oriented syllabus and have generally changed the ways in which educational institutions relate with learners and the labour market, and how young people understand the kinds of life choices and work opportunities that are available to them when leaving school (France 2007).

In the Western Cape, as in the rest of South Africa, very little is known about the kinds of educational policies that have emerged in response to the issue of unemployment, skills shortages, and skill needs, or what policy makers have been trying to do when they develop programmes to deal with the issue of education and work. Policy makers normally say when they focus on vocational programmes that they are dealing with issues of poverty, social marginalization, the skills development of struggling and previously disadvantaged learners, and the challenges of equal opportunities, equity, and overall societal progress. Lawry (2010: 427) has noted that this kind of approach is common for most governments across the world faced with similar challenges. Governments are focusing on programmes of upskilling, and providing education and training programmes that assist learners to get into the workplace.

This thesis focuses on one education and training programme in the Western Cape, namely focus schools, and explores how the provincial education department (WCED) has gone about engaging with social, educational, and economic problems that face historically disadvantaged youth in the province. Focus schools are schools that have a vocational curriculum focus and were set up by

the PGWC and the WCED in 2006 for learners from previously disadvantaged communities. As little is known about the programme or its policies - given its newness in the province - this thesis aims to fill this gap in the literature on vocational education provision in the Western Cape. The thesis does not claim to speak for the entire focus school sector. The idea was purely to open up to the notion of focus schools and to use an art and culture school to reflect to the kind of issues relating to the sector.

The goal of the thesis is to outline what focus schools are and what policy makers say they are meant to do within the educational system of the province. A number of provincial department and district officials were thus interviewed, as well as a principal and some educators at one chosen focus school. These people were interviewed to get their views on what they thought focus schools were meant to do, what they sought to achieve through a vocational focus, and the kinds of problems and challenges experienced by managers and educators at the local level. Another goal of the thesis is to show how the focus school programme is understood and experienced. Eight young people that have attended the chosen focus school were thus interviewed. They were mainly asked about what they expected to achieve or have achieved after attending a focus school.

1.2   Background and goals of the thesis

The purpose of the thesis is to show how the idea of focus schools has emerged in the Western Cape Province, and to explore the gap or mismatch between what the policy of focus schools says it does and how it is thought about at the school level. The thesis also explores some historical aspects of vocational education provision in a province that has shifted from its economy from one dependent on manufacturing to one that wants to be knowledge-driven.

The Focus Schools project, as developed by the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) and implemented by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), is specific to the Western Cape and has not been established in any other province in South Africa. It was established from the mid-2000s and is regarded as a different form of educational provision than that provided to learners within the mainstream schooling system. It is a programme that is targeted at schools located in areas where historically disadvantaged communities live and where learners supposedly struggle with an academic-oriented syllabus.

According to the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) focus schools are part of a bigger project that has tried to fix the province's education-work challenges and is meant to contribute to the building of a 'new economy' for the Western Cape by providing 'education for all' in ways that better use the potential and abilities of individual learners. The WCED noted in 2005 that:

"[i]n line with the provincial goals of iKapa elihlumayo the WCED aims to increase the participation and *success* rates of learners, especially previously disadvantaged learners,

participating in the Further Education and Training [FET] band, expand the number of FET learners who qualify to enter higher education, and improve access to higher education especially for learners from poor families" (WCED, 2005a: 3).

The WCED claimed in late 2005 that it would bring about educational redress by establishing focus schools, while at the same time dealing with issues of social democracy, building a developmental state, and addressing the influence of global thinking and forms on learner thinking. It argued that by targetting learners living in previously disadvantaged areas and lacking abilities in academic-type education provision (especially in mathematics and science) and offering them a different type of education so that their individual abilities and competencies could be maximized, that past inequalities could be redressed.

The thesis argues that this is not the first time this kind of argument about the role of vocational education has been made. It thus explores some of the previous educational programmes and practices that were offered to learners that attended schools that served previously disadvantaged communities. Vocational education and trade training programmes have a rich history in the province and has traditionally been associated with the education of working class learners, especially those defined as coloured under apartheid.

The thesis sets out to challenge the view that "curricula adapted to the specific abilities of learners can better serve their overall needs" (Hunt Davis Jr, 1984). By providing some kind of historical background to the emergence of focus schools, the thesis seeks to show how issues of low educational achievement, unemployment, attempts to link such learners to the workplace, and the development of skills levels necessary to function in the workplace have previously been debated in the province.

1.3　　Research question

The study's main research question was 'what are the links between the focus school program and key educational challenges and dilemmas with regard to previously disadvantaged learners in the Western Cape?'

This was explored by asking the following questions:
- What policy developments and thinking led to the establishment of focus schools in the Western Cape in 2005?
- What were the links of these new policies to international and national debates on vocationalism?
- Were these policies and thinking different to vocational programmes that were provided in the Western Cape in the past?

- What explanations did policy makers, district officials, principals, and educators provide for the roles and functions of these schools?
- How did learners think about focus schools? What did they say about focus schools and their future work opportunities in the Western Cape?

1.4   Context of the research

In debates within the literature on the differences between the academic and vocational it is noted that vocational education is normally seen as a different kind of assistance for struggling learners to ensure some educational success and greater access to future work (Clarke & Winch, 2007; Kliebard, 2010; Wolf, 2002; Dewey, 1977; Willis 1997). The literature on the emergence and development of vocational education internationally, and in South Africa, shows how this link was made and how governments have tried to include groups that were previously excluded from the economy   (Malherbe, 1977; Kallaway, 2002, 2004, 2009; Badroodien, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; McGrath et al, 2004).

In the thesis it is argued that the focus school programme should be seen as part of a wider strategic vision of widening the participation of previously excluded groups in the economy of the province, both for the sake of social inclusion and cohesion, and to ensure that the province has the kinds of skills and competencies that makes it internationally competitive. The WCED (2005a: 3) stated in 2005 that:

> "[t]he Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) as well as the Skill Development Levies Act (Act 9 of 1997) which promote empowerment of people through equipping them with skills for the world of work, lays the basis for legislation for focus schools. The important objective of this strategy is to improve the supply of high quality skills, particular scarce skills, which are responsive to societal and economic needs".

The three vocational areas that were identified and targeted for special attention in the Western Cape "to ensure that learners from previously disadvantaged areas became productive and responsible citizens" (WCED, 2005b) were Arts and Culture, Technology and Engineering, and Business, Commerce and Management. It was argued that learners with talents, interests, or aptitudes in these vocational areas needed to be provided for separately so that they could be suitably developed to enter higher education or the world of work, and also that if learners in diverse areas such as Khayelitsha, Mitchells Plain, Elsies River, and Oudtshoorn could get this special attention and the opportunity to develop their social and intellectual skills, that this would contribute to overall social cohesion, human capital and economic growth in the province.

The focus on these three vocational streams were regarded as an important part of the Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) and its goal of ensuring growth and development through

getting learners in the FET phase to better prepare for particular career pathways. Stanton & Bailey (2001: 8) argue that governments across the world have focused on similar technical and vocational education provision at times of economic difficulty because such provision looks at how to both develop the skills of learners that get them to find suitable jobs later on, as well as helping make them more competitive.

It is important to note here, certainly in the context of South Africa, that vocational education was almost always offered to struggling learners. While this approach changed over the course of the twentieth century with regard to white, coloured, and African learners, for the thesis this seems to be an important observation given that focus schools were initiated only for learners from historically disadvantaged learners in 2005.

By following the historical provision of vocational and technical education provision in Cape Town it was noted that while all technical high schools previously provided for coloured youth under apartheid were converted afer 2005 into focus schools (Engineering and Technology focus schools), technical high schools that previously served white learners in the past continue to be identified as (specialised) technical high schools.

In the above regard, it is useful to refer to the work of Azeem Badroodien for his work on vocational education provision for young marginalised men in Cape Town around the mid-20th century. He shows that the genesis of vocational education provision in South Africa was rooted in a variety of political, social, and economic issues and challenges at various points in the twentieth century.

1.5   Methodology

The study adopted an interpretive case study approach. It was felt that this approach was the most appropriate as the goal of the study was to get a better understanding of various people's interpretations of a real educational situation in its natural context. The most suited approach for case study research, according to Cohen et al (2001: 181), is one with "an emphasis on the interpretive and subjective dimensions of research".

An interpretive approach also provides a better description of what is going on in particular locations or instances of schooling. It is not concerned with general issues but with particular settings in which individuals or small groups are involved. It also allows the researcher to better understand the subjective world of human experience (Van Rensburg, 2001: 16; Feinberg & Solis, 1992: 75-76; Cohen et al, 2001: 22).

In using a case study school the study seeks to provide a view of "real people in real situations" (Cohen et al 2001: 181), where more data and information is accessible than would normally be the case.

1.6   Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 provides a review of various educational practices that have depicted the provision of technical and vocational education in the Western Cape as well as policy debates about the distinction between academic and vocational learning in the country. This literature review is provided using the backdrop of international and national debates about vocational education provision (Wolf, 2002; Kliebard, 2010) and the different kinds of commissions that have discussed this issue in the past few decades. The goal of the chapter is to show how this links up with the Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) of the Western Cape Province, and how this led to the introduction of focus schools. The chapter ends off with a short critique of the HCDS and its supposed contribution to the growth of the provincial economy. In terms of its ability to deliver learners that have the intermediate soft skills that the provincial economy is looking for, the chapter argues that the HCDS (and focus schools) is one policy in a long line of failed policies that have tried to connect learners from struggling communities to the workplace.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodological choices that were made in the study. It shows how the study went about collecting its data and gathering various pieces of information. To build up a picture of what focus schools were about, the study adopted an interpretive approach where the views of policy makers, practitioners, educators, and learners were collected via interviews. These were linked to the various policy and draft documents to show why the PGWC, via the WCED, in 2006 chose to introduce these types of schools for historically disadvantaged learners.

With regard to the interpretative approach: this approach was not only applied to the interviewing of the various subjects, but also with regard to the document analysis. In short, not only was the responses interviewees interpreted, but this method was also applied to the documents.

Chapter 4 provides a more detailed view of the focus school policies that shaped what they were supposed to do. The chapter provides a full list of the twenty eight focus schools in the Western Cape province. The chapter uses the views of departmental and district officials as well as some focus school principals to describe what the key issues were when such schools were established.

Chapter 5 starts off by discussing how various educators working at the arts and culture focus school have engaged with their everyday challenges and struggled with the expectations of policy makers and the realities of being educators serving learners from previously disadvantaged communities.

The chapter then examines how 5 learners that attend one arts and culture focus school in the province understood what the institution could do or provide for them. The learners provide some insights into their different experiences, their subject choices, and the benefits that they did, or did

not, get from attending the focus school. The learners also speak about some of their worries about where they would find work once they had completed their schooling. The chapter also draws on the views of 3 former learners that attended the case study school to get a sense of what they experienced after leaving school and the difficulties they had in securing jobs.

The concluding chapter (6) argues that the focus school programme developed by the PGWC has not had any different outcomes from previous programmes that have tried to engage with similar issues in the province. It notes that the ways in which race, social class, and skills development come together in education provision programmes will probably ensure that the bigger debates of inequality and social cohesion, and the goal of getting more historically disadvantaged learners into higher education, will not be resolved very soon. It is argued that the desire to give historically (or previously) disadvantaged learners more and better opportunities to find suitable work via focus schools has not really led to their further development and that this is mostly due to the lack of decent employment opportunities in the province. It is argued that the politics of race still seems to matter a lot in the province and continues to play a crucial part in the provision of vocational education to learners from historically disadvantaged communities, particularly those described as coloured.

1.7   Significance of the research

The main contribution of the thesis will hopefully be its description of the emergence of focus schools in the province and the discussion of how to understand the key aims and goals of the programme. The thesis argues that focus schools are much more than an educational intervention aimed at assisting learners from historically disadvantaged communities. Rather it tries to fulfill a far more difficult provincial agenda that tries to address a number of historical practices, approaches and problems.

The thesis also shows how focus schools seems to be part of a larger international shift to a new form of vocationalism within schooling systems, where political goals of social inclusion and economic competitiveness are sometimes striven for by the encouragement of lower forms of educational provision; at the expense of quality education.

CHAPTER 2:

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Education is normally thought to be the most important socio-cultural institution within society through which social change can be brought about (Jarret, 1996). It is thought to provide individuals the opportunity to develop and strengthen their individual personalities, their skills, and their knowledge base in specific areas. The United Nations said in 2010 that education should play an even bigger role within societal change and that "having the opportunity for a meaningful education is both a basic human right and also a condition for advancing social justice" (EFA, 2010: 8). While education is often seen as important for personality development, personal behavior, better life opportunities, and a better quality of life, it is equally seen as a crucial foundation for communication between citizens, for societal growth, creativity and technological advancement (Jarret, 1996).

The link between education and the development of society is not a new idea. Prosser and Allen (1925: 3) noted in 1925 that while the term education may have meant many things to many men, "education is inevitably the result of experiences whereby we become more or less able to adjust ourselves to the demands of the particular form of society in which we live and work". They regarded the link between education and work in the same way that Emerson (cited in Kliebard, 1999: ix) had described it in 1841, namely that "labor was God's education, that he only is a sincere learner, he only can become a master, who learns the secrets of labor, and who by real cunning extorts from nature its scepter". Access to work for them was "a path to worldly and spiritual redemption". For American citizens in the 1920s this approach to education and work felt right because they were becoming concerned that education- as academic and humanistic learning - did not seem to have enough of a real and constructive role for them in the building of a new society.

Kliebard (1999: x) notes that in America in the 1920s citizens "came to grips with social change by turning to public schools for answers to the vexing problems of an urban, industrial society". While a child normally attended school for a few years to learn moral character, civic instruction, punctuality, hard work and application, and then learnt how to work through working, all this changed in the late nineteenth century as manual training courses entered urban schools and as American society's expectations about education expanded. Kliebard (1999: x) notes that:

> Manual training gave way to a fully-fledged movement for vocational education, which provided the basis for an all-embracing vocationalisation- the idea that very school subject had to justify itself by its occupational utility. Public understanding of the purposes of mass education would never be the same again.

In that period, across the world, the ability to work was seen as important, to the extent that "only productive labour gave entitlement to citizenship" (Westerhuis, 2007: 25). Citizenship in a world of rapid industrialization was linked up with overall economic development and good use of educational resources (Clarke and Winch, 2007: 2). Vocational education became seen as an important way of bringing about socio-economic change - and came to exist thereafter alongside general education as a kind of alternative to it. Kliebard (199: 150) refers to this in America as the start of vocationalism,which became firmly established as an all-consuming educational ideal from that time. He described it as:

> The supreme criterion of efficiency in curriculum matters had led to the need to make fateful decisions as to each student's eventual occupational and social role. Only in this way could the curriculum be differentiated "to meet the needs" of a diverse school population. To do otherwise meant risking a dreadful waste. Algebra, literature, and history would be taught to large numbers of students who simply had no use for those subjects in terms of their adult functioning. Students were expected to adjust to the dictates of the new industrial society. Increasingly, however, the demands of the workplace and the well-being of society were being regarded as all of one piece. What had been the governing principles of vocational education were now being seen as the governing principles of all of education (Kliebard, 1999: 171).

In our current society it has become normal that when people are asked about education that they mainly speak about 'getting better jobs', 'making more money', or 'achieving financial success'. Whatever people think schooling needs to do, they all seem to see schools more as a training ground for the workplace and economic reward as the main purpose of schooling. People also highlight the waste involved in giving learners education that they did not need or could not use. They argue that it is even more problematic in societies that are significantly unequal or historically were not given access to quality education as such learners need quicker access to jobs and promising futures.

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly understand the historical background and significance of this kind of approach and the provision of different forms of vocational education as it is presented in the international and local literature. The chapter explores this to be able to look at its implications for the introduction of a form of education provision in the Western Cape at the beginning of the 21st century that was founded on similar reasons or based on similar arguments as spoken about above.

The chapter provides a backdrop of international and national debates about vocational education provision (Kliebard, 1999; Clarke & Winch, 2007; Kallaway, 1984; Kraak, 2002) as well as a review of various educational practices that have depicted the provision of technical and vocational

education in the Western Cape. It also highlights some of the commissions that have discussed this issue in the past few decades as a way of showing how the debates link up with the current Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) of the Western Cape Province, and the introduction of focus schools. The chapter ends off with a short critique of the HCDS and its expected contribution to the growth of the provincial economy, asking whether the HCDS (and focus schools) is not perhaps another policy in a long line of failed interventions that have tried to better connect learners from struggling and marginalized communities to the workplace.

2.1   Vocationalism

Through history, particularly from the late nineteenth century, modern vocational education has beenfocused on meetingthe kinds of job requirements that accompanied industrialization. This development evolved to a certain point when "this newly dominant ideal did not simply affect the content of the curriculum but also was dramatically reflected in the ways in which a curriculum was to be fashioned"(Kliebard, 1999:150-152).

Kantor & Tyack (1982) refer to this as vocationalism - as 'the educational ideal that stems from the application of the precepts and demands of business and industry to the curriculum as a whole'. The emergence of vocationalism in the early twentieth century, particularly in the USA, meant that a new vision emerged about what education was for, and "led to a transformation of the curriculum in line with the protocols and criteria of the workplace that invoked an array of new issues that were even more profound" (Kliebard, 1999: 120). The key issue was the belief that education was above all a process of 'getting (learners) ready for adulthood'.

Vocationalism emerged at a time when the idea of "an academic ideal of schooling" was in decline. As Kallaway (1996) shows in his work on educationalist Fred Clarke education policies increasingly advocated from the 1920s that provision not focus as much on the preservation of elites. Efforts were instead made to change, modify, and enrich education provision in ways that accommodated the needs of all individuals in modern society. Fred Clarke emphasized, according to Kallaway (1996: 6), that in the construction of the curriculum, academic education had to be modified to accommodate the vocational and the cultural in order to ensure that "the correct balance was arrived at which would enhance the rights of the individual and ensure the individual is adequately prepared for the world of work".

A focus on 'a correct balance' came from the belief that "competent performance in a variety of adult social roles" was subject to things like "predictability, order, and scientific precision" which was a hallmark of the modern factory and would ensure an orderly and smoothly running society (Kliebard, 1999: 120).

Vocationalism was thus about developing a broad social vision that highlighted the needs of the industrial workplace but that also saw to it that the occupational competence of individuals was ensured. Kliebard (1999: 120-121) notes that "a transformed curriculum had a vital role to play in the realization of that social vision by training the next generation directly in the efficient performance of the activities that define their social role". At that time things like citizenship activities, health activities, and leisure activities were not seen as important to the efficient running of the workplace and the need to get a job. It was argued that the academic subjects that learners studied not only needed to be adapted to meet the demands of the labour market, but that schooling had to be conceived and understood in terms of "raw material and finished products, gains and losses, inputs and outputs, productive and unproductive labour, elimination of waste, return on investment, precise production goals, and the bottom line" (Kliebard, 1999: 121). In the USA this approach was seen as a symbolic identification with ordinary Americans, and by attacking the 'elitism of academic schooling' vocationalism was seen as the protection of the democratic rights of working citizens. It was felt that the responsibility of schools to ordinary citizens "was to match individual capacities with ultimate social roles and for the differentiated training that would be required to perform successfully in those roles" (Kliebard, 1999: 163).

However, this approach to education did not go unchallenged. Citing Bagley, Kliebard (1999: 125) observes that many thought that "it is a mistake to think that all education which cannot be justified upon the basis of a specific vocational value must either seek justification as a preparation for leisure or surrender its place in our schools". In the early twentieth century John Dewey for example argued that the aim of schooling in a democracy "must be to keep youth under educative influence for a longer time rather than to induct them prematurely into the demands of the workplace. Industrial education should be about developing industrial intelligence rather than technical trade efficiency" (Dewey, 1914: 11-12). Dewey argued that the emphasis on vocationalism would give "the power of social predestination, by means of narrow trade training, to fallible men no matter how well intentioned they were". Kliebard (1999: 163) notes that the main objection by people like Dewey was to the "overemphasis given to adjusting individuals to the demands of the social order", and that "it was not the purpose of vocational education to decide for young people in advance what occupation they should follow, nor to project them into life's work as soon as possible". Wrigley (1982: 173) observes that the concerns with vocational education at the time were that it was "a way of shunting working class children into dead-end jobs".

