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# An unexplored partnership: the influence of traditional leaders on schooling

Sandile Mbokazi and Thamsanqa Bhengu

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## Abstract

The international arena has demonstrated that educational collaborations are necessary as tools that strengthen the effectiveness of reform initiatives in improving the educational attainment of students. Accordingly, schools have collaborated with colleges, universities, parents, and community leaders, to democratise education, equalise educational opportunity, support teachers, break down institutional barriers, and share resources for maximum benefit. The South Africa Government has started to consider partnership as one way to improve schooling in the country, and traditional leadership has been identified as one of the possible partners. This paper reflects on the experience of the authors in five research projects, conducted between 2002 and 2004, where the influence of traditional leaders was observed. To understand collaboration, one needs to trace the existing influences that the parties have on each other. Therefore, the role of traditional leadership is discussed in relation to school management, leadership, governance, school-community relations, infrastructural development and curriculum delivery.

## Introduction and background

In the first decade of democracy in South Africa, education policies were developed to provide schools with better opportunities to function efficiently, justly, and democratically (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996; KwaZulu-Natal Schools Act of 1996; Norms and Standards for School funding, 2000). Despite these progressive policy directives, the quality of schooling in the country, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, continued to be a concern to the government and the public. Most schools are not safe centres of community life, because community ownership of schools as contemplated in the Tirisano document has either been partially or not achieved at all. For example, violence in South African schools has reached alarming levels. Bullying, rape, assault, vandalism, gang fights, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence plague many South African schools (Sing, 2003; Maluleke, 2003; Mabokwane and Mampa, 2002; Momberg, 2001; Somniso, 2001). This has caught the attention of the government, and various provincial education departments have begun to implement innovative and practical ways to respond to violence. To mention a few, in KwaZulu-Natal, the Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Safety and Security has joined forces with the MEC for Education to address violence in schools. In some schools in the

Pietermaritzburg area, a suggestion box has been put in place for learners to put in their concerns, such as bullying, sexual harassment, and abuse (Oellerman, 2005; Harrilall, 2005). The Western Cape Department of Education has set up a Safety Schools Programme and Call Centre for the same purpose.

At the close of the first decade of democracy in South Africa the then national Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, identified partnership as one way of addressing concerns in schools. The notion of partnership was reiterated by Ms Ina Cronje, the MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal, at the beginning of the second decade of democracy. In her speech to the academic community and researchers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal on the 22 June 2004 and at the Education Stakeholders' Forum on the 15 July 2004, the MEC enumerated many ways in which schools and employees fall short in their response to the progressive policies. She saw this as linked to the huge backlogs in schools and the poor commitment of some educators to their profession. One of the partners that they have identified to address the situation are the traditional leaders whom they regarded as having an important role to play in the provision of quality education in the country. Prof Asmal in his speech to the traditional leaders said: "The role of Traditional Leaders in the promotion of quality learning and education should not be under-emphasised". These words are an indication that the roles that can be played by traditional leadership in schooling are viewed by the department's political leadership as significant.

For the purposes of this paper, the composition of the Traditional Leadership as an institution needs to be presented. This institution is hierarchal in nature with the *Isilo*<sup>1</sup> at the top layer and *Amakhosi*<sup>2</sup> and the Traditional Council taking second and third layers respectively. *Izinduna*,<sup>3</sup> *izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* occupy the bottom two layers.

