Pioneering an Alternative Way of Doing Development through Leadership Preparation: Learning from the Educational Leadership Management and Development (ELMD) Programme

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Abstract: This study explores educational leadership development and social change strategies pioneered by one programme, the Educational Leadership Management and Development (ELMD) programme of the University of Fort Hare. The programme sought to model a way of doing social and educational transformation through educational leadership development. Conceptually, the model was meant to draw together a number of education stakeholders operating at various levels of the schooling system to undergo the same programme of leadership development. The participants included district education officials, schools principals, members of school management teams, educators and members of School Governing Bodies, who enrolled as teams. They worked on learning tasks that were both academic and practical in nature, with an emphasis on experiential learning that leads to the creation of district and community networks of partners, development teams or forums and communities of practice, as well as the production and implementation of district and school development plans. Emerging evidence suggests a number of possibilities. (1), the ELMD programme delivery design shows what can be done to draw participants from various levels of the schooling system, district, school and community and teach them educational leadership together in a mode that   mobilizes them for change. (2), how social distance separating different levels of the education hierarchy and status consciousness may disappear gradually as people are brought together to work on tasks of mutual concern. (3), the current higher education accreditation policies and practices do not accommodate innovative learning approaches of the kind that the ELMD is developing. In this regard, the ELMD experienced difficulties in coming up with an assessment policy and practices which meet the academic as well as the practical developmental concerns of the programme.
Keywords: Leadership Preparation, Management, Social Change, Development, Community.

Introduction

This paper examines one pilot year of the Education Leadership Management and Development (ELMD) programme run by the University of Fort Hare. The programme sought to model a way of doing social and educational transformation through educational leadership development. Conceptually, the model was meant to draw together a number of education stakeholders operating at various levels of the schooling system to undergo the same programme of leadership development. The programme participants, who included district education officials, schools principals, members of school management teams, educators and members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), were to enrol as teams. They would work on learning tasks that were both academic and practical in nature, with an emphasis on experiential learning that leads to the creation of district and community networks of partners, development teams or forums and communities of practice, as well as the production and implementation of district and school development plans.

Informed by this conceptual position, the study was structured by two underlying questions. First, whether the ELMD was pioneering educational leadership beyond the traditional focus on principalship towards one that is inclusive of other education stakeholders. Second, how leadership development as a vehicle for social and educational

change can be carried out. The research process was guided by a multi-paradigm perspective which drew heavily on the interpretive and critical science orientations (Moyo 2004). This led to the crafting of research methods that looked for data that would assist in an understanding of what was happening in the programme, as well as what power dynamics were at play and with what consequences for innovation. The paper is divided into three parts: (1) an outline of the ELMD experiment; (2) methodological issues and research design; and (3) a discussion of findings.

1.   The ELMD Experiment

In July 2003, the University of Fort Hare's then School of Education launched a new leadership preparation programme, called Educational Leadership, Management and Development (ELMD). The idea of this programme started in 2000 during a discussion between Nhlanganiso Dladla and George Moyo, both academic practitioners at the University of Fort Hare. The idea arose out of three basic concerns. One was the shared belief and desire to see tangible and observable changes taking place in schools and communities, as a result of various Eastern Cape based projects (Imbewu, Isithole, Ikwezi, mention just three examples) aimed at bringing about transformation. The second motivation was to address the apparent lack of coordination and synergy among various efforts within the Eastern Cape Department of Education, pointing to a possible gap in leadership. Following this was the third question focusing on why there was this apparent gap in leadership despite many university based educational leadership and management programmes that have, over the years, produced a number of graduates serving in the schools system. Dladla and Moyo then sought to develop a leadership preparation programme that not only seeks to answer these questions but also to promote integrated whole school and whole district development through the development and nurturing of leadership and management knowledge, as well as the cultivation of a change-activist consciousness in education organizations and stakeholder communities. The main purpose of the ELMD was, therefore

> to harness and organize local and global human and material resources for development through educational leadership, with the ultimate goal of impacting learner outcomes through improving teaching and learning in schools, as well as the support provided to schools by communities, regional and district authorities (Dladla and Moyo 2002:4).

As can be seen, from the above quotation, the thinking behind the programme speaks to an ecosystem with various parts working together for the development and survival of the system. The idea is that these elements of the ELMD programme can develop in such a manner that they are both self-reinforcing and supportive to each other. The partnerships between communities and education organizations ensure that there is a cross-fertilization of ideas between these sectors, leading to relevant actions for change. At the same time, this leads to the development of learning communities within and outside education organizations. The expectation is that this leads to the creation of qualitatively new human and material resources that can be mobilized and used for further action aimed at change. These ideas were crystalised into a programme structure that was to be delivered, as a pilot, over two years.

1.1   ELMD Learning Areas

The programme consisted of eight learning areas designed to produce two outcome areas, as shown in the Figure 1 below.

Module/Learning Area   **Outcomes**

Module/Learning Area	Outcomes

1. Leadership
2. Schools Communities & Transformation

3. Developmental Research
4. Leading Professional Development
5. Strategic Planning & Participatory Action

6. Policy & Education Development
7. Education Management & Development Information System (EMDIS)
8. Projects & Finance

Values & Consciousness
- Social commitment
- Compassion & patience
- Respect

Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes
- Practice-based inquiry frame
- Democratic, participatory disposition
- Positive work ethic & professionalism
- Determination
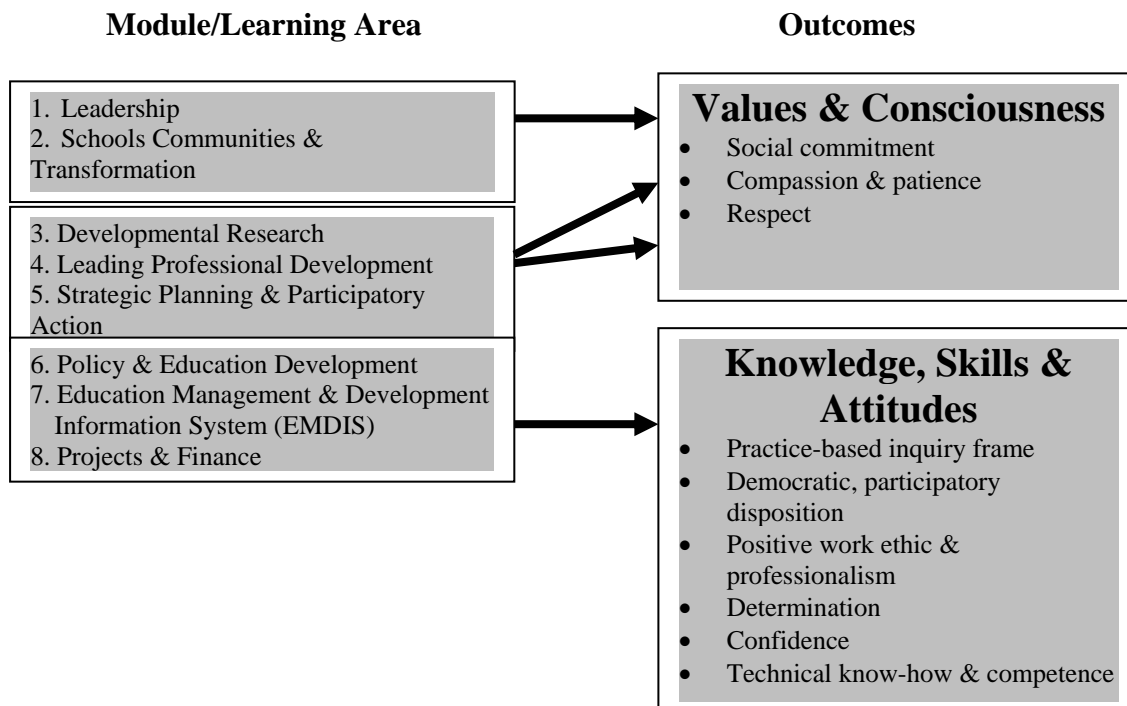- Confidence
- Technical know-how & competence

Figure 1: *ELMD Learning Areas and Expected Outcomes*

The eight learning areas shown in Figure 1, for Cohort 1, are clustered into three sets. The first two introductory modules were designed to oriented participants into ELMD philosophy and values, as well as build a new consciousness. The rest of the areas were clustered in order to achieve knowledge outcomes shown in Figure 1. How this configuration played itself out in practice as well as elaboration of what each learning area seeks to achieve will be discussed in the next section.