People were still attracted to vocationalism anyway. Kliebard (1999) argues that it was the promise of jobs that made it wanted. Kantor & Tyack (1982: 293) also note that "the deeper question about this was why the appeal to vocational education endured despite so much evidence of the inability of education to bring about any change to the structures of jobs and opportunities for young workers". They argued that the answer lay "in the symbolic function that vocational education

played in American life at that time, the alluring promise of economic security, and the popular image of Americans as grease-stained and unrefined, but always prepared to work" (Kantor & Tyack, 1982: 293).

This image of vocationalism was also popular in other industrializing countries across the world, although often in quite different ways. In South Africa for example the idea that vocational education provision needed to focus mainly on the workplace and be shaped by its goals was influenced by a number of historical and political issues from the 1920s.

Badroodien (2001) notes that the provision of vocational education in South Africa in the early twentieth century was mostly focused on the working class white population and how to help them get access to the labour market. He notes that the kinds of vocational education provided to non-white marginalized and poor individuals focused on the jobs that they could fulfill within the economy and their place in the social hierarchy of South Africa at that time. It is to how vocational education was mostly provided in South Africa from the 1920s that the chapter next turns.

2.2 Vocationalism in South Africa

Badroodien (2002: 21) notes that in South Africa vocational education provision from the 1920s generally focused on the 'salvation of working class, urban, poor and indigent children in urban areas to help socialize and regulate them and ensure that they got the necessary skills and knowledge to survive and prosper in the cities. Badroodien (2002) argues that vocational education provision focused mostly on instilling children with the work-preparedness and discipline that they needed to work and that would make them docile citizens.

This approach was common in British colonies at that time. Clark & Winch (2007: 9) note that "in the Anglo-Saxon world, vocational education was confined to preparing young people and adults for working life, a process often regarded as of a rather technical and practical nature" and was mostly "associated with outputs and competences, assessment-led learning and performance indicators – in contrast to liberal education that was generally associated with judgement, management and critical enquiry".

In terms of a British approach Halliday (2007) noted however that there remained a preference most of the time amongst the British for academic education. Many argued that while "academic learning might appear in historical context to be least instrumental seems in many cases most effective in actually securing a good rate of return" (Halliday, 2007:151). This was based on the belief that "[n]o one imagines that there could ever be equal rewards given for different types of work. Indeed it would be hard to know the basis on which equality in reward was to be decided. Suggesting that vocational education would bring equal reward was thus often misleading".

In South Africa from the 1920s vocational education provision was not meant to 'lead to equal reward', nor 'to provide learners with the kinds of skills to find decent work'. It was meant rather to help in dealing with the problems that came with large numbers of people moving in urban spaces. And whereas vocational education programs were provided mainly to non-whites and overseas workers before 1900 (Malherbe, 1977: 163), from the 1920s vocational education was provided only for white learners as a way of giving them the skills to access 'gainful employment' and be self-supporting. The goal of such provision was to specifically help struggling working class white learners to rise above other working class learners both in school and the workplace and to attain the life skills that set them apart from other urban working class learners.

In this regard, Soudien (2010: 20) has noted that in South Africa there has traditionally been a commitment to different kinds of school knowledge for different groups. He observes that "how questions of social difference and race in particular are addressed in education and the curriculum in this recomposing human landscape is important to comprehend. Questions of the curriculum – how it was conceptualised, designed and delivered – took on a particular dynamic in social settings where issues of race, class, gender, language, and religion were matters of public contention".

In terms of vocationalism in South Africa the evolution of technical and vocational education in South Africa thus happened in more complex, controversial, and contradictory ways than in many other parts of the world. Malherbe (1977: 166 - 167) maintains for example that the histories of vocational and technical education not only had different origins but developed over a century along firm racial lines. On the one hand, technical education provision for white learners emerged from the needs that growing industries of that time identified, while industrial (vocational) education developed out of the desire to help poor white learnersto access industrial and technical facilities and fill their place in the social hierarchy (Malherbe, 1977: 188). Vocational education provision focused mainly on the indigence, social and educational inferiority and mental backwardness (Badroodien, 2002: 21) of the lower social strand of the white community

On the other hand, according to Badroodien (2002: 20), "vocational education provision for non-whites had a greater emphasis, historically, on rehabilitative and ameliorativefunctions, and had little or no*training* function". The focus was on learning disciplinary codes that taught them the habits of obedience, work preparedness, religious vigour, and military precision so that they could be docile workers as well as be self-supporting when required. This focus was also based on the view that African and coloured individuals could only work in unskilled positions within industry at that time and thus did not need to be trained -other than to learn the techniques of discipline and order (Badroodien, 2002: 38-43).

2.3   Vocational education and work and urban areas in South Africa

Given that the thesis topic explores a particular form of vocational schooling provided to historically disadvantaged learners in the Western Cape and given that the majority of such provincial learners were defined as coloured under apartheid and before, the section below explores the kinds of vocational education provided to coloured learners in the Western Cape from the late 1930s. The purpose is to show how the ideas of vocationalism shaped provision for historically disadvantaged learners over the next decades and to ask how this informed the introduction of focus schools in 2005.

In the period 1938 to 2000 in South Africa a number of major commissions were formed, that as part of their work also investigated how the needs of coloured learners could best be addressed. The first commission, namely the Wilcocks Commission, was established in 1938 and investigated the needs of the coloured population in South Africa at that time. One of its main recommendations was that the problems facing a community as impoverished and indigent as the coloured urban community could only be resolved through active educational programs that targeted their specific needs in urban areas and that led to appropriate employment (Union of South Africa, 1938). Because education was not compulsory for coloured learners in South Africa until the 1950s the commission recommended that every educative means be found to assist learners in ways that addressed the social conditions under which they lived. The second commission, the De Villiers Commission, was constituted in 1948 and asked to devise a broad framework for a reconstructed system of education and training that initiated future economic growth (Union of South Africa, 1949: 1). One of its main findings was that providing coloured learners with detailed technical and vocational education was wasteful and that efforts should rather focus on teaching them to work. Such a focus, the commission argued, would "address issues of poverty and the overall aimlessness of the poor and indigent coloured population that had migrated to the cities" (Badroodien, 2002: 38). The De Villiers Commission noted in 1948 that:

> Vast numbers of non-europeans are not equipped for life or work. They live at low levels and are inefficient workers. Many become a burden upon the state as offenders or paupers. Steps must be taken to prevent this waste of resources by providing appropriate education and training facilities (Union of South Africa, 1949: 247).

The third commission, the Botha Commission, was formed in 1956 and asked to explore how the needs of learners in the Western Cape could best be addressed (Provincial Administration of the Cape of Good Hope, 1957). The commission asserted that "if it is borne in mind that a large population of South Africa made a living by the use of their hands then it made sense that further educational instruction for coloured youth had to emphasise the development of their manual skills. Most of the opportunities open to them are in the fields of industry and agriculture where manual labour plays the chief role". The commission recommended at the time that special courses in

subjects like woodwork, needlework, practical agriculture, and housecraft in coloured public schools would not only help learners develop the skills they needed to find work but would fulfil a key role in their personal development (Provincial Administration of the Cape of Good Hope, 1957: 10).

The value of these commissions was in how they thought vocational education programs could address the needs of the coloured population in urban areas. These suggestions were based on how they conceived the relationship between vocational education and training and available work in that period, as well as on a particular preconception that "such manual labour had come to be looked upon as the natural occupation of the coloured population (Malherbe, 1977: 191).

Asserting that the coloured population hada"natural ability to work with their hands", Malherbe (1977: 191) maintained that coloured workers were generally 'adaptable in the workplace' and had managed without the benefit of apprenticeship training to obtain skills in bricklaying, carpentry, plastering, painting and other skills in the building trade in the province over a number of decades.In this regard, the Botha commission suggested that provision be made in secondary schools for vocational education for coloured learners, and that attempts be made to establish exactly what types of work coloured workers were engaged in. The commission recommended, amongst other things, that differentiated courses in academic, commercial and handwork subjects be started in secondary education.

In subsequent decades this proposal was further developed with a strong emphasis on providing coloured learners in urban centres with vocational education directly relevant to the kinds of jobs they would secure in industry. It was a proposal and approach that was taken further in the Theron Commission of 1976 as well as in the De Lange Report of 1981, with emphases on the provision of vocational education programs for coloured (and African) learners. By that time the key sectors that coloured workers supposedly had mainly found employment in was in the trades of plumbing, carpentry, fitting and turning, electrical work, and telecommunications, and in the manufacturing, construction, and agricultural industries.

This was taken up by the De Lange Commission of 1981 that argued that vocational education was an essential prerequisite for cultural change and technological modernisation in South Africa (Kraak, 2002: 75). The commission asserted that both African and coloured learners were generally 'environmentally deprived', that this was not conducive to their "cognitive development in the realms of mathematics, science and technology" and that because of this African and coloured learners should preferably follow vocational tracks in their schooling (Kraak, 2002: 75).

The De Lange Commission further recommended that learners that struggle at school should exit the schooling system after 6 years of compulsory basic education, and preferably enrol in the non–

formal training sector, get an apprenticeship, or leave school and enter the world of work. It noted that:

> Childrenwho are environmentally deprived should make an earlier start with vocational education to enable them to master manual and other skills for success in the non–formal training sector to become semi–skilled operators in industry or to be productive in the less formal sectors (Kraak, 2002: 80).

Importantly, it is only from the 1970s that the vocational education needs of African learners were also addressed. The belief that non-white learners were not academically competent to take subjects like mathematics, science and technology led to the commission recommending that a new practical teaching model in vocational education be introduced, and that learning programs preferably start from the concrete and move to the abstract (Kraak, 2002: 79). It was suggested that "vocational education, together with a practical teaching paradigm, was the best educational strategy to assist traditional (African and coloured) communities in the transition towards modern technological culture (Kraak, 2002: 76).

According to Kraak (2002: 81) the Walters Report of 1990 reversed some of the above emphasis on the role of vocational education, arguing that many Third World countries had found that academic education yielded better results than vocational education. The Walters Report argued that while a focus on vocational education was important, this could not occur if a closer link to on-the-job training was not set up. It also argued that the global trend was to focus on broad skills within a particular field rather than on vocationally-specific skills. In the thesis it is argued that the previous link between vocational education and the workplace has again been brought to the fore, with the greater focus on vocationalism now captured in debates about how best to assist historically disadvantaged learners that are struggling with an academic curriculum, and thus are not getting the necessary skills, to secure suitable jobs.

The thesis argues that it is the above link made in a variety of commissions that most emerges within current initiatives like the focus school program of 2006. For the requirements of this thesis it was not necessary to fully show above how vocationalism (and vocational education programs) took particular forms within South Africa over the last decades of the twentieth century. This is dealt with in the work of Kallaway (1984; 2002), Chisholm (1984; 1992; 2004) and Badroodien (2002).

What I sought most to emphasise in the above section however was that the approach to vocational education provision was different in South Africa, even for white learners, and that access to it was defined strictly along race lines for most of the 20th century. The approach to vocational education provision was also different according to urban and rural locations and those

who were given access to live in the various locations. In the section below I highlight how African education in rural areas was dealt with, and how vocationalism took a particular form there.

2.4   Vocational education adapted for African learners

Hunt Davis Jr (1984: 108) has noted that education provision for African learners in the early twentieth century focused on tailoring provision according to the needs of the colonial system of that time. Because Africans were deemed to be "backward, primitive, and retarded" it was argued that normal schooling was too academic and unrelated to their everyday lives, and that an 'adapted form of education' was needed for them (Hunt Davis Jr, 1984: 113).

According to Charles Loram, a senior educationalist and policy maker at the time, Africans needed to be educated firstly in ways that served the interests of the white population and not to become equal with them, and secondly in ways that would better suit their own individual social needs. Heyman (1972: 45) notes that "like most white educators of his time in Africa, Loram was more concerned with ´civilizing´ the whole African community through education, than with producing an educated class who could compete with the European".

In this regard, Loram took from educational theories and practices in the USA to guide him in developing a form of ´adapted´ education to suit the needs of African people in South Africa. The two premises underlying Loram´s thinking on African education were that the white population would continue to rule and that the African population would continue to be ruled, and further that Africans were rural people and that they should remain in rural areas. He argued that Africans "should be educated for life in the countryside as peasant farmers, or they should receive the rudiments of an ´adapted´ western education appropriate to their station in the colonial order, or they should be provided with modest ´industrial´ skills that would enable them to work at the lower skill levels of the modern economy" (Kallaway, 2002: 10). He also argued that practical training for everyday life in home and on the farm was a crucial criterion for their education, and that school knowledge such as health training, handicraft training, agricultural improvement and recreation would suffice to help them to deal with their own affairs (Heyman, 1972: 45). The classical western curriculum for European children was regarded as too abstract and of little relevance to the everyday needs of the African people. Loram noted that "it was very much a bookish affair and almost entirely tinged with the white man´s outlook" (Hunt Davis Jr, 1984: 113).

For the thesis, the significance of this type of education for African learners at the time was that it was supposedly suited both to the specific geographical and cognitive needs of the relevant learners, that vital resources were seen as not being 'wasted' on learners that could not use them appropriately, and that learners were accessing knowledge forms that were relevant to the kind of work that they would eventually do. A further significance was that vocational education provision

for African learners in South Africa was understood in ways that had little connection to industry or to work opportunities in that period.

I argue in the thesis that when confronted with how to engage with the legacies and logic of previous approaches, that policy makers in the current era seem to have gone back to older understandings of vocationalism while at the same time using ideas that came from initiatives like the magnet school program that emerged in the USA in the 1970s - although with quite different objectives. It is a further example of how vocational education has been differently conceptualized and adapted at various points of history. Importantly, I identify and target this particular (magnet school) program below mainly because WCED officials identified it as the key model that they utilised when they established the focus school program in 2005.

2.5 Magnet and specialist schools as new vocational practices

To understand the origins of the focus schools program in the Western Cape, the idea of magnet schools in the United States of America (USA) as well as the specialist school program in the United Kingdom (UK) need to be better understood. For it is these two programs that has most influenced how focus schools have emerged in South Africa.

In that regard it is notable that such programs have across the world almost always been introduced to tackle particular political and educational problems. In South Africa, as Fataar (2007: 599-600) notes, "[a]fter 10 years of reform, there was broad consensus acknowledged by the state, that the inequities in education have deepened and that reform initiatives have faltered". Given the situation in which most historically disadvantaged learners found themselves, the introduction of focus schools in 2005 could thus be seen as a particular political attempt to uplift historically disadvantaged communities (through vocational education programs) and provide them with better opportunities to find work.

It was a direct political intervention that also sought to raise the level of achievement amongst coloured and African learners in marginalized schools by offering them alternative learning pathways to access 'quality education'. With the main aim being to increase the participation and success rates of learners, especially disadvantaged learners, to get them to participate in the Further Education and Training band, and to expand the number of FET learners who qualify to enter higher education (WCED, 2005a: 3), the WCED borrowed from models that had elsewhere attempted a similar kind of political project.

The WCED found this in the American model of ´magnet schools' which offered students a distinctive curriculum emphasizing particular subject areas such as mathematics, science, engineering, computer science, arts, or humanities, while also serving to desegregate schooling and improving the educational quality of learner access (Steel & Levine, 1994: 13-16).

Smrekar (2009: 209) notes that "magnet schools, sometimes referred to as 'alternative schools' or 'schools of choice',were public schools that provided incentives to parents and students through specialized curricular themes or instructional methods".Noting that the term "magnet" initially emerged in the 1970s when policymakers were designing desegregation plans in an attempt to make such schools more attractive to parents, educators, and students, Smrekar points out that the central idea behind magnet schools was to diversify particular schools through focused curricular provision choices.The original approach was to bus learners in from a variety of areas to develop a racially-balanced learner population.

Smrekar (2009) notes though that while the focus on racial diversification was the original focus, the aim was that once a level of desegregation was achieved that a greater focus on curriculum choice and the improvement of educational provision for marginalized learners would follow. He observes that after a number of juridical developments around magnet schools from the 1970s and the removal of mandatory desegregation structures, magnet schools later began to focus more on the kind of education that was provided to learners. Smrekar (2009: 210) notes that:

> Once a district was declared unitary, priorities and policies focused on expanding choice options, neighborhood schools, and quality improvement, replacing the previous emphases on judicial oversight and racial balancing.

The focus was then on academic achievement, reduced costs (that previously came with cross-town busing), expanded parental choice, and closer neighborhood- school-community connections (Smrekar, 2009: 211). It was argued that this allowed parents to see magnet schools as a better choice than regular public schools – especially given that the state invested more funds in magnet schools and the schools offered learners particular themes (e.g. math and science, arts or humanities) or instructional approaches (e.g. Paideia or Montessori) that could improve their achievement levels (Smrekar, 2009: 220). It was argued that the different focus of magnet schools allowed for more innovation, such as increased staff development and support, a better learning focus, and would encourage an improved performance from learners.

While critics of magnet schools cautioned against the schools encouraging forms of resegregation, increased inequality, reduced opportunity for marginalized learners, and an ultimate move away from diversified learner populations, many acknowledged that magnet schools at the time was a particular attempt to provide viable education opportunities for inner-city learners who might otherwise not have received them, using diversified vocational curricula choices as the main way of getting there (Banks & Green, 2008: 27).

A second band of schooling that many WCED officials banked on when developing the focus school idea was the specialist schools program of the UK.Gorard & Taylor (2001) note that this

form of schooling emerged as a way of giving learners alternatives within the school band by which to pursue vocational education choices. In that regard the UK government gave some secondary schools 'specialist status' that allowed them to provide alternative programs and to develop a distinctive mission and ethos that contributed in particular ways to the immediate communities or to the wider education system(Gorand & Taylor, 2001: 3).

The key benefit in this form of provision was that they were given additional resources to develop and spread best practice in certain aspects or parts of the national curriculum. It was felt that by giving schools the opportunities to develop expertise in the specialist areas of Arts, Technology, Sports, and Languages that the teaching in those areas would improve and that this would lead to greater learner achievement. The specialist school program emphasized the development of basic competences, aptitudes and abilities within every learner and a focus on helping each learner reach their full potential. Gorard & Taylor (2001) suggested that further specialisms in engineering, science, and business and enterprise needed to also be considered if working class and marginalized learners were to be allowed to better achieve.

While the key criticism of such a system was that admission policies could easily be reworked in ways that ensured that such schools only got the most able and the most socially advantaged children, many schools supported the initiative because it allowed for greater levels of vocationalism while leaving space for the creative development of school curricula (Gorard & Taylor, 2001: 23).

It is the above historical backdrop and borrowed models of vocational education provision that informed the discussions of WCED officials prior to the launch of focus schools in 2005. I argue that policy makers looked towards a particular form of vocational education as a way of trying to heed calls for social democratic and equity concerns to be taken more seriously, as well as responding to demands for a greater quality of education provision for historically disadvantaged learners. Importantly these calls came at a time when pressures for social efficiency, financial austerity, and a better fit with the labour market, were also being applied.

In the next section the chapter explores the social and political background of the Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) of the Western Cape and what the intended goals were when focus schools were introduced.

2.6   Vocationalism and national and provincial strategies

Rizvi & Lingard (2010: 190) observe that in a contemporary world in which principles of market individualism predominates, strategies to encourage greater levels of human capital are given as much weight as values of social cohesion and community building.They argue that given the pressures from organisations such as the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank, that "discourses that frame policy texts are no longer located simply in the national space but increasingly emanate from the needs of international and supranational organizations(Henry et al, 2001; Lawn and Lingard 2002; Dale 2006; Kallo and Rinne 2006 in Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 14). These organisations are interested mainly in how education can enhance economic development and steer national competitiveness in a global environment, and often demand that national states invest in their human resources if they hope to operate in a global environment (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 131).

Rizvi & Lingard (2010: 130) assert that for economies to be able to compete on the international stage individuals have to be produced that bring new knowledge characterized byits "informality, networks, knowledge-base, and focus on a post-industrial and service-oriented environment". They point out that education systems no longer have the luxury of educating for the sake of personal development nor simply for the social good of society. Rather school knowledge and curricula need to always relate to the needs of the changing economic environment.