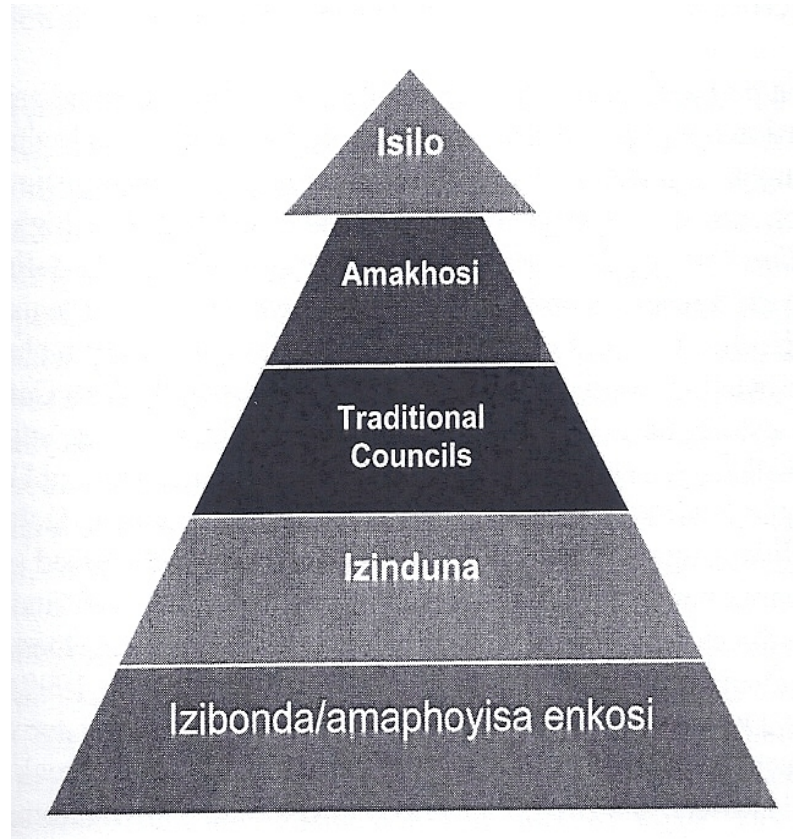
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<sup>1</sup> *Isilo* means the Monarch for the Province of KwaZulu-Natal as recognised in Section 17 of the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005), or 'king' as defined in Section 1 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act No. 41 of 2003).

<sup>2</sup> *Inkosi* means a senior traditional leader as defined in Section 1 of the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act, 2003 (Act No. 41 of 2003) and recognised as such in terms of Section 19 of KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005) and *Amakhosi* is the plural form of the term.

<sup>3</sup> *Induna* is a traditional leader who is under the authority of, or exercises authority within the area of jurisdiction of, an *inkosi* in accordance with customary law, and who is recognised as such in terms of Section 27 of the KwaZulu-Natal Traditional Leadership and Governance Act, 2005 (Act No. 5 of 2005) and *izinduna* is the plural form of the term.

**Figure 1: Traditional leadership structure**



*Isilo* is the monarch, *amakhosi* are senior traditional leaders, both of whom get to these positions predominantly through inheritance. However, during colonial times in South Africa some senior traditional leaders were imposed by colonial masters (Mashele, 2003; Minnaar, 1991). The Traditional Council is the only layer in the traditional leadership institution that is democratically elected, and it must include women (KZNLGTA, 2005; RSA, 2003). The last two layers of the institution – *izinduna*, *izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* – are often appointed by the senior traditional leaders. The Legislation recognises the first four layers. Our experience of working in rural communities indicates that the fifth layer that includes *izibonda* and *amaphoyisa enkosi* takes different shapes in different communities within the province. *Izibonda* are elderly members of the community who have been in the community longest and have profound knowledge of community history. *Amaphoyisa enkosi* keep the peace in community gatherings. In some communities one person can perform both duties.

## Conceptual and theoretical framework

This section provides a discussion of key concepts and theoretical perspectives that are used in this paper. According to Gonzalez, Lauder, and Melles (2000), we are living in an interconnected society where forming synergistic partnerships can create stronger economies and offer residents a high quality of life. *Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus* (1995, p.696) defines partnership as “a relationship in which two or more people or organisations work together in a business venture”. Synonyms for partnership include alliance, association, combine, participation, and sharing (*Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus*, 1995). Strategic partnership, alliances, and mergers are concepts that permeate the world of business today (Jensen and Unt, 2002), and the related discourses have impacted on other sectors including education. Educational collaborations have emerged from the broad spectrum of reform initiatives largely as a means to improving educational attainment for students (Gomez, 1998). Such collaboration has brought together schools, colleges, universities, parents, and community leaders (Gomez, 1998). Collaborative projects have attempted to renew the democratic value of education, equalise educational opportunity, support educators, break down institutional barriers, and share resources for maximum benefit (Gomez, 1998).

