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# THE URBANISATION PROCESS: SOME EFFECTS ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN KWAZULU

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## Introduction

Being a practitioner in the field of rural (and mostly non-formal) education, I do not have statistical back-up for a number of trends which I perceive to be taking place in the field of black education in Natal. There are educational research organisations which may have generated statistics relating to these trends, but I do not intend to quantify my perceptions by making much use of statistics. Secondly, I do not have a significantly developed macro-perspective of the region to propose trends which affect education in all of 'KwaZulu'. Rather I intend to raise a number of trends, which Community Organisation Research and Development (CORD) perceives in formal education in some of the areas in which it works. It is necessary to take a simplistic view of what is rural and what is urban in order to make the topic manageable.

## Access to services

It is widely accepted that access to facilities in Natal (and South Africa) has a strong bias toward urban dwellers and that the provision of facilities and access to them, even in urban areas, is inadequate. What is not as widely agreed upon, is how the provision of, and access to, services in urban and rural areas should be linked through the interests of a national economy - which is clearly not how they are linked at this stage. The present link is one of capital using rural areas for the cheap labour they may provide by subsidising migrant incomes with the remnants of a peasant economy.

## Access to education

Control over education in black schools in Natal is often quite confusing. In black schools in 'white' Natal, the Department of Education and Training is the controlling body. In the Trust areas in Natal which are designated for incorporation into KwaZulu, education is controlled by the Department of Development Aid (DDA) and the Department of Education and Training (DET) which are the so-called development agents. The aim here is for these schools to be handed over to the KwaZulu government once incorporation takes place. In areas which are part of rural KwaZulu, most schools are Community Schools with other Church Schools, and DET schools.

In the case of Community Schools the state has laid down certain minimum building standards which result

in the cost per classroom being R10 000. The people living in the area which is to be serviced by such a school are required to raise the R10 000. Once the school is built, the state reimburses the contributors to the tune of R5 000 and has thus matched the contributors on a rand for rand basis. In practice however few rural communities can afford to raise the required R5 000 at any one time and classrooms may thus take some years to build. The bulk buying of materials is thus not possible and classrooms usually cost the communities in excess of R10 000. There is an example of a school in an area in which CORD works, which had ultimately to pay three times what certain materials would have cost had they been purchased all at the same time.

In DET schools, most of which are in urban areas, the state provides educational services at a far lower cost to the people who are to be serviced by it. Why then is the delivery of education in urban areas treated differently to the delivery of education in rural areas?

Historically the urban areas have tended to be the site of significant revolutionary organisation and action. It is in the urban areas that a volatile and organised youth has been able to pose a threat to the existing system of education for oppression. And it is in the urban areas where state upgrading of education has tended to be concentrated. This process of educational reform has been a case, not only of 'too little too late', but also of insignificant change which is shown by the continuation of education-related protest.

In rural areas there has historically tended to be a lack of local organisation to put sustained pressure on the state which might result in educational reform as has been the case in urban areas. There is also some confusion over responsibility for education, or lack of willingness to accept responsibility for education, on the part of the various government departments concerned. For example, CORD works with the Mboza Village Project which is situated on Trust Land in Northern Natal/Maputaland. There is a great deal of confusion over responsibility for education in the area between DDA, which is meant to be the department concerned with development preparing for incorporation, and the KwaZulu Department of Education and Culture. The two schools at Mboza are Community Schools, the building of which is a significant victory for the

community which is under threat of removal. It is through local organisation that the people living at Mboza have managed, to some degree, to exploit this confusion to win permission to occupy.

So state upgrading of education has tended to concentrate on urban areas and this has probably been due to mass protest against state education. It is largely as a result of this mass protest that international pressure has been brought to bear on the state and that the state has begun to implement a reform process. It has been suggested that part of the aim of this reform process is to foster the growth of a large black middle class in an attempt to defuse the revolutionary potential of the working class. Whether the state took the initiative to adopt such a package of educational reform, or whether it was simply a case of crisis management in the wake of the events of 1976, or to what degree it is a combination of both can only be debated.

### **Post 1976**

There is, however, a trend in black education in South Africa which may affect the state's reform policy in the field. Students living in rural areas tend to migrate in two ways. Firstly, there are more junior secondary schools in rural areas than full high schools and students thus have to move within rural areas, usually to larger sub-centres, in order to matriculate. Secondly, students have historically been perceived as moving to urban areas in order to matriculate due to the shortage of full high-schools in rural areas.

Since the protests of 1976, however, there has been a very definite URBAN TO RURAL migration of students who wish to continue schooling in rural areas as access to education in urban areas deteriorates as a result of political violence. What needs to be established now is whether this is a significant trend or whether it is a minor 'hiccup' in the state's reform process.

It has been difficult to find statistical support for this trend in order to establish the extent of such migration. In order to qualify for entry into rural schools, students often stay with relatives from the area and do not give their home address. Schools often require a letter of transferral from the student which states where his/her previous school was. Community Schools are however managed by school committees made up of local people and the relatives of students wishing to enroll at these schools often have 'contacts' on such school committees which allow students to enroll. This is not to suggest that students do not have problems moving to rural areas and enrolling at schools, but rather that it does occur. Students in urban areas are often not re-

admitted into schools in urban areas if they fail or have taken part in protest activities and this may further encourage the move to rural schools where access may be slightly easier through extended family contacts and local school committees.

It is our experience that students moving from urban to rural areas to continue their education do not lose political consciousness, but help to politicise the arena of education in rural areas. Two schools in two different rural areas in which CORD works have recently had student boycotts. This is not to imply that rural people cannot organise against the state: the very existence of the Mboza Village Project is as a result of community pressure against removal. The history of school protest has however tended to be concentrated in urban areas and there is a possibility that students previously from urban areas may act as facilitators to enable local students to contextualise their position as black students within a wider political framework and to organise to put pressure on the authorities.

What is important is that this urban to rural movement of students breaks the norm and indicates the significance of the political (in its narrowest sense) in theories of rural to urban migration. What does need to be established is the extent of such movement among students and what the potential results of such movement could be.

The above discussion has reflected mainly on rural-urban trends in access to education at schools i.e. up to matriculation level. At the level of work or tertiary study both for pre- and post-matriculants, significant opportunities simply do not exist in rural areas and people are forced to migrate to urban areas. In the Maputaland region it has been our experience that people would rather remain in the area than migrate to urban areas for work. This is possibly due to the relatively unspoilt natural resource base which still exists in the area. It thus becomes important to develop local employment/work opportunities and non-formal education with production programmes which may inform to some extent policy for a post-apartheid South Africa.

There are a host of other educational factors which should be discussed in a forum such as this but time does not permit. For example the urban bias of the curriculum; the unwillingness of teachers to work in rural areas and the consequent abundance of underqualified teachers in rural schools; and finally, information on study and work is generated in urban areas, usually has an urban bias, and does not reach rural areas on a systematic basis.□