In the current global situation for example there is a need for better achievement in science, mathematics, technology, finance, and business to feed the new economy and thus there is a greater focus on getting students to develop expertise and skills that highlight problem-solving and communication abilities for diverse cultural and social settings. There is also a strong demand for skills in industries such as leisure and services, where the emphasis is not as much on knowledge as on work skills that are low-paid and low-skilled.Thus, as much as there is a demand for high skills there is an equal demand for a human resource pool that consists of low cost labour (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010: 41).

In local environments relevant bodies often have to develop complex and interconnected policies to grow and develop their human resource capacity (Hartley, 2007a: 74). These policies have to connect social, educational, and economic challenges in ways that serve individual aspiration as well as the needs of the local economy and labour market. In that regard local bodies normally turn to national bodies for direction and assistance in putting together their growth and development strategies. Hartley (2007) notes in this regard that "the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) was responsible for the MEDS [Micro-Economic Development Strategy] which indicated the likely future economic possibilities for the province" (Hartley, 2007a: 74) and in doing so developed policies that tried to meet the requirements of the global economy. In the Western Cape this kind of partnership led to several potential growth sectors being identified - such as call centres (or business process outsourcing), crafts, clothing, tourism, oil and gas, ICT, agriculture, cultural industries, metals and engineering, and the film industry.The goal in identifying these sectors was also to highlight what kinds of human resources needed to be encouraged.

At the provincial level in South Africa the above discussion was seen clearly in the HCDS of the Western Cape. For the thesis the main point here is that the provincial education department was tasked to oversee the strategy and had to interconnect policies relating to political, social, juristic and educational concerns and develop the right kinds of conditions for markets and investments in the province.

2.7   The HCDS and Focus Schools

The main goal of the Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS) from 2004 was to develop skills amongst young people that prepared them to manage their lives after school (WCED, 2008a: 15). According to Lewis (2008: 31), "[i]f the mission of the HCDS was to provide our youth with relevant skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that allowed them to participate meaningfully in the mainstream economy, and to be internationally competitive (Dugmore, 2005), then we needed to turn our attention specially to each of the delivery platforms to determine to what extent they contribute to this mission".

In that regard, it was felt that "within the PGDS [Provincial Growth and Development Strategy] there was a need to unpack the Scarce Skills Strategy in order to inform the programmes and activities that the WCED needed to explore" (WCED, 2008aa: 34). Lewis notes that the introduction of focus schools was an initiative that emerged from such discussions, as did other programs like Dinaledi schools and schools of skills (WCED, 2007: 42), and was aimed at reducing unemployment and alleviating its consequences through policies that targeted the employed and the unemployed" (WCED, 2008a: 127).

In relation to serving the needs of the marginalised and the poor, a key goal in provincial policies was not only to develop amongst learners skills that linked them to specific kinds of jobs but also to ensure that they had skills that would assist them when they were unemployed. This kind of focus led to particular kinds of areas being identified that learners needed to explore.

For example, Badroodien (2004: 154) argued with regard to the informal sector in 2004 that because informal employment was concentrated in the retail and wholesale trade industries, with just over 50 per cent of all informal workers located in this sector of the economy, and given that employment in the informal sector was dominated by semi-skilled work such as shop work, craft-related work, and other unskilled work, that provincial bodies often focused on providing young people (in schools and colleges) with skills that they would be forced to turn to in the informal sector when faced with economic survival. It was these kinds of approaches that also led to the introduction and focus on subject areas such as Business, Commerce and Management, and Arts & Culture.At such times policy makers sought to provide learners, especially the historically

disadvantaged and marginalized, with practical entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, that they could use some day in starting collaborative or individual micro enterprises.

Similarly, Technology & Engineering focus schools originated out of a situation where the nature of work in a technological society was in constant flux and needed the development of transferable technological skills.Rault-Smith (2008) suggested in 2008 that "the notion of enterprising and entrepreneurial activities should be promoted to uplift ailing communities, which will assist to create markets, which will give people the opportunity to contribute towards the establishment of the second economy (Rault-Smith, 2008a: 46).

The introduction of focus schools was thus a particular approach to vocationalism, in that learners in formerly disadvantaged areas were identified as needing to have business, technical and industrial skills that accommodated survivalist enterprises and addressed their socio-economic positions and challenges (Lewis, 2007: 30).

Importantly, the introduction of focus schools was also said to fill a social efficiency and redress agenda. It was argued that focus schools would give previously disadvantaged learners access to a form of education that was appropriate to their interests and abilities and linked them to work opportunities, and that this was in their best interests. Linking learners to particular kinds of jobs according to their abilities and attributes was also seen as cost-effective and less wasteful in terms of allocated resources. Lastly, it was felt that learners that normally failed or were less successful at schools that emphasised an academic curriculum were being given an opportunity to succeed that they would not get otherwise.

As noted in previous sections the key concerns with this kind of approach was that by giving learners from previously disadvantaged communities access to particular vocational routes in an effort to prepare them for the labour market, a form of social predestination (Dewey, 1914) was more likely. Also, by attempting to redress past inequalities and giving African and coloured learners access to vocational education that took into account their educational weaknesses, focus schools locked learners into particular streams that would inform the kinds of jobs and occupations they would have for the rest of their lives, as well as determine their social class positions. In the chapters below this dilemma and question of whether focus schools provide vocational pathways that are dead-ends, and that they do not provide learners with skills that lead to them finding suitable jobs, is further explored. The main research problem that is explored is whether focus schools address the challenges and needs of previously disadvantaged learners when providing them access to a particular form of educational provision.

However, before I proceed to the chapters that describe and analyse the data that was collected in the study, I provide below details of the provincial HCDS and its critique as a way of locating discussions of focus schools within current educational debates.

2.8 Key aspects of the HCDS

Nyalashe (2007) notes that in the early 2000s the WCED was faced with a situation where it needed to transform its strategies to build up the province´s growth and development through education and training programs, whilst at the same time seeing to key equity and redress demands across the education system. He pointed out that "education reforms had to take root before sufficient youth would have the capacity and skills to engage in the careers required by the growing Western Cape economy" (Nyalashe, 2007: 2). Given that the youth was regarded as a key priority within the developmental plans of the province, strategic plans needed to incorporate them in ways that looked after both their needs and their futures.Notably, 23,6% of the province's population in 2006 was unemployed, of which 52% were youth (Nyalashe, 2007: 9).

Figure 3: Unemployment levels amongst Cape Town youths
Smith (2005:29): The status of Cape Town
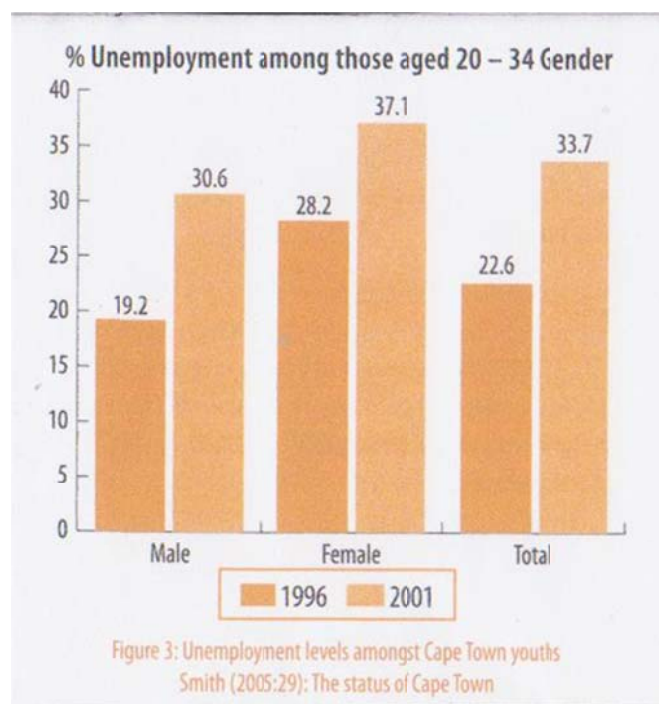
Figure 2.1: UNEMPLOYMENT LEVELS AMONGST CAPE TOWN YOUTH

Importantly, within the strategic plan it was noted that the unemployment rate amongst Cape Town´s youth in the period 1996 - 2001 had increased significantly and that amongst youth aged 20 – 34 the unemployment rate had increased from 19% males and 28% females in 1996 to 30% and 37% in 2001. Furthermore, it was found that enrollment and completion of school learners aged till 17 was the highest amongst whites (at 100%), lower amongst the African population, and lowest amongst coloured learners. Also, it was found that over half of African and coloured learners that received endorsement in the matriculation examinations were enrolled in either

former model C schools or independent schools. WCED research also indicated that learners in ex-model C schools achieved far better in Accounting, Mathematics and Physical Science and that learners from ex-Department of Education and Training (African learners) and ex-House of Representatives (coloured learners) schools still did not operate at the same quality level of education (Nyalashe, 2007: 19).

The MEC for Education, Cameron Dugmore, noted at the launch of the HCDS in 2005that target areas amongst others, increased numbers of learners, and accessing FET in schools and colleges were regarded as crucial educational interventions that would assist the HCDS achieve its goals. Both FET schools and colleges were targeted for educational intervention. It was announced that 28 Focus schools would be launched in the Western Cape. These schools were created to offer different vocational curriculum paths in specific learning fields (Arts and Culture, Engineering, Sport and Business, Commerce and Management) for learners that came from previously disadvantaged communities. Focus schools, it was argued, together with schools of skill and the national program of Dinaledi schools and increased FET College access, were part of the Western Cape's attempts to alleviate poverty and ensure economic growth – whilst embedding values of equity and redress across the education system.

2.9   The pressures of human capital theory

In the current global environment there has been an increased focus on developing knowledge-based economies to enhance international competitiveness. This has led to a clear shift from production-based economies to knowledge-driven ones (Fataar, 2006: 648). Becker (2002: 292) notes that this required an emphasis on human capital and the development of "knowledge, information, ideas, skills, and the health of individuals" to bring about new knowledge that could be traded. Woodhall (1997: 219) describes the concept of human capital as "when human beings invest in themselves by means of education, training, or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings". She observes that it is when individuals invests or spends on assets that will generate income in the future. Woodhall notes that whereas the idea of assets in the past concentrated on physical capital like machinery, equipment, or buildings that could generate income by creating productive capacity, in the new environment assets related more to the development of capital that could be traded in a similar way as the purchase of new machinery, or other forms of physical capital (Woodhall, 1997: 219).

Human capital was thus both a key idea in the ways economies had changed and the result of the efforts of individuals to educate and train themselves through life and ensure 'likely returns' (Becker, 2002: 293).

Mustapha & Abdullah (2004: 52) point out that "human capital theory views education and training as an investment that can yield social and private returns through increased knowledge and skills for economic development and social progress" and that the ultimate aim of this is to develop citizens that contribute to economic growth and make local economies globally competitive.According to the above, it seems very clear why governments focus on developing human resource and developmental policies.

2.10   The key goals of the HCDS

With the launch of the *Human Capital Development Strategy, A focus on Youth* (HCDS), the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) from 2006 set about broader plans for sustainable development in the province by placing a greater emphasis on the development of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and Further Education and Training (FET) in the province. Energies were specifically directed at these platforms to give youth a second chance to educate themselves, and to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that would make them economically productive. An important part of the HCDS, according to the Premier at the time Ebrahim Rasool, was to respond to "the challenges of high levels of unemployment among the historically disadvantaged youth in particular and the perceived lack to skills to take up existing employment and entrepreneurial opportunities to absorb the growing maturing youth population" (HCDS, 2006: i).

Part of the PGWC's plans for the education sector was to transform the various sectors to enhance access, "but more importantly, the biggest focus was on curriculum redresswhere extended and critical curriculum packages (focusing on mathematics, science and technology, and languages) were introduced to tackle theseeming lack of motivation or interest, and lack of resources amongst poor and disadvantaged communities" (HCDS, 2006: 22). In line with these economic growth projects, the idea of centres of excellence or focus schools was considered. These facilities were seen as part of the overall restructuring of the FET sector in the province, and its development strategy.Calling on the national focus on a developmental state, the PGWC incorporated a focus on holistic governance which demanded"a high-level of transversal and integrated service delivery" and which demanded that the province,through integrated and systematic action programs, oversee the health, safety, housing needs, educational opportunities, issues of access to the economy, as well as the related legal matters (HCDS, 2006: 22).The shift to a knowledge-based economy wasalso part of a wider national plan to achieve the main objectives of the Education Vision 2020.

2.11   Limitations within the HCDS

Mustapha & Abdullah (2004: 58) note that if the youth of countries are not given access to education, knowledge and skills, "governments take the risk of losing precious human capital that

could have been harnessed more effectively for new economic paradigms".The key test though is how to do this in environments that have historical legacies and ongoing challenges and that have treated citizen needs in particular ways over long periods. The other test is how to transform the institutional structures within which human capital needed to be developed.

Mustapha & Abdullah (2004: 56) observe thatas knowledge workers had to be "versatile, autonomous, highly skilled, and able to leverage and build knowledge to produce useful action with very strong and analytical skills" such institutions had to focus on the creation of quality human resource programs and provide learners with a critical and analytical mode of thinking that would enable themto function effectively within the new economic age and their various workplaces.

Crucially however, part of the goals of all human capital development strategies was also to develop lower-level skills that trained learners in ways that fitted them into a particular place in the economy. I argue in the thesis that it is for these jobs and opportunities that focus schools have been introduced in the Western Cape. FET programmes in schools and colleges have been developed mainly to give learners vocational and technical skills for particular low-level jobs within the provincial economy.For these learners the new curriculum does not focus on making them "more innovative to help them to invent and develop a critical and analytical mode of thinking and ultimately create a sufficient pool of well-educated, highly skilled and strongly motivated workers as noted by Mustapha & Abdullah (2004: 56).

Rather, in line with previous understandings (as seen in commission reports) of their abilities and attributes, historically disadvantaged learners in the province are still seen as those that can contribute to the economy 'with their hands and their blood and sweat'. While it is acknowledged in the next chapters that focus schools were aimed at redressing key educational inequalities, it would seem that focus schools will be another program in a long line of strategies that have been aimed at mainly linking African and coloured learners to particular vocations and jobs in the province. The focus on vocationalism and the demands of forming an effective HCDS may lead to African and coloured learners continuing to access the same kinds of jobs that they did in the past, especially under apartheid.

2.12   Summary

The main goal of the above chapter was to briefly describe the historical background and significance of vocationalism and the provision of different kinds of vocational education programs as it has emerged internationally and locally. The chapter explored this so that I could show the links between such developments and the introduction of a HCDS in the Western Cape. I tried to show the implications of this for the introduction of focus schools in the Western Cape from 2005. In the next chapter I discuss the research approach and methodology of the study and then

explore how educators, policy makers, and learners describe and thought about focus schools and their value.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The main aim of the study was to describe the emergence of focus schools in the Western Cape, the reasons for their establishment, their role and function, and how individuals linked to one focus school experienced the policy's roll-out. As part of the study the historical background of vocational education in the Western Cape, and policy processes that led to the starting of focus schools, was also explored, as well as links to educational debates on vocationalism internationally and in South Africa.

In this study, with regard to focus schools, the debate about focus schools needs to be related to the debate regarding FET colleges and vocational schools; however no clear evidence emerges within literature or policy documents on the links between the two. Due to this, I will not explore it in this thesis. The education department is not clear about the issue.

In this chapter I describe the research design, methodology and methods used in the study. The purpose of the chapter is to show the rationale for the study and to explain the research decisions that were taken in order to engage with the main research question. The study's main research question was 'what are the links between the focus school program and key educational challenges and dilemmas with regard to previously disadvantaged learners in the Western Cape?'

This was explored by asking the following questions:

- What policy developments and thinking led to the establishment of focus schools in the Western Cape in 2005?
- What were the links of these new policies to international and national debates on vocationalism?
- Were these policies and thinking different to vocational programmes that were provided in the Western Cape in the past?
- What explanations did policy makers, district officials, principals, and educators provide for the roles and functions of these schools?
- How did learners think about focus schools? What did they say about focus schools and their future work opportunities in the Western Cape?

The study adopted a case study approach and focused on the understandings and views of district officials, a principal, educators, and learners related to one focus school in the Western Cape. The chapter also introduces the reader to the research (school) site and to the variety of participants

that spoke about the school. Neither the school name nor those of any participants that partook in the study are real. Pseudonyms were provided for all participants and schools.

It is necessary to say here how the terms coloured, white, African and Indian are used in the thesis. My supervisor reminded me constantly that as focus schools were specially provided for historically disadvantaged learners,I couldn't avoid using the terms in the thesis but also that I needed to say how I used them. Iusethe terms in the thesis mainly to refer to those categories that were used under apartheid to describe the various populations of South Africa. These terms are still used in government documents to describe various communities and their needs, supposedly for redress purposes. According to Badroodien (2001) and Bray et al (2010) the terms were "constructions of a past social structure in South Africain which a hierarchical ordering based on race was inscribed into the fabric of everyday living". I argue however that many communities continue to see themselves in this way.

3.2   Main goals of the study
The overall goals of the study were as follows:
- To provide a better understanding of the focus school program in the Western Cape and its role and function within the overall education system
- To show how the program has been incorporated into the schooling system and how different schools have gone about putting the program into place
- To show what learners think about the program and vocational education, and what they hope to achieve by attending a focus school.

To attain these goals the study followed an interpretive approach where the views and understandings of the participants mentioned above were captured andanalysed.

3.3   The interpretive paradigm
According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001: 444) "qualitative research describes and analyzes people´s individual and collective social actions, belief, thoughts, and perceptions" where the researcher "interprets phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them". Through qualitative research information and understandings are collected to contextualize and conceptualize the subject and focus of a research project.

Scott & Morrison (2006: 131) note that in small scale research the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to interpret the specific and to see how "social actors make meaning as they go about their activities in the world". It allows researchers to see how different people experience the world, the ways they interact with each other, and how they engage with their settings in so doing (Packer, 1999). The interpretive paradigm, note Cohen et al (2000: 22), is appropriate for small

projects because it gets the researcher to "understand the subjective world of human experience and to get inside the participants' heads and understand from within".

Cohen et al (2000: 120) observe however that the interpretive paradigm is often regarded "as impressionistic, biased, commonplace, ungeneralisable, subjective and short-sighted". For that reason the study adopted a case study method and also analysed policy documents and some government reports to back up some of the arguments that are made.

3.4   The case study

Cohen et al (2000: 181) assert that case studies are "specific instances that are designed to illustrate a more general principle". Case studies are thus useful for exploratory and discovery-oriented research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 399). Fraenkel & Wallen (2000: 392) say that much can also be learnt from just one individual, one classroom, one school, or one district, for it provides a unique view of real people in real situations. For this study the case study approach gave me the chance to get multiple voices with regard to one type of school - to gain a conceptual understanding of what that school was meant to do, the logic which drove this, and the educational values attached to it.

3.5   The Focus School and the study participants

3.5.1   The School

The study concentrated on one focus school, fictitiously named Merriman High School (MHS), located in a small town within the Boland region of the Western Cape. The town has a semi-urban economy and has all the characteristics of a place separate from the nearby city (about 60kms away) but still linked to the city in important ways. The school can be found in a historically disadvantaged suburb of the town where inhabitants are mostly coloured and African. There are no white learners at the school.

Merriman High school is one of four high schools in the town. Because many of the legacies of apartheid continue the student populations of two of the schools are mostly coloured, and at the other two schools completely African and white. Social class differences also have a say in where learners attend school, and Merriman High School is often referred to as a "coloured ex-model C". People usually refer to the higher than normal overall pass rate (over 80%) in the matriculation examination at the school. While learners mostly struggle in academic subjects, the culture of the school and its parents is focused on improving the quality of education provided at the school and the achievements of all learners across all grades. The attitudes and struggles within the school is like that described by Bray et al (2010: 45) where they note that while "most parents make real sacrifices to enable their children to attend better schools, most adolescents in poor neighborhoods

fail to achieve their own and their parents´ aspirations" partly because they do not understand what is required to do so and partly because the culture of the school does not help them to do this.

The school was established in January 1952 as a middle school for coloured learners. There was a need at the time for a high school that provided learners with access to academic subjects as well. In 1970 the school was extended to include practical subjects and the school was moved into a new building with a fully-equipped library, natural science laboratory, and specialised classes and workshops for needlework, woodwork, and drawing. The curriculum of the school was again extended during the 1980s and the 1990s to include vocational subjects like accounting, business studies and economics.