1.2   ELMD Learning Area Themes
The learning areas had been further organized around themes in order to give participants practical opportunities to address real-life issues and challenges as well as build teams and community. The themes constituted a **key activity** around which learning through inquiry, knowledge sharing, as well as leveraging knowledge to change their circumstances is envisaged to take place. The learning area themes are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Learning Area Themes*

Theme and Key Activity	Content of Key Activity	Module/Learning Area	Outcomes
1.**Profiling**	• Team building • Identity profiling • Leadership issues • Community mapping	• Developmental Research • Leadership • Schools, Communities and Transformation	**Values and Consciousness** • *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*[1] • Identity • Social commitment • Compassion and patience • Respect
2.**Social Mobilization**	• Analyze data from community mapping • Deepen community profile • Vision crafting • Establish, strengthen district, school and community forums	• Developmental Research • Schools, Communities and Transformation • Leadership • Policy and Education Development	**Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes** • Practice-based inquiry • Democratic participation, disposition • Positive work ethic • Determination • Confidence • Technical know-how and competence
3.**District and School Planning**	• Write development plans • Understand role of policy in planning • Understand role of finance in planning • Develop professional development plans	• Leadership • Participatory Action for Strategic Planning • Finance and Projects • Education Management, Development Information System (EMDIS)	**Knowledge, Skills & Attitudes** • Practice-based inquiry • Democratic participation, disposition • Positive work ethic • Determination • Confidence
4.**Constructing and Implementing Plans**	Participants finalize and implement plans		

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[1] A person is a person because of other people.

Reflections and outcomes of plans	This was to be carried out in district teams.
Affirmation	Affirmers from the University were to visit district teams to affirm their work.

In Table 1, it can be seen that there are four key themes. For each key theme there was a set of activities covered in modules and with corresponding outcomes. For the benefit of participants three theme modules which comprised, "Profiling"; "Social Mobilisation" and "District and School Planning" were developed. They were meant to structure the set of activities under each theme and draw together strands from each related learning area.   Once again, how this has worked out for the first cohort enrolled on the programme will be examined in the next section.

1.3   The Structure of the ELMD Learning & Development Programme
The participants' learning was supported by a variety of strategies that combined week-long block sessions, individual work, as well as regular face-to-face meetings, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2: *Structure of the ELMD Learning and Development Programme*

Structure of Programme	Activities undertaken
Block Week 1, Year 1 (July 2003)	• Introduction and programme philosophy • Introductory team building • Introduction to district mapping and profiling
Independent Action & Learning (July - Sept. 2003)	• **Profiling** and **Environmental Mapping** activity • Team building and leadership reflection
Block Week 2 (end Sept. 2003)	• Profile analysis and Consolidation • Prepare for **Social Mobilisation**
Block Week 3 (Jan 2004)	• Reports on district and school-community visions and structure • Reflectionon Leadership development • Introduction to and preparation for **Planning** activity
Independent Action & learning (Jan – April 2004)	• Mobilisation for **District & School Development Planning** • Planning, development of, and site-based review of **Plans**
Independent Action & Learning (April –July 2004)	• Begin **Implementation** of District & School Development Plans
Block Week 4 (July 2004)	• Whole group reflection on Planning & Implementation experiences • Consolidation of capacity for **Plans Implementation**
Independent Action & Learning (July –Sept. 2004)	• Continue **Plans Implementation** • Preparation of detailed progress Reports for mid- **Evaluation and Affirmation 1**
Block Week 5 (Sept.	• Presentation of Progress Reports at Affirmation

2004)	1('moderation' by University of Fort Hare, Eastern Cape Department of Education, National Department of Education & other assessors) • Conferring Section 21 status ('full'/'conditional' and further preparation for improvement.
Independent Action & Learning (Oct. – Nov. 2004)	• Integration of Affirmation feedback and consolidation of necessary cycle step(s) for **improvement implementation** • Preparation of Affirmation 2 and **ELMD Colloquium**
Block Week 6 (Jan 2005)	• Presentation & Evaluation at Affirmation 2 and **ELMD Colloquium** • Preparation of M.Eds for dissertation work

The learning and development programme shown in Table 2 summarizes the approach. Upon acceptance and enrolment, participants attended a week-long **Block Session** in which writers of modules and other invited people presented a combination of lectures and workshops. During block sessions, participants were introduced to key activity tasks and independent as well as collaborative action learning. During the first year, every fortnight, in between block sessions, there were **face-to-face** sessions where participants met as district based teams to share action-learning experiences facilitated by tutors who were called *abakwezeli,* which means people who "keep the fire burning".

1.4   Characteristics of Cohort 1 of ELMD

Table 3 presents a distribution of ELMD participants by district and position. It can be seen, from the table, that four Eastern Cape districts participated in the first year of ELMD. The largest representation was from District 4, with almost a third of the participants. This was followed by District 3 with 26. Then came District 1 and District 4, with 23 each.

Table 3: *Number of ELMD Participants by District & by Position*

District	Position of Participant					Total
	EDOs	Principals	Educators	HODs	SGBs [2]	
District 1	5	5	4	5	4	23
District 2	1	5	3	3	11	23
District 3	4	5	6	4	7	26
District 4	6	6	3	5	12	32
Totals	**14**	**21**	**13**	**22**	**32**	**104**

Source: Progress Report by the Programme Coordinator of 15 October 2003 (figures updated 9 November 2004)[3]

The table also disaggregates participants by position, in order to show the level of participation by stakeholder. It is interesting to note that the largest single group is that of

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[2] SGB members are not educators, but members of the community, usually parents.

[3] Figures were updated on 9 November 2004 with the assistance of the ELMD Programme Administrative Assistant. Figures, however, still did not agree with those of the other two tables, which at the time of writing this report no one in the ELMD office could explain.

School Governing Board (SGB) members. This group consisted of parent members of the SGB, all of which did not have a university entrance qualification. The second largest group was the Heads of Department (HODs). These were school based educators in positions of leadership. The principals were in strong third place, then followed by the Education Development Officers (EDOs), who occupied the position of district education officials. The smallest number was that of educators. This means that there was a strong school representation of people in leadership positions.

Each district team then consisted of all five levels of stakeholders and the leadership of the team was expected to be a shared task that would be influenced by assignments, intended to capacitate all participants to develop their capabilities and model the desired leadership roles they would be required to play within their locales.

