

Z. K. Matthews High School
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Interviewer 2 (I2): Colleen Brandt

Narrator 1 (N1): L. Tini

Narrator 2: (N2): P. Mamlulo

I: So I guess my first question to um both of you would just be how long have you been um at this particular school, how long have you been teaching, um is this, you know, your first school or have you been in others? And how might it compare to places you've taught in the past?

N1: How long have we been here?

N2: Year.

N1: Year.

N2: Nearly a year.

N1: It's nearly a year now. Yes, nearly a year now. Yeah, yeah so in terms of the infrastructure in this particular school comparative to others schools we are probably coming from, it's better off. Uh, except when, when in terms of sanitation, when we're talking of that, because I mean toilets they are not up to stretch, I mean, you can go there. They are not adequate for the health of the learners, it's not up to stretch. Also if you to the around this school you will see this school doesn't sporting fields, yes, netball or any other. We have to, probably, 10 to 15 kilometers where we can find a sporting field where we will be able to play, two major or three major sporting activities, so that will be rugby, soccer and netball. But comparatively speaking from it's, it's, where I am coming from it's better off. But, uh, what make it also so difficult is type of instruction, in from what is being maintained to a limited extent, we've got a problem of burglary. Each and every time in this school there've been buglers, just recently just after we opened there was a burglary that happened in the kitchen. Early in January there was a burglary that happened in there store out there so, so, so because of its location because it's so isolated, there are so few, it's difficult therefore to, to, to really maintain the infrastructure. But comparatively to where I'm coming from, because I'm coming from a deep rural area and to be where the standard of the building and facilities is not to stretch, you are surviving because, in circumstances you'll find a class by where the whole class the window frames are broken and even here there's a block there at the last block where do grade eight and night, the grade eight

and nine, the ceiling is falling down so, so, so those are the challenges. I've been teaching eighteen years now, it's been eighteen years now, yeah...

I: That's quite a long time. Um, and how many learners do you have at this particular school, do you know, roughly how many learners attend this school?

N2: Five hundred and seventy

I: Um and what's the year range? Is it just, um, a high school, or...

N2: Yes, it is secondary from grade eight to grade twelve.

I: Um, and I see you, uh, have several different buildings. Is there a, how many buildings do you have in total and, uh, how are the separated? By years, or different subjects or areas?

N1: They are separated in terms of grades because if you see here this block here is grade 12, the following block is grade 11, the other third one would be grade 10, then the last one would be grade 8 and 9. Because we've got one class for grade 8, two class grade 9, three grade 10, three grade 11 and grade 12. Then you have this one which is a hall so these are the buildings that we're having except for the administrative block because you do have this block, the administrative block, also there's another administrative block there where the deputy principal and some [inaudible] members sit in order to manage that area because we can't manage because the wall here that goes, we can't see on the other side so we separated that administrative block to be two. This one is run by the principal, the other one is run by the deputy principal, and also here we have a staff room for those teachers that are sitting.

I: Okay. You mentioned the community that um the school is based in, um how do most of the learners come to school? Are most from this immediate community or do some commute from further? Um, and what is like the main method of transport the learners take to get here every day?

N1: Others about 20 to 30 km, yes, because others are coming from Zinyoka and others from Bisho, and you see this village here Balasi Valley. Mainly they come on foot. Hence we'll find many a times they are late, because they come on foot, they're unable to cope with waking up in the early mornings because also when they wake up in the early mornings we must make sure that there are other learners which are accompanying them. Because at the bottom of the school there's a forest, if I can put it that way, where most of the learners have been gang raped, that's the situation that we find our school in. And also because of that also small forest behind the school which in another year it was cut off but still growing again, you'll find a person not a learner, I'll say a person, entering the school saying he's visiting his sister or her sister, being armed. We don't know how he entered the gate of the school, probably he will have cut away a

bit of the fence at the bottom of the school. So, so, so, also we've got such kind of a situation where we find strangers, if I can put it that way, coming to the school unannounced, and others are being stabbed by those particular unannounced [inaudible]. Sometimes you'll see it by the end of the day that there was this particular learner that was raped or stabbed because the school is big. Yeah, yeah...

I: Quite large, yeah. Yeah we saw the fence that goes around the school, are there any other security measures? Do you feel like they're lacking? And is there any, like, steps to maybe improve security? Or is it a funding issue?