During its whole history however learners at Merriman High School always shone at arts and culture events. While it was not a formal subject area at the school learners used to partake in cultural and performing arts activities and always did wonderful in them. For example, the school choir held its very own choir festival in 1974 and participated in a school choir competition on the SABC in 1975. For the last 18 years the choir has won many awards. The school has also always done well in drama events and has received a number of awards at festivals over the past twenty years for singing and dancing. Thus, in 2005 it was really the learners' performance in arts and culture activities that led to the WCED offering Merriman High School the opportunity to become a focus school (School Business Plan, 30 August 2005: 1 – 2).

Merriman High School has a staff of 50 teachers and about 1450 learners. Since 2006, when it switched to its focus school emphasis, the school has employed a number of educators with art teaching qualifications or with extensive experience as art practitioners. The main benefit of being called a focus school in arts and culture is that the PGWC has committed itself to build required infrastructure and to provide the best technology available to serve arts and culture activities at the school. Importantly, as focus schools are situated in the further education and training (FET) band - located at level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework- learners have to successfully complete their schooling in the GET band at the end of grade 9 in order to enter the FET band.

This has created a number of challenges for a previously mainstream school like Merriman High School. Firstly, the school needed to continue serving the learners in the area, especially those that did okay in academic subjects. Where else could they attend school? Secondly, the school needed to provide for the learners that were coming there for the arts and culture curriculum. The school thus chose to continue as an ordinary school with a focus area component in the arts and culture field for grade 8-12 learners.

Initially the school started with three performing subjects – dramatic arts, music, and dance studies- and since 2007 and 2008 have further included visual arts and design in its overall

curriculum. About 400 learners at Merriman High School partake in the focus school component of the school. To qualify within this band learners take 1-2 subjects in the arts and culture field, in combination with other practical and academic subjects.

Learners enroll at the school because of its past reputation of being a good school that provides learners with a decent quality education, as well as for its focus school activities. They come from surrounding towns and areas and more than 50% of the learners travel long distances to attend classes each day. Learners are able to either access government-subsidized transport services or they stay in hostel accommodation at the school.

While this was not my original plan, I chose to mainly conduct my research at Merriman High School because I teach there and was more or less familiar with what it meant to be a focus school. While Denzin and Lincoln (2007: 662) warn that the researcher´s insider status can be blinding and subjective, from the beginning I positioned myself in the research in such a way to give a fair and objective account of the issues as far as possible.

I had planned to also conduct my research at another focus school. From advice from the head of curriculum at the district office, I had identified a number of other focus schools where I could also do my study. Thus I started the study at two focus schools, namely Merriman High and School B. However, due to problems with me being a grade 12 educator (and its responsibilities) and the long distances that I had to travel to get to school B, I quickly realized that it was not practicable to do research at school B and thus stopped that part of the study. I did use however the interviews that I conducted with business, commerce and management educators and the principal of school B in my study to confirm how key aspects of how focus school policies were understood.

3.5.2   The research participants

In the study I did interviews with a number of participants that offered their views about this form of schooling. These included departmental officials, district officials, focus school principals, educators, and learners. Interviewing a small number of participants is characteristic for interpretive research (Cohen et al, 2000: 35).

To get a provincial and district perspective on focus schools I interviewed a number of departmental (WCED) officials and district officials. The officials gave an in-depth insight into what the schools were meant to achieve and how they fitted into future provincial plans. Two of the officials had played a role in the writing of policy documents for focus schools as well as in writing policy documents for the provincial Human Capital Development Strategy (HCDS).

For a view of what educators and learners thought about focus schools I interviewed a number of participants at the chosen case study schools. At Merriman High School I interviewed the principal,

all the arts and culture educators, five grade 11 learners, and three learners that attended Merriman High in the period 2006-2009, while at School B I interviewed two educators that teach in Business, Management and Commence, as well as the principal. One of the educators at school B left the focus school and the teaching profession during the course of the study and is currently employed as a manager at an information and technology institute. All interviews with participants were conducted at sites where they were located and at times that were convenient to them all.

3.6   Data collection techniques

For the study the main research methods used was interviews and document analysis. I conducted interviews with all participants and also did a document search of historical and sociological work on the Western Cape to inform and strengthen the arguments and methodological choices that were made.

The interviews were all semi-structured with predetermined interview protocols (see addendum 1). McMillan & Schumacher (2001: 444) suggest that the "[s]election of the interview strategy depends on the context and purpose of the study, namely (1) to obtain the present perceptions of activities, roles, feelings, motivations, concerns, and thoughts; (2) to obtain future expectations or anticipated experiences; (3) to verify and extend information obtained from other sources; and (4) to verify or extend hunches and ideas developed by the participants or researcher."

The focus of the interviews was to obtain perceptions of what focus schools were, what the provision of focus schools was meant to bring about, and learner thoughts and concerns about what it meant to attend focus schools. Another objective was to get learners to talk about their expectations of their futures after leaving an arts and culture focus school. A final goal was to verify and extend information obtained from a variety of sources regarding focus schools, and where the idea behind focus schools originated from. All interviews were completed at times convenient to the participants. I conducted all the interviews and recorded all of them on a voice recorder. All of the interviews took between 45– 60 minutes to complete. I transcribed each of the interviews manually, coded them, and then analyzed the data obtained from the interviews. I coded the data because Tuckman (1994: 271) notes that when data is gathered it needs to be categorized first before it can be analysed. Tuckman (1994: 271) also observes that coding is a useful way of analyzing data that comes in words, such as in interviews. The purpose in doing the above was to gather information and gain insights framed by the research objectives of systematic description, prediction, and explanation.

The second method used in the study was analyzing policy documents. The goal here was to get some idea of why the PGWC introduced this form of educational provision in the province aimed specifically at historically disadvantaged learners. Denzin & Lincoln (2007: 583) state that the

purpose of document analysis is to understand "the impact or consequences of policy, but additionally the processes of how official law or policies are translated and interpreted, from the heights of inception down to the points of implementation, to the "street-level" realities". The aim was to get policy makers' views on vocational education policies formulated at the national and provincial level and to recount what they claimed learners and educators experienced at schools that provided mostly for the historically disadvantaged. The purpose in this case was to understand what policy makers, in writing the focus school policy, intended to achieve by establishing focus schools. For the document analysis all policy documents relevant to the focus school program was examined to get a comprehensive account of what policy makers and department officials sought to achieve via focus schools.

The study also reviewed much of the historical material on vocational education in South Africa and the Western Cape. This was done to contextualize the circumstances and the problems being addressed that then led to the focus school initiative. I read widely on the complex historical, social, cultural and political context of the Western Cape to get an idea of the kinds of vocational education programs that were provided for historically disadvantaged learners, particularly coloured learners.

It is important to note that the Western Cape has been the region of South Africa where the majority of the country's coloured population has historically lived. For most of the twentieth century almost 80% of South Africa's coloured population lived in the Western Cape. In 2009, 54% of the Western Cape's 3.9 million population was defined as coloured (Western Cape, Statistics South Africa, 2009: 1). I mention this because a large section of the town in which Merriman High School is located would be regarded as the coloured population. I also mention this because before 1994 Merriman High School catered solely for coloured learners. For that reason I describe in the next section some of the social and working contexts that determine how learners that attend Merriman High think about education.

3.7   The socio-economic context of Merriman High School

In the town in which Merriman High School is located coloured inhabitants do most of the unskilled and semi-skilled work on the surrounding farms. They are also laborers in canning and textile factories (mostly women), workers in mills, building industry, municipal, workers in local shops and whole sellers, and cleaners in private households and businesses. A very small section of the town's coloured population is middle class. They fill positions such as nurses, teachers, police officers, correctional officers, and other civil and municipal services. Because of the high unemployment rate in the town, lots of town inhabitants work or look for work in nearby Cape Town, and travel to and from their workplaces there to make a decent living. It is difficult to find

decent employment in the town and most learners know that they will have to move to the urban areas of Cape Town once they leave school if they are to work.

3.8   Ethical measures

In educational research ethical issues are key parts of the research process and needs to be adhered to for the whole of the study; from start to finish and afterwards (Cohen et al, 2000: 123). As the subject of research is normally human beings, ethics are important to avoid uncomfortable and harmful situations for participants and to ensure that the interests of participants are protected at all times. Tuckman (1994: 13) notes that if research ethics are not adhered to, embarrassment, hurt or frightening consequences for participants could result. The main ethical issues were informed consent, confidentiality and privacy, risks and discomforts, and the right to withdraw from the study.

In terms of ethical procedures in the study, permission to conduct the research was obtained from Stellenbosch University, the Western Cape Education Department, and the principal and school governing bodies of two focus schools. Informed consent forms were also obtained from two principals, six educators, the parents of participating learners, and all district and provincial education department officials. Assent forms were obtained from eight participating learners as well. The aims and purpose of the study were explained to all the parties involved, and the participants were also informed that the interviews were being recorded. Participants were constantly reminded that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the project at any time if they felt uncomfortable with any aspect of the research. Fortunately, by the end of the study, none of the participants withdrew.

3.9   Potential risks and discomforts

The biggest responsibility in a research project is to ensure that participants are not harmed in any way by the research. Thus the researcher must make sure that participants give their full permission and that they know what they are agreeing to. Alderson (2002) notes that in the process of gaining permission individuals get to "inwardly digest the information they are given and to weigh it up in light of their personal values and priorities to gradually gain the resolve to make and stand by a risky decision". The main purpose of getting permission is to remind the participants that the researcher is responsible for protecting their privacy, making sure that they are not harmed in any way, and ensuring their anonymity. In the research I did not foresee any difficulties or problems with regard to harm coming to any of the participants. The questions were not developed or asked in ways that made any participants uncomfortable and participants were reminded that they may at all times choose not to answer a question. Most interviews in the study were conducted in Afrikaans. Only interviews with some departmental and district officials were done in

English. I provided participants transcripts in the language in which they spoke during the interviews and thus use quotes in the thesis in their original form (Afrikaans).

Although I was an educator at the school I ensured that I did not interview any learners that I taught. I told learner participants during interviews that they should not in any way feel obligated to answer my questions and should feel free to withdraw their participation from the study at any time, should they so choose, and that I appreciated their participation in the project.

3.10   No payment for participation

Participators did not benefit in any way from the study, either in direct payment or in any other form or kind. I did offer learners a cooldrink or something to nibble during their interviews on a hot day, but this was a form of respect that I would do in any other educative situation and in no way constituted an attempt to get participants to assist my study.

3.11   Confidentiality

All of the discussions were taped and the conversations were always strictly confidential. Nobody in the study was identifiable in any way and all participants were given pseudonyms. Participants were given copies of transcripts of their interviews which they had to check for mistakes and confirm it was what they said. They were then asked to sign off the interviews for me to use in the study. Once the thesis is complete and the degree awarded, all recordings will be erased.

In terms of the information that I collected they were kept in a locked safe in my home and stored on my computer with password protection. Nobody had access to any information and even when I presented my work to my supervisor pseudonyms were used.

3.12   Participation and Withdrawal

I reminded my informants that they could choose to withdraw at any time and decide not to take part in the study. They were told that even once they had accepted my invitation and completed interviews that they could still decide to unconditionally withdraw and that no harm or consequence would occur if they did. They could also refuse to answer a question if they choose that.

3.13   Summary

The chapter described the various issues linked to doing the research and writing up the information. I outlined the research design and the methods that were used to collect the data. I showed also the ethical challenges that had to be overcome. In the following chapters I focus on the findings that came from the interviews with participants and interpret and analyse what they may mean.

CHAPTER 4:

FINDINGS PART 1 - FOCUS SCHOOLS, A WESTERN CAPE APPROACH

The establishment of focus schools in 2006 was a particular educational intervention by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). In this chapter I explore the various discussions and debates within the province that led to the introduction of this group of schools. I also show what departmental officials and policy makers thought they were doing with these schools. I use WCED policy documents to explain what the schools were meant to do, as well as interviews with departmental officials and focus school principals. I also provide a full list of focus schools and highlight where they link up within the provincial structure. The goal of the chapter is to describe the debates that led to the introduction of the focus school sector and their function within overall provincial education provision, and to show what the focus school sector roughly looks like.

The chapter starts with a discussion of the influence of political concerns and developments in the Western Cape in the period after 2001 that led to the establishment of focus schools.

4.1   Redress and Economic Development in the Western Cape

Nyalashe (2007: 9) notes that when the African National Congress won the provincial elections in 2002 and took power in the Western Cape it was immediately under pressure to address the sharp inequalities that had manifested itself between the rich and the poor in the province. In the period after 2002 the ANC were well aware that not only did voters expect them to deliver on their promises but also the country needed the province to take the lead in issues related to the economy. Given the race politics that had led to the Democratic Alliance winning the various provincial elections after 1994, the ANC-led provincial government also knew that it needed to address issues of social cohesion and social integration in the province. This led the Provincial Government of the Western Cape (PGWC) to adopting a growth and development strategy in 2003 called 'iKapa Elihlumayo' (meaning 'Growing the Cape'). Education was seen as a key part of this strategy.

Action plans were put in place that especially tackled the unemployment challenges amongst the historically disadvantaged communities in the province and to find ways of better integrating the politically and socially marginalized communities into the provincial economy. It was argued that the provincial economy had focused too much until then on developing high skill levels and that a greater focus was needed on developing low and intermediate skills in the province.

Lewis (2008: 23) notes that PGWC first set about developing a micro-economic development strategy, where it identified key sectors within the economy that needed development in order to stimulate job creation for the poor, and then tried to implement systemic plans that holistically

addressed the needs of the province. The Office of the Premier saw the reform of the education system as a key part of the changes that needed to be implemented if the needs of the poor in the province were to be addressed. Hartley (2008: 18) points out that at that time the grouping that was identified as the most affected by unemployment and the lack of opportunities in the province was the youth. In historically disadvantaged communities the rate of school achievement was seen as being too low, youth were rapidly dropping out of schools, unemployment levels among them were increasing, and many youth were seen as prone to drug abuse, social misbehavior, and crime and gangsterism.

Importantly, the Office of the Premier had to follow on what had been put into place after 1996 by the Department of Education (DoE) in conjunction with the Department of Labour (DoL) with regard to access to education, the kinds of curriculum that were followed, and the structures that were introduced to help address employment and skills issues. In the period after 1996 the national government had instituted Curriculum 2005 in schools, reformed it and brought into its place the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), and also brought into play a revamped FET platform in which there was a new National CertificateVocational (NC(V), skills programmes and a learnership program that was connected to Sector Education and TrainingAuthorities (SETA) (WCED, 2008a: 5). After 2001, with the Human Resource Development Strategy (HRDS) and later the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGI-SA), the national government had made a concerted effort to use the FET platform to target the needs of the historically disadvantaged because it believed that these initiatives would address the needs of the poor and at the same time deal with the skill needs of the country (WCED, 2008a: 5).

Based on this the PGWC introduced a development and growth strategy that focused on priority skills that focused on the needs of the people of the Western Cape (WCED, 2008a: 5). In particular, the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) – that was responsible for the Micro-EconomicDevelopment Strategy (MEDS) from 2004 - indicated that the most likely future economic growth possibilities in theWestern Cape lay in callcentres or business process outsourcing, human resource development, crafts, clothing, tourism, oil and gas, ICT, agriculture, cultural industries, metals and engineering, and the film industry (Hartley, 2007a: 74).

After 2002 a key part of the PGWC's approach was to look at how the FET sector could play a better part in its redress agenda and see to the needs of those whose education had been severely compromised by apartheid. In line with policies of the national Department of Education, the WCED introduced programmes to improve performance in critical subject areas such as mathematics, and science and technology through the Dinaledi program. However, the PGWC also felt at the time that there was a need for programmes that directly addressed the needs of learners that were not doing well in academic schooling. For this reason it explored, via the WCED from late

2005,the idea of developing institutions like focus schools that concentrated on subjects like engineering and technology, business, and arts and culture and that tried to highlight the talents of historically disadvantagedlearners. In addition to this, in discussions with the WCED it also explored how vocationally-driven programmes could be introduced throughschools of skill -for learners that did not cope well in the public school system (WCED, 2008a: 6).

Lewis (2008: 30) notes that the PGWC specially targeted historically disadvantaged coloured and African learners for intervention because it felt that their needs had been neglected in previous development initiatives. It focused on fixing this mismatch by developing vocational programmes for them within the FET sector because it felt they needed skills and training that would get them into employment. According to Lewis (2008: 30) "while the high-skillsargument has exaggerated the changes impacting on the manufacturing sector and under-valued thedemand for intermediate skills, it is acknowledged that certain sectors, products and services requireparticular skills inputs with a differentiated hybrid mix of high, intermediate and low skills". This was roughly in line with what was happening in the rest of the country at the time. As Badroodien and Kallaway (2004: 13) point out "the FET band was expected tomove away from a focus on higher-level technical skills and instead focus on institutions that produced intermediate skills, and it was felt that the major short term skills needs of the country would best be cultivated in asystem that harnessed technical college provision and industrial training initiatives to economic growth".

Focus schools, Dinaledi schools, schools of skill, FET colleges, and various SETA and world of work programmes must be seen not only as attempts to address the needs of learners that were not coping with the academic aspects of the schooling- through alternative routes of vocational education provision- or as a way of ensuring that those that left school had some kind of relevant skills, but also as a way of developing the intermediate skills that had been identified to feed the economy of the Western Cape.The scarce skills identified in the province were mostly in the old trades of plumbing, panel beating, welding, motor mechanics, carpentry, and tailoring, but there were also new areas in things like call centres, catering, office administration, computertyping, personal services, and in the growing retail sector.

The PGWC therefore put a lot of effort into reorganizing the FET sector in the province and making sure that existing vocational schools and centres became part of their new approach. It also went on a marketing campaign to encourage early school leavers, drop outs, and those learners who found it difficultto cope in mainstream secondary schools to enroll in vocational programmes and ensure that they could be not only economically useful to the province but also to themselves by being able to make a living.

I will show in this chapter and in chapter 5 that the PGWC and the WCED struggled with different goals and situations linked to bringing about social justice in the province and that it was impossible to address issues of social democracy, redress, and development at the same time as they dealt with difficult economic and labour issues, especially when so many different people and viewpoints were involved. I claim that the PGWC has also been unable to make the focus school model work properly, and to bring about effective vocational programmes in them, because the PGWC did not understand the ways in which vocational institutions and programmes were thought about and operated in the province. I argue that the PGWC and the WCED did not properly engage with how vocationalism and vocational institutions in the province previously created many of the socio-economic and political challenges that the PGWC was trying to sort out.

The main goal of the chapter however is to show what officials and policy documents said about focus schools and their key functions within provincial education structures.In the sections that follow the chapter highlights the voices of officials as they explain the role of focus schools. It then explores how two principals and focus school educators thought and set about implementing the main goals of the policy at their various schools.

4.2   What are focus schools?

As part of the curriculum redress process in scarce fields for disadvantaged learners of the Education 2020 Human Capital Development Strategy, the Western Cape Education Department (2005: 2) noted in 2005 that "one of these targeted interventions is to establish ´focus´ schools to serve as pathfinders and lead institutions in their fields, offering quality education to ensure excellence in the nurturing and comprehensive training of learners with exceptional talent, interest or aptitude".

The core pieces of legislation that lay the basis of legislation for focus schools was the Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) and the Skill Development Levies Act (Act 9 of 1997) which promoted the empowerment of people through equipping them with skills for the world of work (WCED, 2005: 3).

The WCED (2005: 3) defined focus schools as secondary schools that offered particular ranges of FET subjects in areas in which they had the required physical, human and material resources. They were to be "schools of excellence at the forefront of curriculum development and best practice, with the highest concentration of quality human and material resources and equipment, utilized optimally to benefit the learners and the education system". The legislation that was developed thereafter allowed the WCED to either convert existing secondary schools into fully-fledged focus schools (if such an establishment provided opportunities for curriculum redress) or to develop a focus school component within existing secondary schools. No matter which form it took

focus schools needed to provide an environment within which focus subjects could be taught effectively and where learners could succeed in those areas. It was argued that the success of the learners would depend on (i) excellent school management (ii) excellent specialized teachers in the focus field (iii) the ability of the schools to attract learners with interest, aptitude or talent in a particular focus field.