1.5   How does the ELMD Differ From Other Leadership Development Programes?
The ELMD approach to leadership development has been recognized as innovative[4]. Apart from various testimonies attesting to this fact, the very composition of cohort 1 participants, as shown in Table 3 testifies to what commentators from universities as far afield as the United States of America, and including some African universities, have said: what the ELMD is doing is something unique. They have acknowledged that no university has tried to create a programme and course materials to accommodate different levels of learners, some of whom "do not have matric, while others in the same team have already completed graduate and even post-graduate university degrees" (Eastern Cape Department of Education, Undated:6). From this point of view, it could be said that the ELMD experiment has something to contribute to the world concerning educational leadership development. Before claiming a paradigm shift, however, the ELMD experiment should demonstrate achievement of desired changes in leaders, districts, communities and schools. This study sought to find evidence of transformations that had taken place as a result of ELMD intervention.

2.   Methodological Issues and Research Design
The core research questions that underpin the study are how is leadership developed for non-hierarchical, change, learning organizations and how whole school and whole communities change through leadership development. Put in another way, the purpose was to *learn* how the practice of a leadership preparation programme can be a vehicle for social change. In line with this aim, my intention was to learn from the single case, the ELMD. Stake (2000:436) argues that a case study must be designed to "optimize understanding of the case rather than generalization beyond." However, in undertaking the case study approach, I was aware of lack of agreement on a number of methodological issues that arise out of differences in views about the purpose and nature of case study. Gromm, Hammersley and Foster (2000: 5 - 6) have argued that these include questions of whether the results are generalizable or usable by others. As my aim was to learn, I hope the findings will be used by future leadership development programme designers and implementers. The other issue has to do with causality or narration of events. Part of my aim was the latter, so that I could tell the story of what went on in year one of the ELMD programme. The third issue concerns authenticity and authority. It has been argued that a case study can capture the unique

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[4] The ELMD participant testimonies presented in the section on findings of the study as well as anecdotal comments from partner institutions who have visited the programme as co-facilitators and module writers have attested to the innovative nature of the programme. The collaborators came from institutions which included California State University, in the USA, Rhodes University, Africa University in Zimbabwe and University of Transkei.

character of a case being studied, where the concern is not typicality but rather, to represent it authentically in its own terms. In studying the ELMD as a case, I have endeavoured to understand and interpret what happened during year one in terms of the consistency, authenticity and credibility (O'Leary 2004) of what the programme set out to do, as a way of representing it as accurately as possible. These are some of the key ideas that constitute ground rules for good research (Denscombe 2002).

Paying due recognition of the above issues and from the nature of the research question which seeks to answer *how* the data I was looking for was primarily qualitative, representing *developing* educational leadership using the ELMD model. These data comprised written texts from programme documents (including published course modules and other materials) and my own research journal reflecting on various ELMD staff colleagues and interview responses. To collect these data I used two main methodological approaches elaborated in turn below.

2.1 Practice-Based Observation
In this study, I have used observation, not in the traditional sense. Based on the nature of the research questions and the type of data I was looking for, I was led not only to agree with Agrosino and Mays de Perez' (2003) critique of the positivistic experimental and hypothesis-testing position in observation, where an observer tries to maintain a "detached" and "objective" stance, but also to orientate my observation such that I become part of the world (ELMD) I was studying. To do this I also drew on insights from the Imbewu concept of Practice-Based Inquiry (PBI) and thus coined the term *Practice-based Observation.*
According to the Imbewu Project, PBI is an open-ended inquiry by educational practitioners into their practice. As a researcher who was also co-programme designer and co-facilitator, I was at the same time an ELMD practitioner. In PBI, according to Imbewu, practitioners go through six main cyclical phases:

- **IDENTIFY** an issue or element of the vision they want to achieve, something they want to improve. Collect information about that element in order to understand it more clearly.
- Generate as many ideas for action (strategies) as possible and make an action **PLAN** with the action strategy that seems most useful in their context at this time.
- **ACT** by carrying out the plan and systematically collecting information about what happened.
- **REFLECT** together about what happened.
- **EVALUATE** what happened, draw conclusions (how far was the action successful and why did this happen).
- **PLAN** the next action that is needed to achieve the vision.
  (Imbewu Project: *Facilitators Handbook: An Introduction to Practice-Based Inquiry*: 10).

It has been further argued that PBI is an approach where practitioners, among other things:
- collaborate to discuss issues in their daily practice in order to make changes designed to improve their practice
- actively construct their knowledge through a process of inquiry
- collaborate to solve problems and richer understandings of professional concepts, skills and values
- bring about change and improvement at the level of each educator's daily practice – that is, the classroom, the office, the school.

- use critical and specific outcomes across traditional subject boundaries

It will be recalled that the roll out plan for the ELMD (see programme description above 3) is one that emulates the PBI principles as well as a cycle of reflection and action modeled along PBI lines. It can also be seen that PBI is closely allied to Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR has been defined as collective "self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in a social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social…practices" (Kemmis and McTaggart)[5]. It is applied research in which the community or organization under study participate actively with professional researchers from the initial design to the final presentation of results (Lazes *et al.* 1991; Easterby *et al.* 1994).

For the purposes of this study, my observation was both participatory and reflexive in nature. What I have called Practice-Based Inquiry Observation falls within a post-modern orientation that emphasizes the importance of understanding the researcher's "situation" in terms of his or her gender, class ethnicity, etc., rather than standards emulated from the natural sciences, especially positivist notions of a detached and objective observer (Agrosino and Mays de Perez 2003). This point notwithstanding, however, I documented my data as and when it was occurring, in a systematic way. This practice is in line with the requirements of good research. In this regard, I also endeavoured to produce a convincing narrative that should serve as *de facto* validation of the data. The only proviso is that of a margin of error arising out of possible limitations of my own observation capacities.

As a technique of collecting data, my Practice-Based Observation meant that each time I participated in an ELMD activity (meeting, seminar, block session, affirmation, etc.) I was observing the behaviour of participants and other practitioners in the programme and taking notes, which I used to write and interpret what had been happening in the programme during the period of investigation.

2.2   Interviews

Three types of interview, characterized by Fontana and Frey (2003) as *brainstorming*; *creative interviewing* and *polyphonic interviewing* were used.

Brainstorming is a form of group interview which can be formal or informal and in which the role of the interviewer is non-directive. This approach was used mainly in ELMD planning sessions and think-tank seminars. Although I was neither chair nor traditional interviewer asking questions, my presence in these sessions allowed me to look gather data I was looking for.

Concerning creative interviewing, Fontana and Frey (*ibid* p 80), argue that as unstructured interviews necessarily take place in everyday worlds of members of society, interviewers and interviewing must necessarily be creative. This means that they must forget "how-to-rules" and adapt themselves to ever-changing situations they face. Viewed in this way interviews are a collection of oral reports from members of society. They become "life-histories" which take place in multiple sessions and over many days. This approach was used in block sessions and during affirmation exercise (described below). These interviews were not based on structured or pre-defined questions. They were based on questions that were

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[5] Quoted in Hughes, I & Seymour-Rolls, K (2000) (24 August 2002). "Participatory Action Research: Getting the Job Done". *Action Research E-Reports, 4.* at: http://casino.cchs.usyd.edu.au/arow/arer/004.htm.(Accessed 30 August 2002)

influenced by the over-arching questions of the study which arose during the course of my interactions with the ELMD participants as I observed their behaviour and listened to anecdotes.

The third type of interview, polyphonic interviewing, according to Fontana is linked to one of the issues of contestation in interviewing. It concerns the extent to which the voices of interviewees are recorded with minimal influence from the researcher. In polyphonic interviewing multiple perspectives of the various interviewees are reported and differences and problems encountered are discussed rather than glossed over. A key strategy in this form of interviewing is to leverage those interactional moments (during interview session) that leave a mark on people's lives. Such a focus on the existential moments can hopefully produce rich and meaningful data. In this study this approach cut across other types of interview as each time I asked questions and listened to answers I was mindful of the problem of representing their views without, as far as possible, "contaminating" them, such that the reader and other researchers can construct that portion of the ELMD life history from another angle. I did this interviewing during block sessions, some face-to-face sessions and during the affirmation exercise.