N1: No it's lacking the security because it's only the fence and the alarm. And if you talk about the alarm, the alarm people, probably, it would take them 30 to 40 minutes to come at least to the school whilst already the damage has been done. We also asked the Department of Education to provide us in the district with uh, I will call it armed guards, who, who'll be around the school because this school is not close to communities. So, so, so if they can have an armed guard who will patrol the school day in and day night—and day and night—and probably put in some searchlight, probably it would deter those criminal element from coming to school. Because when they come to school, if you can see behind the school how they break in, they take one brick at a time, which means they've got an ample time to break—they don't break into the windows, just the brick—yeah, taking one brick at a time and then they enter. So you know, you can see, they've got an ample time. If there was an armed personnel patrolling the school, particularly in the night and in the holy day, probably we wouldn't have such higher rate of burglary in our school.

I: We were um, actually, we didn't get to go, but um a portion of our group went to the Department of Education yesterday to speak with them. How is your relationship with the Department of Education? Do you feel like you have good means of communication? How is that communication, like, if you're asking them for help with security, um what are the steps you have to take to make such petitions and what's the response like?

N1: They always talk of financial costs. Remember we are dealing with the district. Because department [inaudible] 10:28 we've got national department, we've got provisional department, then the provisional department go down to district and also her circuits. So you have to go to the circuit manager and the circuit manager will say to you, "you must write a letter," you write a letter, see, then I will hand over to the district manager to advocate on the manner. The district manager will say "Wait a minute I have to go to the provincial department," because that's where the funds lies, before I go I can say to the school "Look, you do go ahead and employ someone to patrol the school." So there's that kind of a bureaucracy which sometimes hampers the progress of the Department of Education because it takes quite some time. Because you have to wait for other schools, because they cannot concentrate on only one school you have to wait

for other schools, while our schools differ and are unique. Yeah it is sometimes very frustrating the progress within the department when in dealing with schools, particularly those schools that are in need. Because we believe the resources that are here are the resources of the very same department because if the school is being burglarized, the computers that are given by the department are stolen, that is setting back the whole department. Yeah, yeah. My colleague will add. [Laughter]. I can talk 'til tomorrow [Laughter].

N2: Uh okay. The relations with the department are good. As my colleague was saying when you are having a problem then they will just listen but there is nothing after that. You can write a letter, several letters, but there is no support which the department is giving us, more especially in the case of the infrastructure, we're having really a problem. So there is not much support which you are getting from the department, they're just giving you the resources then you must work out of those resources. There is no maintenance program or plan which they are having towards that. So yes relations they are good but the support is not there.

I: What kind of resources, as teachers, um what kind of resources in your classroom do you see the most need for? What subjects do you both teach, first off I guess. And then um what kind of needs do you have like in your specific classroom, um what do you think the main struggle is? Like is it the security that's affecting the class the most or is how's the textbook supply, things like that?

N2: Okay, um, I'm a commercial teacher, mainly for commerce but, um, specialize in accounting and economics. Um, based in the resources, when its up for the learners, on the side of the learners, I can't lie, the resources is ninety percent of it. Because there is the budget for, that is the resources for the learners. Then it's very limited of course. Where as people say, I'm saying they (inaudible) will only budget a hundred and fifty for a learner, for all their resources. So we tend to make sure that there at least there is, there is no supplementary after that. No. So in the sake of the teachers I do not want to lie, there is no budget for other resources. We are mainly, mainly, mainly using the, the, the textbooks. We don't have ICT as in our days, so you only if you want that do you have that, it's coming from the donors, it's coming from the donors. So we must seek out from the donors so that we can get into the IT. Then the Department, there is nothing for the teachers. Even if the table says that in the paper budget there is something which is LTSM, that is Learner Support Material budget, but in that case, you will see that the Department will centralize the budget. When centralizing the budget, which means that, even if the, you see, there is the need for maybe, let's say for the tablet, to them if they say the tablet is a luxury, you know, but to us as the teachers the tablet is not a luxury. It's well portable, you use it, then you come in the classroom tomorrow very prepared. We've got a task, the project task, that is from the donors which we can use. So there is that problem with the resources which we need. As we are saying we are the HOD, look the environment here, this is just an office. It tends also to demotivate us because even the environment itself, you know, is encouraging you to do

well. But when you say oh look at this desk, look at this table, we don't have carpets, we don't have anything that is also a furniture, is another problem. Also on the side of the learners, we do have a problem for furniture—there are no desks, there are no chairs. And in the budget from the Department of Education, sorry, there is no budget for furniture. As you are looking here, there are five plus, five plus minus five, or plus/minus six villages who are supporting us, that is the learners are coming from those five villages. Villages which the higher rate of poverty is very high. The support financially from their parents is not much because most of these learners are coming from pensioners, they are staying with their grannies who are pensioners, getting the grant from the government. So that it's not easy really to support with the school fees or something like that. And also we are Section 21, that is no fee school, no. So when the parents hear that is a no fee school, even if you want something of the fundraising, the parents say, "No the Department say we don't [inaudible] the school." So we are very heavily problemated basically in the equipment for administration and for the learners.

