



Mary Metcalfe:

Join hands to fix schools

Image: Liam Cornell

MARY METCALFE - "Its time to align interventions in education."

Håvard Ovesen

A new national partnership to make education work was unveiled at the Towards Carnegie III Conference this week.

Addressing an audience at the Baxter Theatre on Tuesday night, Mary Metcalfe, former MEC for Education in Gauteng, now a professor of education at the University of the Witwatersrand, explained how the new National Partnership for Schools Improvement would work. "It's aimed at aligning activities and interventions in education with a view to maximizing efficiency. We want to make sure that all interventions are not fragmented."

Metcalfe told *Carnegie3 News* that the state spent "a huge amount of resources" on education – around R164 billion. "Despite that investment, we are not seeing any significant improvement in education."

At the same time, the corporate sector contributes more than R1 billion per year to the education sector, either through education

funds or NGOs.

"Wonderful ideas are being implemented in a scattered way across the country."

But a great deal of effort and resources are going to waste simply because people are doing overlapping work isolated from each other.

Rather than simply donating books, the Partnership says it is ultimately about "helping teachers make use of learning material."

The National Partnership's idea is that, through proper facilitation and co-ordination, truly sustainable change can be achieved by "working through, in an embedded way, the system of government," Metcalfe said. Speaking to *Carnegie3 News*, she explained that it is a matter of "[making] what we have within the system work."

Rather than setting up parallel structures

that will never become sustainable on their own, the National Partnership wants "to work the system from within", the Baxter Theatre audience heard.

"It is not rocket science", Metcalfe assured *Carnegie3 News*, but a question of five key interventions. The first is to "turn the school districts around". Understaffed districts need to build capacity so that they can come to schools with a "how can we help you?" attitude, rather than today's control- and compliance-oriented approach.

Next is to train school management teams: principals, deputies and heads of department. Together with the district management, these are identified as the "key change agents in the whole process".

This will create an environment, argues the partnership, which can facilitate the last three elements. Metcalfe's lament of fragmented efforts is especially aimed at two of these: teacher development, and teaching and learning support material. Rather than simply donating books, the Partnership says it is ultimately about "helping teachers make use of

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learning material.”

None of this is possible without community involvement and direct support for learners. This involves everything from peer counselling to “getting books into children’s hands,” explains Metcalfe. However, no one can learn on an empty stomach. Hence, the Partnership wants to ensure that where there is school feeding, a healthy and nutritious meal arrives before ten every morning.

To make a comprehensive impact while avoiding the one-size-fits-all trap, the Partnership is currently working with different provinces to identify districts where they can implement their plan. As schools within districts can be vastly different, this means that the approach must be carefully tailored to meet individual schools’ needs.

What is the National Partnership for Schools Improvement?

It consists of 50 organisations including:

- Education funds and funders, such as the DG Murray Trust, Tshikululu, and USAID
- Unions, such as COSATU, NAPTOSA, and SADTU
- Education stakeholder organisations, such as the South African Principals’ Organisation and National Association of School Governing Bodies
- Corporate social investment organisations, such as the National Business Initiative and Trialogue
- Academics, Development Agencies and Education Management
- Education NGOs, such as PRAESA, Soul Buddyz, and the Centre for Education Policy Development



Image courtesy of Equal Education

BROKEN - a dilapidated school in a rural area. The new partnership aims to distribute schoolbags to each school-going child.

Bags of hope

Sue Segar

Imagine a South Africa in which, on the first day of school, every single pupil received a bag full of everything they needed for the year ahead. A country where school-children faced the year, not with trepidation and a sense of deprivation, but with a sense of excitement because they were well prepared.

This could become a reality if the National Partnership for Schools Improvement has its way.

The school bag concept is just one of the ideas envisaged for learner support by the partnership, a collaboration aimed at aligning interventions in education.

“There should be a ritual celebration of receiving the bags and making sure the pupils are ready for the year,” said Mary Metcalfe, in her address to the plenary on a National Education Partnership.

A further ambition, said Metcalfe, was to include five reading books “of their very own” in each pupil’s school bag, at the beginning of the year.

