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Meeting challenges in rural African education: a Zambian case study

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Private initiatives can contribute to the eradication of many of the educational problems of developing countries, specifically in rural Africa. This article explores the crippling education problems of several developing countries. It argues that many of these problems can be addressed by non-governmental organisations making use of privately funded mini-education systems. In particular, an analysis and discussion of the Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education shows that a private educational initiative, acting as a mini-education system itself, can make a substantial contribution towards the pedagogical upliftment of a community in a rural area, such as that of the Masaïti area of Zambia.

Die oplossing van onderwysprobleme in landelike Afrika: 'n Zambiese gevallestudie

Privaatiniisiatiewe kan 'n bydrae lewer tot die oplossing van baie van die onderwysprobleme in ontwikkelende lande, veral in die landelike gedeeltes van Afrika. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die onderwysprobleme in verskeie ontwikkelende lande. Hierdie probleme kan die hoof gebied word deur nie-regeringsorganisasies wat gebruik maak van privaatbefondste mini-onderwysstelsels. 'n Analise en bespreking van die Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education toon dat 'n privaat-onderwysiniisiatief wat in sigself optree as 'n mini-onderwysstelsel 'n aansienlike bydrae kan lewer tot die pedagogiese opheffing van 'n gemeenskap in 'n landelike area, soos dié van die Masaïti-gebied in Zambië.

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Since the 1960s education in Africa has suffered from all kinds of problems. African states have devised a range of solutions to these problems, some of which have worked to some extent.¹ The Education for All (EFA) programme, introduced by the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, for the period 1990-2015, has already made a substantial contribution towards providing access to primary education for all children in Africa. It has also increased the literacy levels of Africans. However, generally speaking, the EFA programme failed in raising the standard of education in most countries in Africa, in particular in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region.² Evidence, in the form of low Mathematics and Science results (NCES 2008) and the low literacy rates of students with access to schooling (UNESCO 2010), shows that the dramatic expansion of primary education systems occurs at the expense of school quality.³

The current scholarly discourse about the educational circumstances in African countries abounds with examples of growth and concomitant challenges. The growth is observed in the net primary school education enrolment ratios that surged from 36% in 1960 to 66% in 2004 and the concomitant decrease in adult literacy rates (UNESCO 2006, Wolhuter 2007). The challenges of the African education system can be observed in the low levels of job satisfaction among teachers (Edwards 2005: 35, Michaelowa 2002); the chronic shortages of teachers (SSA still need to train a projected 1.6 million teachers before 2015) (Africa Grantmakers Affinity group 2010, UNESCO 2006); a shortage of financial resources (McCullum 2010); lack of quality in terms of education system management (Wolhuter 2007); a low exporting rate of educational services to other countries (Mpinganjira 2008: 128), and a lack of infrastructure for educational research (Wolhuter 2007). A recent study done in 100 countries under the auspices of *Newsweek* confirms that education in Africa is still failing miserably. Education

1 Cf Davie 2010, Dixon *et al* 2008, Jallow 2010.

2 Cf Kamunde 2010, Deiningar 2001: 303, King 2005: 424, King *et al* 2007, Wedgewood 2007.

3 Cf Nwonwu 2008: 143, Wolhuter 2007, King *et al* 2007.

in Mozambique came 96th, Tanzania 94th, Ghana 92nd and South Africa 97th (Anon 2010). Scenarios such as those portrayed in the study of Kadzamira & Rose (2003) in Malawi also attest to the non-attainment of the desired standard: the 18 000 untrained teachers employed due to increased access to primary school education have not contributed towards alleviating poverty. Malawi responded positively to the challenge by means of massive injections of funds (by the Millennium Development Goals) but experienced a decline in efficiency due to a lack of well-qualified teachers.

This article focuses on Zambia where the situation is not much better, as is evident from the low examination pass rates in grades 7 and 9, limited access to secondary schools (US Aid 2010: 2), as well as the erratic participation and non-utilisation of facilities in rural areas. The Ministry of Education is waging an uphill battle against inadequacies in infrastructure, and in institutional and human capacity, among others a critical shortage of teachers, in particular in rural areas (Educational Statistical Bulletin of the Republic of Zambia 2007: 13-5, *Zambian Economist* 2010).

It is clear that conventional ways of solving Africa's educational problems, in particular those of rural Africa, have to a large extent failed. Other solutions must be found to challenge the lack of quality education in Africa. This article appeals for a more context-sensitive, collaborative and participative model of educational reform at the micro-level (*cf* Kamunde 2010). It aims to defend the claim that private (non-government) initiatives can contribute significantly to the eradication of many of the educational problems of developing countries, in this case in rural Africa, by deliberately applying a particular structure (with specific guidelines) that has become known as "a mini-education system". In doing so, private initiative can be more easily linked to the actual education needs of the particular target group; the enforcement of quality assurance by interest groups is more manageable, and education can be linked to the national education system. This article refers, in particular, to the role and contribution of a specific case in Zambia, namely the Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education (FCE).