I: Do you have anything to add or...?

N1: No I think she has said a mouthful, because, for example, as I'm an HOD of Humanities—which would be include your your History, Social Science, your Tourism, your Arts and Culture—for example if you go to Social Science it includes for most learners Geography, you must have atlas, you must have a globe. If I want to give direction for a child in a globe, I have to create something out of my own mind, for example use an orange, yeah, so that he can have an idea what a globe is. So indeed the resources in order to fulfill our obligation in terms of teaching learners, and also that learners can have the understanding of what we're talking about. If you say that you come from Pennsylvania in the USA, they don't know even where the USA is, it's better for me because I can say where you say this particular side, they don't even have idea. So you have to go out of your way—because I was going through, in my emails here, there was a certain department that says I must write to so that I can get some atlases—so you must go out of your own way in order to get resources, in order to make sure there's teaching and learning which is effective in your school. If you don't do something, waiting for the Department, then you'll wait 'til the cows come home, yeah.

I: You mentioned a bit that the students are coming from um poorer homes, um how's that maybe effect coursework, like um, do students have access or the ability once they're home to continue doing their homework? Um, I know you guys have a library here, is that a space the students can use? What kind of like homework or coursework support do you guys have for these students?

N1: For instance since these teachers coming from—these learners, these learners are coming from poverty-stricken families and others are child-headed homes, it's difficult for them. For instance if you give them homework, it will showcase that 99% of them will come out without

doing that. And they'll explain to you that, "After I went to school and I was preparing my homework, grandmother said I must cook for my siblings so I don't have any obligation and I slept because I was so tired," yeah. There's those kinds of situations. And also, you can't say to an illiterate old lady or man, to say, "Please look after your kid's studying and assist him or her in doing his or her work." Because he'll tell you, "I'm illiterate, I don't know anything about it, the only thing I can do is just say to him or her is please study." Because the learner can say "I'm studying," and open the book and put in his earphones and listen to ? 19:39 without even studying. And the old man [inaudible], they don't understand that this one is not studying. So that does hamper, because you'll find sometimes most learners not doing their work because some of the work must be done at home and there's no support at home. Even if you call the parents, few of them will come to school, because of also being illiterate and also because of the distance, few of them will come so that they can be able understand what is needed of them in terms of supporting their kids, not about them to start 20:12. So we are struggling, but we're not folding our arms. In spite of the challenges that are there we are trying to do our level best, under those conditions, because we can't just give up. There's no room for that, you can't just give up. We have to continue to tell them, "Do your homework." And especially now, if you say now, because corporeal punishment is not being applied, you can't hit a learner. And you say now you've got to use detention, for example. If you use a detention to this particular learner while he has got to go for 26 km alone, are you also not putting that learner under the spotlight of the criminals so they can take advantage of him or her. Those are the kind of things that have been difficult in terms of disciplining. We do discipline them, make them sweep the floor, and those minimum, make them write many words in a textbook, but others are enjoying it as if we are doing nothing. Because also parents will tell you, "I'm comfortable that kid is at school because he's giving me trouble when I'm at home." So they just drop them here so that we can watch over them so that they can rest the day at home because they are old. So those are some of the challenges.

N2: In addition, most cases, when we are giving them work now, special projects which need research, it tends to be very difficult, because they should go to research on their own. But from here to town is plus/minus 20ks, so they must have a taxi fee. Where are they going to get it? We just ask those questions but you are forced to give them and you must see, give them that space of they must investigate and research on their own because you are giving them another skill. But you tend to be forced to do it on your own. Take for instance in my side, they will go to some project for resource documents, they must go to the banks to get those document deposits slip, withdraw slip, all such. But I—there's no way. I will go to the bank for that and can give them then they can fill in. In such, then I like it because of these donors we have new computers so we allow them to go for but there is [inaudible], that they're under supervision because learners—kids are kids, you know—so they can supervise so that they go, cannot go to others, so we give them the chance here at school in their spare time or during free time, most of the case that is the spare time, to go and research so that they will be able to do their homework and other

things. So at the end of the day you find out the part of their eighty percent of doing their task is tend to our twenty percent we're now doing eighty percent of them, because the research part, the all those such things are is do by us, but it is because of the environment. So we are working in a very, very difficult environment. But we are trying. Because—

N1: We talked about library, is there a little bit you can say about that library there?