According to Gomez (1998), partnership involves both engagement and exchange, with collaborative activities aimed at mutually derived and independent benefits for all participants. Partners must have a highly flexible, empowering, and innovative partnership culture; a team-based strategy; and a process of relationship management (Lendrum, 2004). Partnerships and alliances involve strong, inspirational and visionary leaders with levels of personal drive, competence and integrity (Lendrum, 2004). The basic principles of partnership include agreement on common problems. These guidelines were intended to break down barriers and rebuild the quality of schooling (Gomez, 1998).

A successful partnership must function symbiotically, and maintaining this kind of relationship requires an understanding of multiple realities, because conflicting perceptions of the same event can lead to a breakdown in communication (Gomez, 1998). Gomez (1998) further argues that partnerships should be the result of a mutual desire on the part of two or more institutions to effect change. Practitioners and researchers agree that the key to sustaining the energy of interinstitutional collaboration is strong leadership and effective governance. Among those characteristics deemed essential are

common goals; mutual trust and respect; shared decision making; long-term commitment; and information sharing (Gomez, 1998).

The term partnership implies equity among institutions and individuals within a system circumscribed by entrenched inequities and hierarchies (Gomez, 1998). Some writers have argued that in partnership attitudes, feelings, and habits must be merged (Jensen and Unt, 2002). Perhaps one way to achieve this is to create a positive 'entrapment' among the partners. Entrapment is a term adopted from psychology, which means a process whereby partners increase their commitment to a course of action in order to justify their investment of time, money or effort to it (Wade and Tavis, 1998). Gomez (1998) raises a concern about the absence of a theoretical basis for educational collaboration and an almost exclusive focus on practice. He then proposes that a more rigorous philosophical scrutiny of the relationship among partnership, education, and democracy, profound systemic change must be done.

We use the systems approach to frame our thinking about the forms of partnership that may or may not exist between traditional leadership and schools. This approach maintains that all individuals and organisations exist within a network of relationships (Pettigrew, 1999). Sociologists call this a 'social network' that can be characterised by either strong or weak ties (Brinkerhoff, White, Ortega and Weitz, 2002). In this perspective, schools are seen as part of a society which has a profound effect on how the school operates). When used in connection with social and human systems, it is referred to as 'ecosystemic' theory, where all parts are related to, and affect, each other (Pettigrew, 1999).

Ecosystemic theory is based on the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment (Pettigrew, 1999). This is appropriate to use in analysing the interdependence between schools and the land that is under the authority of traditional leadership. Within ecosystemic theory there are four levels. These are Microsystem (e.g. individual; family); Mesosystem (school; church); Exosystem (community services; school governing body; Provincial DoE); and Macrosystem (customs of culture; broad ideologies; government; laws) (Pettigrew, 1999). For the purposes of this paper we are using mesosystem, exosystem, and the macrosystem, because we are examining partnerships at an institutional level, i.e. school and traditional leadership.

Pettigrew (1999) cautions that all these levels must exist in harmony; otherwise a 'dissonance' will occur. The idea of 'ecological dissonance' occurs when the equilibrium of the whole system is disrupted (Pettigrew,

1999). The harmonious equilibrium can be disorganised by power relations among role players. Power has been defined elsewhere as the ability to direct others' behaviour even against their will (Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn, 1988; Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2002). Sociologists have identified two kinds of power, i.e. coercion and authority. While coercion is the exercise of power through force or the threat of force, authority is power supported by norms and values that legitimate its use (Brinkerhoff *et al.*, 2002).

A number of studies conducted by the Education Policy Consortium<sup>4</sup> of South Africa between 2002 and 2005, some of which were conducted in collaboration with researchers from other organisations across the country, suggest that traditional leaders have great power and influence over decisions for schools falling within their jurisdiction. Such power and influence is either negative or positive. This is happening in rural schools, because most schools in such contexts are built on tribal trust lands, and by default the traditional authority often has a final say on land-related decisions.

In this paper we maintain that schooling is characterised by cultural transmission through what many sociologists call a 'hidden curriculum' (Wilcox in Spindler, 1982; Meighan and Siraj-Blatchford, 2003). We can thus see the role of traditional leadership in relation to either the formal teaching process or the informal cultural transmission processes of schools, or to both. This frame enables us to examine the role of traditional leadership in school governance, management, curriculum delivery and infrastructural development, as well as in mediation between schools and communities they serve.

