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THE LANDSCAPE OF RURAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA: BEYOND DEFICIT PARADIGMS

WCED RURAL MULTIGRADE CONFERENCE
CAPE TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE, CAPE TOWN,
18-19 JULY 2025

Phumzile Langa



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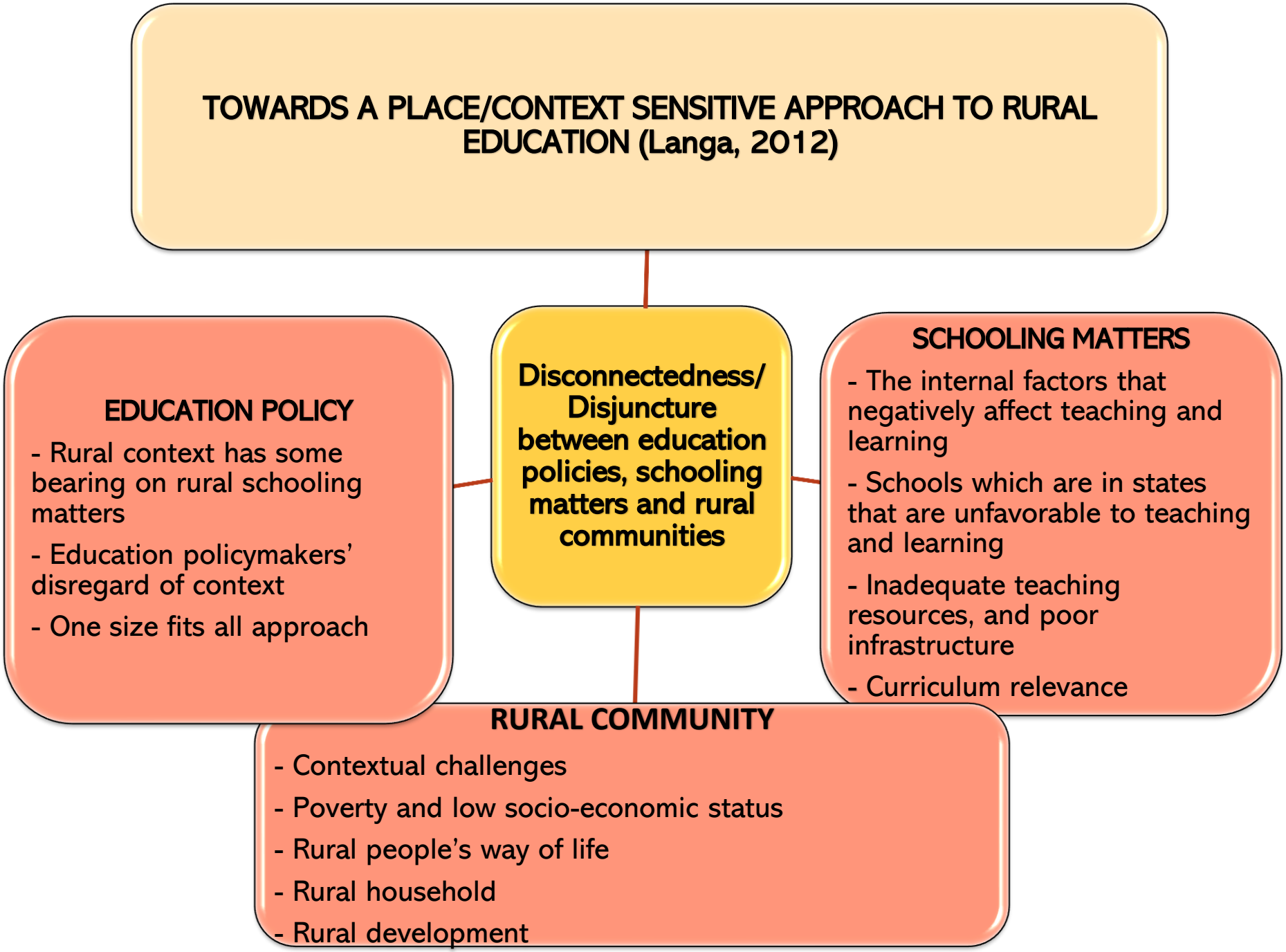
FOREWORD – EMERGING VOICES