Teacher off camera: That one there, the [inaudible]?

N1: Yes, what's that thing we call a library?

Teacher off camera: It's only textbooks.

N1: No other books. Old textbooks, of the old curriculum, probably. Because we've been having so many curriculum in South Africa over the period of twenty years. In five curriculum—

N2: Five.

I: Yes...

N1: While we've been taught and trained for three years. Yes. We had the Bantu Education, there was uh Curriculum 2000 OPE, there was OPE—

N2: NCS.

N1: There was RNCS, the Revised National Curriculum Statement, there was uh...

N2: NCS. And then CAPS.

N1: NCS, the National Curriculum—now it's CAPS [inaudible].

I: Now it's what? Sorry?

N2: It's CAPS.

N1: CAPS, yes. So so so so you see now, within this twenty years of democracy we have these kind of curriculum changes that we need to adapt within a short space of time, yeah, within a short space of time. We leave textbooks so that learners can be encouraged to read, not textbooks for, that are prescribed by the department, but for enjoyment. Because library, usually kids need to go there to [inaudible sounds like refair?] and to enjoy being library, in terms of reading books so that they can also assist, it can also assist them in terms of knowledge of English and how to

actually relate in English because sometimes... I used to teach English. I've seen that English becomes a barrier, yeah, in teaching. Because a learner will understand if if if you translate it in Xhosa, his mother tongue, but when you just speak English all the time... They'll—you'll go out and ask them if they understand and they'll say, "Yeah, we understand," and if you give them an assessment to what they understand you can see that, neh, they didn't understand anything. So so so having a library with the books that are not prescribed by the department but for them to to to—for if they do assignments—to refer to them and also for enjoyment, also can assist learners. And also, the problem also that we're having with our department, it usually, what we call some kind of a beauty contest, I want to put it that way, some kind of a beauty contest. Now we are preparing for trial exams, grade 12, eh? They will come and say they're going to motivate learners. Learners failed. They will come and shout to the teachers why learners failed, then they will go out again. Learners write final exams, particularly grade 12, they will come before that, say they're monitoring examination. Then, after examinations, results come in January, they come in January again. Same thing, they'll shout to you that you're not doing your work. After that put all your problems to them, they say we're going to come back again, they don't come back again. Then comes June, you see this beauty contest for grade 12, it's January, it's June—sorry—it's January, it's June, it's September and December. There are those beauty contests by the Department that it attends to. It doesn't follow up on what we we we we normally say to them are our problem. Because, from where I'm standing, I think if a school says we've got this particular problem, it is the purposes of the Department to say to these guys they overcome together with that school those problems. Not to come when it's about to be an examination, particularly by grade 12, and for that fact their own, only concentration is on grade 12. If learners failed in grade 8, they don't have any problem. But if learners fail in grade 12—whoa—it's hullabaloo to the teachers they're going to be attacked left right and center about why did learners—now they'll say that teachers are not coming to school, they're not going to school, you're always out of the school, and all kinds of accusations will be leveled against the poor teachers. That is the kind of situation that we're in. Hence you'll find so many people have either taken a package within the Department, others have taken an early retirement because they say, "This is not motivating us, it's frustrating the Department of Education"—Particularly in the Eastern Cape, particularly in the Eastern Cape. For example, I want to give a typical example, uh, if you ask them what happened with—because there are those who go to school to assist learners—and teachers since they are, on holidays, they are being given some kind of stipend so that they can be motivated to go and attend to those learners. But now teachers are being told that there is no funds being allocated for that in the school but this was budgeted long time ago. You ask yourself where did, where do those funds went to? That's a problem we are having.

I: You mentioned teachers are getting burnt out, maybe leaving the school, um. How's your school on teacher supply? Do you have a teacher shortage or are you okay? Um, and what, are there ways for teachers to voice these concerns about treatment and things like that to the Department, or are you kind of on your own? [Laughter] What's the situation?