As this research had a strong practice-based component, I needed to be particularly sensitive to the fact that I was not coming in as an expert, (despite my personal involvement in the programme as researcher and leadership developer) but rather a co-learner, ready to hear the research participants' voice and respect their "truths" about the ELMD.

3.   Findings
The data discussed in this section is in two parts. One relates to programme content and process that the first cohort of ELMD leadership "trainees" went through. The other consists of fieldwork findings from the affirmation exercise.

3.1   ELMD Content, Process and Experiences
This part presents experiences of ELMD participants' learning and development actions with regard to the three key activities of *Profiling; Social Mobilisation* and *District and School Development Planning.*

3.1.1 Profiling
This theme is covered in the first workbook or *umthamo*[6] (as it is called in the ELMD) entitled *Priming Ourselves for Leadership and Development.* This *umthamo* was designed to guide participants through doing a key activity drawn from three key modules, Developmental Research, Leadership and Communities and Social Transformation. The key activity for this introductory *umthamo*, profiling, was defined as "looking at something from a particular perspective in an effort to understand how it works."[7] This key activity focused on two main tasks (a) Team Profiling and (b) District and Community Profiling.

In line with the shared and collaborative perspective on leadership, one of the first concerted efforts of the ELMD was to help participants build teams from within themselves. The first encounter, with ELMD participants during the first Block Session was structured as a major team building exercise for a whole week. An examination of the first week-long block session shows that a large amount of time was devoted to introductions and team-building exercises[8]. Each day, for example, started with a team building exercise. Throughout the

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[6] It is a Nguni word meaning 'mouthful'.

[7] See page 3, School of Education In-service Programmes, *Priming Ourselves for Leadership and Development: Introductory Umthamo.* University of Fort Hare.

[8] Available in Programme files at University.

week, participants were asked to sit in their "district teams", which meant that the district officials, principals, educators and SGBs all sat together as a district team and were given tasks within that grouping.

An interesting exercise, which they were asked to do on the first day as they sat to work together for the first time as a group consisting of different levels in the education hierarchy, was to introduce themselves. Introductions involved:

- each person in the group saying who they are,
- what their clan name is,
- their history,
- what their purpose in life is,
- their strengths,
- their weaknesses, and
- why they joined the programme.

The introductions were significant in the sense that, it was evident that, as people introduced themselves some "ice" was being broken and barriers were beginning to be shaken.

The introductory *umthamo* outlined how the team building exercises were going to be part of structured and unstructured activities as they work through the *imithamo*. The structured sessions included the Block Sessions and face-to-face meetings. Following these first block sessions were four face-to-face sessions, leading to a second block session, in which they, as a district team, reported on achievements and challenges to the entire ELMD cohort. District teams were assisted by facilitators called *abakwezeli* (which means, "Keep the fire burning") to work through and prepare for this report back.

The other major task during the same period was the community profiling exercise. This was to be done through a participatory research activity called *community mapping* (Moyo and Kgobe 2003). The primary aim was two-fold: to help participants build a profile of the community in which they live and work. This was done in order to help them understand and discover what services were available and how they could work together with other stakeholders to promote the education of their children. The other aim was that through a process of community mapping, in which community members went through a similar exercise as team building, community members would "discover" or re-define who they are. The community mapping exercise basically involves calling members of the community together and holding conversations about the community. Below is an agenda that ELMD participants used:

- Introductions by each member of the community present;
- Exploring the past, in which members discuss the history of the community;
- Understanding the present, which includes (a) an analysis of the current reality within the community, (b) community strengths, and (c) community challenges;
- Community priorities; and
- Community vision.

The community mapping workshop is a data collection strategy based on the idea that once the community members have unpacked who they are, a number of possibilities can result. One is that they have a better understanding of who the others are, where places of help are, who can assist, and what contributions they as community members can make in the transformation of education and the community. In short, by going through a mapping exercise, they could identify partners and collaborators in education with whom they could network.

3.1.1.2 Successes and Challenges of Team and Community Profiling

The data in this section relate to evidence that shows the success and challenges of team building and community mapping exercises.   The data are compiled from reported experiences in face-to-face and block sessions.

a) *Team building*

The word "team" is often used without much care in defining what it means. McDermott (1999:2) has defined team as a "group of people with a common goal, interdependent work, and joint accountability for results." It can be argued that teams and teamwork have to be consciously built and carefully nurtured. It must also be recognized that that teams can exist in name without necessarily exhibiting team culture and that if they have team culture, can become "silos", "isolated"(McDermott 2003:3). Notwithstanding these caveats, the ELMD approach was designed to build a culture of teamwork. A number of participants and *abakwezeli* exposed to ELMD philosophy and methodology have attested to the fact that they have seen teams forming and carrying out team tasks (see Table 4).

A presentation for the affirmation exercise prepared by the King William's Town team has claimed that ELMD caused greater participation within communities and helped the group work as a team.

Other evidence of the impact of team building exercises is summarized in Table 4 below. I compiled this from team reports in Block Session 2. They pertain to two face-to-face sessions from District 4 and District 2.

Table 4: *Experiences of Various Education Stakeholders in Team Building*

Stakeholder	Experiences
District Official	Positive: • I saw how a team is formed during the first Block Session. • I was able to mix with people of different rank. We were able to discuss as colleagues. • These activities gave me confidence. Negative: • There was no cross-district collaboration. • There was no contact between teams.
Principal & Educators	Positive: • I witnessed a common feeling of working together. • Learned to respect other people as I do not always have the right answers. • Learned to be tolerant. • Valued contribution from SGB members. • Some people started by being touchy but gradually learned to relax. Negative: • Some people tend to disregard ideas from others. • There was lack of punctuality. • Some people are not as committed as others.
SGB Members	Positive: • I was accepted as an SGB member by people of

	diverse experiences. • I saw the potential for us to be developed. Negative: • Late coming was a problem.

The responses above are a promising indicator of what can be achieved as far as team building is concerned. It also shows some challenges associated with the individual behaviour of team members. At this stage, it may be difficult to say whether these are teams in name or in substance. Data from the affirmation exercise below should assist. This area could also constitute another study.

(b) *Community Mapping*
Armed with ideas from the first block session and supported by the *abakwezeli* in face-to-face sessions, participants went out to the field to "get their hands dirty", that is, they carried out the community mapping research activity without the traditional literature review, research design and other head work preliminaries associated with academic research. The ELMD thinking, in this respect, was that theory must build on real-life experiences. By undertaking the real-life activity of mapping the community, the participants must have experienced some challenges of formulating research questions and setting about answering them. When teams reported their data in Block Session 2, the data looked as shown below:

Exploring the Past:
- Teenage pregnancy was a disgrace.
- Churches were also used as schools.
- Farmers were managing the schools.
- There was no democracy in schools.
- Learners used to walk long distances.

Understanding Our Present:
- Moral decay.
- High rate of unemployment & poverty.
- HIV/ AIDS problem.
- Child abuse.
- High crime rate.
- Lack of parental involvement.
- Substance abuse.
- Availability of learner support material.

Challenges in Our Community:
- Unemployment.
- Lack of community involvement.
- Literacy.
- Shortage of subject advisors.