The defence of the claim is structured as follows. First, the article briefly describes the current education situation in Zambia, showing that Zambia, like the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, is challenged with ubiquitous problems, in particular in rural areas. It then briefly discusses the roles that private initiatives in general can play in eradicating those shortcomings. In the process, the article refers to a few private sector initiatives worldwide that have been making substantial contributions to the eradication of education problems in their respective countries. This is followed by a brief discussion of a relatively new phenomenon referred to as a “mini-education system”. The article then discusses the FCE mini-education system to show that, as a mini-education system in Zambia, it has already succeeded in making substantial contributions to the educational upliftment of the community it serves. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings and a few recommendations in order to stimulate the effective functioning of the mini-education systems of NGOs in SSA.

1. Research method

The research was based on an integrated view of reality, the human being and his/her education, communal life and knowledge, a view that integrates faith convictions, pre-theoretical assumptions and scientific endeavour. The universe is viewed and approached as a finite, coherent, rational, ordered totality, grounded in the ultimate love and promise of the God of the Bible. A literature review of primary sources of information was done against this philosophical background with the aim of acquiring a deeper understanding of the Zambian (educational) context, private educational initiatives, and the phenomenon referred to above as a “mini-education system”. The literature review provided the raw material for the construction of the conceptual-theoretical framework on which the empirical investigation was based.

The empirical part of the study was based on a constructivist epistemology, drawing upon the interpretive research paradigm (Onwuegbuzie 2009). Interpretive research assumes that people

create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them (Walsham 2010). In this instance, the constructivist-interpretive method was combined with a case study focusing on the extent that the FCE mini-education system enables the FCE to meet the challenges in the Masaiti community in Zambia as part of the effort to improve the ineffectiveness of African rural education. This combination facilitated a 'researcher-as-insider' approach, which was important for understanding the context of this particular mini-education system. Consistent with this, the study employed qualitative methods including descriptive field research in the form of one-to-one interviews, informal observations and open-ended email questionnaires. Focus groups were also organised based on purposeful sampling. The sample included experienced and knowledgeable community and government teachers who were interviewed about private education initiatives, in general, and the FCE education system, in particular. The discussion with the focus groups also included a SWOT analysis for evaluating the structure and elements of the FCE mini-education system. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, and relevant individual contributions were integrated in the reporting. The preparation, analysis, structuring and interpreting of the data also took cognisance of the educational needs of the Masaiti community in order to investigate the possibility of employing this structure as a solution to that community's educational dilemma.

The case study as technique in the qualitative research tradition was used for the purposes of analytical generalisation and, in particular, within the context of particularistic generalisability. The fundamental principle of the data analysis is of a case-to-case transfer generalisation where the researcher makes generalisations from one case to another (a similar case) and, in this instance, education by a private initiative in another developing rural community (*cf* Onwuegbuzie 2009: 120).

2. Education in Zambia: background

Zambia is a landlocked country bordered by the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania in the north and by Zimbabwe and Botswana in the south. It has a population of 10.3 million people, of whom approximately 62% live in rural areas and 54% are younger than 15 years. HIV/AIDS has infected 15% of the adult population. Zambia has a relatively open economy, with the mining sector as its backbone. The Structural Adjustment Programme that Zambia, by financial necessity, had to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund in 1991 placed constraints on public spending on education (Lungwangwa 1992). Zambia has posted economic growth at an average of almost 5% between 1999 and 2005, but 6% of the current population still live below the international poverty line (Bajaj 2010, Netherlands Embassy 2005: 1-3).

The Zambian formal education system consists of basic education from grades 1 to 9, and high school from grades 10 to 12. The education system recognises two alternative approaches to primary education in addition to the public school system, namely community schools and interactive radio centres that are provided by Education Broadcasting services. The Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) 2011-2015, currently spearheading the development of the education sector, formulated the National Implementation Framework (NIF) as a strategic plan. The NIF serves as an important instrument for monitoring, implementation and performance (Educational Statistical Bulletin of the Republic of Zambia 2007: 13-5). For the budget year 2011, 18.6% of the total national budget was allocated to education and skills training (Mubela & Simwanza 2010).

According to the Ministry of Education's review reports (2006), primary education is struggling with inadequate facilities and delayed funding, all of which restrict the system's performance. There is also a lack of consistency in participation and monitoring programmes. The majority of the schools are severely understaffed, female teachers are leaving rural areas for urban areas, and community schools are still operating without infrastructure. The grade

9 national pass rate in 2006 was 48.3% (Educational Statistical Bulletin of the Republic of Zambia 2007: 13). In accordance with the Zambian Ministry of Education's Infrastructure Operational Plan (IDOP), 2500 new classrooms and 18 new high schools were erected in 2009. In addition, 280 teachers' houses were constructed in rural communities (Ministry of Education in Zambia 2009: 4).

