

Education and Development in South Africa

*From Local Innovation to
Systems-Level Change*



INTRODUCTION From Stalled to Just Growth

“Forty-one percent of South Africa’s privately held businesses cite the availability of a skilled workforce as the biggest constraint to business growth... This is the third consecutive year that workforce issues have been cited in Grant Thornton’s survey as the greatest impediment to growth in South Africa.”

-Grant Thornton’s 2009 International Business Report¹

Despite the fact that falling demand has been cited as the greatest economic growth constraint worldwide since 2008, skills shortage is still the major hindrance in South Africa. The South African economy has grown steadily at an average rate of over 4% since 1999, recording 36 consecutive quarters of growth into the third quarter of 2008.² Although much more growth is necessary to provide economic security for the majority of South Africans, there are at present significant opportunities for those able to take advantage. This shortage of skills threatens to stall macro economic growth and the upward mobility of previously disadvantaged individuals, as well as to increase dissatisfaction with the pace of change. The danger to both stability and justice should not be underestimated.

The skills shortage, however, is a symptom of the larger, more complex issue of insufficient opportunity drivers for the poor and unskilled. The appropriate questions then are: What drives opportunity? What enables individuals to take up employment, to be entrepreneurs, and to increase growth-producing outputs?

Education analyst Renuka Vithal describes the challenge: “South Africa as a nation is

characterized by a large percentage of the population with an incomplete academic background, with possibly high skill levels in an occupational area but low fundamental learning skills.”³

To answer the above questions, Amandla Development focuses on “upstream” measures for driving opportunity, specifically improving access to quality education. Improved education access is a key component, but insufficient by itself. Amandla recognizes that equitable opportunity development is complex and needs a multifaceted approach to achieve sustainability. Improving education service delivery requires a comprehensive approach that engages the many stakeholders involved. Groups providing services in schools, those working directly with learners, and those working with families, must all provide services in line with a cohesive strategy. There must also be discussion between such service providers and those that fund the work, as well as with policy makers.

Given this complex reality, Amandla Development believes the critical need at present is capacity support for the groups best positioned to effect sustainable expansion of access to quality education in South Africa. They simply must be able to reach more people. Further research will help determine who these groups are, the efficacy of their various interventions, and their precise capacity needs. We know that groups closest to the communities affected by policy measures possess integral knowledge of specific needs and workable solutions for them, as well as an ability to implement such

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“South Africa as a nation is characterised by a large percentage of the population with an incomplete academic background, with possibly high skill levels in an occupational area but low fundamental learning skills.”

1 “Skills Shortage SA’s Biggest Constraint,” SouthAfrica.info, 19 February 2009 <<http://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/gtibr-190209.htm>>.

2 “GDP Growth, 1st Quarter 2009,” Statistics South Africa, March 2009 <<http://www.statssa.gov.za/>>.

3 Latoya Newman, “Only 12 Percent Able to Study After Matric,” The Mercury [South Africa], August 20, 2008: 4.



solutions in their local context. Indeed, the ability to implement is most often that which is missing in reform attempts.

In light of macro trends and findings set out in the previous white paper, this paper examines the disconnect between the desire for improvement and the actions by policy

makers and community members with the same goal. That is, given that policy makers have the resources and communities have the most intimate knowledge of their needs but not the resources, what is a potentially useful paradigm for bringing together resources and implementation capacity?

THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN RESOURCES AND IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

“The fact remains that South Africa spends more money on education as a percentage of GDP than any other country in the world, but we face enormous historical and quality challenges within our education system.”

-Joe Samuels, Deputy Executive Officer South African Qualifications Authority⁴

Although the South African government arguably has more than sufficient financial resources and has made improving education service delivery a priority, the mechanisms for implementing its policies in localities and schools are lacking. In part this is due to a deficit of local knowledge (i.e., what perceived needs are, contextually appropriate solutions, etc.). More problematic still is a lack of efficient means for gathering relevant local knowledge that can be translated into policy action.

One potential means for gathering information on communities is NGOs. Many non-governmental bodies operating in communities have first-hand knowledge of the effects of policies on community members. Their primary function, however, is most often as the vehicle for collective community action. The gathering and transmission of knowledge to the state for the purpose of policy development is not typically a primary function of an NGO. Yet, that knowledge could prove pivotal.