## Methodology

This article draws from our experience and reflections as researchers in four ethnographic studies conducted by the EPC. The common goal of these studies was to "formulate patterns of analysis that makes reasonable sense out of human actions within the given contexts of a specific time and place" (Fife, 2005, p.1). Our experiences in these studies were not captured in any formal order, because the studies were not examining traditional leadership. Rather these experiences existed as our reflective notes on how we grappled with one or another form of

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<sup>4</sup> The Education Policy Consortium of South Africa is a research structure formed in 2000 by the education policy units in the Universities of Fort Hare, Witwatersrand, KwaZulu-Natal, as well as the Centres for Higher Education and the Centre for Education Policy Development. The Consortium is funded by the SIDA and the Dutch government.

traditional leadership influence in these studies. The studies that are selected are the Governance and Equity in South Africa; the Emerging Voices; Investigating the Effects of the ECAG's Classroom Building on Schooling; and Investigating the Impact of Unpaid Domestic Child Labour on School Attendance.

The Governance and Equity project was a longitudinal study that had three components to it, i.e. statistical analysis of education finance, discourse analysis, and six case studies – two of which were rural schools – were selected from Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The Emerging Voices study was conducted in collaboration with the Human Sciences Research Council and was funded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. This study examined people's experiences of education in the context of poverty in nine rural primary schools from the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces. The study to investigate The Effects of ECAG's Classroom Building on Schooling was conducted in fourteen rural schools in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal. The study to examine The Impact of Unpaid Domestic Child Labour on School Attendance was conducted in twelve rural schools, six from each of the KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces.

In these studies we were struck by the significance of the role of traditional leaders that seemed to have implications for the success or otherwise of many decisions and processes that impacted on schooling. For the purposes of writing this article, we saw it necessary to make follow-up telephonic interviews with some selected school managers, and traditional leaders from the schools and communities that had participated. The selected schools' names are presented here in pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. These schools are GMY Primary, NYC Secondary, MTW Secondary, KBZ Secondary, and ENB Primary. GMY and ENB Primary Schools are situated under the same *inkosi*. MTW and NYC Secondary Schools are also under the same *inkosi*. The aim of the contact was to refresh our memory and to obtain current information about the influence of traditional leadership in these schools. An additional one-on-one interview was conducted with one Inkosi who has made a contribution to improve infrastructure in the schools that are situated in the area of his jurisdiction.

A careful triangulation of information from the authors' experience and the follow-up interviews with selected informants from the schools that participated in the above mentioned studies resulted in the discussion below. The discussion traces the evidence of traditional leadership influence in school management, governance, mediation between school and community, and in infrastructural development. The conclusion which attempts to elicit implications for policy and practice is made based on the emerging picture in the discussion, comes at the end of the article.

## Traditional leadership in school management and leadership

Within the school context management and leadership are closely related with different foci. Management focuses on operations within an organisation while leadership entails looking at the direction that the organisation is taking (Clarke, 2007; Department of Education, 1996; Davies and Ellison, 1997; Sapre, 2002). Both these terms take into account the social context and relationships that can assist the organisation to achieve its vision and mission. In the Emerging Voices study, it was found that when principals indicated the degree of influence of various community leaders on the running of the school, they ranked the *izinduna* the highest (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

During the follow-up interviews, the informants expressed contrasting opinions about the linkages between traditional leadership and school management teams. The principal for GMY Primary said that school management and leadership are professional and highly specialised roles that traditional leaders would not be expected to take on. Other informants saw the linkage as a definite possibility and indicated how such a linkage has been, and could be, achieved in various school contexts. There are visible signs of partnership between the institution of traditional leadership and the school management team regarding what is currently happening, and what could potentially happen, in schools. The emerging picture is that traditional leadership can assist school managers in terms of information sharing, conflict management, and maintaining discipline.

According to the principal of the KBZ Secondary, the traditional leader who was an ex-principal and an *induna*, and was running a local taxi industry, used his multi-faceted experience to share specific management-related information with the current principal of the school. The principal further asserted that most traditional leaders know learners' home conditions and are better placed to inform the school about these conditions so as to help enable the school management team to understand learners better. In that way the school can make informed choices about the deployment of resources. This supportive role was linked to his ex-principal status and cannot be played by any traditional leader who did not possess this status.