Summary from Block Session Presentation of Community Mapping Data
As can be seen from the above summary of data presented as part of reporting on community mapping activities, the following challenges can be identified:
- The data are not presented in a usable format. For example, under community challenges, the item *unemployment,* does not say much. There is a need to process this, such that

unemployment is represented as a rate or stating the number of unemployed. According to ELMD thinking, data processing and data summarization are then taught, based on what the participants themselves have produced.

- What might be presented as a challenge of unemployment, however, may in fact be something else, for example, lack of skills, attitude to work, etc. What this suggests is that in research, the participants need to be clear about what questions they would like to answer and how they should facilitate the "extraction" of evidence from the respondents.

Getting research experience was one of the aims of this theme. The other was to actually come up with a community profile showing characteristics of the community that have relevance to the real-life everyday challenges of supporting education in their schools. The King William's Town group came close to this in the written report in which they reported that they had approached the following stakeholders for the purposes of tackling identified challenges:

- South African Police Service
- Social Workers
- Municipal councilors
- Nursing sister
- Taxi Associations
- Department of Agriculture

The group approached these stakeholders because they felt that they work or ought to work closely with schools and that they are leaders in their field of operation. It can be argued that if this approach is followed up and sustained, it can lead to the creation of a district knowledge ecosystem or community of practice.

The above examples of profiling activities by teams show that some steps were being taken leading to the mobilization of stakeholders towards collective leadership. But after profiling, how were they to carry out the actual mobilization in the next key activity?

3.1.2 Social Mobilisation

Social mobilization was viewed as getting the team to "get your community moving" (Botha and Avery 2003:2). At this stage of the ELMD programme, "trainee" leaders were being called upon to build upon their team strengths and knowledge of community to get their communities moving for the purpose of building a better life and education for themselves and their children. The social mobilization activity book gives participants various ideas and notions of the phenomenon of mobilization. These include the 1976 Soweto uprising and others.

This particular activity book, like the first one, drew on three modules, which are: *Communities and Social Transformation*, *Developmental Research* and *Policy and Education Development*. Around the key activity of social mobilization, participants were required to carry out individual and team activities in their work places and communities.

The main activities under the theme of social mobilization revolved around holding an *imbizo* (or discussion workshop) in which various stakeholders were to be brought together, analyze the situation in their communities and eventually craft a vision for development. Written reports from teams (with ELMD Programme Coordinators) show various ways in

which this was experienced. They show that the participants had, in the main, been able to mobilize sections of the community by holding *imbizo*s.

One face-to-face report from District 2, however, revealed some challenges faced by the team in trying to hold an *imbizo*. The group reported poor attendance and the *imbizo* could not be held and was postponed for a future date.

From these available reports, a number of things can be learned. One is that the quality of report writing was weak. Where an *imbizo* was held, it is difficult to capture the richness of exchange of ideas that can take place at such a forum. This is a critical learning point for the pilot study as, without detailed and sound documentation, it is difficult to capture and learn from the process of development of leaders using the ELMD model. From my understanding, in discussion with colleagues, this study is the first to capture in a systematic way what the ELMD is trying to model. For this reason, the potential ethical dilemma of my dual role as researcher and leadership developer is resolved, as the study should benefit the programme as well.

The other point is that the strategy of planning and undertaking an *imbizo* was possibly weak in the District 2 team. This raises the point about what kind of leadership knowledge and skills are required to undertake such tasks. Furthermore, if the ELMD curriculum should be built around real-life leadership challenges, as was envisaged in the ELMD concept, then there is a need to learn from such an abortive attempt how to do just that in practice.

Finally, the timeframe in which the *imbizo*s were to be organized and held was possibly too short, given that most participants had full-time jobs as educators or district officials. What kind of timeframes to use, ELMD programme designers should, I believe, learn from the participants, in the spirit of co-learning and constructivist curriculum building, by creating opportunities for sharing experiences.
Despite the apparent opportunities lost, the exercise in social mobilization appears to have laid the necessary awareness for a participatory approach to development planning.

3.1.3   District and School Development Planning
Crafted around the key activity of District and School Development Planning, were four ELMD modules: Participatory Action for Social Transformation and Strategic Planning, Leading Professional Development, Finance and Projects, and Education Management Development Information System (EMDIS). The thrust of these is on developing plans that would lead to plan implementation designed to "support the schools in the move to attaining Section 21 functions" (Botha, Dladla and Avery 2003:6). Section 21 status, as provided for in the South African Schools Act, is about self-management of schools. This calls for competencies in financial management; educational transformational policies such as that of Norms and Standards for Financing, production, processing, and in using the Education Management Information System (EMIS) – understood in the ELMD as EMDIS, with an emphasis on development.
Reports on practical activities around the key activity of District and School Development Planning were still very thin by the end of year one. However, some participants had started working on their development plans. How this was unfolding in practice in schools and districts will be seen from the data from the affirmation exercises below.

3.2   ELMD Assessment Policy, Practice and Indicators of Change

While the ELMD was primarily designed as a capacity-building and development oriented programme, the fact that most of those enrolled on the programme (see Table 3 above) were registered for an accredited qualification presented a twin-sided challenge for the programme designers. On the one hand, they had to come up with an assessment strategy that meets the accreditation requirements of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) and which is in line with the SAQA framework. On the other hand, such an assessment strategy should be consistent with the developmental thrust and ELMD philosophy. This challenge preoccupied programme designers from its inception up to the time of implantation of assessment. It must be noted, though, that the issue of assessment is not peculiar to ELMD. Broadfoot and Black (2004) acknowledge that controversies around assessment in education remain unsolved world-wide, prompting them to pose the question as to whether practitioners in this field have not reached a stage where assessment is actually being re-defined.

They argue that there is "a move to rethink more radically the practices and priorities of assessment if it is to respond to human needs rather than frustrate them" (Broadfoot and Black 2004:1). In this connection, Broadfoot and Black raise two critical questions. First, the extent to which prevailing modes of assessment tend to reinforce outmoded notions of curriculum content and student learning at the expense of twenty-first century learning skills and dispositions such as creativity and learning to learn. Second, whether it is now time for the emergence of a new paradigm born of the very different epistemologies and needs of the twenty-first century (*Ibid.* pp. 21–22). The two questions are highly pertinent to the ELMD orientation, not only in pioneering an alternative way of educational leadership development but also in redefining assessment procedures for the preparation of such leadership. What contribution might be made by the ELMD's first draft of Assessment Policy and Procedures, produced in January 2004, some six months after the launch of the programme,[9] will be determined in part by its ability to shift the paradigm in the face of structural constraints (as a result of   HEQC and SAQA imperatives). But first, I now briefly outline the ELMD assessment policy and procedures in the draft document and go on to examine how these worked out in practice for the programme.

3.2.1   ELMD Assessment Policy and Procedures
The ELMD programme designers have been at pains to design an assessment system that is different from the traditional type.   Some basic principles of ELMD assessment demonstrate this:
- The ELMD is primarily a transformational and development project. Assessment strategies support this.
- Assessment reflects the primary importance of participant activity and its outcomes.
- Summative examinations are not appropriate in this project, and written assignments are different in nature from traditional ones, being based on practical activities.
- The awarding of qualifications will, however, be done on the basis of rigorous and structured assessment procedures, in line with SAQA requirements.
- Assessment will be graded on a 5-point rating system (1–5) described below. No marks or percentages will be awarded until the final grading is translated into a final percentage for the purpose awarding qualifications (Assessment Policy and Procedures Draft 1. p. 2 – Appendix 12).

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[9] See Assessment Policy and Procedures Draft1: Educational Leadership, Management and Development Programme. 15 January 2004.