Although building the knowledge and organizing ability of the community is an important task of NGOs, they also need additional capacity for transmitting accrued best practice knowledge to the state. Further, adding to the internal organizational capacity of a given NGO improves its ability to do this work with its community. Adding to financial resources available to local NGOs is critical to improving capacity. In the long run, capacitating the NGO enhances the state's capacity to deliver higher quality services to its citizens. The state can improve service delivery by better resourcing the NGO sector. NGOs can act nimbly where the state is typically clumsy.

⁴ The Mercury.



Given the common goals as stated by policy makers and the NGOs in question, there is a natural alignment and opportunity for collaboration. It is worth mentioning, though, that non-government in South Africa has often meant anti-government. The legacy of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the anti-apartheid NGO sector casts a heavy

shadow on today's civil society. The culture of opposition, or at least the perception that NGOs still view themselves as operating completely apart from the state, has crippled what should be a symbiotic relationship. The concept of deliberative democracy provides a useful framework within which to consider and develop solutions.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY DEFINED

Deliberative democracy, also sometimes called discursive democracy, is a system of political decisions based on some trade-off between direct democracy and representative democracy that relies on citizen deliberation to make sound policy. In contrast to the traditional theory of democracy, in which voting is central, deliberative democracy theorists argue that legitimate lawmaking can arise only through public deliberation by the people.

For democracy to function and for policy to be effective, it must be driven by real local needs. An underlying assumption of participatory governance is that people affected by policies have special knowledge - often called "local knowledge" - that can help policy makers make more informed decisions. Most often, one considers the challenge of bringing local knowledge into policy conversations from the perspective of government: How can government agencies design stakeholder meetings to bring in local perspectives? However, the reverse perspective is equally necessary. That is, how can social change organizations bring their local knowledge to the policy conversation? Or, if they find the

conversation an ineffective way to be heard, how can they take effective action outside it? In short, how do they translate their local knowledge into action?

This paper does not argue that deliberative democracy is the cure for all that ails South Africa. Nevertheless, deliberative democracy is a tool for understanding the NGO's potential role in adding capacity to the state's efforts. The following findings outline how this might work.

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY AND NGOs

Finding 1: NGOs are uniquely positioned to create change that government cannot, but NGO innovations ultimately need state support for sustainability.

Although the national government has the financial resources to enact policies on a large scale, it often lacks the necessary traction at the local level to be successful implementing education improvement policy, specifically:

- Improving teacher quality, classroom management, and establishing a culture of valuing learning



Professor Jonathan Jansen, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Free State states, “The change needs to come from the bottom, and I think the NGOs are good for that. We developed a very strong sense of how to work that way pre-1994. The limit is in connecting the dots between small-scale initiatives [and] systemic change.”

Quite simply, acquiring contextual knowledge of a given school’s difficulties would require extreme human resources from national government. But individual programs dedicated solely to these issues can interact most effectively, and their sense of the tradition of bottom-up work as a key element of the South African context makes this approach viable.

Eric Atmore of the Centre for Early Childhood Development adds, “Half of our funding increase has been from provincial government. But that’s part of our strategy. We know that governments can’t deliver [certain] services and individual and corporate [sources] will dry up after a time.”

•Reducing barriers to entrepreneurial growth and business markets via learning how to access capital and networks

The acquisition of knowledge without access to professional networks and entrepreneurial capital will only get an individual so far. The reality is that the personal business network of the average non-white South African is quite limited, making professional networking a component that must be addressed. However, given the difficulty and, indeed, undesirability of regulating such networks, the NGO is best positioned to help individuals tear down social barriers, establish new linkages, and

gain greater social mobility through personal connections.

As Walter Penfold of Endeavor South Africa puts it: “University curriculums mustn’t just teach how to manage big organizations but also how to create something. Then groups like Endeavor bring these people into contact with each other to form powerful networks.”

•Education needs to teach people (esp. business students) how to innovate

According to Professor Jansen, “[The ability to innovate] are... skills independent of your degree that actually matter enormously, that our youth [generally] don’t have.”

In the classroom, interactive learning facilitates critical thinking that takes ideas beyond their original parameters. Also, the NGO landscape in other countries is rich with examples of business leaders mentoring students to think early about innovation. The Young Entrepreneurs Alliance in Boston, Massachusetts, for example, pairs mentors and teens to start and run actual businesses. The teens generally come from low-income backgrounds but achieve a high rate of success: 98% graduate from high school and 80% go on to college, a rate four times that of their peers.⁵ True, more basic skills are the starting point for most of South Africa’s youth, but innovation should not be too far behind. Such particular curricular changes and challenges are best dealt with on the institutional level rather than by a distant national government.