Focus schools were to be selected using some of the following criteria:
- Geographical spread across the province and districts
- Complete consensual agreement by the school community and parents
- Committed and motivated principal, staff and government body
- Efficient school management
- In rural areas had hostel facilities available
- Had suitable transport system for urban schools (WCED, 2005: 4 - 5).

The WCED oversaw the process of identifying particular schools based on them doing well in particular activities and subjects over a long period of time, were section 21 schools and thus could manage its own norms and standards funding, and based on what they thought were the key needs of learners in those schools.

In terms of identifying the areas on which to focus, the WCED used the twenty one geographical areas that the PGWC had identified to develop economically. Hartley (2008: 17) notes that "these areas were chosen because of the high rate of crime, gangsterism, drug abuse and because of the high poverty index. The focus areas identified for development included Khayelitsha, Beaufort West and the Northern Suburbs (including areas such as Elsies River)".

Together with the PGWC's many other social interventions, focus schools were meant to serve as an alternative to academic education and complement initiatives like Dinaledi schools, various SETA activities, and other world of work programmes. Lewis (2008: 32) notes that "various programmes implemented by the WCED sought to respond to the demand for a strong foundation in the general education band, such as through Dinaledi schools,as well as for effective vocational learning. Focus schools offered a light orientation to technical and vocational skills development programmes within the general education band".Within these institutions it was envisioned that there would be more structured vocational content that was different to that provided in mainstream FET schools. The main focus was on creating intermediate skills in 'scarce skill areas' like arts and culture, engineering and technology, and business, commerce and management that served the economy of the Western Cape in important ways.

As noted above the focus school project was one part of the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS) in the Western Cape that was offered to learners in historically disadvantaged communities to help them pass and excel in subjects that developed practical entrepreneurial knowledge en skills and that hopefully led to them making a start in creating innovative, collaborative or individual micro enterprises. Which is why learning areas like business studies, economy and accounting in business, commerce and management fields, design, visual art, dance and dramatic art,tourism, hospitality, arts and culture, and technology was identified and prioritized (WCED, 2008a: 43).

The WCED for example targeted the technology and engineering areaaround which to develop one band of focus schools due to the changing nature of work in an increasingly technological society. It then focused on developing for the band a vocational curriculum that learners in historically disadvantaged communities would be able to access, as a way of either giving them job specific skills or transferable knowledge that allowed them to study further in the FET phase or in the HE phase.

4.3   What the focus school education band looks like

The twenty-eight focus schools that were established by 2008 were divided into three focus areas, namely 10 Arts and Culture schools, 10 Engineering and Technology schools, and 8 Business, Commerce and Management schools. Whereas the 10 engineering and technology schools were previously mostly technical high schools or general secondary schools that had a strong focus on technical subjects, the majority of the 18 Arts and Culture and Business, Commerce and Management focus schools were previously general academic schools that were then converted.

Of the 28 focus schools 19 schools (68%) were located in urban or semi-urban areas of the Western Cape, with 9 schools located in rural areas. In terms of being historically disadvantaged schools 23 of the converted schools (82%) were previously defined as coloured schools, while 5 (18%) were previously defined as African schools.

The WCED (2005: 2-3) deliberately chose to establish in each of the (7) Education Management Development Centres (EMDC) at least 3 focus schools. After 2006 the number of focus schools allocated to each district was increased, with some districts getting up to 6 focus schools. More focus schools were established in the Southern, Eastern and Northern Metropolitan areas of Cape Town. According to Hartley (2008: 17) the WCED felt that areas such as Khayelitsha, Beaufort West and the Northern Suburbs needed even more intervention because of their higher poverty index and accompanied socio-cultural issues.

Importantly, given the infrastructure and funding challenges of converting ordinary schools into focus schools, a very small minority of institutions chose to become dedicated focus schools. The

vast majority of secondary schools simply added focus area subjects to the curricula of their schools and continued to operate as ordinary secondary schools.

A final important point about focus schools is that it was never intended that the schools have an open admissions policy. Learners could not simply enroll and take up focus school subjects. Rather, learners were selected at the grade-8 level and again at the grade10 level (using stipulated selection criteria and rules that are open and transparent) to attend a focus school based on the ability, interest, aptitude, and talent in a particular focus school subject.

Provided below is a list of the 28 focus schools that were established after 2006. The list includes the geographical areas in which they are located as well as the area of specialization that they focus on.

Table 4.1: LIST OF FOCUS SCHOOLS IN WESTERN CAPE

Focus school	Focus Area	EMDC	Name of secondary school	Geographical area
	Arts and Culture	Metropole Central	*Alexander Sinton*	Thornton Road, Crawford
	A & C	Metropole North	*Belhar*	Belhar
	A & C	Metropole South	*Cedar*	Mitchells Plain
	A & C	Metropole East	*Chris Hani*	Khayalitsha
	A & C	Metropole East	*Eersterivier*	Eesrterivier
	A & C	Metropole Southern Cape / Karoo	*George*	George
	A & C	Metropole West Coast/ Winelands	*Schoonspruit*	Malmesbury
	A & C	Metropole South	*South Peninsula*	Diep River
	A & C	Metropole Overberg	*Worcester*	Worcester
	A & C	Metropole South	*Wynberg High*	Wynberg
	Engineering and Technology	Overberg	*Groenberg*	Grabouw

E & T	Metropole South	*Gugulethu Comprehensive*	Gugulethu
E & T	Metropole East	*Joe Slovo*	Khayalitsha
E & T	Metropole Southern Cape/ Karoo	*Morester*	Oudtshoorn
E & T	Metropole South	*Oval North*	Mitchells Plain
E & T	Metropole South	*Princeton*	Mitchells Plain
E & T	Metropole North	*Proteus*	Rygersdal
E & T	Metropole Central	*Spes Bona*	Athlone
E & T	Metropole North	*St Andrews*	Cannaught Estate
E & T	Metropole West Coast/ Winelands	*Weston*	Vredenburg
Business, Commerce and Management	Metropole east	*Bernadino Heights*	Kraaifontein
B, C & M	Metropole West Coast/ W	*BergRivier*	Wellington
B, C & M	Metropole Southern Cape / Karoo	*Bridgton*	Bridgton
B, C & M	Metropole North	*ElsiesRivier*	Elsies River
B, C & M	Metropole Overberg	*Esselenpark*	Worcester
B, C & M	Metropole Central	*Gardens Commercial*	Gardens
B, C & M	Metropole South	*I.D. Mkize*	
B, C & M	Metropole East	*Zola Senior*	Elonwabeni

4.4   The rhetoric of educational change

While the chapter has thus far shown what policy documents have said about focus schools, in the sections below the chapter explores the views of key policy makers, WCED departmental officials and principals and educators in schools about their understandingswhat focus schools were meant to achieve. It is argued that not only did policy documents not always provide a good idea of what focus schools were trying to accomplish, but that various 'people on the ground' often had quite different ideas about what policy changes were trying to do.

The chapter shows for example from interviews with officials at district and provincial level that they had quite different approaches and understandings of what the key goals of focus schools were, and that often they did not understand what was happening in the schools and communities themselves. I show that much of what was said in interviews used a lot of rhetoric about 'helping the historically disadvantaged schools' but yet many of them did not properly understand what the introduction of focus schools would do for such schools.

4.4.1   A question of quality education

According to one district level official focus schools were meant to bring *quality* through education tothe historically disadvantaged communities. This educational provision was meant to offer "gateway subjects" that would open up opportunitiesfor clear career advancement. He argued that focus schools offered opportunities forlearnersthat had an interest, aptitude and talent for the arts, technology or business and that learners selected were being prepared either directly for the labour market or for further studies in higher education. Pieter Blaauw noted that focus schools wouldin that way build capacity at the provincial and the national level and address deficiencies in the labour market. [Given that the interviewees spoke in Afrikaans I have italicised their responses.]

> *Die kind wat uitstaande is, bring met die geleentheid kwaliteit tot die arbeidsmark. Dit is ook ´n manier om kapasiteit te bou op nasionale vlak. Leemtes in die arbeidsmark word so aangespreek.* (Pieter Blaauw)

Pieter Blaauw further observed that focus schools were also meant to fulfill a redress function and give disadvantaged learners the opportunity todevelop their skills and capacities to a level where they could compete with the historically advantaged insociety. By giving them capacities in key areas, he argued, learners from historically disadvantaged communities would be able to challenge for the same level of positions in the world of work or tertiary institutions as those that had benefitted from the policies of the previous government. To achieve this, such learners had to be given the chance to excel in subjects that were not previously freely available toWestern Cape coloured and African learners.

Hierdie kanse word gegee vir kinders in voorheen benadeelde gemeenskappe om op dieselfde vlak as die meer bevoorregtes te kompeteer vir verdere geleenthede. Die geleentheid word gegee in vakke wat nie voorheen geredelik beskikbaar was vir die kinders nie.(Pieter Blaauw)

4.4.2 A question of work preparedness

Another district level official suggested that to properly address the educational needs of historically disadvantaged learners, they needed to be properly prepared for the world of work. This, she argued, was not achieved in schools that were too academically orientated.She claimed that a key goal of the WCED was also to respond to the needs of companies that preferred learners that had more advanced technical and vocational skills.

Meer vaardig-gerigte skole is tot stand gebring. Dit is kuns en kultuur-, handels- en tegnologie-skole. Daar was gevind dat sekondêre skole te akademies-gerig was om kinders voor te berei vir die sakewêreld en in die entrepreneurs rigting.... vaardighede wat die arbeidsmag vereis, ontbreek(Rochelle Logans)

The focus school project was thus not geared towards under-achieving learners as such, but rather offered historically disadvantaged learners with better opportunities to develop more skills-related and vocational forms of education. According to a senior WCED departmental official, the opportunities for learners upon completion of their studies at focus schools were endless and would foster the kinds of entrepreneurs and professionals in the province that would enhance competitiveness.He observed that the focus schools were deliberately located in poorer areas so that historically disadvantaged learners with potential could rise above their social conditions and in the process break the circle of poverty. All interviewed officials claimed that the educational intentions of the focus school project were completely sincere and were meant to bring about social change. They noted however that for that to happen, all stakeholders had to buy into the idea and make it work.

Through this provision, learners can develop into entrepreneurs, could became leaders in their fields and take up employment possibilities. The opportunities are endless (Christopher Anthony)

4.4.3 A gateway to higher learning

In an interview with a senior departmental official he noted that the curricula of focus schools were written with one main aim in mind, and that was to develop high level skills and knowledge that would allow learners attending focus schools to access higher education, or similar kinds of tertiary institutions. He argued that learners at focus schools were not meant to go into industry and that they were not being educated to develop into artisans. Rather, policies clearly stated that learners at focus schools would be subjected to a light orientation of vocational and technical education to

prepare them for a higher level of vocational learning. If going into industry was their choice however, they had the option of finishing grade 9 and then pursuing a vocational or technical course at a Further Education and Training College.

> *Die kurrikulum is geskryf vir een doel, en dit is ´high skills and high knowledge´. Kinders is bedoel om in Hoër Onderwys te gaan – om byvoorbeeld Ingenieurswese te studeer, nie om in industrieë te gaan vir ´n ambag nie. Leerders moet na graad 9 FET kolleges toe gaan as hulle verder hul verder wil bekwaam vir ´n ambag. Fokusskole berei nie leerders vir ´n ambag nie, leer hulle nie om ´n enjin aanmekaar te sit nie* (Will Thomas)

The official maintained however that learners that were not interested in, or who did not have the capability to go into higher education, could undergo a learnership and then follow a specialist course at a FET College.The idea was that such learners could eventually qualify to study further at a higher education institution. By expanding the number of FET learners that had key critical thinking skills, focus schools would play a key facilitating role between the schools sector and universities. Having said that, the official admitted though that focus schools for him were not producing enough of these kinds of learners that entered university and that could compete properly with previously advantaged learners.

> *Die filosofie van die voorsiening was om hoër denkgehalte leerders na vore te bring, maar in ´real terms´ het dit nie so uitgewerk nie* (Will Thomas)

According to the senior official focus schools were meant not only to get more learners into the FET band, but to provide most learners with enough basic skills and preparation to enter tertiary institutions. In this regard no mention was made about the key challenges and weaknesses that learners from historically disadvantaged communities were faced with in their schooling both at the social level and within the schooling. Many learners simply would not have been able anyway to take up many of the opportunities that the WCED imagined, and many learners in identified focus schools did not have the academic capacities and support to achieve at levels that got them into higher education.

4.4.4   A form ofsocial upliftment

Yet another WCED departmental official suggested that the main purpose of the focus school project was social upliftment. Shaine Hendricks claimed that focus schools was initiated to address the needs of learners between the ages of 14-18 that were vulnerable or at risk of getting involved in drug taking and gangsterism and that would probably drop out of school. According to Shaine, the purpose of the project for the Premier of the Western Cape at the time of the band's establishment was to address the high levels of social problems within poor communities and to empower those communities.

It was found that youth between the ages of fourteen to eighteen were more at risk to drop out of school. Mr. Ebrahim Rasool, the former Premier of the Western Cape, identified the poorest areas in the province because of the many drug users and drop outs there. Educational interventions were developed to build the capacity of the youth and to get them to stay in school. (Shaine Hendricks)

The WCED official asserted that a key way of making the project work was to co-ordinate it with the projects within other provincial departments for young people in such areas. By linking focus schools to the scarce skill strategy, argued Shaine Hendricks, it was easier to engage with the redress and access interventions of the province. It was felt that there were too few technical and vocational schools in the province and that focus schools could fill a crucial gap for learners struggling to get access to fields and a FET platform that were not previously available to them.

To be skilled in something, post grade 9, learners could attend FET schools, colleges and SETA programmes. Potential drop outs could stay in school in this way and even later go into higher education, or they could leave school with some skills that should help them to support themselves. The important thing is that learners had a chance that they did not previously have.(Shaine Hendricks)

4.4.5   A question of equivalence

Interestingly, one WCED official suggested that historically disadvantaged learners needed to get access to a more comprehensive form of vocational education that was being provided at many ex-model C schools. He argued that learners at such schools were able to take up to four vocational subjects in a relevant field and that this gave them an advantage when they entered the world of work. He claimed that a number of formerly-white schools (as well as a few formerly coloured schools) were able to provide vocational subjects to learners that had direct links to changes within business and the labour market. He suggested that more technical schools were needed in the province, especially in historically disadvantaged areas.

Sommige van die skole [coloured schools] het slegs een of twee van die vakke aangebied, min het al vier [subjects in the focus field] aangebied. Baie ex-model C skole het al die vakke gehad(Will Thomas)

The official further argued that when the WCED identified twenty eight schools among the coloured and African communities to fund and develop into centres of excellence, the idea was to introduce 1-2 subjects that learners had not previously had access to or specialized in. The point of focus schools was later to develop into centres of excellence that provided at least 4 subjects in specialist areas.

4.4.6 A question of convenience- focus schools as a funding opportunity

According to Wilmore Gilbert, a key problem for focus schools when they were rolled out in the beginning was that schools were attracted to the concept for the wrong reasons. In this regard he noted that on the one hand schools were influenced by political figures to become focus schools while on the other many agreed to become focus schools to access the funding that came with it.

> *Political influencing by certain communities undoubtedly played a vital part in allocating focus schools. But many schools also grabbed the opportunity because of the physical and human resources that were given to the selected schools. They were not concerned about whether they would succeed as focus schools. Because they did not properly consult the community, schools later encountered a problem with the sustainability of the project as they lacked the management capacity to see to the new focus of their schools* (Wilmore Gilbert)

As a top official within the WCED Gilbert was concerned that many focus schools simply used the project to access financial resources and had not recognized the limited job opportunities in their areas for which focus schools were preparing learners for, especially in rural areas.

> *Schools were more attracted to the financial resources that the project offered them, hoping to save the school from existing financial hardship. They did not plan for the long term and had too many staff members moving onto other jobs to keep the focus school idea working properly* (Wilmore Gilbert)

In this regard, when the WCED first rolled out the project it had funded many selected schools to build necessary infrastructure such as dance and drama studios, and to give schools the resources to accommodate additional subjects. Between funding and resourcing the selected schools also received organizational and curriculum preparation. This was done according to existing models within the country where formerly white schools had been given particular expertise and resources to specialize in fields such as science and engineering, and arts and music schools.

> *Existing models in the country within the formerly white education department was schools that offered all subjects in a particular fields such as Engineering Graphic and Design, and Electrical Technology (Science and Engineering) and Music and Dance (Arts)* (Wilmore Gilbert)

This decision to become focus schools was partly driven by the ways in which focus schools were set up according to international models like the magnet school projectof the USA.

> *Magnet schools are focuses within a school. They took a focus, such as science, made it a special school in a bigger school. This special subject together with the general academic subject formed the school´s curriculum. But important characteristics of these schools were desegregation and forced bussing as a way of getting racially diverse groups of learners from*

outside the school's region together and developing a stronger learning environment. (Wilmore Gilbert)

The problem with the model however, noted Wilmore Gilbert, was that schools did not really commit to the idea of racial integration or social inclusion, and concentrated too much on the specialist aspect of the project. He argued that a key part of the success of the focus school project was that it needed to become sustainable and that this meant that it needed a diversified and inclusive learner base that in the long run would make the schools financially viable. This, he claimed, would probably not happen now because schools had not planned properly for this.

> *It was mostly the idea of a focus area that was taken up - a special focus such as dance and drama. Policy makers neither adopted the organizational structure nor the funding model that was required to succeed* (Wilmore Gilbert)

As noted above quite different approaches were taken to what focus schools were meant to do. This is not surprising given the variety of challenges and issues that the schools were set up to address. As Will Thomas observed, "*Fokus skole het nog nie tot sy volle reg gekom nie. Die projek is te verskillend deur die skolegeïnterpreteer*".

Thomas claimed that the schools that converted into dedicated focus schools had adopted the correct approach and interpretation and that most learners within focus schools needed to take up focus subjects and omit many of their academic subjects.

> *Nie al die skole het dit so gesien nie. Hul fokus is te akademies. Streng gesproke kan dit nie so wees nie. Hulle moet dan weer ´n gewone skool raak. Hulle kan nie opreg sê dat hulle ´n fokusskool is nie. Hul sterk stroom is te akademies* (Will Thomas)

In the sections below the chapter explores why the idea of focus schools was interpreted differently by two schools and their main reasons for doing so. Notably, while some provincial schools did convert fully into focus schools, the majority of participating schools in the Western cape simply added a focus school component to their existing curricula.

4.5   The realities of a vocational focus

4.5.1   Becoming a fully-fledged focus school

According to Thomas Lakay, a previous educator at a Business, Management and Commence focus school, the school had not realized the full implications of what it meant to operate as a focus school. In the school's case it had chosen to become a fully functioning focus area institution that specialized in one specific field of expertise. All other subjects that did not complement the focus subjects were phased out. Their decision to follow this route had been influenced by the school's

strong track record in business subjects which made it believe that it could successfully convert into a focus school.

He observed however that this decision had major consequences for the school and its surrounding communities. He noted that while it had been fairly easy to get the permission of parents in their school to convert into a focus school, the key problem for the future success of the school was that most surrounding schools needed to provide the subjects that the focus school had done away with. They also needed to recommend to their learners to attend the focus school to study business subjects. Lakay asserted that the education department needed to develop a zonal approach around focus schools so that all learners' needs in the area were provided for and also to allow specialist educators to move from the focus school to surrounding ones, and vice versa.

However, a key problem in the current approach, according to Lakay, was that neighboring schools were not keen to be part of a zonal approach as they did not get the financial benefits that came with becoming a focus school. Also, they were not keen to change their teaching approach or their curricula to accommodate what was happening at the focus school. Lakay pointed out that a further problem was that other focus schools had adopted different approaches to becoming focus schools and thus could not assist them in working through the kinds of challenges they were facing.

> *Dit is nie die idee wat ons van die department gekry het nie. Die saak was nie heeltemal deurdink. Elkeen het net sy eie ding gedoen* (Thomas Lakay)

The key problem for the school was that the surrounding communities had particular expectations of them with regard to what learners were taught and what this meant for their futures. When parents were not willing to support the school, the school had no option but to listen to what the communities wanted. This had enormous consequences for the school as they could not develop their programmes or train their educators in the ways they wanted to. Lakay noted that because of the financial challenges and the social pressure on their school it was not a surprise to him that most schools that were identified to become focus schools had chosen to remain mainly general academic schools with a particular vocational focus.