N1: In terms of, in terms of, there is a teacher shortage because we differ. Teachers differ with the department in terms of allocation of teachers because the Department only concentrate on the number of learners whilst teachers concentrate on the number of subjects that we are teaching. That's where we differ with the Department. What the Department of Education will say to you, "You are 118 students here, I'm going to give you five educators." Whilst those teachers will be teaching plus/minus seven learning areas or subject per teacher. The Department doesn't concentrate on that, it only concentrates on the number of learners because of budgetary constraints. But they'll say, "We cannot employ more teachers because of budgetary constraints." But it would be wise for the Department of Education to say, "One teacher, one phase, one subject," probably, neh? Or if that's difficult, "One teacher, one phase." You'll have a teacher that teaches from grade 8 up to grade 12. How will that teacher prepare? And you'll find that this teacher will prepare for the first period grade 8. Now in between this teacher will go to grade 12, he has to change now, because the the the the the understanding now goes higher. While in grade 12 again go back to grade 9, doing a different subject. That's a problem that we're facing. We only interact with the Department of Education in those kinds of situations through different teachers' unions that are in existence, pleading with them to represent us, to to voice our frustration, this is what we want. And the department will say they don't have funds because what is the sorry state of the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape, even in South Africa probably, I don't know about other countries, is to put the budget first before the needs instead of saying these are the needs then the budget must [inaudible] come to the needs, but they do it the other way around. They put the budget first and then look what, what are the needs of this particular system that you can say okay, that's the budget. So now the budget will meet now the needs, while both are very important. That's the situation that we're finding. Yeah.

I: Do you have anything to add, or...?

N2: No.

I: No, okay. [Laughter]. Um, you mentioned, um, a couple of times too, how you're getting supplementary resources from other foundations and things like that, um. We were at Equal Education earlier this week and talking to them about kind of similar problems. What, um, are there foundations in particular that have been helpful, um, in donating supplies, like are there certain foundations that you work pretty closely with, um, if they have names or anything? Or is kind of, do you seek them out per need?

N1: We seek out them per need. For example, we've, I've heard when I came here, [inaudible] that there was a project, I don't know how far is it, with a lot to build a sporting field but I don't know how far is it. Because, yeah, we we we seek per need, the sponsors. For instance, just recently I was in town, I met another gentleman—he's a reverend, I don't know what church he

is in—we were talking about books and he said there are a team of different reverends working together with the Steve Biko Foundation. They will be able to to to to donate some books and I reported that to the members of the faculty. So I, we need to follow that, what kind of textbooks that they are prepared to give us. Because when we talk, when we were talking, it came to my mind that we are having a library but I don't, I'm not sure what is inside that particular library as I was talking to him about books, and we'll take it from there. So on many bases we we we go to different Non-Governmental Organizations to ask for for assistance. Like this NGO here that donated those computer library. And also, they very are also careful of what child (35:00) goes there, they are very strict, you must not go there, you must get permit, because they don't want that equipment to be damaged. So on a need basis we go to different non-governmental organizations to to to ask for funds or to fund a particular project that we're thinking of...

I: Um...

N2: Ok, just want to jump in...

I: Please.

N2: Another problem we are having is our school. Because in any type of a donation, any company, when you want to invest in the school, first you come and check the school environment...

N1: Yes.

N2: And our major problem here is the [inaudible] (35:53). Take for instance currently, the department with the, oh what are they called neh?

N1: Yes.

N2: I forget what they're called. They're sponsoring the schools with the tablets, you know. Then they've got those permits and they will first, before they come to school, they will come to check their security, you know. I think within two months that we had them, the tablets, the twenty-six tablets, then they were gone. The department, they took them, you know. So they come to the school and they say, "Yay! We do really see why you are having this challenge." Then we'll see them, they're gone. Because they will come and invest and then [inaudible] (36:30) so that is another problem. And also, we, it is true, most of our schools, our principals are old and they are coming from that era, you know. So in terms of infrastructure management, it's not the same as the former models of schools. But we are forced us to take our books into the auditors, you know, with the help maybe of a a a school clerk or with a teacher from the industry. I mean, I'm a commerce teacher so I'm helping my principal with the finances. But he doesn't know the heart part of the finances. He's just using the mind, you know. But at the end of the day

it's not correct, you know, so when you are looking at the finances of the schools they way they are using it, they say "no," you know, they hope they [inaudible 37:25] so we're just having that problem. Usually those who are giving us, a, a donation like this one, it's a way they are going to monitor. If we can see when you are here these the the the donators from the company, each and every month they are here to supervise what is happening, is it useful or effective to our school, and also are they still in good condition. While some of them that give are very far and they don't have that chance, you know, so we tend to have very very very heavy challenges of getting resources for our kids.

I: Um, you mentioned, uh, certain principals and teachers being of a different era and the challenges that creates. I was also thinking about earlier you talked about how many kinds of curriculum you've had since '94. What kind of, um, are there areas of training? Every time a new curriculum comes out, who works with you to ensure that you understand the new curriculum? Or is that--you're laughing--is that completely lacking? How does that--how are you keeping up with the times? Who helps you with that?