NGOs are positioned to interface between government and community by gathering, using, and sharing “local knowledge.” That is,

5 <<http://www.yeaworks.org/ata glance>>



they can observe the particular characteristics (strengths and constraints) of their area, they can test need and circumstance-specific creative solutions, and they can gather direct feedback from beneficiaries.

Limitations

An important caveat to the above is that the influence and quality of many NGOs have declined since 1994, since many international donors shifted support from NGOs to government and many skilled employees have shifted from the sector as well.

In the 1990s, vast amounts of bilateral and multilateral assistance poured into South Africa to ensure a smooth transition of power between the apartheid and democratic regimes, peaking at \$541 million in official development assistance in 1999.⁶ International expertise and financing helped foster a strong civil service, legislature, civil society, and independent media.

As former parliamentarian Raenette Taljaard observes, “But the world’s attention soon waned. South Africa was too rapidly deemed a full-fledged democracy, and various forms of assistance dropped off between 1999 and 2002. Newly created South African institutions were left to their own devices.”⁷

As Joanne Harding of the Social Change Assistance Trust observes, “We shifted our funding base as a strategic decision. Since 2001 or so, international [funders] started to do bilateral agreements and started pulling out, or reducing budgets, etc. So even our core funders have reduced their funding to us by 50% in the past couple years.”

Godwin Khosa, Executive Director of JET Education Services adds, “NGOs thrived prior to democracy. At that point, donor funding was redirected to government, and the sector hemorrhaged expertise in a big way. I don’t think the sector was prepared for that, and it got a shock. Around 1997 many closed down after their savings dried up.”

Talent has followed the money as well: “Turning around the talent pipeline will require changing the perception of NGOs, in terms of remuneration, and I think you [must] redefine roles and attach significance to them,” says Khosa.

Additionally, NGOs can be hindered through dependence on external donors, constraining them to being driven by the donor agenda rather than being needs-driven.⁸

In theory, then, NGOs represent a natural vehicle for translating government objectives into effective action in communities. These objectives include educating and training service providers as well as learners and creating innovative solutions that government could scale up and fund. But, in practice, NGOs are often unable to influence beyond their locality and need assistance to realize this potential.

Finding 2: NGOs are not a panacea and must be used strategically, not haphazardly.

NGOs will only be particularly adept at certain interventions and innovations in the South African context. For example, NGOs cannot currently have major impact on the dynamics of SADTU⁹-government relations. But NGOs

“But the world’s attention soon waned. South Africa was too rapidly deemed a full-fledged democracy, and various forms of assistance dropped off between 1999 and 2002. Newly created South African institutions were left to their own devices.”

6 Raenette Taljaard, “Think Again: South Africa,” *Foreign Policy*, 14 April 2009 <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4819&page=2>.

7 *Foreign Policy*.

8 Clearly, this may be a threat in working with the government as well. This is one reason why fundraising capacity building is so important – to increase the NGO’s options.

8 South African Democratic Teachers’ Union



can work with teachers and schools to help improve the learning environment and working conditions, something both groups can agree upon as necessary.

In finding appropriate entry points for interventions and policy influence, one may want to start by examining NGOs that have had success in direct contact interventions. Examples of their interventions include:

- Tutoring to supplement gaps in school curricula
- Extra-curricular skills training programs
- Delivery of peripheral services that enhance ability to attend school such as health/food/uniform supply
- Teacher training/support/professional development programs
- Adult education programs to improve the skills of those who have already left formal education

The ASSET program, for example, works with learners to prepare them for tertiary education and also provides bursaries. Through its activity, such a program not only gains valuable insights into effective pedagogy, but it also gathers a great deal of knowledge on instructional deficits in schools and qualitative data on where educators feel under-resourced and overwhelmed. Such information could prove vital for policy makers seeking clearer understanding of what works and how to direct their own efforts.

“There’s so much we learn by being in the schools. We’re spending time in the schools to see what is being taught so that we can know what the gaps are. We’re also trying to help teachers cope with having standard grade and higher grade maths students in the same classroom. How do they create differentiated

tests that stretch stronger learners and help weaker learners achieve something?” asks Jennifer Court of ASSET.