The Zambian government is persisting with its policy of encouraging private providers of education, as is evident in the 503 private schools that were registered with the Ministry of Education in 2007 (Educational Statistical Bulletin of the Republic of Zambia 2007: 18, Sikwibele 2002.). Community schools in Zambia also enjoyed phenomenal growth from 55 in 1996 to 2716 in 2006, representing 30.5% of the total number of schools in Zambia (Chondoka 2006). It is a "success story" of private (community) educational initiatives that are not dependent on external donor support. Although the "community movement in Zambia" enables learners, in particular poor rural children, who have no access to education, to attend school, it has failed to provide quality education (Farell 1999: 68, Chondoka 2006). Bajaj (2010) contends that the hope for the future of Zambian children is on a collision course with the realities of many schools: overcrowded classrooms, absenteeism, poor teaching and learning quality, and limited job prospects after graduation. Kelly (2000) also calls for the HIV/AIDS crisis to be placed at the centre of the country's education agenda.

Another persistent problem in Zambian education, as in the entire sub-Saharan area, is the failure to develop indigenous languages as languages of learning and teaching (LOLT); in other words, education through the medium of the first language or mother tongue (Kashoki 1990 & 2003). In Zambia, as throughout anglophone Africa, English has replaced the mother tongue as LOLT as from the fourth school year. Another perennial problem since the mid-1970s in the formal education system which seems to be detached from the needs of society and the Zambian economy is that of schooled unemployment: those who succeed in graduating

from the school system find themselves among the unemployed (Serpell 1993).

This has given parents in Zambia a desire to resort to more efficient alternative education in the form of private education. One of these private education initiatives is the Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education (FCE) which, in our opinion, could serve as a model for challenging the ineffectiveness of the current education system in and for rural Africa.

3. Private education initiatives

International approaches to private education moved from a non-formal approach in the 1970s to where they are now regarded as complementary to national education systems (Rose 2009: 225). Generally speaking, private educational initiatives (such as NGOs) are still considered a second best alternative to formal state provision. According to Rose (2009: 231), evidence with respect to the impact of complementary educational initiatives that effectively educate underserved populations in developing countries is limited. Research by Moore *et al* (2006) on nine education models found that the majority of them were more cost-effective than government schools in delivering education services. Students also achieved higher learning gains through adjustments in school size and location, curriculum and language of instruction, school management and governance arrangements, teaching staff and instructional support services.

The role that non-state providers (NSPs), in general, can play in contributing towards the quality of basic education services is well documented (Rose 2009 & 2010, Moore *et al* 2006). The education sector increasingly pays attention to developing partnerships between governments and NSP private initiatives (Rose 2010). For the purposes of this study, three such private initiatives, that have been making substantial contributions to the eradication of education problems in their respective countries, serve as examples.

School for Life in Ghana is a nine-month education programme for eight- to 15-year-old children living in Ghana's rural northern region, where there is scant access to primary education. *School for Life* teaches local language literacy, numeracy, and general academics equivalent to three primary school grades in nine months. This was established in 1994 by the Ghanaian Danish Communities Association (GDCA). In the northern region of Ghana, the survival rate from first to third grade is 59.4%, with 47.9% reaching fourth grade. Of those students who enter the *School for Life* initiative, over 91% complete the nine-month programme, equivalent to grades 1 to 3, with equal rates for boys and girls. Of those who complete the *School for Life* programme, 66% overall proceed to fourth grade in public schools. Of the *School for Life*, 82% of the pupils met minimum standards for literacy and numeracy at third-grade level after a nine-month cycle (US Aid 2010).

The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) was founded by Sir Fazle Hasan Abed in 1972 as a development organisation dedicated to alleviating poverty (BRAC 2010). The major challenge for all education service providers remains the provision of quality basic education in Bangladesh. BRAC contends that bringing every child into the classroom no longer suffices; each child is entitled to a high quality of education that will prepare him/her for the future. The goal of the BRAC Education programme is to improve the quality and delivery of services in education appropriate to the needs of poor children. Its purpose is to help fill the remaining gaps in coverage, retention, and quality of compulsory primary basic education. BRAC launched its education programme in 1985 with 22 one-room primary schools; it now serves 37 500 non-formal primary schools (BRAC 2010). Its programmes have set the tone in providing non-formal primary education to underprivileged children who fall out of the formal education system. The organisation is 80% self-funded through a number of commercial enterprises, including a dairy and food project and a chain of retail handicraft stores called *Aarong* (BRAC 2010).