> *Toe ons begin het ek die geleentheid met albei hande aangegryp om die skool op te hef. Ek wou help om die skool een van die beste besigheidskole in the land maak. Maar die tegnologie wat aan die skool beskikbaar gestel was sou die manier van onderrig heeltemal verander. Dit sou ligjare van die tradisionele manier verskil het. Onderwysers was nie geskik vir hierdie soort veranderings nie. Dit was a taamlike 'culture shock'.*

4.5.2 A normal school with a vocational focus

Christopher Walters, principal of Merriman High School, observed in 2010 that their school had chosen to become a focus school because of its success in a number of music and arts activities over many years, and that when the idea was presented to the school it had grabbed at the opportunity. It did so, he claimed, because the school needed financial assistance to get to the level of other 'well-performing' schools in the area and to provide the best provision that they could for their learners.

> *Die inisiatief is na ons gemeenskap gebring om ons leerders te bevoordeel. Om op dieselfde vlak as die voorheen bevoordeelde skole te kom. Dit is wat sekere vakke en vakrigtings betref. Ons leerders het nooit die geleentheid gehad om hulle in sekere vakke bemagtig te word nie – vakke soos klavier- en balletklasse* (Christopher Walters)

Walters noted that a key goal of the school had for a long time been to get to the level of other ex-model C schools with regard to the subject areas and fields that they provided. Given that many of their learners did very well in the arts (like playing instruments like the piano and in doing dance), Walters had recommended to his learners' parents to take up the offer to provide specialized arts and culture subjects at their school. The initial decision was to offer two arts subjects, namely dance and dramatic arts, but soon after the opening of the focus school, three other subjects (music, visual art, and graphic design) were added to their curriculum to make them a fully-fledged focus school. However, the school soon realized that it was not a good idea or practice for learners to take up three arts subjects.

> *Dit was nie gesond om drie kunstevakke te neem nie. Dit was baie moeilik vir die leerders om by te hou. Daar is tot die besef gekom dat steunvakke by een of hoogtens twee kunstevakke geneem kan word. Kunsvakke was toe meer beroepsgerigt aangebied*(Christopher Walters)

Walters pointed out that for learners to take up three art subjects was simply too much work for educators to cope with. The practical and theoretical aspects of the subjects were simply too demanding, and thus learners were advised to take a maximumof two art subjects in combination with complementary subjects such as business studies or life science. He noted that this step was also taken to support the future careers of learners at the school. The school felt that even though many learners enjoyed studying the arts, such a focus would become a burden to them when they tried to enter the labour market.

Also, adopting a strict focus school approach had financial implications for the school as providing for arts and culture subjects was an expensive activity.

> *Fokusskole word nie ekstra deur Norme en Standaarde befonds nie. Fokusskole is duur. Daar word van skole verwag om self die fokus finansieel te onderhou* (Christopher Walters)

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Given that focus schools were a provincial initiative, schools like Merriman High could not turn to the national education department for assistance and this made it impossible to survive, especially given the school's past and the socio-economic situations of the majority of its learners. It was for that reason that the school decided to remain a school that offered the normal academic subjects along with some focus school subjects.This approach brought with it their own sets of problems, which is further discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5:

RESEARCH FINDINGS PART 2 - SCHOOLING, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, AND WORK

5.1   Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, a key challenge for focus schools since 2006 has been the different kinds of functions and roles that they have needed to address. While the WCED had intended the band of schools to model itself on experiences in magnet schools in the USA, specialist schools in the UK, and vocational schools for former white learners before 1994, to do this was more difficult than most policy makers and department officials had thought.

Part of the problem, according to senior officials, was that many schools did not adopt the entire model and merely agreed to offer specialized subjects in certain fields, or did not fully understand what the policy was trying to achieve. A further problem was that lack of infrastructure and financial constraints meant that many programmes could not be properly implemented and many of the daily operations of focus schools could not be supported. According to officials, given that the focus school project was aimed at schools that had always struggled financially due to the socio-economic backgrounds of the parents and the legacies of apartheid, and given that most schools that were identified for conversion did not have the physical or human resources to start up the focus school project properly, most focus schools after 2008 have struggled to remain sustainable.

While the survival of this band of schools will depend on proper investment and support from the province, many officials say however that this is improbable. They note that financial constraints had in the first place compelled the PGWC to convert existing general secondary schools or existingtechnical high schools in formerly disadvantaged areas into focus schools. This had been a less capital intensivemethod and had meant that the provincial authorities had not needed to build special schools for that purpose. The approach fitted in with a lot of what is happening across the world in relation to the provision of vocational programmes to marginalized communities.

Governments across the world are increasingly offering ´weak´ or 'limited' vocational school-based programmes to deal with the kinds of problems that are emerging within their labour markets and to remedy some of the shortages in intermediate and technical skills. Hayward (2004: 1) notes for the UK that "over the last thirty years the English Government has undertaken a series of policy initiatives that have been aimed to improve the vocational learning system and to increase participation in it in order to meet the perceived labour market demand for intermediate and technical skills". Vocational subjects have been introduced mainly to foster intermediate skills for technicians, craft-level occupations, occupations in business and other skills needs in the service

sector. A key part of the initiative however has been the "moderate investment that was needed in new plant and staff development" (Hayward, 2004: 14).

While the main goals of the expansion of school-based vocational provision may have been to stimulate economic growth and to be globally competitive by producing learners with intermediate skills, in most countries across the world vocational programmes (like focus schools) have focused mainly on giving learners a 'basic toolkit of skills' (McGrath et al, 2004) that help them to survive in a world where unemployment levels are increasing and where jobs are mostly casual – meaning that learners need to be adaptable. Callaghan (cited in Hayward, 2004: 1) noted as early as 1976 that:

> There is no virtue in producing socially well-adjusted members of society who are unemployed because they do not have the required skills. In today's world higher standards are demanded than were required yesterday and there are simply fewer jobs for those without skill.

While in the previous chapter the various departmental and district officials, and school principals provided a variety of reasons and approaches for the increased focus on vocational education provision, understanding how to address the actual (redress) needs of African and coloured learners in focus schools has remained unclear.

In the sections below I first explore what five arts educators at Merriman High School highlighted about their experiences and challenges of working at an Arts and Culture focus school, and what they thought were the 'real' problems confronting such schools. I then discuss the experiences of 8 learners that attended the focus school and explore what they felt were their main obstacles and opportunities.

5.2   Challenges for educators

5.2.1   'It's what the community wants'

No matter how schools try to reorganize themselves in South Africa, because of the ways in which funding and authority of schools are organized schools will mostly follow what the parents of their learners expect of them. If not, parents will take their children to schools that fit in with what they want for their children. Thus, the success or survival of schools depends on what visions parents have of schools and their expectations of what schools will contribute to their children's development. This is something that policy makers don't take into account when they open up new kinds of schools – like focus schools. If parents are not convinced about the practicality of a particular kind of school they will exert pressure on the school to provide a little of what they think their children need. Cindy Peters, the visual arts educator at Merriman, noted in 2010 that:

> *Die gemeenskap het ´n visie van die skool. Dit is 'n kunste fokus en ook ´n akademiese fokus. Die skool moet die behoefte van die gemeenskap ingedagte hou.*(Cindy Peters, visual art teacher)

She noted that the communities around Merriman High wanted the school to provide both academic curricula and focus school subjects and it was the job of the WCED to work out how to ensure that. Ms Peters observed that the WCED had thought that the majority of learners around such schools would take focus school subjects.

Another educator at the school, Sue-Ann Esterhuizen, maintained that the problem for schools in small towns was that there were a limited number of schools available to serve learner needs. If a school was located in previously disadvantaged areas of a town and previously served the needs of African or coloured learners, then it was even more difficult since parents would continue to expect that school to be there for their children. She claimed that the push to convert school, especially in rural areas, into fully-fledged focus schools would never become a reality.

> *Ons moet rekening hou met wat die gemeenskap verwag moet die skool bied. In stede en groter dorpe het ouers ´n groter keuse. Die fokus element van ons skool was aanvanklik buite verband geruk.*(Sue-Ann Esterhuizen, music teacher)

Ms Esterhuizen noted that in larger towns or urban areas there was a wider choice of schools available. In small towns however, children living in surrounding areas travelled great distances to access education and thus their needs had to be accommodated. With few school options available for children, focus schools in small towns had a responsibility to provide both academic and vocational subjects.She also pointed out that the school was very popular in the region and learners tried often on their own to get admission to the school. This was linked to the good reputation of the school regarding academic, cultural, and sport achievements, and its ability to produce disciplined, eager, and willing learners. Merriman High school was regarded as the 'model C version amongst the coloured schools'.

> *Ons skool kan nie net ´n kunsteskool wees nie, vakke moet beroepsgerig wees. Kinders kom van ver vir die akademie en die fokus. Ons doen die kind ´n guns. In die Paarl en in die stede is daar baie skole om van te kies, daarom kan sommige skole net volle fokusskole wees… Die ouers se keuse hier is nie groot nie* (Sue-Ann Esterhuizen)

However, the problem with taking a multi-purpose approach, observed Berenice Adams, was that the school simply could not develop the expertise and understanding needed for a successful focus school. She noted that the number of learners at the school was simply too many (1,468 learners in 2011), that the attention of staff members was too spread out and the divide between academic and vocational subjects too wide, and that the pressure on available resources at the

school was too great. As a dance teacher she needed a lot of time with her learners and "just to get double periods at Merriman High", according to Ms Adams, was almost impossible.

> *Dit is nie ´n fokusskool soos ander toegewyde fokusskole nie. Dit sal beter gewerk het as dit ´n volle fokusskool was. Die bestuur se fokusse is te verdeel. Dis nie net Dans nie., Ouers stuur hul kinders nie net vir die kunste-vakke na die skool toe nie, maar ook vir ander redes. Die skool is te wyd, met te veel vakke.* (Berenice Adams, dance teacher)

5.2.2   Focus school subjects as forms of personal and community development

A further problem for focus schools was that educators had particular ideas about what they were expected to do at the school. According to the dance teacher, the purpose of a focus school was to build an audience for the arts. Her job, she noted, was thus about exposing learners to the arts and developing and advancing cultural activities in historically disadvantaged communities. She maintained that her role was not only to develop dancers but also to build a dancing community.

Whereas learners in urban and advantaged communities had easy access to theatres, dance exhibitions, and musical shows, Berenice Adams pointed out that part of her job was to create opportunities within the community to experience the arts.

> *Ek stel mense bloot aan die kunste. Ek ontwikkel en bevorder ´die voorheen benadeelde gemeenskap´ om die kunste te waardeer. Mense moet uitgaan om die kunste in die gemeenskap te ondersteun … As iemand lief is vir sport of karaoke sal jy ´n kaartjie koop, dieselfde wil ek hê vir die kunste.* (Berenice Adams)

However, this desire to 'bring the arts to the community' came at a price. Ms Adams asserted that trying to serve a larger community and do developmental programmes at local primary schools, hospitals, old age homes, community centres, and prisons put a lot more pressure on focus school subject educators than others. As opposed to what educators at other focus schools did, educators at multi-functional focus schools had quite different functions.

> *Almal verwag te veel van ons. Daar word druk op die skool uitgeoefen omdat ons die vlagskip is. Ek het met die voorneme gekom net om te kom werk as ´n onderwyser. You have to be constantly clued up here. It is very stressful. Compared to other focus schools, teachers do just what they have to do, no extras like we do* (Berenice Adams)

5.2.3   Focus school educators as professional artists

Amy Van Reenen, the dramatic arts educator, asserted that because arts and culture educators brought specialized knowledge and skills to schools, their expertise could not be wasted. She noted that they came from professional spaces where they had already made names for themselves and that if their expertise was wasted they would simply return to their previous lives.

Ons bring sekere kennis en ervaring na die skole, en verryk die kinders. Ons kom uit die praktyk, het as kunstenaars naam gemaak. Ons kan nie net ´n dooie vak aanbied nie.(Amy van Reenen, dramatic art teacher)

Van Reenen noted that to get learners to perform at eisteddfods, art festivals,or other types of competitions required particular kinds of tutoring that only professional artists could really bring. She argued that because most learners from historically disadvantaged communities were 'visually stimulated' and 'audibly stunted', educators needed to use different and particular techniques to get the best out of them. This needed expertise, patience, and long hours of dedicated attention on the part of focus school educators; hours that many of them did not get to have with learners.

5.2.4   *Focus school learners with mixed skills*
The key difficulty for learners at focus schools was that many of them struggled in their academic subjects and did not have previous training or exposure to certain vocational subjects.

When the focus school project was started in 2006 and schools were invited to apply for conversion, the idea was that learners that enrolled at focus schools would have particular interests and aptitudes in focus school subjects (arts and culture, engineering and technology, and business, commerce and management). Learners were expected to have some ability and competency in one of these areas if they were to be selected to attend a focus school. Also, given that learners were selected as late as grade 8 and grade 10 levels to enroll in particular courses, it was expected that many of them would have been exposed to their interest areas earlier in their lives and that the focus school would simply develop this further so that they could enter the workplace.

Educators at Merriman High observed however that most of the 400 focus school learners that attended the school had not been trained earlier in their lives in any of the focus school subjects and that many of them needed extra tuition as a result. Most learners also did not perform well in academic subjects. Given the legacies and challenges that learners from historically disadvantaged communities daily faced, educators noted that learners thus needed even more attention than at mainstream schools.

Die feit is dat ons leerders nie baie sterk akademies nie, ons moet baie harder werk om hulle op ´n sekere standaard te kry. Die fout wat mense maak, hulle dink dat dit die ondergemiddelde kind is wat drama kan neem. Kinders wat excel is die kinders wat intelligent is. Drama vereis intelligente kinders. Tekste moet intelligent benader word (Amy van Reenen)

Ms Esterhuizen, the music teacher, suggested that a way of ensuring this was to develop stricter selection guidelines and ensure that most learners were academically strong as well. This, she

argued, would allow educators to train learners in ways that would make a change in their lives. She claimed that a focus on quality and not quantity would allow them to successfully address the vocational needs of learners frompreviously disadvantaged communities.

> *Die gevoel van die onderwysers is dat die kind prakties en akademies aangelê moet wees om te excel …In die kunste moet hulle dissipline kan hê en hard werk. Dit is van die grootste belang. Hul visuele werk moet op standard wees. Hulle moet ook gemotiveerd wees.* (Cindy Peters, visual arts teacher)

Ms Esterhuizen further argued that the idea of vocational education as less strenuous needed to be challenged. As a music educator she expected her learners not only to have a 'good ear for music' but also to be able to engage with the theoretical and physical parts of doing music. This required attention to detail, putting in long hours of training, and lots of hard work. To study music required skill, dedication, refining techniques, and hours of practice. This, noted Ms Esterhuizen, was not possible in a school where focus school subjects were seen as just another part of curricula choices.

> *Met die begin in 2006 was die keuring van leerders nie so streng nie… Die keuringsproses het oor kwantiteit, nie kwaliteit gegaan nie. Leerders moet teoreties en prakties sterk wees. Hulle het nie altyd die etiek van harde werk nie, weet nie waarin hulle hulle ingelaat het nie. Dit is ure en ure se harde werk* (Sue-Ann Esterhuizen)

5.2.5   Vocational learning as undervalued

According to Amy van Reenen the assumption thatbelow-average learners were more suited to study the arts undermined the value of vocational learning. She argued that learners of the arts needed to be intelligent and flexible. She noted that "to give an honest performance learners had to be able to read the text, assess their situation, and comprehend what the text was pushing for". She pointed out that when these kinds of skills were developed in learners there would always be job opportunities available to them.

> *Die onderwyser moet hard werk om die leerders gereed te kry. Onderwysers tesame met die leerdersmoet ook binne hulself groei.* (Amy van Reenen)

Cindy Peters argued that too many people thought that vocational subjects were easy and that they did not understand the hard work and dedication that was needed in vocations. For a learner to succeed, she noted, required that learner to succeed both theoretically and practically. This was something that was not even expected of learners that excelled at academic subjects in non-focus schools. Peters pointed out that learners that studied in focus areas needed to be motivated and dedicated. Their work had to always be of a high standard because it was in the public eye and open to questions and criticism.A problem for Merriman High was that many people did not realize this.

5.2.6   The value of time and a question of money

Focus subject educators noted that they simply did not have enough time with learners to make a meaningful change in their lives. That was because of issues of travel in the afternoons for many of them, as well as them needing to pass their other (academic) subjects. They claimed that the school structure and timetabling system did not help them to spend enough school time with learners and that they had to compete with other teachers for the attention of learners. One educator noted that on occasions when she had needed to keep learners out of their classes for practice – either for examinations or for upcoming performances- academic subject educators had been very angry. This had caused a lot of tension among the staff around what subjects were seen as more important in the school.

She noted however that because the WCED had allocated so much funds to the development of the school, that the focus school component of the school needed to be favoured. She felt that the WCED had given the school a unique opportunity to focus on arts subjects (something that had never happened before) and thus the school needed to make sure that learners succeeded in those subjects. Also, given that focus school subjects were expensive to support, there was added pressure from the WCED to constantly produce in those areas.

This pressure was counterbalanced however with the low levels of learner success in academic subjects at the school. Educators noted that because of the acute focus on the arts and needing to excel in these subjects, learners tended to neglect academic subjects like business studies, history, life sciencesand physical science. Due to this neglect learners then did badly during their matriculation examinations. Educators noted that this posed a huge challenge to the future of the focus school.

> *Die department wil results sien. Baie druk word op leerders geplaas om goed te doen, maar dan druip hulle vakke soos Besigheidstudie en Lewenswetenskap.* (Cindy Peters)

Cindy Peters further noted that to address such a situation one university had launched a mentoring project within historically disadvantaged communities to assist learners in their academic subjects as a way of getting them to do well in both and thus obtain admission to their arts faculty.

> *Die Universiteit ... het ´n inisiatief aangegaan om leerders se ander vakke op te lig deur ´n mentorskap-projek om universiteit toelating te kry. Daar word gevind dat daar ´n leemte by akademiese vakke is. Bruin en swart student kan nie toelating kry nie met hul swak akademiese merke.* (Cindy Peters)

5.2.7 Having the motivation to commit

The graphic design teacher, Lorna Lemmer, is a young person who studiedabroad for five years. When she returned to South Africa she found that learners generally were not motivated to do graphic design or to put in the necessary hours to succeed in the subject.

> *Leerders wou nie hulle kant bring nie. Hulle was ongemotiveerd. Die teorie het gemaak dat hulle prakties agter raak. As daar iets was wat hulle nie van gehou het nie, het hulle geensels beland gestel nie. Hulle werk dan nie.* (Lorna Lemmer, graphic design teacher)

Her concern was that a vocational subject like graphic design needed learners to be able to problem-solve, and to work out ways of making things work. She observed that because learners needed to be able to work with concepts in mathematics many simply lost interest and stopped trying.

> *Baie leerders leer nie die teorie nie. As jy nie iets prakties doen nie, stel hulle nie belang nie ... Kinders se entoesiasme ontbreek. Hulle het die talent, maar besluit om nie te werk nie. Baie wit skole het ook begin met design. Die kinders se ouers het geld om hul te help met die vakke. Met kuns moet jy navorsing doen. Kinders by Merriman bring gereeld nie take terug nie*(Lorna Lemmer)

Ms Lemmer noted that while many learners had enormous talent, there were too many reasons in their schooling and home lives that led to them not committing to their studies. In future, she suggested, focus schools should ensure that learners that travel long distances to get to school are put up in hostels. This would make it possible after school and over weekends for them to complete their academic or theory assignments and tasks and also spend more time practicing in their new subject area.

> *Leerders het talent, maar presteer ondergemiddeld.Hulle glo nie in hulself nie. Kinders bly ver, hulle moet liewers op die koshuis bly, sodat daar ook Saterdae gewerk kan word.*(Lorna Lemmer)

5.2.8 The choice of differentiation

Berenice Adams asserted that when she, as a focus school educator, was confronted with pressures to perform, she often sacrificed the development of some of her weaker learners. She pointed out that when requests were made for performances she normally used only those learners that were prepared to work. When the next request that group would be used again, with the result that weaker or unmotivated learners did not get the chance to perform in front of audiences (except in class). This, admitted Ms Adams, may have contributed to the problem where out of a class of 32 in grade nine, only 12had made it till grade 12 in 2010.