“Each pupil in every class would be given five different books, meaning that they could swap within classes and between the grades. This would enable a massive reading

programme, with children swapping books that don’t require teacher administration or a library. This is an innovative way of getting children to read.”

Metcalfe pointed out that the children who succeeded the most at school were those who had access to reading material and were able to practise reading.

The DG Murray Trust (DGMT), an independent private charitable trust, was doing the costing for this exercise, Metcalfe said.

The bags are just one of the interventions aimed at making pupils’ lives easier.

Feeding schemes that ensure children have a meal by 10am every day, as well as peer-support groups to help children cope with the challenges of life, were also in the pipeline.

How RDP houses can combat poverty



Image: Lee Middleton/IPS

RDP houses usually lose value when they change hands. Here is a plan to reverse that trend.

Håvard Ovesen

An average RDP house costs the state R150,000. If put on the market, it will typically fetch around R80,000. The actual street price, however, if you don't place a premium on a title deed and you pay cash, can be as low as R30,000.

This last scenario, in which a R150,000 RDP house is turned into a low-value asset that effectively leaves the formal economy, is sadly common. Bovain Macnab of the Suburban Housing Action Campaign (SHAC!) is on a mission to bring them back to the formal economy.

The solution is seductively simple: while unknown numbers of RDP houses (or certainly their owners) have dropped off the radar

as far as municipal rates and transferability goes, Macnab wants to issue a “quasi-formal deed”, or a license, to anyone who shows up at municipal offices and declares themselves responsible for an RDP house, in exchange for a small fee. If the licensee performs well in terms of payment of rates and the like, a more formal deed will be issued.

a title deed means access to credit, which can smooth the way into the formal economy

What is needed, he explained to *Carnegie3 News*, is “to find a pathway back to the formal process”. The homeowner license solution solves several problems, he says.

Naturally, it brings with it security of tenure, and the ability to easily extend and improve the structure. Faced with death and divorce, family members with access to an official title deed have rights: they cannot be simply thrown out of the house.

Just as important is that a title deed means access to credit, which can smooth the way into the formal economy.

If there is a homeowner or a licensee, the municipality has someone to collect service charges from. This means more money in the city's coffers. Lastly, Macnab points out, many people now living in RDP houses are actually on the housing list. Issuing them with homeowner licenses for the places they are already living in, will reduce the queue, and help authorities focus their work where it is most needed.

A little less happy - survey

Mapaseka Setlhodi

More than half of the adults surveyed in the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) reported being less satisfied with their lives in 2010 than in 2008, according to the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Dorrit Posel.

Almost two-thirds of the adults surveyed did not believe their economic ranking in South Africa had improved over the period 2008 to 2010, while satisfaction levels had declined more among Africans than among whites, Posel added.

Speaking during the parallel session on the NIDS, Posel said the findings were derived from a survey where people were simply asked: "Using a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means 'very dissatisfied' and 10 means 'very satisfied' how do you feel about your life as a whole right now?"

Household surveys conducted across the country normally measured well-being based on money-metrics, but these measurements failed to capture the distribution of this income within the household, Posel said.

On the finding that satisfaction levels declined more among Africans than among whites, Posel said that, by 2010, most African adults (53 percent) surveyed reported a satisfaction level of 4 or lower, compared to 39 percent in 2008. The comparable figures



Image: Liam Cornell

DORRIT POSEL - the middle class is actually at the very top of the income ladder.

among whites were nine percent in 2010 and seven percent in 2008.

While nearly two-thirds of adults surveyed did not think their economic ranking in South Africa had improved between 2008 and 2010, there was evidence that individuals underestimated their relative class position.

Africans who were considerably rich, tended to think of themselves as having a middle class lifestyle, and there were many reasons for this tendency to under estimate, Posel continued.

"But the nature of South Africa's income

distribution is such that the income associated with the middle-class lifestyle is way at the top of the income distribution. "And in fact I would guess that all of us think we have a middle class lifestyle but we are actually at the very top of the income ladder in South Africa," she told the audience.

Another observation from the study was that people tended to become happier with age. "It might have to do with diminished responsibility," joked Posel.