Community-based schools in Afghanistan is an effort to provide annual educational opportunities for approximately 45 000 marginalised children, youth and adults in areas where there is no access to formal schools (CARE 2010). CARE promotes local accountability and sustainability by training Community Education Committees (CECs), teachers and employees from the Education Department and Ministry of Education. It assists with the establishment of community-based classes, provides material support to teachers and students, and offers training and in-classroom support to community-based teachers. At present 22.295 students (67% girls) in 244 schools and 744 classes, 288 village/community education committees and 734 teachers are beneficiaries of community-based education initiatives throughout Afghanistan (Moore *et al* 2006: 3). They are funded by USAID and a consortium made up of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the Aga Khan Development Network, and CARE (2010).

These private initiatives in Ghana, Bangladesh and Afghanistan have made impressive contributions towards eradicating educational problems such as a lack of access to education for poor rural communities, low literacy rates and high dropout rates (Rose 2009 & 2010).

4. Theoretical framework: the ‘mini-education system’ as framework for structuring private education initiatives

Education systems have long been recognised as a prominent unit of analysis in education provision worldwide and in the field of comparative education (Bray & Kai 2007: 141). Kandel (1933: 83) notes that it is not easy to define the term “education system”. In her book *Social origins of educational systems*, often regarded as a seminal publication, Archer (1979: 54) wrote that an education system is created when the components cease to be disparate and unrelated sets of establishments or independent networks. Archer focused on government-provided education

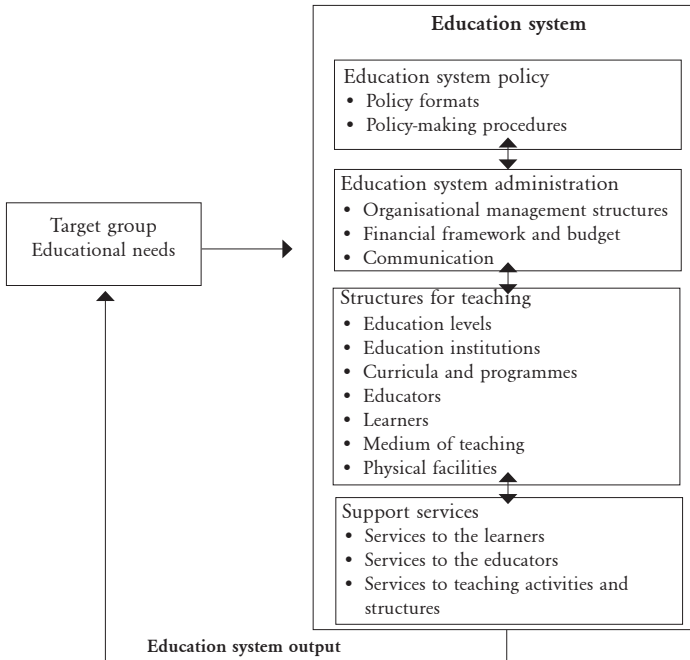
systems; there are, however, many other types of systems and subsystems, for example those operated by NGOs and those that function across national borders (Bray & Kai 2007: 124, 141-2).

A careful analysis of education systems reveals that an “effective education system” can be defined as those planned activities by teachers to support students to obtain the required competencies for fulfilling their roles in life (Steyn 1997, Steyn & Wolhuter 2008: 2-3). As phenomena, education systems can be divided into two broad categories, namely national education systems and mini-education systems (Steyn & Van der Walt 1997). The term “national education system” refers to a structure or system that provides for the needs of all the inhabitants of a particular country as its target group, whereas the term “mini-education system” refers to a structure or system that provides for the education needs of a particular identifiable group among all the inhabitants of a specific country (Steyn 2009: 67, Steyn *et al* 2002: 44-5).

In other words, ontologically speaking, the mini-education system is a structure, system or framework that facilitates the provisioning of effective education to a group of people, smaller in numbers than the target group of the national education system (Dekker & Van Schalkwyk 1989: 296). The mini-education system finds its overarching purpose in providing its target group with such teaching and learning opportunities as would serve their particular education needs (Van Nieuwenhuizen 1993: 30-45).