Additional activities to research include “conduit” activities such as:

- administering grants
- support/mentoring for higher education for motivated students

and advocacy:

- educating and mobilizing communities around the importance of education
- teaching people how to “loyally critique” the government and pressure for well-thought-out, longer-term policy change

Finding 3: NGOs should not be conceptualized as isolated actors, but rather as points within a web. They have a role to play in shaping their communities, but can only thrive themselves when well connected to an eco-system of partner organizations.

Improving education quality goes beyond work in the schools. For schools to be properly resourced and supported, action must be taken in communities as well..

- NGOs must educate populations on the bigger strategic picture and their current options, while listening and gathering feedback about local pressures and needs
- NGOs must connect people in the community to one another to amass a larger, more powerful voice – to build consensus on key issues, and to organize constructive action
- NGOs must bring knowledge of local needs to the attention of policy makers: through written word (briefs/reports/letters), events, conferences, meetings, advertising/news



media, building connections to responsible authorities

According to Doron Isaacs of Equal Education, “People locally must have an understanding and have a vehicle to do the type of work the state can’t necessarily do.”

The NGO can serve as that vehicle. However, it is important to note that not every NGO needs to do all of the above pieces. Some organizations can focus on training and direct services to schools, some on grassroots education and mobilization, others on advocacy, and still others need to focus on building collaboration between organizations to distribute knowledge, facilitating a more coherent effort across the sector.

Amandla’s long-term goal is helping partners each do the piece they do well, then channeling the efforts of various NGOs, in as cohesive and strategic a manner as possible,

to accomplish all of the above.

Despite the above analysis, one must bear in mind that building deliberative democracy will almost always be messy, that is conflictual, a mix of success and failure. That does not, however, mean it is ineffective. In fact, the process involves citizens productively and increases their stakeholder sensibility, thereby increasing another form of social capital.

Perhaps most importantly, such a framework provides for the transference of local knowledge to policy makers and for transparent allocation of resources to those best positioned to implement policy objectives.

The findings below set forth a paradigm for bridging the disconnect between resources and effective strategies, ultimately leading to empowered and equitable development with state and non-state stakeholders working in synchronicity.



FURTHER FINDINGS VIS-A-VIS THE AMANDLA DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM: A PARADIGM OF EMPOWERED AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Amandla Development empowers the organizations that empower communities:

Finding 1: Funding streams need further development. Amandla can help by

- Making the case that investing in NGO capacity is investing in quality and results
- Developing more robust and context-specific capacity building models
- Spurring social enterprise thinking in its partners

Investing in Capacity

It has been a persistent difficulty of NGOs that the majority of funders wish only to fund discrete projects with easily reported results while the ability of the organization to deliver on increasingly ambitious goals is not supported. Specifically, NGO workers are expected to work for wages significantly below their counterparts in the private sector, yet they are expected to produce results that change lives. Often, NGOs have difficulty getting funding for technology, facilities expenses (building, utilities, maintenance, etc.), general administration, professional development/training for staff, etc. These are

all things any business needs to be effective, yet funders seem to expect miracles. Donor acknowledgement of the need for increased capacity funding can help realize the results they desire. Amandla can help both NGOs and other like-minded intermediaries to develop and convey this case.

“[Funders] don’t look at the capacity of the people who need to deliver it as well as the capacity of the organization as a whole, to the extent that the organization needs system. So, in fact, the whole idea of looking at NGOs as organizations that need to grow, that are partners in development, is something we have to win the battle with with our big corporate funders,” says Gail Campbell of Zenex Foundation.

By building capacity effectively, Amandla’s partnership can assure investors that the social return on their investment will be significantly higher.

Metrics and Context-specific Models

Relevant performance metrics are key to understanding results and building effective models. Although development sector good practices are considered good practices for a reason, imposition of performance measures or desired outcomes on contexts that do not lend themselves to such types of assessment merely imposes an interpretation of results that may or may not be fair. Accurate measurement of what matters helps donors decide which ventures are truly effective and worthwhile. Thus the caveat that not all outcomes are easily measured is important.

As Shelagh Gastrow of Inyathelo puts it, “We have quite a few monitoring systems in place. But... if you had measured the greens or women’s movement, they would’ve lost



funding. Social change takes years and is hard to measure. If you had measured the women's campaigns and asked after two years how many men were washing the dishes, we would've lost them. Sometimes you're not having any impact for a time, but not always."

Amandla's role is helping to educate the donor community to shift donor culture so that they will not rely so heavily on traditional metrics alone to make funding decisions.