In another school, i.e. MTW Secondary, the traditional leader was considered by all the informants as an expert in conflict resolution and discipline maintenance. As such, he occasionally conducted capacity building workshops on conflict management with the school management team.



Further, the school's discipline policy provided for specific disciplinary measures to be outsourced to the traditional leadership. For example, the discipline policy refers all cases involving learners carrying weapons into the school premises to the *Inkosi*. This is done as a protective mechanism for the in-school population, because such learners pose a threat to both the staff and other learners. The rationale of outsourcing these cases is that they compromise discipline in the school and therefore a neutral institution, for instance, the traditional leadership, is deemed appropriate to address this. There is consensus from informants that the relationship with the *Inkosi* has benefited the MTW Secondary School greatly.

The informants recommended ways in which the partnership between traditional leadership can further be developed and strengthened. One traditional leader stressed that they should not be ignored or undermined by the school authorities, but must have significant input on the general running of the school. Unlike in MTW Secondary, the principal in NYC Secondary reported that traditional leadership can assist in helping management solve a number of problems such as curbing violence in schools. This shows that this school has not been as proactive as the MTW Secondary in terms of taking advantage of the expertise of conflict resolution that the *Inkosi* possessed. The principal of ENB Primary School said that her management team was neither able to deal with extreme cases of unruly behaviour of learners as manifest in cases of bullying, nor able to cater for learners with special needs, especially those who were mentally challenged. She felt that traditional leaders can assist the school in building a strong case for intervention by social workers.

## Traditional leadership in school governance

Governance entails defining an organisation's mission and to establish its policies and control mechanisms to allocate power, determine decision-making processes, establish organisational culture, and set up procedures for performing specific tasks (Kouri, 1999). Traditional leaders have a historical influence on school governance. During the era of Bantu Education, traditional leaders were given responsibility to nominate five members, four of which would serve in the School Committees (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The Emerging Voices study pointed out that 83% of surveyed schools were situated or built on tribal trust lands/communally-held land, which gives the traditional leaders authority and control over schools, particularly in the school governance (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Such authority and control entail monitoring and supervising SGB activities,

as well as disciplining the children (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Our analysis of traditional leadership influence on school governance has revealed that these leaders participate as either full members or representatives in the general functioning of SGBs, as well as promoting safety and security in schools.

The roles that traditional leadership plays in school governance include monitoring, supervision of the School Governing Body (SGB) activities and participating in the Safety and Security Committees. There are three types of membership that traditional leadership have on SGBs. The one is that of full membership of the SGB. As full members of the SGB traditional leaders perform normal functions like any member of this body. The Chairperson of the SGB in NYC School is also a member of the Traditional Council that deliberates on community matters with Inkosi. The other form of membership is through having a representative on the SGB who reports to the traditional leadership, enabling it to monitor and supervise the activities of the SGB. In MTW Secondary, the Inkosi has the representative on the SGB, who reports to him on a regular basis. Co-option to the SGB occurs when the SGB identifies a member of the traditional leadership structure as having specific expertise. In the study to examine Governance and Equity in South African Schools, one school in the Eastern Cape had co-opted a Headman<sup>5</sup> into the SGB and his contribution was seen by the principal and the teaching staff as positive. The latter form of membership indicates the trust that exists between the two structures.

The principal of the KBZ said that most schools elected traditional leaders into their SGBs, mainly because they are influential and are trusted in the community. The inclusion of traditional leadership in the Safety and Security Committees has been crucial in the promotion of safety and security in schools. The KBZ principal said that the school is located in close proximity to the *Induna*'s household and he looks after the school, because he also serves in the Safety and Security Committee.

During the interviews informants also made recommendations about roles that can be played by the traditional leadership. The principal for GMY Primary said that the traditional leaders can play an important role in assisting the SGB identify parents that need to be exempted from paying school fees. They further pointed out that traditional leaders help authenticate cases of those who apply for exemption. The principal at ENB Primary said that her school was gripped by vandalism of school property and she asserted that traditional

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<sup>5</sup> Headman is equivalent to '*induna*'.

leaders can assist in this regard by supporting the school's efforts to address this challenge. The experience of MTW School has demonstrated the possibility and the success of this.