The above principles capture the tension between the traditional academic summative examinations and democratic, activity and outcomes based assessment. They also show the efforts by ELMD programme designers to attempt to shift the paradigm with regard to doing leadership development and social transformation. However, perhaps one of the most innovative ideas built into the assessment procedures is the notion of *affirmation*.

3.2.2   The Concept of Affirmation

Affirmation has been defined as a process whereby assessors external to the group *affirm* and celebrate the work done by the *abakwezeli* and participants[10]. In doing this, they confirm the grades given by the group/peers and *abakwezeli*, or in certain cases suggest modifications to bring them in line with grades from other groups or agreed upon criteria. The bringing of grades in line with those of other groups is a form of moderation, but the difference is that affirmation can be seen as "user-friendly" in the sense that it is a negotiated process. The participant is given the opportunity to present and defend his/her work to the affirmers.

The affirmers in the first ELMD affirmation exercise, which was carried out in October 2004, were people from other universities, Africa University in Zimbabwe, Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape, the University of KwaZulu Natal, *abakwezeli* from another group, academics from the Faculty of Education at Fort Hare, District Directors from the Eastern Cape Department of Education and module writers. As can be seen, the spread of stakeholder representation and the sharing with outsiders of the work done by *abakwezeli* and participants is a form of accountability. This is an important part of building confidence in the programme. It is also a monitoring and quality assurance process that could go some way to convince the HEQC.

3.4 Core Competences Assessed and Affirmed

In the ELMD assessment policy and procedures, it was further outlined what was to be assed and affirmed. These competences are given in table 5.

Table 5: *Core Competencies to be Assessed and Affirmed[11]*

Area of Competency	What is to be Assessed
1. Leader	Evidence of development of leadership potential
2. Researcher	Evidence of research skills in portfolio (group and individual) Projects and dissertations for post graduate students
3. Change agent & advocate	Group presentations on vision crafting and forum formation Evidence of change agency and advocacy in portfolio
4. Reflective practitioner	Quality of reflection in journal and on-going work and interaction through the year
5. Team participant	Evidence of quality team participation in an on-going work and interaction throughout the year Evidence of team participation in portfolio

Two learning points need to be mentioned in connection with the description of competencies in Table 5. One is that reference to "evidence" of various aspects to be assessed remained unspecified. In other words, what were the actual pieces of actions or

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[10] ELMD September Affirmation – A Suggested Framework: 16 July 2004.
[11] Assessment Policy and Procedures Draft 1: 15 January 2005. (p. 5)

behaviours that the assessors and affirmers were to look for in order to, for example, enable them to describe a participant as exhibiting "development of leadership potential"? I would argue that there was need to spell these out ahead of time to prevent each assessor looking for different things. While specifying what to look for may promote a shared definition of learner or participant development in the various desired competencies, however, it carries the danger of reverting assessors to what Broadfoot and Black (*Ibid.* p. 21) refer to as "outmoded notions of curriculum content and student learning at the expense of twenty-first century learning skills and dispositions such as creativity and learning to learn".

The other point to be highlighted concerning the ELMD set of competencies is that in order to align them to the developmental thrust of the programme there is a need to specify the criteria for assessment within the framework of a *rubric* or scoring tool. The crucial point here is that a rubric should be developed not by assessors on their own but jointly with the participants. The co-construction of a rubric can also avoid reverting to outmoded assessment practices. Nevertheless, the programme leaders developed a tool that was used to assess and affirm what had been achieved by participants in just over a year of ELMD engagement. This was done through an affirmation exercise which lasted over two weeks, during October 2004, and which involved a team of affirmers visiting ELMD teams in their districts. Data from that exercise is given below.

3.4.1   Data on Development of ELMD Leader
Through the Leadership module, participants reported that they had learned a number of things:
- Through this module I have learned to do away with the "I" syndrome.
- As a leader you are a change agent. Change has to start with each individual. Our values and attitudes have changed.
- Our change is a journey towards self-managing schools.
- I have learned that leaders are not born. Everyone can be a leader. We have got to share leadership. For example if learners come late to school, this problem must be addressed jointly by the principal and the SGB. This will promote ownership and team spirit. **(Team presentations. District 1[12]. 11 October 2004)**

Two main perspectives are apparent. One concerns the awareness of inclusivity in leadership, the notion that it is not the individual "I" that matters but the collective. Problems must be addressed jointly in a spirit of sharing knowledge and wisdom. The other point to note is that leadership is about deriving change. Change, however, must start within the individual in terms of change in the values and attitudes that govern relationships as manifested in the culture of a given organization or community.

Some hundreds of kilometers away, the District 4 ELMD group exhibited a similar outlook when they gave the following statements abut their engagement with the leadership module:
- We are guided by systems thinking in leadership, which sees every action as part of a system. We avoid blaming others for problems and attempt to look for a solution systematically.
- Systems thinking in leadership promotes ownership of problems and solutions.
- Teachers first consult us whenever they want to change, taking into account parents' needs. **(Team presentations. District 4. 14 October 2004)**

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[12] The actual names of districts have been left out in the interest of anonymity.

The District 4 group presented the idea of shared leadership in terms of systems thinking. The idea is also an endorsement of Peter Senge's (1990) systems thinking approach to building changing or learning organizations. From these indications, it can be concluded that these may be early signs of the development sustainable leadership knowledge ecosystems within the districts and school communities.

3.4.2   Data on Development of ELMD Researcher

Research learning experiences were expressed in terms of engagement with two modules. One was the research module, which guided participants through a participatory research activity, community mapping as discussed above. The other was the module on Communities and Transformation, which required participants to undertake an ethnographic study in their communities. In community mapping, participants were expected to undertake fieldwork that would enable them to collect data they would use to construct a profile of communities they lived or worked in. During the Affirmation, participants stated:

> Community profiling was most meaningful to me. Before I did profiling, I did not know the history of the school, now I do. I now understand the community better. Before we engaged the community, they were not interested in school. We were having a problem of late coming of learners. **(Affirmation exercise interviews. Participant 2. 11 October 2004)**

This appears to have been a popular activity among the participants. The idea was to build research theories from practical experience of "getting their hands dirty" first, without having done what Gough (undated: 9) calls headwork in research. Headwork would have had them introduced to research in the traditional way, with a grounding in epistemological and methodological issues concerning research design. They plunged into fieldwork guided by a developmental desire to know more about their community in terms of stakeholders that were around and could be of assistance to education. Below are some of the participants' statements:

- We carried out community mapping in which we approached a number of stakeholders, such as Health and Social Development.
- We got a number of stakeholders together and started crafting a vision.
- Our team member went and approached an NGO to assist our school.
- Through developmental research we (a) learned that research is a two way process, researcher and researched gain experience; (b) gained experience in terms of drafting research questions; (c) learned that we need to know the community in which the school is situated. **(Team presentations. District 1. 11 October 2004)**

As can be seen from the above statements, the concern of the research activities was developmental with little attention paid to methodological issues. Traditional academic convention would perhaps dismiss what ELMD participants did as rudimentary and questionable on ethical and other grounds but when we consider the relevance of the research for practical action, the value of what the participants did can perhaps be judged differently. The presentation by District 4 group illustrates the point.