Samuel's story: skills squandered

Jacques de Satgé

Samuel*, a hard-working farm worker from the Mopani district in Limpopo, has lost his land claim battle and his livelihood. Michele Hay, a PhD student from the University of Witwatersrand, told the story of a man betrayed by land policies designed to enable him.

Speaking during the parallel session on Land Reform, Hay related how Samuel, who was too poor to go to school, got a job on a white-owned farm at a young age. He started a family on the farm, but when the owner died, the farm was sold.

This left Samuel jobless and he turned to the local chief to access land. However, a severe lack of water ruined his time on the chief's land. He lost 22 of his hard-earned cattle due to a severe drought, and conflicts over water resources soured Samuel's relationship with the chief.

Some years later, Samuel was asked by the

children of the white farmer he had worked for to manage a farm they had recently bought. This provided him with a sustainable livelihood. His son was a budding farmer and keen to follow in his father's footsteps.

Here is a man betrayed by land policies designed to enable him.

The white owners gave Samuel the opportunity to buy the farm. He applied to the Department of Agriculture for assistance, but was denied help as there was an existing land claim on the farm.

Hay explained that "conflicting claims" are a common occurrence in the claims system, adding that the land redistribution and restitution process was riddled with such complexities.

Nevertheless, Hay continued, Samuel and

his son went ahead and bought the farm. They secured a small loan from the Land Bank, which covered only the cost of the land but did not offer aid for the tools of production.

As the debt piled up, the farm was eventually repossessed. It was sold to a church group that allowed Samuel and his family to live on the farm where they remain today.

Hay summed up this desperate situation when she said, "...in the context of massive redistribution and a mandate to increase the number of black commercial farmers, an experienced farming family now lives destitute, essentially as labour tenants on a farm they once owned, with little security of tenure."

A concern was raised among panel members of the Land Reform session that current policies will only serve to create many more Samuels.

Hay said there was a need for land restitution to be "rethought" as "households and individuals were being marginalised in this [current] process".

*not his real name

No incentive to go formal

Håvard Ovesen

The formalisation of informal enterprise can be tricky business. David Neves, Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of the Western Cape, told a Towards Carnegie III mini-plenary session on Tuesday that bringing informal enterprises into the formal economy can be a mixed blessing for small-scale entrepreneurs.

He illustrated his assessment with the stories of “Sibongile” and “Ramena”. The former is a woman running a spaza shop in Khayelitsha, and the latter is a cattle farmer, trader, slaughterer, and seller of braaied meat in rural Limpopo.

Neves warned that “the spectre of formalisation” brings both benefits and unexpected, not to say unwanted, effects on the ground.

For example, Ramena’s cattle business gains most of its competitive advantage from its informal nature. With formalisation, Ramena would have to go to an abattoir rather than slaughter his own cattle. But then he would have to comply with environmental health standards and a host of by-laws related to retail, water and zoning.

Many cannot fathom why small-scale entrepreneurs would resist the move into the formal economy

So while Ramena’s product might benefit from formalisation, this can potentially put him out of touch with the impoverished clientele he currently services. This could easily

result in loss of clients and eventual collapse of his business.

Neves’s point is that formalisation is both “complicated” and “nuanced”. He says Sibongile’s business in Khayelitsha, which includes takeout foods and under-the-counter alcohol, is successful precisely because it operates on the margins. Therefore there is no incentive to formalise her business.

That people decline participation in the formal economy, even in situations where bank accounts, VAT numbers, and the like are within reach, poses a puzzle for many economists. Many cannot fathom why small-scale entrepreneurs would resist the move into the formal economy.

Neve says that profit maximisation is not the only goal of many such businesses. Food security, income generation, risk mitigation, and managing social requirements are all part of the equation.

Land policy still fails the poor

Jacques de Satgé

Land redistribution policy is faltering in spite of a dramatic growth in budget, according to Associate Professor Ruth Hall, who addressed Towards Carnegie III yesterday.

Hall, who works for the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), based at the University of the Western Cape, said the South African government had instituted three cycles of unsuccessful land policy since 1994.

Hall said the first policies aligned with the neoliberal values of the World Bank, proposing “land reform through the market”. Surveys had confirmed a wide demand for land nationally, although more than 50 percent wanted plots of less than a hectare in size.