[Laughter]

N2: That's the, that's the big big big challenge with our department. Do you know what is a microwave?

I: Mhm.

N2: Do you know how the microwave do the job?

I: [Laughs] No...

N2: You don't know the job of the microwave?

I: Oh, to heat food? The microwave?

N2: Yeah the microwave.

I: Like the kitchen appliance?

N1: Yes.

N2: What is the purpose of the microwave?

N1 & I: To warm the food.

N2: To warm the food.

N1: Or to cook the food.

N2: It is not to cook the food, but it is just, within a short period of time. Yeah, it it's just to warm it up. Yeah, that's what I was thinking. We microwaved by the Department of Education. The teacher profession is three years to four years of full-time training. But you go now with a change in two days, three days, you must adapt. We've got old, [cough] sorry, ladies here, we've got old coming from coming from the [stutters]--

N1: Bantu education.

N2: Bantu education. Uhh, do we think that this is easy for them to adapt? Not at all. And even in myself, as young as I am, but the change is very difficult, you know, yeah. So that is the challenge which we are having within our system. Change within in a short period of time then you adapt with it and immediately you will say, "now I've got it!" [clap] Then change another one to the next. So that's the problem we are having. But we are trying. But at the end of the day, I don't want to lie, the problem when I'm having with this how much more with the learners because I must take this learning to the learners so that's why you'll see now a days [inaudible]. There are learners in grade 12, it's not easy for them even to speak English purely. It's very difficult. It's not because they don't want to. It's the system. It's the system itself. The system does not help them. Now take for instance this one, okay, I'm going to take it straight to to to my subject, accounting. When you get into a new chapter, there's nothing in the introduction. They just [claps] go right to the content. There's no intro, like the previous one, like myself when I was at school. To to to to do three or four exercises is just an intro, you should be use of what you are doing then to the fifth one now you are getting to the content. Now here it's just the [clap] first exercise on the [clap] first page it's us who are struggling. Our learners, their ability is not the same, you know. So intro now is-is-is [inaudible] for all of them even those who are slow learners to get into, you know. But now we are just taking the approach up to the high level and it's become a problem. That's the challenge which we're having.

I: You mentioned the two to three days for training for curriculum. Is that--are those like inservice activities? What kind of, when they change the curriculum, is it just teachers meet and have a kind of crash course on them or what's that, what are those like?

N2: You are lucky. I was, eh, a facilitator, neh, from the OBE to NSC. Lucky for me, in my union, that is teacher the union I'm in [inaudible], I was chosen to be a facilitator for these publishers, you know. We're working with M-m-m-Macmillan, yes, to to to for this, you know. Lucky, I was trained there by Macmillan for two weeks. Then also, the Department of Education chose also me to be a facilitator for NCS for a week. The Department, taking me to the hotel for

a week to be trained by by someone from Johannesburg, you know. Then I came back to train the educators from the Department for a week, they must go to the class, that's all of it, to adapt. And it it's a good disguise to say, "There is no change, there's not a change, it's just 40% of a change, you know, the content is still the same." But when you go there, it's not 40%. But since you are educator and you go into this profession, you know, so you are forced and also it's work, you are forced to adapt yourself, so you tend to be a student. So that, what you are talking about, quality educators, I mean quality education, we can give these learners quality education. So that's why I was saying what is the microwave so it would just be a microwave every year in the changing of the syllabus. In between years there are inservice training for a day, for two days--

N1: A day or two, yeah.

N2: Not more than that. Day or two days. And also you find that they are taking these publishers. And most of these publishers are just marketing their books.

N1: And sometimes there's publishers, some of them have been subject advisors before. But because of the frustration with the Department of Education they just went to, because those are private companies, for lucrative jobs, and then assisting the same Department they were working with. Yeah, it's hard. It's hard, it's hard. But we're doing our level best.

I: Yeah, I was just going to ask. I mean--what do you think--we've been focusing a lot on the negative. The whole teacher training thing is very similar in the States, by the way, we have a very similar problem. Um--

N1: Do you normally go, where, do you normally go out during school hours or after school?

I: Do we go...?

N1: For training.