> As a result of the research module, the chairperson of the SGB initiated his own research into why the state of toilets in a local pub were dirty. As a result of this research interaction, the manager of the pub did some corrective action. **(Affirmation Team presentations. District 4. 14 October 2004)**

Later, during individual interviews, I was able to talk to the SGB member concerned and this is what he said:

> I went to the local pub and asked for the manager. I was carrying the research *umthamo*. He agreed to see me and I went upstairs. I explained that I was doing research in the community. I asked him about why toilets were dirty. He blamed the workers. I explained that I was not going to report him to authorities. He agreed to have them cleaned. **(Affirmation Interviews, Participant 4, 14 October 2004).**

The significance of this action, as indicated above, lies in the fact that interaction with the module raised an awareness of a problem and an enquiring mind on the part of the SGB member. It can also be said that the SGB felt empowered to do *research* – an activity traditionally associated with people in the academic world. The third point is that the action, whether it passes or fails the canons of good research, resulted in change on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee.

Following ELMD philosophy, the SGB member can then be further developed by being taught research theory that builds on practical experience and relevance to real-life situations.

3.4.3   Data on Development of ELMD Change Agent and Advocate

The story of the SGB member above is, in a sense an act in change agentry[13] and advocacy. The concept and practice of change agent and advocate is complex. To be labeled as a change agent and to actually exercise agency may not be as mechanical as expected. The debates around this issue notwithstanding, it is important to examine some actions taken by participants with a view to assessing the extent to which they have been agents of change. One participant from a school in Fort Beaufort District reported that:

> What benefited me most from the ELMD is the module on Communities and Social Transformation. This module is key as it shows how I must first transform myself and then transform the community. *[our school]* is a poor area so we have initiated a Social Welfare Forum comprising a number of stakeholders such as police, nurses, etc. We have also approached the municipality for a plot to initiate a garden for the community. **(Affirmation interviews. Participant 2. 11 October 2004)**

As can be seen from the above quote, change agency here was not individual; it was a team effort in the sense that the "we" is used. The important thing is that some actions to change prevailing disadvantaging situations were being initiated and the initiation is attributed to engagement with an ELMD module.

Another example is one of an individual SGB member who said:

> I went to one nearby school where there as a meeting about finance but there was no chairman, no secretary. One person was directing the meeting. I had to intervene. I was able to see things were wrong**. (SGB Chairperson, School A., Affirmation Team Presentations. District 4 October. 14)**

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[13] Term borrowed from Fullan, M. G. (1993) *Change Forces : Probing the Depths of Educational Reform.* London. Falmer Press. Fullan uses the term in way that combines the agent of change and exercise of agency.

Once again, it would appear this action to change was prompted by the knowledge gained through a study of correct financial practices as presented in an ELMD module. An EDO, in another situation was also empowered, as he stated:

> Using a knowledge from the Policy Module I was able to solve a case of one school SGB. The case took three weeks to solve. Also helped with changes in the District Strategic Plan. **(Affirmation interviews. Participant 5. 11 October 2004)**

Yet another SGB took action to change an undesirable situation relating to lack of infrastructure in the community:

> The research module showed me how to live. When we carried out research in the village, it was because we had identified the problem of lack of access roads. This problem was so bad that even when people have passed away, in some villages, they are carried by wheelbarrow because no car can go there. Faced with this problem I carried out research about what to do and found that I had to apply to the local municipality through the local councilor. Currently a road is being constructed in the area. **(Affirmation interviews. Participant 5. 11 October 2004)**

From these examples, on the face of it, it would appear there was some exercise of agency prompted by the ELMD intervention. Or were these simply fortuitous situations? This question notwithstanding, it is possible to argue that participation and exposure to ELMD philosophy and ideas prompted them to take the actions described.

3.4.4   Data on Development of ELMD Reflective Practitioner

The idea of the reflective practitioner is another complex issue, as it implies that one should be reflexive in thought and action. Lesson and Skoldberg (2000:i) view reflexivity as a stance that involves, "…looking at one's own perspectives from other perspectives and turning a self-critical eye onto one's own…". This also implies an internal process inn one's mind. However, Kemmis (1985:140) warns, that reflection is not purely an internal psychological process. It is an action-oriented, historical and political process. This means that as a person reflects, he or she is influenced by history and political factors such as ideology and language.

To return to affirmation data, the problem with regard to recognizing and capturing reflection is that most participants were struggling to figure out what to write in their journals. One journal entry however, shows some reflection on personal growth that the participant was going through:

> We see a difference among us, we are growing even in our minds. We see wrong things and whether there is leadership. What leadership is. I am learning since I entered the programme. **(See Affirmation interviews. Participant 4. 14 October 2004)**

The confession that "I am learning since I entered the programme" is telling. It is also consistent with individuals who are likely to build a learning organization in the sense argued by Senge (*Ibid*). Senge, however, goes on to add that for such learning to sustain a learning organization, it should be team learning. How then was the ELMD developing team participants?

3.4.5. Data on Development of ELMD Team Participant

Wenger (1998) argued that social participation in everyday practice is a process of learning that creates meaning, identity and community. One of the key competencies for ELMD is therefore team participation. Evidence for this was obtained mainly through

observation. Whenever I had the opportunity to observe ELMD participants at work, it was evident that they had developed team spirit. In fact, they use team effort to cope with the demands of ELMD work. One SGB participant admitted that he was helped by one educator to translate into Xhosa what was in his workbook (Affirmation interviews. 14 October 2004). Generally speaking, as most modules have not yet been translated into Xhosa (a local language) for the SGB members, it was reported that these members rely on other team members to translate for them. They also reported that they routinely work together as a school-based group or district-wide group, depending on the task in hand. As a school-based group one participant, referring to the finance module, said:

> I must admit that we have not yet had a chance to go through it as a group. What we normally do is to assign each other and take turns to lead the group in discussion of each module. **(Affirmation interviews. Participant 5. 14 October 2004)**

There are times when they came together as a district team to prepare for team presentations during block sessions. The Fort Beaufort group was, for example, said to have been meeting on their own initiatives and without *abakwezeli*, for a whole week to prepare for the affirmation exercise.

While it was difficult to pin down any individual contribution to team participation, the general impression is that participants in fact depended on teamwork to get on with ELMD work.
On the whole, therefore, while there were signs that teamwork was generally accepted by both ELMD participants, the challenge lies in what competences are needed to overcome obstacles.

3.5 Transformations through ELMD Intervention

The five core competencies outlined above were meant to equip the participants with the means to bring about transformations in their schools, communities and places of work. Apart from group presentations and individual interviews, the affirmation exercise also took affirmers to two selected schools per district. I was in a team that visited two schools in Fort Beaufort and two in District. The purpose of the school visits was to see evidence of what participants reported during a block session. In other words, the intention was to see how participants were putting their competencies to practical use to develop their schools and communities. What I would like to capture below are narratives of transformations that had taken place in each of the four schools I visited since they joined ELMD.

1. *Transformations since Joining ELMD: School 1, District 1*
   - **Principal:** During that time things were vested in one leader, the principal. Now we have learned through ELMD that we share leadership. **(District 1, 12 October 2004).**
2. *Transformations since Joining ELMD: School 2, District 1*
   - **Educator:** After the ELMD we have established a number of committees and we have come up with a vision for the school. **(Affirmation Exercise School Visit. District 1, 12 October 2004).**
3. *Transformations since Joining ELMD: School 1, District 4*
   - **SGB member:** Before ELMD, school monies were kept by an individual. We have now learned to keep money in the bank. We have a finance committee which authorizes the expenditure of money according to whether it is in the plan and is budgeted for. We also organize fund-raising events, such as a concert. **(Affirmation Exercise School Visit. District 4, 15 October 2004)**
4. *Transformations since Joining the ELMD: School 2, District 4*

- **Parent:** As parents, we sit and decide on priorities and raise funds. We however experience difficulties. For example, we asked parents to pay R50 but there are problems. Some pay R5, some 5 cents, etc. Although it is difficult, we are determined. There is a detailed fund-raising register. (**Affirmation Exercise School Visit. District 4, 15 October 2004**)

The above data from affirmation school visits corroborate what was reported Affirmation Block Session, and various reports that participants gave during block sessions. Although there was no ELMD baseline study on baseline conditions of all the aspects reported during the affirmation exercise, one can be confident that these transformations were indeed taking place for two reasons. One is that since the narratives at school level included ordinary parents who were non-ELMD participants, it can be concluded that what was said was genuine and not simply to please the affirmers. The second reason that gives confidence is that the same consistent message of transformation can be picked up from different schools and districts that are far apart. To sum up, the reports from the four schools in two districts show a number of areas of transformation:

- From hierarchical to shared or distributed leadership.
- School principals working better with SGBs. The SGBs themselves, understanding their roles better.
- Because SGBs are working closely with the schools, they appear to be promoting school community integration.
- Schools were becoming more democratic in the sense that they were working through committees.
- School finances were being managed better, with some transparency, through finance committees.