The mini-education system consists of four structural components, each of which containing several elements. The structural components include the education system policy; education system administration; structure of teaching, and education support services (Steyn & Wolhuter 2000: 3). Each component and its elements serve a particular role and purpose in the mini-education system. The components and elements of the mini-education system and the relationship of the system to its target group can be illustrated as follows (Steyn & Wolhuter 2010: 460):

Table 1: Components and elements of the mini-education system



Education policy refers to the statement of intent that describes the way in which the identified educational needs of the target group are to be solved (Steyn et al 2002: 48, 49, 67). The policy serves as an instrument in which the goals and objectives of the system are stated. Structure of teaching refers to the way in which the different education programmes are structured to meet the educational needs of the target group. The structure of teaching embraces the education institutions and levels, curricula and differentiation, entrance requirements of learners, evaluation, certification as well as an explanation of the position of educators and learners (Steyn et al 2002: 76-7). Support services refer to the specialised non-educational services required for improving the quality and effectiveness of the educational activities. The component education system administration indicates the controls that

organise the functionaries and personnel in the education system. These functionaries are responsible for determining the formulation, adoption, and implementation of the education system's policy, as well as for consultation of the target group and the collection and distribution of the finances required (Jones 1971, Steyn 1997, Steyn *et al* 2002: 70).

The educational needs of the target group (in this instance, the Masaiti community in Zambia; *cf* Table 1) have a direct impact on the structure of the mini-education system, in this case of the FCE mini-education system which, in turn, has a transformational influence on the target group.

Understanding a mini-education system not only flows from a description of its components, but also shows whether it can serve as a model for providing the sustainable educational opportunities required for promoting effective community development in rural Africa. Each of the private educational initiatives discussed earlier can be regarded as a mini-education system since each of these provides for the identifiable needs of a particular target group and proves itself to be an initiative with a specific policy, administration, teaching structure and support service components.

The *School for Life* focuses on the needs of Ghana's northern region where there is no access to primary education. The target group of BRAC in Bangladesh is the poor children deprived of education, as well as overage girls that are already out of reach of the national education system. COPE in Afghanistan targets rural children, in particular girls.⁴

The *School for Life* in Ghana also defines itself as a mini-education system through the goals and objectives stated in its education policy. It aims to solve the educational problems of the target group. The teaching structure is reinforced by local language textbooks and low teacher-student intakes, but its curriculum only allows for three areas of instruction. The administrative component functionaries are controlled by *School for Life* committees that

4 *Cf* BRAC 2010, Moore 2006, US Aid 2010.

supervise the day-to-day classroom monitoring and community-based facilitators (US Aid 2010).

The BRAC private educational initiative in Bangladesh aims to improve the quality of mainstream schools and to increase community and parent participation in children's education. As a teaching structure, it focuses on pre-primary, primary (up to grade 4) and secondary levels of teaching. BRAC publishes educational materials in different ethnic group languages. It also provides training support through induction and in-service training for its teachers. Teachers' salaries are paid by the government (BRAC 2010).

In summary, these private educational initiatives function as mini-education systems: they provide for the identifiable needs of particular groups and prove to be initiatives that each has a policy, administration, teaching structure and support service components – all recognised elements of a mini-education system.

5. The FCE mini-education system in Zambia as a private education initiative

The following case study comprises an analysis of the FCE mini-education system as a private education initiative in Zambia. This case study shows how private education initiatives can be organised formally in order to ensure quality, and to provide a form of education that will contribute to the quality of national education.

5.1 The cultural and political environment and context of the FCE mini-education system

The FCE is an educational initiative in the Masaïti district in Zambia's Copper Belt province. The main population group living in the area are the Lamba, with a total of approximately 300 000 people spread all over the Masaïti district of Zambia as well as the Katanga district of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They live in small villages, each under the leadership of a headman. The villages consist of 20 to 30 huts (family

groups) each. The land of the Lamba is currently under the traditional leadership of Paramount Chief Mushili (Lisati 2006: 7). The social organisation of the Lamba is interwoven with their religious and spiritual convictions (Doke 1970: 27, 50).

The inefficiency of the state education system, in particular in rural areas, is evident at grassroots level in the Masaïti community. The high grade 9 failure rate of 55.9% in the district in 2009 meant that out of the total of 2 899 students who registered for examinations at the end of the year, 1 490 dropped out of the school system without a grade 9 certificate and will arguably become part of the social problem in the community. Of the 83 schools in the Masaïti district, only 12 have access to electricity and half of the schools do not have an adequate water supply. The teacher:pupil ratio is 1:53 (Ministry of Education 2009: 20, 30, 44, Lisati 2006: 94, 114, 118). The schools in the Masaïti community suffer from the challenges of low literacy rates after students had access to schooling, low teacher satisfaction, shortage of teachers, female teachers leaving rural areas, and low pass rates.

5.2 The FCE-mini-education system: background

The Foundation for Cross-Cultural Education (FCE) in Zambia has served as a private educational initiative and has been accredited with the Ministry of Education in Zambia for the past twelve years. In this period, the FCE developed a mini-education system appropriate for developing countries and for communities in Africa, specifically for the Masaïti community. The FCE is an international, non-denominational, non-racial and non-profit Christian organisation, focused on equipping disadvantaged geo-graphically peripheral communities with knowledge, skills and Biblical values in order to effect transformational development. It is financially self-supportive through business initiatives in hospitality and farming. Donors only provided start-up capital for educational infrastructure development.