She noted, however, that learners had not only been differentiated according to motivation, but also by talent. Many learners had natural talent as opposed to learners that trained hard, while others danced for example from childhood when some had only danced for three years. Educators found the pressures of dealing with this enormously challenging as they had to constantly be encouraging learners to keep practicing and yet produce at the same time.

> *Daar is groot verskille in die leerders se dans-vlakke. Leerders wat van vroeg af danslesse neem en leerders wat natuurlike talent het, gaan vooruit en die ander bly maar agter. Dit is ´n groot probleem.* (Berenice Adams)

5.2.9   *Educating in vocational schools*

From the above it was found that educators in focus schools tended to prefer working with the most able and talented learners in the focus school and that they tended to often protect their professions and their needs ahead of the needs of weaker learners.

While many would see this as a problem for the schools, what it did say was that educators did not think of learners that studied focus school subjects as remedial or lesser learners. Instead, they expected only the best from their learners. While much of the literature often asserts that learners in vocational programmes are those that do not perform academically and that they are the weaker students, interviews with focus school educators suggested that this was not always the case at Merriman High School.

It was also found that the rhetoric and preoccupations of policy makers about focus schools often did not mean much to the realities of teaching and learning at the local level. While the views of educators were discussed above about how they experienced focus schools, the sections below will explore the aspirations and desires of eight learners that attended Merriman High School. The goal of such a focus is to show how learners made decisions with regard to the vocational training that they received at the school.

5.3   **Obstacles and opportunities for learners**

Setting aside for a while discussions about education and labour policies with their focus on social inclusion and the need for citizens to be globally competitive as well as the challenges of setting up vocational institutions to achieve this, in the next part of the thesis attention is drawn to the views of the learners of focus schools themselves. The argument that is madeis that "although often ignored or silenced, the voice of those affected directly by policy is important - particularly where it contradicts or challenges the rhetoric of accepted policies" (Lawy, 2010: 427).

The main focus of the section is on how learners anticipated their future working lives and their concerns about finding a place in the world of work. Given that policy documents assert that focus schools will provide historically disadvantaged learners with quality education and opportunities to

enter higher education, the section explores what learners thought about vocational education policy rhetoric and how they planned their lives when engaging with it. Each of the eight learners that were interviewed attended Merriman High School with a focus in arts and culture subjects.

5.3.1   The thrill of arts and culture

In interviews with the 8 learners they all spoke about the delight and the pleasure of dance, singing, visual art, design, and acting. They expressed passion and joy about being able to be learners at an arts and culture focus school and spoke about the self-confidence and the social skills that came with performing and being able to be part of dance groups, drama productions and creative activities.

For many of the learners their role model at Merriman High School was a former learner (and one of the 8 interviewees) who had excelled in drama and had gone on to attend university in Cape Town. Learners noted that his story urged them to also dream about successfully reaching their dreams.

Clyde Benjamin had gotten into drama by participating and excelling in school plays. He enjoyed this so much that he decided to further his drama studies at university, where he took part in a number of productions. After he completed university Clyde hired his own agent and for a long time secured a number of roles in different stage plays and audiovisual productions. Clyde noted that production companies were keen at the time to try out new 'products' but that as the years went by work became more and more uncertain.

> *Produksie-maatskappye soek altyd nuwe produkte, werk is wisselvallig, jy moet aanhoudend werk soek. Op die platteland by ons, is nie werk vir ons nie. Jy moet in die Kaap of op Stellenbosch wees om te sosialiseer met die mense in die bedryf.*(Clyde Benjamin, former learner).

While Clyde continued to struggle to find regular work his story represented for each of the learners the possibility of success and the thrills that came with performing art. Clyde is currently studying to become a drama educator as he believes this will offer secure employment while still living out his passion for acting.

> *Die fout wat ek gemaak het, ek het gedoen waarvan ek gehou het. Ek het nie die nodige ondersoek oor die beroep gedoen nie. As jy werklik jou droom wil volg, moet jy bereid wees om baie uitdagings te weerstaan.* (Clyde Benjamin)

5.3.2   The reality of being poor

All of the learners noted that while they wanted to become performing artists and spend their lives perfecting their art, they were all well aware of the difficulties and the hardships that came with the professions that they had chosen. This was especially so given that each of them came from poor

rural backgrounds and did not have access to funds to pursue careers while not formally employed. Which is why, they noted, each of them had combined their arts and culture focus with some academic or vocational subjects at school. They asserted that the big advantage of studying at a focus school like Merriman High school was that they could combine graphic design with business studies and consumer studies, or design with civil technology and geography, or dance studies with life Science and physical Science, or dramatic art with business studies and life science, or dramatic art with geography and business studies.

Llse Meintjies for example chose to study human ecology because it was a wide field and would give her a number of options in fashion design, catering or even a career in tourism or in the business sector. When asked why she chose these, she described it in the following way:

> *My beroep is meer op praktiese vakke gefokus. Daar is nie altyd werk vir kunstenaars in die bedryf nie. My grootste bekommernis is dat daar nie altyd werk vir my sal wees nie. As ek in ´n ontwerp-rigting gaan, sal ek net op een rigting kan fokus*(Llse Meintjies, current learner)

Charlene Hess noted that while she has studied drama she had kept her options open by also doing business studies and life sciences. She had done this because she did not want to be a burden on her parents when she completed schooling and was even considering studying to become an educator.

> *Ek het vakke soos Besigheidstudie en Lewenswetenskap met Drama … Drama is ´n groot passie, dit is vir my lekker om voor mense op te tree en hulle te vermaak. Die feit is dat daar nie werk sal wees nie en dat ek net by die huis sal wees en op my ouers se nek sal lê, bekommer my.* (Charlene Hess,current learner)

Charlene noted that her father and the career guidance educator had advised her to explore other career options that were more financially stable. Her mother had also advised her to take up nursing because of having done life sciences as a subject. Charlene pointed out however that there was little point in studying if it was not something that she enjoyed.

> *My pa en juffrou by die skool het gesê daar is nie geld in nie, daar is nie werk nie. Hulle het gevra waarom gaan ek in Drama, dit gaan jou net terugsit. Gaan liewers in die onderwys, ´n meer standvastige beroep met ´n inkomste in die maand. Jy sal meer verseker wees van ´n werk. Ek kan nursing doen, maar wat is die use as jy iets doen wat jy nie wil doen nie* (Charlene Hess)

Another learner, Jo-Ann Solomons, was even more careful in choosing her career. She said that she had decided from the beginning that she would be an educator. When she was asked whether she would like to further her studies in the arts, she responded by saying:

Ja, ek sal graag wil, maar ek verkies om eerder vir ´n onderwyser te gaan. Wat as ek vir ´n aktrise leer en daar is nie werk vir my nie? Dit is hoekom ek nie wil gaan vir ´n aktrise nie, al geniet ek dit so baie en dit eers my droom was. (Jo-Ann Solomons, current learner)

Jo-Ann spoke about former learner, Clyde, who had been one of her role models at the school, had completed a drama degree, had even had an agent, but still couldn't find work. She noted that she had chosen to follow her other inspiration - her drama teacher.

Juffrou …. laat ons altyd laat lag, sy inspireer my. Om ´n drama onderwyser te wees is ´n veilige beroep. … om ´n aktrise te wees is maar moeilik. Jy het nie die sekerheid dat jy werk gaan hê nie. Om aktrise te word mag dalk nie uitwerk nie. As ek nie ´n drama onderwyser kan word nie, sal ek dit oorweeg om maar ´n gewone onderwyser te word.

Wanting to become a professional dancer, said Roma Julius, was a wonderful dream but probably unreachable given her financial position and her parent's poverty. She noted that this had not stopped her from wanting to study further. She pointed out that she had twice visited university campuses to find out about a career in somathology.

Die feit dat ek dalk nie werk kan kry nie is ´n groot bekommernis. My ma-hulle is gekant aan professionele dans. Ek sal dan graag universiteit toe wil gaan. Ek was al een of twee keer by die universiteit en alhoewel dit na ´n baie swaar taak lyk, wil ek dit nog altyd probeer. Hopelik sal my droom as ´n professionele danser bewaarheid word. So dan nie, sal ek graag in ´n somatologie rigting wil gaan.(Roma Julius, current learner)

5.3.3   Dreaming about higher education and a professional career

Daniël Snyman is a dramatic arts student and hopes to be a successful actor one day. He regards his other subjects, physical science and life science, of little relevance to his future -they only serve to fill up his 7 subjects at school. Daniël is an optimist and believes that he will be a successful actor. If not, his alternative career would be to become a movie producer.

The reason for Daniël's optimism was that when he became an arts and culture learner at Merriman High his life was forever changed. He noted that the focus schools experience had given the self-confidence and belief that had made him what he was. Daniël noted that he would go on to study further and then meet well-known artists in the industry and get the opportunity to perform with professionals.

Die fokus skool het my baie geleer. Die skool gee geleenthede , ook tot kompetisies. Ek tree nou al op met professionele mense in die bedryf. Die jaar het ek van 470 deelnemers die kompetisie as beste speler gewen. Dis goed vir my CV. Ek bou ´n goeie reputasie op. (Daniël Snyman, current learner)

Daniël asserted that being a learner at an arts and culture focus school has already had its benefits because when he met people in the industry, they were impressed by the training and the self confidence that focus school learners had.

> *As jy in die bedryf wil gaan het jy van die begin af die regte opleiding. Jy het ook die nodige selfvertroue in dans, teken of optree.*

The problem however with believing so much in his acting ability was that Daniël did very poorly in his other subjects. Constantly being away on school productions or practicing for shows had led to him neglecting his schooling and possibly failing. Daniël was well aware that unless he committed to working on his academic subjects that he would not get admission to a higher education institution. He noted that his parents were also very worried about his academic performance at school and expected him to work harder at it.

> *My ouers is glad nie tevrede met my vordering nie in die skool nie. Drama vat te veel van my tyd. Ek hou van drama, ek gee nie baie om vir my ander vakke nie. Om makliker in te kom by die universiteit, moet ek en gaan ek drasties werk aan my swakker vakke.*(Daniël Snyman)

According to Daniël he had enrolled at the school because unlike at ex-model C schools where learners had to take extra classes in the afternoon in their arts and culture subject and took it as an extra subject, he had been able to do drama every day as part of his daily curriculum. Hayke Adams held a similar view about the school. When asked about the benefits of attending an arts and culture focus school, she spoke about the wonderful outings, shows and workshops in different new worlds, and visits universities and places she had never been. Hayke noted that this had not only made her schools years a pleasant and memorable experience but had opened her eyes to what was possible in the outside world.

5.3.4 Worrying about work

Henke Hendricks, a former learner of Merriman High, spoke however about the pain of being unemployed. He still dreams of finding a job one day in the creative arts industry. When he was a learner at Merriman High he was a very good visual art student and dreamt about becoming a successful entrepreneur in this field. For months he could not find any employment even though he was willing to take on whatever small jobs he could get. Henke spoke about the many classmates that studied with him in arts and culture that currently were employed as shop assistants in local supermarkets or even as volunteer paramedics in the local medical services division. Only one of his classmates, observed Henke, was currently employed in his field of study and that was in an art gallery in a remote country town.

This was similar to the experiences of Hayke Adams, a former dance learner, who finished school nearly two years ago. When she completed school she worked at the local post-officefor a few

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months as a temporary worker and is currently employed as an office administrator at the offices of an attorney.In her final year at the school she had gone for an audition at university for a place in dancing but had not been successful in her application. Hayke spoke about the pain of her socio-economic situation and the fact that she had not been able to study dance from an earlier age. She asserted that since she had only studied dance from grade 10 she would probably never get the opportunity to pursue her dreams of becoming a professional dancer any further.

> *Ek het ook gegaan vir ´n oudisie om verder te gaan leer, maar ek was onsuksesvol. Ek meen almal kan nie plek kry nie, maar ek voel ek was benadeel omdat ek eers graad 10 begin het met die vak Dansstudie. Ek moes met die ander kinders compete het wat van kleinsaf dans gedoen het* (Hayke Adams, former learner).

In this regard, Henke Hendricks suggested that learners that studied at focus schools should do research before they chose their subjects and find out first where they could find employment. He advised that learners visit workplaces and talk to people in industry to make sure that they knew what they were getting into and thus to make informed career choices. Otherwise, he warned, they would become disenchanted when real life started and reality struck.

> *Om ´n kunstenaar te wees, en ´n kreatiewe beroep te wil volg, moet jy vasberade wees, jy moet vasbyt om jou plek in die wêreld daar buite te vind.* (Henke Hendricks, former learner)

5.4   Conclusion

While one of the goals of the introduction of the HumanCapital Development Strategy (HCDS) in 2006 was meant to prepare historically disadvantaged learners in focus schools for the world of work or higher education, from the learner views above it is clear that much of this goal has not happened. While many appropriate policies were put in place and the right kinds of learners were recruited to study at focus schools, a key reason for learner failure to move into higher education has been the lack of available opportunities when they leave school. It is at that time when reality kicks in and all focus school policies become meaningless to the lives of learners that attend them.

In the sections above learners spoke mostly about finding work when they finished school and developing the intermediate-level skills and ability needed to keep such jobs. The scarcity of work was their biggest concern when they completed school. Learners noted that this concern came from the fact that many of their very skilled and creative role models in the arts and culture sector were not being able to find long term employment.

From their viewpoints it is clear that it is not really the lack of skills or abilities among learners that come from historically disadvantaged communities that should be of concern to policy makers. Rather, it is their inability to find suitable work that is currently the biggest obstacle. While the HCDS had claimed that learner previously were not properly connected to the labour market and

had established focus schools to help in this matter, learners still could not find employment with their new vocational skills.

Given the constraints and obstacles noted above, one of the key questions that the thesis asks is whether focus schools as a new form of vocationalism in the province can really be expected to resolve some of the key educationalchallenges of the Western Cape.This is briefly highlighted in the conclusion below.

CHAPTER 6:
CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to locate and explain the emergence of the focus school program in the Western Cape from 2006. As an educational intervention aimed at addressing the needs of learners from historically disadvantaged communities in the Western Cape, focus schools were meant to be a redress intervention that gave learners from poor coloured and African families access to vocational subjects that would then hopefully develop the skills and confidence that allowed them to study further. The purpose of doing this was to contribute to the intermediate and low skill levels that needed to be stimulated in the province. The thesis tried to better understand how policy makers thought up these ideas and processes, and how educators and learners engaged with them when focus schoolswere introduced in 2006.

The focus of the study was to engage with how policy makers, through focus schools, set about increasing the participation and success rate of learners in the FET band, expanded the number of FET learners that qualified to enter higher education, and improved the links between learners that studied vocational subjects in historically disadvantaged schools and higher education institutions (WCED, 2005a: 3). The claim that such vocational schools would maximize the potential of learners in selected historically disadvantaged schools, and provide them with skills that contributed to the provincial economy, was closely examined in the thesis. The thesis also closely explored the WCED's assertion that the main objective of the school-based vocational band was also to improve the supply of high quality skills that led to better learner development and entry into the world of work, and in so doing maintained and enhanced the provincial goals of its economy being internationally competitive (WCED, 2005a: 3)

In this conclusion I briefly bring together some of the arguments and debates about focus schools and vocational education provision in the Western Cape. I argue that the introduction of focus schools has run its own unique course that has been quite different to what was expected, but note that focus schools will struggle to be sustainable if the current policy approach is continued. I also question the claim that learners in schools like Merriman High don't have the intermediate skills needed in the world of work, and assert that the starting of a focus school at Merriman has not really helped those learners (following a vocational path) to enter higher education or the world of (decent) work.

In this part I summarize the policy intentions contradictory to the learner and educator understandings of the policy intentions.

WCED policy intention was to use the FET platform to target the needs of the historically disadvantaged in an attempt to address the needs of the poor and simultaneously to deal with the skills needs of the country (WCED, 2008a: 5). Focus schools were established from 2005 within the fields of engineering and technology, business, and arts and culture to assist learners in the Western Cape who did not cope well in the mainstream schooling system (WCED, 2008a: 6). Learners in the province were given the chance to succeed offering them a vocationally-driven curriculum.

Educators argued that vocational subjects in arts and culture focus schools were not easy. The expectations of educators are that their learners need to be creative, intelligent, hard and dedicated workers. It requires for learners to be good in their theoretical and practical work to succeed. In their daily experience, they perceived the opposite.

In the case of the learners, they are well aware of the scarcity of job opportunities in the creative industry. To ease their concerns, they combine their arts and culture subjects with some academic or vocational subjects at the school. The main aim is ultimately to be able to get a job to support themselves. The ability to find suitable employment is the biggest obstacle learners in historically disadvantaged communities are confronted with.

It was found in the study that most learners that wanted to study further ultimately chose to do so via an academically-based path. Few learners were convinced that they could succeed in chosen arts and culture professions, especially in higher education institutions. When they finally decided on a further form of study, or even a particular kind of job, they settled on that which had an academic focus. This was in line with Wolf's assertion of 2000 that "learners across the world have realised that in choosing an education best suited to keeping them afloat that, besides the old craft trades, the best vocational education was an academic one" (Wolf, 2000: 82). Raffe (2002: 5) similarly argues that while "political processes and international policy rhetoric have demanded vocational paths, learners and their parents inevitably fall back on the more traditional academic paths to prepare them for roles in the world of work".

6.1   Quality Education

A key goal in recent policy processes has again been how to address issues of social justice and how to ensure that learners, in a world of increasing individualism and competition, got fair access to quality forms of education and job opportunities. Policy makers have claimed that the introduction of focus schools in 2006 was not only geared to providing such access but that they were also a redress intervention that would link learners to decent forms of work, or higher education.

The provision of 'gateway subjects' was meant to open up opportunities for learners at focus schools to plan more sustainable career pathways and to give them the skills and expertise to study further. Focus schools were thus not meant for those that needed basic vocational training for low-level work, but rather were geared to those learners that had the ambition, desire, and dedication to pursue vocational professions.

The problem in the Western Cape however has been that because focus schools served a wide and diverse learner community that were historically disadvantaged, schools could not only focus on the needs of those dedicated and ambitious vocational education learners. Pitching vocational courses at too-low a level had the effect however of the dedicated learners not getting the necessary theoretical basis in their various vocations to be able to study further. When learners discovered that they had to perform well in the academic subjects anyway if they were to get admission to universities, many were discouraged from further following vocational paths. In the thesis it was found that even when learners excelled at their vocational paths at school (like Clyde) and were able to enter university, they faced enormous challenges in keeping up with the academic aspects of university life and in holding onto their dreams of performing professionally. Many learners spoke about how their time at a focus school had not really helped them to get into university and that choosing a vocational career path early on had in fact limited their opportunities and their choices once they reached university level. The thesis thus problematized the idea that focus schools in fact provided a suitable link to higher learning or decent job opportunities.

Which is why Wolf (2000: 256) suggests that when governments provide education "they should simply focus on providing their citizens with a good basic education at primary and secondary levels". She argues that besides being expensive, vocational education provision ultimately did not fulfil the purpose of creating "desirable and flexible" individuals "with good general skills and abilities" (Wolf, 2000: 85).

6.2   Linking learners to work opportunities

Senior departmental officials noted in 2010 that the focus school project was not really geared towards under achieving learners and that they preferred serving those historically disadvantaged learners that had dreams of excelling in their future careers.

In this regard, learners in the study that had gone on to university and still could not find work questioned whether this policy claim was in fact true. While they described their schooling as exciting and interesting, they also spoke about the low-level kinds of employment that they had had to accept upon leaving university in order to survive. They claimed that having a vocational career pathway had caused them more harm than good. In the end, the scarcity of available work was their biggest concern and many learners noted that until such time that policy makers ensured that

vocational learning led directly to employment they would discourage others from attending focus schools.

6.3   Redress and social change

From the various discussions with departmental and district officials and engagement with policy documents there was little doubt during the study that the desire to address the educational needs of historically disadvantaged learners with regard to redress and equality was sincere and earnest. In line with policy documents and intentions officials confirmed that the focus school program was always intended to assist historically disadvantaged learners and improve their access to both further learning and the labour market.