The first policy, known as the Settlement/Land Acquisition Grants (SLAG), aimed to resettle 600,000 people on a quarter of a million hectares of land, at a cost of R1 billion during the 1994-1999 period. However, these expectations were not realised as Hall claims that “state-driven resettlement simply alienated everybody.”

The second failed policy, the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development programme (LRAD) was heavily influenced by the notion of black economic empowerment. It cost R5,4 billion. Race was prioritised over class, she said, and grants of up to R100,000 were given for farming.

However, Hall suggested that this was simply a continuation of previous policy. “Land



Image courtesy of Carnegie 3 NGO Database

reform had come full circle,” she said, as she drew parallels with Apartheid’s Land Purchase policy. LRAD lasted for 6 years (2000 – 2006), before it was replaced by the current Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy (PLAS).

This system, Hall explained, works on a lease system whereby government “rents” land they have bought to beneficiaries. This lease system gives beneficiaries the option to purchase the land, although it’s not clear how they could afford this. “The state is a major and growing landlord,” quipped Hall.

Hall outlined several problems with PLAS. Leases are given to beneficiaries only for three years, meaning that farmers are unable to secure

loans to ensure their land is used productively. Rent due to the state has also gone unpaid in some provinces.

She criticised South Africa’s “dwindling vision for Land Restitution” and complained that resettlement goals had become “conservative”.

The first policy, SLAG, had aimed to resettle over half a million citizens; the second, LRAD reduced this number to 200,000, and the current policy is resettling only 3,000 people a year.

Hall warned that “under PLAS we are not going to contribute to the National Planning Commission’s goal of a million jobs in agriculture.”

New call for wealth tax

Håvard Ovesen

The theologians of Kairos Southern Africa have reignited the wealth tax debate. Emphasising the South African principles of ubuntu and *samehorigheid*, Reverend Edwin Arrison of Kairos this week echoed the call that Archbishop Desmond Tutu made last year for restitution.

As men of the cloth, the Reverend noted, “we believe not only in the life hereafter, but restitution and restoration now.”

There is a need for a “radical shift, new thinking [and] new models of development”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) did not address the economic crimes and benefits derived from Apartheid, he argued. Whereas black people’s historical heritage has been a “perpetual state of economic depression” over generations, South Africa’s white population continues to reap the rewards of generations of inherited wealth.

Charity and volunteerism had proved inadequate, said Arrison. “Individual goodness is not enough.” Instead, there is a need for legislated restitution. For this to work, a law on the wealth tax must be crystal clear about its purpose, and be within the mandate of the



Image: Liam Cornell

EDWIN ARRISON - “individual goodness is not enough”

Constitution.

He also emphasised the need to ring-fence the tax, by earmarking it for purposes such as eradicating the bucket system and bringing people out of the informal housing rut.

Given that South Africa is one of the most unequal countries in the world and that black women bear the worst of the brunt, there is a

need for a “radical shift, new thinking [and] new models of development”. A wealth tax, said Arrison, should be founded in legislation, and focus more on corporations than on individuals.

He called on civil society to form a vanguard around the issue and to take the matter to Parliament within the next few years.

Tough to enforce rights if you are poor

Mapaseka Settholdi

“There is sustained conflict between the state and residents of informal settlements in South Africa,” said professor Linda Stewart, law professor at North West University yesterday during the plenary on the Constitution, Law and Justice.

Stewart reflected on a story that illustrates the gap between constitutional provisions and the everyday reality of people living in informal settlements.

The story of the Rooigrond informal settlement is about bureaucratic indifference and the fact that poor people lack the means to hold government to account.

The settlement was established in 1990 by farm workers after they were dismissed from

work by white farmers in the area. Stewart said the North West Department of Agriculture, Conservation, Environment and Tourism promised this community a piece of land so they could pursue agricultural work. This

The Rooigrond community remains loyal to South Africa’s promise of a better life.

promise never materialised and was eventually reversed by the Mafikeng city council in 2006.

The residents were then threatened with eviction, and negotiations with the state on the matter came to naught. In the meantime, they lacked access to basic services like housing, water, sanitation, health, and economic

opportunities. These are rights guaranteed to all South Africans under the Constitution.