The FCE's vision of transformational development undergirds an educational strategy that includes the Zambian curricula

, provides for the additional or “special” educational needs of the Masaïti, and pays attention to their local perceptions and circumstances (Compion 2011: 14). These special education needs include breaking the fatalistic attitudes of learners; educating parents and their children; contributing to the welfare of the state and local communities, especially through local Government; shifting the focus in education from the individual to society, thus creating a learning community as the basic purpose of schooling, and affording students opportunities to participate in community service and national reconstruction as part of their educational development (Compion 2011: 4-14).

The article will now explain why the education provided by the FCE complies with the characteristics of a mini-education system and to what extent this compliance promotes the successes of this educational enterprise. This information about the FCE mini-education system, as a case study, can also serve as a guideline for other similar mini-education systems associated with private initiatives.

5.3 Structure of the FCE mini-education system

5.3.1 Vision, aims and objectives

The first requirement regarding a successful mini-education system is a clearly structured policy that embodies its vision, aims and objectives, and that serves as guideline for the system’s functioning. Its vision, aims, objectives and policy should be aligned to ensure successful education (Steyn *et al* 2002: 61-3). These features can all be found in the FCE-mini-education system.

The main goal of the FCE mini-education system is to establish training centres in Africa in which to implement its vision, namely to make a generational impact in developing communities according to their education needs (FCE 2010). This vision is a strong central driving force and binding factor for all components and elements of the FCE mini-education system.

The aim of the training centres is to recruit, train and send teachers and community workers in a variety of fields to help fulfil

the FCE vision. Some of these fields are education, community development, primary health care, agriculture, development skills, business entrepreneurship, and cross-cultural training.

The FCE mini-education system's objectives are: to establish colleges for the training of trainers, teachers and community workers; to establish model schools where college students can do practical teaching and inspire the community and other private or government schools towards Christ-centred education; to equip members of disadvantaged communities with Biblical values, knowledge and skills that will lead to community transformation through the establishment of activity centres; to develop curriculum material for the different fields of training in FCE, and to train and network educators through developing and sharing curriculum material for schools.

5.3.2 Structure for teaching

The FCE mini-education system provides a structure for teaching and training that complies with the requirements of formal, informal and non-formal education and training and that will create opportunities for children from pre-school to adulthood to meet the educational and developmental needs of their communities. All the elements of this structure are purposefully structured to realise the vision of the education system.

- Education institutions

The education institutions of the FCE mini-education system can be divided into a training centre, a teacher and community training college, activity centres and a model school. Thus, the need for both general and special education is being met (FCE policy document 2006).

- Training centre

In order to ensure a strong hub of service delivery, all education activities in the different regions of Zambia, including the Masaiti district, are coordinated at the Zambian training centre. The training centre itself provides the basic training to facilitate education as well as the required infrastructure for education in

the districts and regions. It also provides accommodation and a safe and secure environment where students and FCE members can develop as a learning community.

- Teachers and community training college

A college for the training of teachers and community workers is at the heart of the training centre. The teachers are employed at the model schools or state schools, while the community workers serve at the activity centres.

- Activity centres

Activity centres have been established in a decentralised fashion to serve communities or villages that facilitate community transformation. The activity centres focus on different spheres of influence such as additional education, women development, farming and agricultural expansion, and general infrastructure development.

- The model school

The pre-school receives learners from the child stimulation groups in the activity centres at the age of 6 years, and serves for language bridging, from mother tongue to English. The pre-school is on the same premises as the primary school.

The basic model school (grades 1 to 9) serves both the community and other private or government schools by setting an example in providing and implementing quality education. It also serves as facility for the school-based education of student teachers of the college (Koti Ni Eden School 2010).

- Programmes and curricula

The curricula of the FCE mini-education system are aligned with the vision of transformational development and provide for the special education needs of the Masaiti community.

Teachers at the FCE can obtain a diploma in primary education and the trainers a certificate in community development. In addition to the conventional teacher education curricula, for the purpose of meeting the special educational needs of the community, the teacher education programme includes, according to

Du Toit (2009), competencies (knowledge, skills and values) in cross-cultural studies, adult basic education, home maintenance, aspects of basic farming, entrepreneurship, teaching youth and adults in aspects of sexual education, and practical teaching in schools in all communities and specifically in extremely disadvantaged communities. They also include planning and implementing informal group sport and recreational games and activities in disadvantaged communities, establishing and managing schools and activity centres in a disadvantaged community, teaching learners with special needs, equipping students to identify and handle traumatised children or young people, and equipping students to be effective teachers in any context, all by using what is available in their environment.