## Traditional leadership in schools - community relations

The discourse on school community relations have been underpinned by the acceptance of the fact that a school is not isolated or independent, but it operates in a social context such as the local community (Bryson, 1988; Sergiovanni, 1990; Gorton, 1991; Robertson, 1995). There has been a growing realisation and a need for school leaders to get to know community leaders better, involve parents in school processes, and to establish key communicators from members of the public (Fiore, 2002). Traditional leadership is part of community leadership in rural contexts and attempts to establish linkages between this structure and schools had both positive and negative factors. Some of the positive ones include an enhanced community ownership of schools and parental involvement in school affairs as well as playing a gate-keeping role in terms of access to schools by outsiders. Negative factors include the non-responsive attitude of some traditional leaders when they are invited to participate in school affairs, and it has been reported that some are in fact trouble-makers.

The informants interviewed revealed that most school managers have found involving traditional leaders in ensuring maximum participation of parents in school affairs a rewarding exercise. The current roles played by traditional leadership include the promotion of community ownership of schools which helps curb crime and vandalism. Other roles include mediation and strengthening of relationships between schools and community; creating a platform where both the school and community discuss issues affecting them. Such a platform has been created in GMY Primary School, where the traditional leaders call community meetings and use the school as a venue. This is characterised by symbiotic relationship between the two structures. For instance, the traditional leadership utilise school as venues for community meetings and the school would have a slot in the programme to address the community on school matters. Despite ENB Primary being in close proximity to the GMY Primary, there is no evidence that indicate that such a symbiotic relationship has been established. Sometimes the schools request traditional leadership to call community meetings on their behalf. In MTW Secondary School, the *Inkosi* is requested to invite parents on behalf of the school, and in this way attendance to meetings has improved.

In The Effects of Unpaid Domestic Labour on Schooling study, an *Inkosi* played a gate-keeping role regarding access to schools built on tribal trust lands for research and development projects. Informants also indicated that there is a potential role that can be played by the traditional leadership to create a platform through which schools can form partnership with different spheres of government. The principal of KBZ said that traditional leadership can also liaise with Local Government and Welfare Departments on behalf of the schools in order to secure linkages that would benefit learners. However, this gate-keeping role could be both productive and counterproductive. While this is important to protect the schools from invasions that may violate the rights of the members of school community and creating innovative partnerships for schools, it may also block development in these schools. The researchers were almost chased away in a research site and a development project for improving access roads was suspended in KwaZulu-Natal, because the traditional leadership felt that the protocols had not been properly observed.

Notwithstanding the positive factors characterising the relationship between traditional leadership and schools in rural contexts, some traditional leaders were not supporting the schools in their jurisdiction. The principal at ENB Primary said that some traditional leaders were less motivated to understand that the schools needed them. She said that all they did was to use the school for the distribution of letters to community members inviting them to meetings. The principal in NYC Secondary asserted that community members and leaders should assist with regards to safety and security. He despaired that this was not possible because these people often expected payment for such services. Though there was a Safety and Security Committee in the area, of which traditional leadership was part, it was non-functional, because members hardly attended Committee meetings. The Safety and Security Committee of ENB Primary has *izinduna* as part of the structure. They were also part of the Community Policing Forums, but it was reported that other members of such forums were the very trouble makers, because they were allegedly involved in petty criminal activities.

School-community relationship building and sustenance is a two way process where both parties must take initiatives. While most informants were content with calling for the involvement of traditional leadership on school affairs, the KBZ principal proposed the inverse trend. He said that in order to maintain a smooth relationship between schools and communities, school managers need to associate with the community by attending functions or parties even if uninvited. This is taking the school to the community and promoting the schools' involvement in the community affairs. This would afford the

community an opportunity to accept and regard these schools as part and parcel of themselves and would enable them to make suggestions for school improvement.

## Traditional leadership in infrastructural development

The need for infrastructural development is echoed by John Samuel in the Emerging Voices study when he says: “The relative scarcity of resources and in some cases the desolation and poverty of rural communities seriously limits the developmental possibilities that might be achieved through education” (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005, p. viii). The evidence in the four selected studies indicated that partnership between schools and traditional leadership in terms of infrastructural development took various forms. These include traditional leadership taking initiative in enhancing schools’ built environment, endorsing application for the construction of new classrooms, and the schools approaching traditional leadership to assist in fund raising for the provision of physical resources, such as toilets.