The study revealed however that as policy brought in new forms of vocational and technical educational provisions to offer young people the opportunity to do better in new economies (worldwide), it was the funding of vocational programmes that was the casue of most concern. This was evident in the PGWC in the first place using cost-driven considerations when they converted existing schools into focus schools. Proper vocational education provision that led to further studies was an expensive exercise, and a lack of confidence in funding it well meant that such redress interventions would probably come to nought.

In terms of the overall thesis, it has been shown that political, socio-economic, cultural and historical contextual factors continue to shape the influence that vocational programmes can potentially have in the lives of learners from historically disadvantaged communities. Because communities are well aware of previous forms of provision and their potential (or lack of it) for changing their lives, many learners and their parents continue to regard vocational projects like focus schools as 'for coloureds' – which many learners regarded as 'trying to keep them in their place and in low-level labour'.

The purpose of providing a historical backdrop was to contextualize the complexity of educational practices in the Western Cape and to highlight the continuity of educational practices and practices from past to present. The further goal was to say that unless the link between vocational education, poverty, and notions of race was better understood then projects like focus schools would always be regarded as for the marginalised and for those that should 'do the labour work'.

Indeed, by highlighting key aspects of the HCDS the thesis showed the outcome of policy rhetoric remained the same even when the relationship between education and the workplace was being radically changed. The thesis suggested that while issues of social democracy and redress were always associated with such approaches, vocational education projects, with a key focus on the development of intermediate skills, ultimately fulfilled a key role for new liberalistic and globalisation discourses (Rizvi, 2010).

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According to Lawy (2010: 430): "[w]hereas the post-war social democratic settlement emphasized full employment and universal welfare provision, the new neo-liberal discourse of workfare is individualized and emphasizes competition and markets". This suggests that projects like focus schools, no matter what the policy intentions, ultimately will not deliver on its key promises.In the thesis I have highlighted this by pointing to the variety of differences between how departmental officials perceived the focus school project and how learners experienced it.

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7. Shainé Hendricks – Senior departmental official, Western Cape Education Department – 25/02/2011.

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10. Cindy Peters - educator, Arts and Culture Focus School – 10/03/2011.

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13. Sue-Ann Esterhuizen - educator, Arts and Culture Focus School – 13/03/2011.

14. Christopher Walters - Principal, Arts and Culture Focus School – 26/03/2011.

15. Wilmore Gilbert- Top/senior official in Western Cape Education Department – 30/03/2011.

Learners:

Current learners:

1. Charlene Hess – 2/02/2011

2. Jo-Ann Solomons – 2/02/2011

3. Roma Julius – 2/02/2011

4. Ilse Meintjies – 2/02/2011

5. Daniël Snyman – 2/02/2011

Former learners:

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: WCED PERMISSION LETTER TO DO RESEARCH

Navrae Enquiries IMibuzo	Dr RS Cornelissen
Telefoon Telephone IFoni	(021) 467-2286
Faks Fax IFeksi	(021) 425-7445
Verwysing Reference ISalathiso	20100412-0052

Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

Western Cape Education Department

ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mrs Desireé Larey
7 Barlawiet Street
MALMESBURY
7300

Dear Mrs D. Larey

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: EXPLORING THE EMERGENCE OF FOCUS SCHOOLING IN THE WESTERN CAPE: A CASE STUDY.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. The programmes of Educators are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from 3rd May 2010 to 30th March 2011.
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as submitted to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen
for: **HEAD: EDUCATION**
DATE: 12th April 2010

MELD ASSEBLIEF VERWYSINGSNOMMERS IN ALLE KORRESPONDENSIE / PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE NUMBERS IN ALL CORRESPONDENCE / NCEDA UBHALE IINOMBOLO ZESALATHISO KUYO YONKE IMBALELWANO

GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LAER-PARLEMENTSTRAAT, PRIVAATSAK X9114, KAAPSTAD 8000
GRAND CENTRAL TOWERS, LOWER PARLIAMENT STREET, PRIVATE BAG X9114, CAPE TOWN 8000

WEB: http://wced.wcape.gov.za

INBELSENTRUM /CALL CENTRE
INDIENSNEMING- EN SALARISNAVRAE/EMPLOYMENT AND SALARY QUERIES ☎0861 92 33 22
VEILIGE SKOLE/SAFE SCHOOLS ☎ 0800 45 46 47

APPENDIX 2: STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

14 December 2010

Tel.: 021 - 808-9183
Enquiries: Sidney Engelbrecht
Email: sidney@sun.ac.za

Ms DP Larey
Department of Education Policy Studies
University of Stellenbosch
STELLENBOSCH
7600

Reference: 403/2010

Ms DP Larey
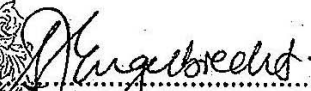
APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE

With regards to your application, I would like to inform you that the project, *Exploring the emergence of focus schools in the Western Cape: using a case study*, has been approved on condition that:

1. The researcher/s remain within the procedures and protocols indicated in the proposal;
2. The researcher/s stay within the boundaries of applicable national legislation, institutional guidelines, and applicable standards of scientific rigor that are followed within this field of study and that
3. Any substantive changes to this research project should be brought to the attention of the Ethics Committee with a view to obtain ethical clearance for it.
4. The researcher/s implements the suggestions made by the mentioned by the Research Ethics Committee (Human Research) in order to reduce any ethical risks which may arise during the research.

We wish you success with your research activities.

Best regards

MR SF ENGELBRECHT
Secretary: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Non-Health)

APPENDIX 3: SCHOOL PERMISSION LETTERS TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT THEIR SITES

Wes-Kaap Onderwys Departement
Western Cape Education Department
Isebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

SCHOONSPRUIT SENIOR SEKONDêR

Posbus 1046, MALMESBURY, 7299 admin@schoonshs.wcape.school.za Tel. 022 - 4864598 Faks 022 – 4865639

28 Mei 2010

Die Universiteit van Stellenbosch

VIR AANDAG: DR. AZEEM BADROODIEN

Geagte Dr. Badroodien

U skrywe van 20 Februarie 2010 is ter sprake.

Geliewe kennis te neem dat die skool se beheerliggaam toestemming verleen aan me. D.P. Larey om haar Ondersoek met betrekking tot die afhandeling van haar tesis wat betrekking het op Fokusskole in die Wes-Kaap by bovermelde skool te loods.

Vir u verdere aandag.

Die uwe

C.P. VAN DER MERWE
Prinsipaal

SCHOONSPRUIT SEKONDÊR
POSBUS 1046
MALMESBURY
TEL: (022) 486 4598
FAX: (021) 486 5639

BERGRIVIER

HOËRSKOOL

CHAMPAGNESTRAAT
WELLINGTON
7655
☎ (021) 8732301
(021) 8732467
🖷 (021) 8732349
SEL: 073 3664786
EMIS nr. 0112473340

HIGH SCHOOL

✆ 1
WELLINGTON
7654
e-mail:
admin@bergriver.wcape.school.za
www.bergrivierhs.co.za

PRINSIPAAL: L. DAVIDS
SAID nr. 930000372

2010-08-03

HEIL DIE LESER

Hiermee gee die Skoolbeheerliggaam toestemming dat **me. Desiree Pearl Larey**
by die skool navorsing kan doen i.v.m. die Fokusskool.

Voorwaarde dat die onderrig nie nadelig beïnvloed word nie.

Die uwe

L D DAVIDS
PRINSIPAAL

BERGRIVIER HOERSKOOL
WES-KAAP ONDERWYSDEPT.
POSBUS 1
WELLINGTON 7656
TEL.8732301 FAKS 8732348

APPENDIX 4: PROJECT INFORMATION LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT·STELLENBOSCH·UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Mrs Pearl Larey from the Department of Education Policy Studies at Stellenbosch University. The results of research will contribute to my Masters dissertation. You have been selected as a participant in this study because your opinions and insights will form the basis of my research on the emergence of Focus Schools in the Western Cape and understanding the role and function of these schools within the overall system.

PURPOSE OF MY STUDY

The aim of the study is to better understand the role and function of Focus Schools in the Western Cape, to explore the reasons for their emergence in 2005/2006 in the province, and to situate the current policy initiative within historical developments around vocationalism in South Africa. I focus in particular how one focus school experienced the roll-out of this policy decision. Your participation in the study will offer invaluable insights into how and why this occurred.

PROCEDURES

Interviews will be conducted with a variety of participants that can offer insghts into this form of schooling. These include:

- Members of the provincial education department involved in the framing and development of this form of schooling
- Education district officers
- The Principals of three identified focus schools although interviews with two of them are done solely for a wider understanding of the sector
- Educators at the main site of study, Merriman High school, specifically those that teach Art and others involved in vocational subjects
- 10 learners at Merriman High School

All interviews will be conducted at the sites where the participants are located, the bulk of them at Merriman High School. These interviews will always be completed at times convenient to the participants.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

I do not foresee any difficulties or problems in this regard. The questions will not make any participants uncomfortable in any way and particpants are reminded that they may at all times choose not to answer a question.

Fakulteit Opvoedkunde • Faculty of Education

As I am an educator at the school I further highlight that participants must in no way feel obligated to answer my questions and should feel free to withdraw their participation from the study at any time, should they so choose. I do undoubtedly deeply appreciate and value the inputs of all participants in the study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO YOU (OR TO SOCIETY)

You may find that speaking about the form of schooling may – mainly in indirect ways – get you to think a little more deeply about the sector. However, any benefits to you or the school or society in general will probably have indirect benefits only.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will NOT benefit in any way from direct payment or in other forms of kind. I may offer learners a cooldrink or something to nibble during their interviews should it be a late afternoon interview or on a hot day, but these would be a form of respect that I would do that in any other educative situation and in no way constitutes an attempt to get participants to assist my study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All our discussions will be taped, so that I can remember all you say, but our conversations will always be deemed strictly PRIVATE. I will never identify you in the study by your real name and will assign pseudonyms to all participants. I will provide you with a transcript at the end of the process for you to verify and confirm what you have said, which you will sign off. Once the University has accepted my written work, all tapes will be erased.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study will be included in ths study only with your permission. I promise to safeguard all information in password-protected programmes and software and all transcripts will be kept in a safe place at my home (a safe or a locked drawer). No one other than myself will have access to the tapes and transcripts. Where I do discuss the data with my research supervisor, I will use the assigned pseudonyms at all times.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

I must remind you that you can choose at all times whether or not to be part of the study. Even once you have accepted my invitation and completed interviews, you may in any case still decide to withdraw from the study. You may do this unconditionally at all times, as well as to refuse to answer any question that you don't want to and still remain in the study.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at 0832611056 or my lecturer, Dr Badroodien, at 021-808 2263.

YOUR RESEARCH RIGHTS

As noted above, you may withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at 0832611056 or my lecturer, Dr Badroodien, at 021-808 2263.

YOUR RESEARCH RIGHTS

As noted above, you may withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE/GUARDIAN/PARENT

Mrs Pearl Larey described the information above to the participant in their first language or language of choice. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his/her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant: ....

Signature of Participant: ....

Name of Legal Representative: ....

Signature of Legal Representative: ....

Date: ....

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to

.... and his legal representative. He/She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me questions. The conversation was conducted in the particpant's language of choice.

Signature of Researcher: ....

Date: ....

APPENDIX 5: CONSENT FORM FOR WCED AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Informed Consent from departmental and district officials at chosen research site

In this research I seek to interview departmental and district officials. The goal is to get your views and impressions of the establishment of focus schools. I will conduct interviews only with departmental and district officials that have direct knowledge or participation in the formation and establishment of this schooling form. The interviews will roughly take about one hour (or according to the available time of the official) and will take place at your place of work.

As noted, the main focus is on your understanding and views of how the idea of focus schools came about and is being thought about, and what the role and function of the facilities are expected to be. Pseudonyms - false names will be used in the research to protect the identities of the participants.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obvious risks in your partaking in the study, because the questions that I ask are of a very general nature and pose no concerns.

I hereby request that you, _____ partake in my study for interviews. This will involve:

- Partaking in interviews at times determined according to your timetable and need

PROCEDURE

5. I hereby declare that you will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. I commit to ensuring that the interview will not bring harm whatsoever to your person or position.

6. All the information I get from the study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your name will not be used or inferred in any way or form in the study

7. I remind again that you may withdraw from the study at any point whatsoever, should you of course wish to do so

8. All results and findings of the research will be shared with you for your input and ratification.

I, _____ , agree to participate in this noted study.

_____   _____   _____
Name and Surname of participant   Signature   Date

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at 0832611056 or my lecturer, Dr Badroodien, at 021-808 2263.

YOUR RESEARCH RIGHTS

As noted above, you may withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Mrs Pearl Larey described the information above to the participant in their first language or language of choice. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his/her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant: ....

Signature of Participant: ....

Date: ....

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document

to.. He/She was encouraged and given ample time to

ask me questions. The conversation was conducted in the participant's language of choice.

Signature of Researcher: ....

Date: ....

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS AND EDUCATORS

Informed Consent from School Principal and Educators at chosen research site

In this research I seek to interview the principal and a variety of educators (particlarly those that teach Art) at the school chosen as the focus of this study. The goal is to get your views and impressions of the establishment of focus schools and how you think these facilities will add value to the schooling sector. I will conduct interviews only with principals and educators that have direct knowledge or participation in the formation and establishment of this schooling form. The interviews will roughly take about one hour (or according to the available time of the official) and will take place at your place of work.

As noted, the main focus is on your understanding and views of how the idea of focus schools came about and is being thought about, and what the role and function of the facilities are expected to be. I´m also interested in your views on the supposedly creative or vocational paths of learners and what you think will motivate them to attend the school. The study is important because an understanding of why focus schools have been developed and their function can assist learners and educators in maximising what they get out of the focus school experience. The main part of my study (fieldwork and interviews) will take place at Merriman High School (which is a pseudonym-false name) and all interviews will be conducted there.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obvious risks in your partaking in the study, because the questions that I ask are of a very general nature and pose no concerns.

I hereby request that you, _____ partake in my study for interviews. This will involve:

- Partaking in interviews at times determined according to your timetable and need

PROCEDURE

1. I hereby declare that you will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. I commit to ensuring that the interview will not bring harm whatsoever to your person or position.

2. All the information I get from the study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Your name will not be used or inferred in any way or form in the study

3. I remind again that you may withdraw from the study at any point whatsoever, should you of course wish to do so

4. All results and findings of the research will be shared with you for your input and ratification.

I, _____ , agree to participate in this noted study.

_____   _____   _____
Name and Surname of participant   Signature   Date

APPENDIX 7: CONSENT FORMS FOR PARENTS OF LEARNERS

Informed Consent from Parents/Guardians

In this research I seek to interview 10 learners at Merriman High School to get their impressions of the focus school and how they think attending the school will enhance their future opportunities. I will conduct a single interview with each of the 10 chosen learners. The interviews will not be longer than one hour and will take place either during school intervals or after school.

As noted, the main focus is on learner opinions of the benefits and disadvantages of focus schools and their perceived options post-matriculation. I´m also interested in decisions of learners to follow a creative or other vocational path and the motivation for these decisions. The study is important because an understanding of why focus schools have been developed and their function can assist learners and educators in maximising what they get out of the focus school experience. I will conduct my fieldwork and interviews at Merriman High School (which is a pseudonym- false name- for the school that your child attends).

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obvious risks in your child partaking in the study, because the questions that I ask are of a very general nature and pose no concerns.

I would like to include _____ in my study for a single interview. This will involve:

- Him/her partaking in one interview at a time determined according to his/her timetable and need

PROCEDURE

1. As _____ is still a child, I need to get informed consent from you, the parent/guardian

2. I declare that both you and your child will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. I commit to ensuring that the interview with your child will occur in a safe environment, which will not place him/her in any danger whatsoever or lead to his/her exclusion from his/her peers

3. All the information I get from the study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The school's and the child's name will not be used or inferred in any way or form in the study

4. I remind again that your child may withdraw from the study at any point whatsoever, should you of course wish to do so

5. All results and findings of the research will be shared with you for your input and ratification.

I, _____ , the parent/guardian of

_____, agree to him/her participating in this study.

_____   _____   _____
Name and Surname of parent/guardian   Signature   Date

APPENDIX 8: ASSENT FORMS FOR LEARNERS

Informed Assent from Learners

In this research I seek to interview 10 learners at Merriman High School to get their impressions of the focus school and how they think attending the school will enhance their future opportunities. I will conduct a single interview with each of the 10 chosen learners. The interviews will not be longer than one hour and will take place either during school intervals or after school.

As noted, the main focus is on your opinions of the benefits and disadvantages of focus schools and their perceived options post-matriculation. I'm also interested in your decisions to follow a creative or other vocational path and the motivation for these decisions. The study is important because an understanding of why focus schools have been developed and their function can assist learners and educators in maximising what they get out of the focus school experience. I will conduct my fieldwork and interviews at Merriman High School (which is a pseudonym- false name- for the school that you attend).

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RESEARCH

I perceive no obvious risks in your partaking in the study, because the questions that I ask are of a very general nature and pose no concerns.

I hereby request that you, _____ partake in my study for a single interview. This will involve:

- Partaking in one interview at a time determined according to your timetable and need

PROCEDURE

1. As you _____ are still a child, I have gotten the informed consent from your parent/guardian. However, I also seek your assent and permission to be part of the study

2. I declare that you will be fully protected from any physical, emotional or psychological harm. I commit to ensuring that the interview will occur in a safe environment, which will not place you in any danger whatsoever or lead to your exclusion from your peers

3. All the information I get from the study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. The school's name and your name will not be used or inferred in any way or form in the study

4. I remind again that you may withdraw from the study at any point whatsoever, should you of course wish to do so

5. All results and findings of the research will be shared with you for your input and ratification.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at 0832611056 or my lecturer, Dr Badroodien, at 021-808 2263.

YOUR RESEARCH RIGHTS

As noted above, you may withdraw your consent or your participation at any time. You are not giving up any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Malene Fouche at 021-808 4622 [mfouche@sun.ac.za] at the Division for Research Development at Stellenbosch University

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SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT
AND LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE/GUARDIAN/PARENT

Mrs Pearl Larey described the information above to the participant in their first language or language of choice. The participant was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to his/her satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant: ....

Signature of Participant: ....

Name of Legal Representative: ....

Signature of Legal Representative: ....

Date: ....

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I have explained the information given in this document to

.... and his legal representative. He/She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me questions. The conversation was conducted in the particpant's language of choice.

Signature of Researcher: ....

Date: ....

APPENDIX 9: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for interviews - WCED officials, principals and educators

1. Why do you think the education department implemented focus schools in historically disadvantaged communities?
2. What kind of educational need / problem do they want to address?
3. Do you think that focus schools are currently addressing their objectives?
4. What does the WCED attempt to achieve with focus schools?
5. What's you opinion of what focus schools are meant to do?
6. What do you think is your role as a principal or educator in a focus school?

Onderhoudsvrae - WKOD amptenare, skoolhoofde en onderwysers

1. Waarom dink u het die onderwysdepartement fokusskole na die voorheen benadeelde gemeenskappe geneem?
2. Wat dink u – watter opvoedkundige behoefte of probleem wil die onderwysdepartement deur hierdie voorsiening aanspreek?
3. Wat is u mening – spreek fokusskole hul doelwitte huidig suksesvol aan?
4. Wat probeer die WKOD bereik met die besondere skole?
5. Wat is u mening ten opsigte van wat fokusskole moet bereik?
6. Wat dink u is u rol in hierdie onderwysvoorsiening?

Onderhoudsvrae – studente

1. Hoe word jy bevoordeel / benadeel deur aan 'n kunste-fokusskool verbonde te wees?
2. Hoe oefen jy jou vakkeuse uit met in agneming met dit wat die skool bied?
3. Wat dink jy – met 'n loopbaankeuse in gedagte – wat is jou kanse om 'n kreatiewe beroep te volg? Beskryf enige van jou bekommernisse en onsekerhede.
4. Watter opsies is daar vir hoër onderwys?
5. Identifiseer enige rolmodelle (studente wat reeds hul loopbaan by Merriman Sekondêr voltooi het)?