- Diploma in Primary Education

The focus of the training programmes, as expressed through the FCE mission, is to prepare student teachers to be able to teach effectively in all, but especially in disadvantaged rural communities in Africa. As part of their general teaching methodology, FCE supports students to obtain the required competencies in finding natural links between Biblical values and principles to be incorporated in their daily lesson planning and teaching. They are assisted to integrate their own subject philosophy into every school subject.

The aim of the programme is to support students to obtain the required competencies to teach in primary schools from Grades 0 to 9. The duration of the programme is three years.

The curriculum outline of the diploma in Primary Education consists of modules such as childhood development, classroom management skills, community service, compensatory education, subject methodology, and so on.

- Certificate in Community Development

An essential element of the vision is to have adequately prepared community workers with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to support members of disadvantaged communities to take their rightful place in society.

The aim of the programme is to support students to work as facilitators in disadvantaged communities with a focus on disciplining, motivating and training people for the transformational development of their communities. The duration of the programme is two years.

The curriculum outline of the Certificate in Community Development consists of modules such as transformational studies, agriculture, development skills, entrepreneurship, education, primary health care, and law and government.

- Teachers and learners

The teachers and trainers of the FCE mini-education system are expected to function in circumstances where learners are mostly not stimulated or prepared for formal schooling, where there is a lack of basic resources and where parents are mostly illiterate and very poor. Members of such communities are often caught up in a vicious circle of ill health, deprivation, poverty and powerlessness. Teachers at the FCE are thus expected to be committed, well-prepared and qualified, and to exemplify the vision of the FCE mini-education system.

It is envisioned that learners who have been educated in the FCE schools will be instrumental in transforming their own communities by functioning effectively in their different roles in society.

- Language of teaching/training and learning (LOLT)

The LOLT of formal schooling is English, according to national education standards. The pre-school programme thus serves as a bridging year in language ability, from mother tongue to English. The mother tongue is the LOLT in the activity centres.

- Education and training facilities

The basic facilities for effective education and training consist of, for example, classrooms and workshops as well as basic teaching media. An important feature of these facilities is that they should blend with the existing infrastructure in the community to enhance acceptance of ownership by the community, while representing the idea of the possibility and relevance of the development. Members of the community,

who have received training in building skills, build the training centre facilities.

5.3.3 Support services of the FCE mini-education system

Three types of support services can be identified, each of which can be explained in terms of the FCE mini-education system.

- Support services to educators

These are provided through in-service training and curriculum development services by the curriculum development department (Dreeckmeier 2009). Lecturers and teachers are exposed to international training institutions and conferences in order to learn from other cross-cultural educational initiatives (Grobler 2010). All teachers and lecturers belong to support groups that meet once a week for personal development and counselling and for discussions on how to execute their responsibilities in challenging environments.

- Support services to learners

Support to learners is provided in different ways, for example, through a feeding scheme for the children affected by hunger during the months of January to March each year. The agriculture department of the FCE supports the college with food in the form of maize, cattle, citrus, and poultry farming as part of a sponsorship programme. The FCE Health Post provides medical services, in particular malaria treatment, to the children and students.

- Support for teaching activities

These services strengthen actual teaching and include the teaching media, examination services, a remedial teaching service, as well as the extramural sports activities; all of these are provided in the basic school. In addition, every student is expected to be involved in the running of the college by performing kitchen, bathroom, classroom and terrain duties. Every student is equipped with as many life skills as possible to support and sustain him-/herself physically in rural school situations. From grade 5 onwards children are taught to have their own gardens

to generate income for further studies. The FCE building and carpentry department supports the physical structural development of the college, school, activity and training centres (Grobler 2010).

5.3.4 Education system administration as component of the FCE mini-education system

The FCE system administration is a bottom-up organisational structure supported by policies and administrative procedures.

The administrative structure of the training centre consists of four departments: the college, school, community and support services. Each centre leader, in conjunction with the vision leader, appoints the heads of department responsible for managing the work in their departments. Heads of department are accountable to the centre leader and to the centre leadership committee (*cf* FCE 2004). Educational policies include aspects such as personnel, finances, liaison, and administration. The FCE Constitution (2004) confirms that any person, regardless of race, gender, religion or language group, who agrees and endorses the FCE Constitution, may apply for membership. Applicants will only be considered once they have undergone the required orientation and in-service training. All work in the association is on a voluntary basis and members are responsible for their own income. All FCE training is sponsored with 50% of the total cost of studies.

Well-defined student selection policies embody the criteria of selection as well as some logistical details regarding interviews. Du Toit's (2009) remarks are pertinent to the implementation of the education policy:

- All training programmes are based on and integrated with sound Biblical values and principles.
- Small classes (12 in college and 20 in school) ensure high levels of interaction, and maximise the development of the potential and character of each child. Teacher training focuses on character development of the students.