The building of MTW Secondary School was an initiative of the *Inkosi* in 1982 and the *Inkosi* has remained a guardian for the school to ensure proper maintenance of the built environment. Together with parents, an *Inkosi* assisted in raising funds for the deposit in the building of eight classrooms at another school, i.e. NYC Secondary School. Another *Inkosi* made a tractor available to level the ground where classrooms were built at GMY Primary School. In the study to investigate the effect of ECAG’s classroom building on schooling, it was reported that during the process of applying for classroom provision, an *induna*, played an important endorsing role in the signing of application letter for ENB Primary School. After a teacher had left the school because he could not cope with the lack of toilets, the *Inkosi* where KBZ School is situated has responded positively to the school’s request to help build toilets. The KBZ principal further said that whenever the school buys equipment, traditional leaders are informed for buy-in purposes, because community ownership helps improve safety and security. An *induna* argued that traditional leaders should have an ultimate say on infrastructural development, since the land belonged to the *Inkosi*. All these incidents indicate current and potential partnership between traditional leadership and schools in improving the built environment.

However, the proposal made by the traditional leader’s lobbying for an ultimate say in infrastructural development indicates different perceptions of power relations than the one indicated by the principal of KBZ Secondary.

The principal is of the opinion that the power of traditional leaders can be used to benefit the school in terms of protecting physical resources. On the other hand, the traditional leadership desire to have a direct influencing on the final decisions about infrastructural development.

## Traditional leadership in curriculum delivery

The current and potential roles that traditional leadership play in curriculum delivery point to a thin line between the formal and the 'hidden' curriculum. It was reported in one of the participating schools that the current role of traditional leadership in curriculum delivery entails reinforcing the traditional values of respecting oneself and others. The principal of KBZ pointed out that the traditional leadership often comes to address the children at school on issues of tradition and cultural values of respect. This happened either during school assembly or in Life Orientation classes.

A proposed role includes that traditional leadership contribute towards promoting HIV/AIDS awareness. The KBZ principal said that traditional leaders can complement educator's efforts to promote HIV/AIDS awareness. He said that some learners were orphans, but would often hide their situation. Traditional leaders know learners' situation and are in the position to share information with schools managers in order for them to handle related learner cases effectively.

## Conclusions: implications for policy and practice

The nature of partnership between traditional leadership and schools has been characterised by the search for expert knowledge, gate-keeping, and support towards general school improvement. In addition, there are recommendations to take these forms of partnership to the next level where these can be formalised through legislation. First and foremost an exosystemic partnership between education departments and traditional leaders must be explored within the South Africa context and must be properly legislated for maximum support of the rural schools. This requires effective policies on how the schools can draw from resources in their feeder area and how the communities can strengthen schools efforts to be centres of community life. This paper has indicated an evident willingness of traditional leaders to support the affairs of schools in their areas and has suggested how a platform to involve them in the transformation agenda of schools can be established and sustained. It is everybody's responsibility to promote and encourage this relationship. It is a

two way process where school-based stakeholders must involve traditional leaders in their affairs and traditional leaders must do the same. The data from the participated schools in this article indicated that the relationship between schools and communities was shaped by the nature of participation of traditional leaders in the affairs of the schools.

The legislation should also seek to regulate and encourage the effective communication between traditional leadership and schools. A communication between principals and traditional leaders must be smooth and characterised by proactive endeavours of parties involved. The NYC and MTW High Schools have different strengths of relationship with traditional leadership regardless of their proximity to the same traditional leadership headquarters. This was also true in the ENB and GMY Primaries. The difference was in the proactive nature of the parties in MTW Secondary and GMY Primary, and their passivity of the parties in NYC Secondary and ENB Primary in relation to building the relationship. As a result, collaboration between school and traditional leadership was weak for the NYC, while it was very strong at the MTW. Our assumptions about proximity of the two schools and thus having similar relations with traditional leadership were thus dispelled.

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Sandile Mbokazi  
Faculty of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

[931321343@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:931321343@ukzn.ac.za)  
[mbokazis@telkomsa.net](mailto:mbokazis@telkomsa.net)

Thamsanqa Bhengu  
Faculty of Education  
University of KwaZulu-Natal

[bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:bhengutt@ukzn.ac.za)