Stewart said the only channel the Rooigrond community had to have their voice heard was through marches and demonstrations, often referred to as “service delivery protests”. She says despite the utter failure by the state to meet their basic rights, the community remains loyal to South Africa’s promise of a better life. “In every formal letter and report that this community had submitted through to higher authorities, they ended off with: ‘we love South Africa,’” she said.

However, they continue their daily struggle for basic needs and still face the threat of eviction. “The Rooigrond informal settlement is an example of the gap between the ideals of our Constitution and the reality of life for poor people,” Stewart said.

Let them eat bread

Bureaucracy meant to protect citizens often hampers them - Ramafoko

Berndt Hannweg

Poor people's efforts to start their own grassroots initiatives are often tied up in red tape. The very legislation meant to protect citizens, often hampers them, says Soul City CEO Lebogang Ramafoko.

Speaking after the conference session on Wednesday that focused on how media can raise awareness of poverty and inequality, Ramafoko highlighted some of the challenges facing development workers and ordinary citizens, such as lack of training, resources, and dealing with a growing bureaucracy.

"It starts with training," said Ramafoko. "The typical developmental worker is badly equipped and supported to deal with the issues facing a community".

She gave the example of a group of women in an informal settlement in Bokfontein, near Rustenburg, who wished to start their own crèche. Children under five were being left unattended while their mothers were away working, and the women needed to find a way they could be cared for during the day.

A venue was found and the women began to undergo training in Early Childhood

Development. Unsurprisingly, the children needed to eat during the day. So the women applied for emergency funding from the Department of Social Development in order to purchase bread for them.

Here they hit an obstacle. To access the funding, the women had to provide the Department with quotes for the price of bread from three separate vendors. The main retail outlets – where bread was cheaper than the local spaza shop – were a pricey public transport ride from the settlement where they lived.

“You end up finding community people tying themselves into knots...”

This was in 2008. While they never did get the money for their bread from the Department, the crèche itself is still going strong. Eventually, the children got bread – but from donations made by the community, not from government.

Stories like this repeat themselves across South Africa, says Ramafoko.

“You end up finding community people

tying themselves into knots. In a lot of ways it's nonsensical and it's divorced from the reality on the ground.”

She has urged government to be more involved and understanding. Instead of attending endless study groups and training junkets, Ramafoko would like to see councillors trying to understand the challenges their constituents face.

“They need to think: ‘How do I understand what a group of women are trying to do, and how do I use the resources of council to unlock that?’”

There is a schism between the people with immediate knowledge and understanding of the situation (the “people at the coalface”, says Ramafoko) and those at the top of the bureaucratic chain with the authority to act on the problems.

This inability to act has frozen development workers in inflexible roles, trapped by the very processes that should be helping them.

And profiteers insinuate themselves into the gap, between what can be done according to process and what must be done. Ramafoko believes that this “gap of thugs, the clever and lazy” can be defeated by a more flexible and understanding government authority.

MEDIA PANEL - Nic Dawes, editor of the M&G; Alide Dasnois, editor of the Cape Times; Mondli Makhanya of the Sunday Times; and Pippa Green, journalism professor, discuss how the media covers poverty and inequality.



NGOs seen around

Scores of non-governmental organisations are part of Towards Carnegie III. Francis Wilson, Conference Director, has welcomed their participation and commended them for their profound understanding of poverty and inequality.



Professor Francois Lategan of Fort Hare University takes time out to help showcase an exhibition on the Ilima-Agri-Park initiative with (left to right), Mlungisi Cibini, Astereda Mnkeni and Vuyani Somyo. The project is a joint venture between five community-managed co-operatives and Fort Hare's Science and Agriculture Faculty. It includes a nursery to grow vegetable and other seedlings, agricultural co-operatives growing vegetables, as well as a vegetable and food-processing co-operative which now uses solar power to drive processing equipment such as dryers and ovens.

Kathy Watters of UnLtd South Africa, an NGO that supports social entrepreneurs for sustainable community development



Vernon Weitz (Centre for Christian Spirituality) and Madney Halim (The Community Based Development Programme)