I: Oh for training? Um, I think, no. There are usually inservice days scattered throughout the year where teachers, um, the students--the learners will have, the learners will have off, they'll stay home, and the teachers will come to school and have a day of training, um, programs, yeah. It's very similar. And I think it's similar too that they limit the teachers who can go to kind of these larger training conferences. Um, usually like a representative from a school will be chosen and, right yes, and that person has to kind of like summarize the knowledge to everyone else. [Laughter]. Yeah, yeah, it's very similar. And the, the whole, um, textbook industry is a big problem in the States as well. It's very familiar. Yeah it's a very capitalistic, uh, system, which is not always the best for the learners or the teachers, right, um... But, yeah. What are some of the things that you guys think are working well? What are things that you're optimistic about, I

guess, since we've been focusing so much on the, on the negative? Um, what keeps you going I guess? As teachers?

N2: Uh, I don't want to lie. The first part, what keep us going, our union--teacher union--are motivating us much. Because, also they will teach us, our boss, they will teach us. They are trying by all means--take for instance now, uh, in our union that is SADTU, there is a donor saying, "I can, for this particular subject, Maths, English, Accounting, in high school, then for grade R teachers," and yeah it's for for these subjects and grade R, "I am available. But if I can get a number of teachers to go to take [inaudible] for training, at least we are getting something there," you know. So there are [inaudible], so that is the first motivation we are getting, the teachers, the unions are supporting us. Secondly, in the side of the Department, as I was saying, they are good listeners. But, in the lower level, that is from the district, the second managers do support us but they are having this problem that is the constrains of the finances.

N1: Constraints of the finances, yeah.

N2: When you call them, they are here listening to our problems. Then those who've, those who go, they seek to help us, you know, to do that, we take courses. If we say here there's a need, a shortage of teachers, he will just look in the nearby schools of [inaudible] if there's no additional teacher in that particular school, then he can take you to the school where you can get the support and they are supporting us, that is the, our, circuit managers with the district itself, that is the district manager. It's, it's helping us a lot. And also, uh, in this part of the, the finances, we are, yes we do understand it was declared an, declared an, our unions also agreed, of section 21, that is no-fee schools, at least that budget which the Department is giving us comes to school early, so it's easy to to, whatever you want to do, that is doing are-- Take for instance now, uh, here, I'm doing the the the um, I'm making the order for next year's textbook. So my budget, whether it's a paper budget, is already here, you know. The teachers must choose the books, for the stationary, I already ordered for the stationary for the next year, so it is early, you know. At least in in in that case, to prepare for next year, it is very early, you know, even if the resources are very limited. So at least we-we-we, they are trying their best on that side. And also in the case of the nutrition, that the learners are getting nutrition free of charge from the Department of Education, and also here in our schools, as I was saying, our learners are--all of them--are coming from poor background, so at least they are getting something during break free of charge. At least the nutrition, it's it's it's better, so at least know, our learners, it's easy for them to-to-to be at school in the morning until after, afternoon, because at least there's something in their stomach, you know. Ahh yes, that little bit of support, you know, at least from the Department, we do get, I don't want to lie, that's what I'm saying. And you know, what makes us to go on is that [inaudible]. If you call someone and he came and you see that it's a good--so you do have that trust--that is you are going something more from him, yes. So that is the support, and he can add.

N1: I wanted to add this one. In spite of all of these challenges that we have made mentioned, of the Department ever changing, administrative head in the form of SGs, there are learners out there who are making us proud. Ah, because each and every dark cloud there's silver lining. There are learners out there coming from the very same poor families who are making us proud to say that they are achieving because when you have learners that are achieving in your school and in your subject you say, "Wow, in the midst of all of this, someone there was listening to what I was teaching. Someone was supporting me." Because at the end of the day whoever comes and say that they didn't do work but there is that one learner where they do make you proud, they achieve an excellent result. I wanted to add that because there are those learners that want us to wake up and come to school everyday to say, no-no-no-no, in spite of all other who don't want to listen there are these learners that they want achieve so, let's go. Take each day as it comes because of them, because indeed there are such learners and we don't want to disappoint them, yeah, we wouldn't want to disappoint them.

I: I think you're both--you both sound like excellent teachers and I'm sure, I'm sure you have students who appreciate you, I know I would, um, it's very inspiring to hear. I guess I just want to open it up to any, if you have any, like, closing remarks, or do have any questions for me? Um, you've been so generous with your time, I don't want to take any more of it.

N1: No I wanted to-to-to-to-to... What can you assist us as-as-as-as-as an institution. Either... Because there is this now which is being introduced in South Africa, this of e-learning, whether using Skype and teaching other subjects. What can you assist us with?

I: With Skyping and things? Yeah, um, that's becoming more prevalent in the States as well, um...