On the basis of the above points, it can be concluded that the ELMD's development/transformation thrust was showing signs of meeting expectations of the programme.

3.6   Academic Development of Participants

The position is less clear with regard to the academic side of things, as pointed out earlier, with regard to difficulties in designing assessment policies and practices. The following points came out of what was noted during the affirmation school visits:

1. Participants Assignments:
   - This is a highly problematic area.
   - Not all modules specifically specify assignments.
   - The review of the current draft materials should ensure that assignments to be done are clearly specified.
   - Future ELMD intakes must have this matter resolved.
2. Workbooks:

Candidates had done a fair amount of work on them. However not all activities were followed.

   - Many participants felt that there was work overload.
   - It may be that activities are not well coordinated.
   - There are too many modules which are not well coordinated.
   - There may be need to re-visit the roll out plan.
   - There is also need to thread activities around a key activity of each module.
   - Some *abakwezeli* may still be operating in the traditional mode and some writers may be lacking in this approach.

- There is need to extend the M.Ed. in the workbooks.
- Workbooks should be the engine for practical activities. (**Mid-affirmation Review Meeting. 13 October**)

From the above summary, it would appear there were major problems with the area of assignments. From participating in various programme meetings, I know that not all modules had specifically stipulated that there would be a written assignment. The rest of the modules had a number of activities that could be done in activity workbooks. It would appear that the strategy for assessing the academic side of things had not been carefully thought through well into the first year of the programme being rolled out. Some time in July 2004, the university demanded marks for ELMD students and the students had to be given written essay assignments to do in four modules. Furthermore, following the experiences of the affirmation exercise and the concerns expressed by the new Dean of the Faculty of Education, that the academic side of ELMD was weak, central programme staff decided that all the levels were going to write examinations and that all were going to write set essays of varying lengths, according to level [ACE., PGCE, B.Ed. (Hons) and M.Ed].

From the workbooks, it would appear that the participants had too many modules "pumped" into their work schedule in a short space of time. For adult learners many of whom had not done systematic academic work for a long time this proved a bit too much to handle, especially for the SGB members as one admitted:

> "My main problem with ELMD modules is English. The research *Umthamo* was translated into Xhosa, I understood very well. I am struggling with the English versions. (**Affirmation interviews. Participant . 14 October 2004**)

It was felt that those with relatively little academic training should have some of the load spread over time. For those who had registered for postgraduate qualifications, especially the M.Eds., the feeling was that they needed to be given activities that are more academically demanding.

The problem of capturing and reporting on academic development of ELMD participants loomed as a concern during the final affirmation meeting as the summary the meeting below shows.

1. **Affirmer 1: Observations/Concerns from District 2:**
   - The journals, workbooks and portfolios were very poor. It would appear the participants did not get much support from the *abakwezeli*.
   - However, it was clear that the activities that involved social mobilization were well done. It was evident that these participants have built relationships with stakeholders.
   - My concern was on qualification/accreditation.
   - In this programme there is more action.
   - As an academic I need to see certain things presented in an academic way.
   - There is need to see the minimum amount of work done in each *umthamo*.
2. **Affirmer 2:**
   - The programme is academic. The problem is quality assurance standards which do not accommodate the ELMD approach.
   - The solution might be to document the ELMD action-research process and open it up for debate to academia (**Final affirmation Review Meeting. 16 October 2004**).

My reading of the above concerns and observations is two-fold. The first concerns the way "academic" is defined and measured. In the conventional system, it is defined and measured according to statutory bodies and their Standard Generating Bodies of different disciplines and areas of specialization. From the conversation at the meeting of 16 October, it can be seen that there are two positions concerning the category "academic". One appears to relate to the conventional understanding while the later appears to recognize that even outside of the conventionally defined standards, it is possible to recognize academic performance. My own conclusion, as I sat through the participants' oral presentations and interviewed some of them, was that, indeed, the content and manner in which they were coming across could be described as academic. What I mean is that a number of them, in their own mother tongue, Xhosa, were able to *describe*, *analyze* and *evaluate* the subject matter in modules. In academia these are some of the skills that any learning programme seeks to develop. What these participants lack is perhaps conventionally defined academic writing skills in English.

Herein lies my second reading concerning the worry around the academic thrust of the programme. In this regard, I agree with Affirmer 2's contention that part of the problem lies in the fact that the current quality assurance standards do not accommodate oral assessment of academic development in the way the ELMD exercise did. In South Africa, the conventional wisdom concerning what is academic and how it should be recognized and rewarded is encapsulated in the definitions of the SGB as well the Norms and Standards for Educators which was not designed with the developmental thrust of the ELMD in mind. My conclusion for the moment is that the ELMD has to ensure that it measures up to what the statutory bodies define as academic. The ELMD can only change the definitions by participating in the debate with the wider academic community as well as the statutory bodies.

3.7   A Final Comment on the Data

It will be recalled that in outlining methodological issues and research design I raised a number of issues potential to validity during the process of data production. At the conclusion of the study I need to return briefly to them, since they are part of a bigger challenge of representation in qualitative research. The central issue derives from my dual role as participant researcher and leadership educator in the programme, and the question to be addressed is how I guarded against distortions in the responses. It is possible to argue that in any qualitative research there will "…always be a precarious relationship between an experience and its description…" (Churchill 2000: 44). This suggests, for example, that respondents may find it difficult, or perhaps impossible, accurately to describe what it is they have experienced. However, it must be remembered that 'the experience' exists nowhere else but in the respondents' subjective consciousness, which can be accessed through narrative. The phenomenological argument that lived-experience data is always "true" since it is pre-reflective is a strong safeguard against what Churchill (*Ibid.*) describes as potential "self-deception".

The practice-based approach I followed in this study also ensured that I was able to *see* changes in patterns of interaction among participants during the period of investigation, thus providing credibility to the verbal responses on which the conclusions of this study are based.

4. Conclusion

From carrying out this study I have drawn two strands of conclusions. The first is that the ELMD approach faced tensions between conventional and innovative ways of leadership development. These were most marked in areas of assessment and accreditation of qualifications, thus raising questions about the role of a higher education institution in

offering development-oriented programmes. The second strand relates to the ELMD attempt to pioneer a training approach that links theory and practice aimed at bringing about real-life changes in schools and communities. In its short life, the programme demonstrated what can be done to draw together participants from various levels of the schooling system and teach them educational leadership in a mode that breaks social distance separating and mobilises them for change. The experiment, however, calls for more research on, among other things, what is 'academic'; what different stakeholders learn from each other, as well as how that learning takes place. A study exploring these issues could add to our understanding of transformation through education.

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