Social Enterprise Thinking

Operating as social enterprises also helps bring in funds and increase financial independence. Models that consider earned income streams are far more sustainable than those completely dependent on donor funds. Not being dependent on one or small number of donors allows consideration of needs to outweigh donor priorities. Amandla will work with partners to integrate this thinking into their financial planning and business models.

Also, consider the quantity of funds returned to the national treasury by provincial governments in a given year: often as high as 50% of funds allocated. Helping partners manage to a point of peak efficiency will improve the overall delivery system by creating a place for government funds to go and be utilized effectively.¹⁰

Finding 2: Amandla is going to add tremendous value by building networks among NGOs through

- Documenting and sharing knowledge of which innovations work
- Helping NGOs to innovate based on

constituent concerns rather than donor preferences

Knowledge Sharing

Sectoral cooperation can only bring more resources to bear. As knowledge of what works is disseminated, stakeholders can contribute needed manpower to act on viable solutions. Groups working on the same issue but in different geographic areas can join hands to use their current resources to help more people. In essence, two expert heads are better than one.

Further, building capacity by networking groups makes sure that accrued knowledge is further tested and that resources can be used more efficiently. A result is increased donor confidence.

"You can't look at advocacy or sometimes capacity without having some kind of coalition. If you look at ECD (Early Childhood Development) you see that there's a coalition and most of them are funded," notes Campbell.

Additionally, knowledge from the experiences of relevant organizations can prevent repetition of mistakes. Because so few efforts to improve education in SA have borne fruit, extensive analysis of why they failed should inform decision-making going forward. This requires honest sharing.

"JET recently analyzed over R1bn of spending by the Business Trust and concluded it made [little] difference. The relevant question is why," remarks Hylton Appelbaum of Liberty Life Foundation.

Maryke Venter of Heartbeat adds, "Networking

¹⁰ Jonathan Jansen and Nick Taylor, *Educational Change in South Africa 1994-2003: Case Studies in Large-Scale Education Reform*. World Bank 2003: 21.



with other organizations would be important. People are not prepared to talk to each other because they're competing for the funding. Creating a space that's not threatening would be so useful. That could give such a head start to smaller organizations.”

Constituent-driven Change

Additionally, opening communication between stakeholders can clarify constituent concerns. That is, too often decisions are made and programs designed based on perceived needs rather than expressed need.

Equal Education's Broken Windows Campaign, for example, was the result of gathering information from learners as to their needs. Learners reported the biggest needs on their campuses and agreed that fixing broken windows was a top priority because it was often too cold to concentrate in class. Equal Education was able to help the learners petition the Western Cape Education Department and secure funding by bringing their need to the attention of relevant policy makers.

Finding 3: Amandla's focus on personal development (beyond just acquiring skills) is going to add value by

- Developing understanding of how learners learn and
- Supporting efforts that address the spectrum of learning obstacles

How Learning Happens

As a study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), Stanford University and a consortium of South African universities and researchers observed, “There is little empirical analysis that helps policymakers understand the low level of student performance in South African schools or how to improve it.”¹¹

As a common service provider to groups working directly with learners to boost their individual achievement, Amandla will help in the production of measures and methodologies for understanding what pedagogies and environments are most effective. The starting point there is, of course, what is already known about what spurs learner achievement and then working with groups using research as a foundation.

The above study by the HSRC et al. contributes to the body of knowledge of quality deficits and potential ameliorative efforts, and Amandla's work adds to it by helping groups seeking to operationalize the developed theories. Amandla also assists groups whose work extends beyond learner skills development alone; apartheid did more than bar individuals from economic opportunity—it inculcated a distinct set of negative values that necessitate direct counteraction.

For example, the study reports that teachers' mathematics knowledge is linked to the quality of teacher training they receive, which in turn affects the quality of teaching in the

11 Martin Carnoy, Linda Chisholm, et al. *Toward Understanding Student Academic Performance in South Africa: A Pilot Study of Grade 6 Mathematics Lessons in Gauteng Province*, 24 April 2008: 1.



high school. Yet the study also notes the difficulty of controlling for other factors aside from teacher quality that influence learner test results. Thus, while teacher quality is clearly important, addressing other factors such as school administration, financing, and classroom size (just to name a few) must be a consideration as well.