I2: I know there are some programs that, um, where you can create, kind of, partner schools across, in different places, where certain classes can, when, share, if you're learning maybe Geography or a History, you can actually go, maybe, and Skype with people from that area. So, again, sharing our information, um, would definitely something possible that we could do and that, you know, through these technologies, even just email, um, to have that open communication, is definitely something we can do and offer you, that can help enhance, you know, the learning here, and even our learning. It's a great opportunity to share, have that open communication.

I: We, um, on this trip with two professors, I don't know if you've seen them around, um, Professor Bair--Professor Sarah Bair--she's, um, a professor of Education, um, American Education. I'm studying to be a teacher so she's my [laughter] she's my professor...

N1: Oh, welcome to our world!

[Laughter]

I: I know! Um, and then we're with Professor Jeremy Ball, who's a History professor and he focuses on African History so, um, he's been in the King area before and he's kind of our guide through. And I know, um, all of us at Dickinson are, um, very open to continuing--we'd really like to continue--relationships that we make here, um, we'd like to share information. When we complete--we're going to be working on these projects that we're doing, um, right now, for the next coming semester. We start classes again when we get home, um, and we're going to be taking classes completely focused on American and South African Education, um, and preparing our projects, so, um, we'll get your contact information and we'll be happy to send information to you too. Yeah, but I know...

N1: Alright, please do, yes. Because we [inaudible].

I: Yes, and, and we would like to share information about, yeah, and again if you have any questions about U.S. Education, um, Professor Bair is a great resource for that, um, I'm sure she could be very much helpful in terms of the Skype and technology thing, she knows a lot about that, um, yeah so...

I2: So we can get that information.

I: We can, yeah, I'm pretty sure they're both walking around with their cards so we can get you... No, but you can--

N1: Yeah, it was--One, one, eh, organization that I belonged to when I was a student, call themselves South African Students, had this motto which still applies, and it will still applies even though I'm dead: "Each one, teach one." I've learned something from you, you've learned something from us. Yeah, "Each one, teach one." With this engagement you can learn something from us, also we can learn something from you. Also something that sometimes we see them over the TV and how people are being type of thing, all of those, all those myths, these things are not happening there, this is what happening there. Truth is in directions.

I: Exactly, yeah. That's why we're here, yeah. We've learned a lot about our own Education from yours and vice versa. Again, we've had very similar histories, I think, um, again, not the same, and ours, we've had more time maybe um, but our challenges--we have very similar challenges. And it's--we would love to like exchange that and maybe, yeah, how we're problem solving, and yeah, share information so we'll definitely give you our contact information. And hopefully we'll put together a nice project to send [laughter], I hope.

N1: Please, please, please, please, please, do that. Do that, please do that.

I: We're going to work very hard. Colleen and I are in it for the next few months [laughter], the two of us together.

N1: And you must pass and become a teacher, you'll be great teacher, you'll be a great teacher.

I: Yes, I'm, I am very inspired by all of the educators I've met here in South Africa, have definitely reinforced my desire to teach, because it is--I think it is the most important, one of the most important, professions.

N2: Yeah!

N1: There's this saying, "If you made a mistake, eh, a doctor--if a doctor makes a mistake in a patient, that patient dies. The preacher if he make a mistake in those go--churchgoers [laughter]... But if you make a mistake with a mind of a child, you kill that child for the rest of his life. Yeah, so we are dealing with a delicate material, which is the mind of the child, which you need to nurture it so that they can be young and contributing adult, to better our societies.

I: Absolutely, absolutely.

N1: Thank you.

I: Thank you so much for all of your time. Um, we really--I can't, I can't say how much, how much we appreciate this. Are you okay if we were to use some of the video, um, and audio from our talk here today in our, um, multimedia presentations?

N1: No problem.

I: No problem? Um, can I just get you to sign some forms, just so that we have your permission? Um, is that okay?

I2: Is he going to need another one?

I: Um, I may need another, I might yeah, just because we have the two. I hope we have enough. So this is just--you don't have to answer all of these questions, this is just to get some of your background information, um, and then that's just, um, all about sharing our conversation here today, um, if there are any restrictions you'd like to place on it, let me know. And again, I'm happy to send all of this information to you via email.

N1: You will not misuse it, I know. [Laughter]

I: I promise you, I won't! So valuable to us. Thank you so much for all of your time.

N1: Thank you, you too.

I: I know the group who--there was a group who was interviewing learners and I think they had about five or six, I think the learners were very eager to talk. [Laughter] That's so nice, that's so nice.

I2: Yes, we're finishing up.

I: So not--

I2: They both sign the same one, because we don't know where it is.

I: Okay, okay.

End transcript.