- Well-qualified, experienced and dedicated staff members ensure that training of the highest possible standard takes place.

5.4 Successes of the FCE mini-education system

The FCE system is unique in that it has been structured as a mini-education system and is not project-driven; it is self-sustained, independent of donor organisations, and focuses on quality education. The four institutional types of the FCE, namely training centres, basic school, college and activity centres, have been designed to address the educational needs of the Masaiti community in a holistic manner while addressing the vision of transformational development. In addition, the FCE mini-education system offers longer teacher education than government institutions.⁵ The establishment of activity centres created opportunities for youths who dropped out of the formal system.

The FCE School has had the best examination results in the Masaïti district for the past 4 years (2006-2009) (*cf* also Grobler 2010). It also had a 100% grade 7 pass rate in 2008 and 2009. This confirms that the FCE mini-education system has provided solutions to the frustrations experienced in this particular part of Africa (*cf* McCullum 2010). The development of leadership is another strong focus point of the FCE education system. This is confirmed by the fact that many of its ex-students have taken up leadership roles at the public and private schools where they are presently teaching.

6. Findings

The FCE mini-education system, with characteristic elements such as vision, teaching, support services, administration and policies, may serve as an example for every mini-education system in its efforts to provide for the unique educational needs of a specific target group.

5 Chibuye W, interviewed in Masaiti, Zambia on 18 November 2009.

6.1 Structure of private educational initiatives

According to the principle of case-to-case generalisation, it can be argued that by describing and structuring a particular private education initiative such as that of the FCE, understanding such an education initiative becomes more feasible. Every individual and institution that wishes to assess, fund or become involved in the education activities of such an initiative, is positioned to understand the holistic integration of the vision, policy, management and governance, education programmes and support services of such initiatives and the level at which this initiative relates to the national education system of a specific country.

6.2 Guidelines for the internal functioning of mini-education systems

The FCE mini-education system contributes towards the Zambian government policy regarding the involvement of private providers. It actively helps to provide for the need for quality education, participates in the battle against overcrowded classrooms, the outflow of teachers, poor facilities and the active involvement of the various communities. The FCE meets the following guidelines regarding the internal structure and functioning of such mini-education systems:

- Its teaching structure addresses the holistically felt needs of the community and challenges the lack of efficient integration of theory and practice in the African education system (*cf* Wolhuter 2007).
- Its vision and policy provide a strong unity and require commitment from each member in order to counter the lack of commitment and low satisfaction of teachers in the African education system (*cf* Edwards 2005: 35, Michaelowa 2002).
- Its internal functioning defines itself as a sustainable system that can make training accessible to all. It also addresses the rural communities' need to take ownership of the education of their children (*cf* Kamunde 2010, McCullum 2010).

- The system administration distinguishes itself as a bottom-up organisational structure supported by relevant policies and administrative procedures, that are functional to address the ineffectiveness of administrative practices in the African education system (*cf* Ochieng 2010). The structure of the FCE mini-education system also has some limiting features which hamper the effective functioning of the system.

7. Recommendations

Private educational initiatives in Africa should not be viewed as merely complementing the national education system, but as essential parts of the system that enable communities to develop the quality education system they need for optimal development. Therefore, education departments should increasingly develop partnerships with NSPs (Non-State Providers) in the various communities for the purpose of improving the quality of education. In addition, the community school movement in Zambia should direct its attention towards improving the standard of education and not only towards increasing access to school-going children (*cf* Farell 1999: 68). Further study is needed for understanding the impetus behind those community and private school initiatives that have so far been providing 30.5% of Zambia's national education needs (*cf* Chondoka 2006).

Private education initiatives should purposefully structure their activities according to the above structure of the mini-education system. This will contribute towards demystifying these education initiatives, enhancing quality assurance, ensuring provisioning in the actual education needs of the local community, and supporting sufficient correlation with the national education system.

8. Conclusion

This article claimed that, generally speaking, private educational initiatives could contribute towards eradicating many of the educational shortcomings of developing countries, in this case in rural Africa. Several sets of evidence were offered in support

of this claim. The discussion of the education context in several developing countries, in particular in their rural areas, revealed that they have indeed been struggling with crippling education problems. The discussion also showed, with examples from various parts of the world, that many of these problems could indeed be addressed and even eradicated by calling on non-governmental organisations to act as privately funded mini-education systems. The analysis and discussion of the FCE demonstrated that, and how a private educational initiative, acting as a mini-education system, is able to make a substantial contribution towards up-lifting a community in a distant rural area of Africa, such as Zambia's Masaiti region.

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