Holistic Efforts

Notably, the LEAP Schools have a matriculation rate significantly higher than the national average (over 90% versus 60%).¹² By working with the individual and not just on skills acquisition, LEAP has been able to achieve much. As Director John Gilmour puts it, “We’re saying that the inequity is continuing and built in. Our schools are taking young people who have been written off and told they won’t do maths and science and showing that they can.” LEAP takes an active role in students’ lives beyond the classroom and gets results in the process

By engaging the community and not just in-school issues, an organization provides an intervention with deeper and lasting impact. This can be accomplished by both the organization’s composition being representative of the community in which it works, and also by the organization learning from the community which issues impact its learners outside the classroom. Therefore, Amandla prompts its partner NGOs to reflect deliberately on gaining information from their staff and the learners with whom they work.

Bridging the divide:

Finding 4: Amandla’s strategy contributes to the sustainability of change by

- Making talent development a focus
- Elucidating how talent development affects organizational and community growth
- Facilitating the confluence of local innovations with policy support

Talent Development

Practically axiomatic in non-profit sectors is the belief that talent is the greatest resource of a non-profit organization. The prevailing sentiment in the South African NGO sector, however, is that there is currently a dearth of top-caliber talent available. Lower remuneration certainly plays a role, but one cannot ignore factors such as employee engagement in the organization’s mission and employees’ perceived appreciation by management.

Not only must NGOs recruit and retain high-caliber staff, but that staff must also understand and advance the organization’s social mission; the collective bottom line goes well beyond revenue. Amandla’s aid in developing the core competencies of a partner NGO’s talent builds the strength of the organization and it increases the depth of human capital in the SA workforce.

“Educating children to the point where they’re employable is the key to developing a deeper

¹² <http://www.leapschool.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=117>.



pool of skilled labor. As it is, we can't retain the high-quality workers who come through. They come and learn a great deal and then move on," says Linda Gould, Executive Director of Education Africa.

Talent Development and Social Capital

Also, as workforce skills and competencies increase and the sector networks, additional social capital is created. The attraction and retention of skilled employees and their subsequent professional development, particularly amongst people of color, leads to the availability of a deeper and wider pool of knowledge to individual organizations, as individuals within them share knowledge with their professional networks. These same individuals carry their knowledge back to their communities both in professional and casual capacities. The result is the inclusion of previously disadvantaged people in the types of professional networks long unavailable to people of color in South Africa.

Groups like Endeavor base much of their model for growing wealth on the foundation strong networks provide:

"Access to capital and networks is a barrier that must be broken. We've always had

families and large corporations controlling the economy, and they're not net creators of jobs. We need to increase the pool of great entrepreneurs, and we must increase [numbers of] well-educated people to do that," remarks Walter Penfold of Endeavor.

From Innovation to Policy

Further, proving the manageability and scalability of a given innovation is integral to gaining the support of the state. Once clear that a program is working and that it can work beyond its locality, the case can be made for policy level backing, whether contracting the NGO as a service provider or by co-opting the program in some way. It should also be noted that scalability may not always mean replication of an operation, but sometimes replication of a model, sharing of knowledge, or even spreading the use of a management methodology. Indeed, all play key roles in a given program's success. This approach essentially connects the dots between the political will that has not attained sufficient results and local actors who have made gains but who lack the resources for large-scale impact.



CONCLUSIONS

Although the extent to which education alone drives growth in a given economy is debatable, it can scarcely be argued that the education attainment levels of a given country's populace will not bear directly on that country's ability to sustain or expand its growth. South Africa is in just such a situation of needing a much deeper and wider pool of skilled labor to continue both its economic growth and its establishment of firm roots as a young democracy. It needs this both to improve the livelihood of its people and for the sake of justice; a previously officially oppressed population will not indefinitely bear unofficial oppression thanks to lacking opportunities.

Acknowledging the seriousness of the problem, the state has designated significant funds for improving education service delivery. But ends are much easier to determine than means. That is, stating a policy objective and outlining how each and every school will achieve it are very different tasks, the latter being especially complex in a country as large and diverse as South Africa.

The key to functionality is synthesizing the high-level knowledge of policy makers and the knowledge of lived experience to inform policy decisions, and then successfully translating that knowledge into actionable measures for the moving parts of government. Amandla is under no illusion as to the facility of the task. But the role of a strategic service provider who collects knowledge of successful interventions, recasts them as policy initiatives, and helps facilitate collective effort and cohesive steering, is one Amandla Development has been uniquely conceived to fill.



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Greater Good SA
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Heartbeat
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Home From Home
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