'… Foremost among the challenges facing rural South Africa is the task of improving the quality of education. What is often overlooked, however, is the immense, untapped potential of rural communities to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves'

(Nelson Mandela, 2005)

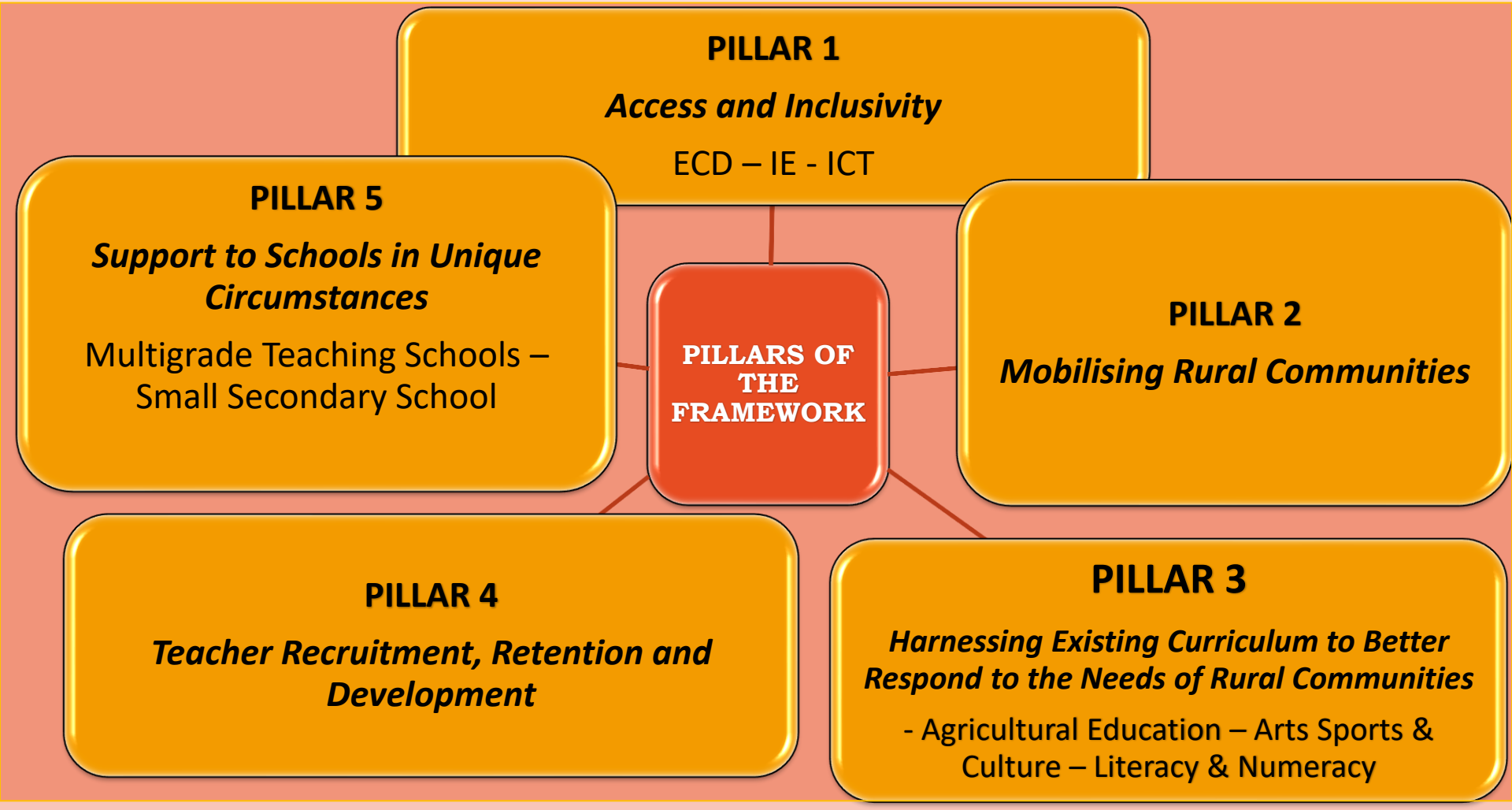
DEFINING RURAL IN THE CONTEXT OF SOUTH AFRICA

- In South Africa 'rural' refers to:
  - areas that consist of the ***tribal lands*** controlled by traditional leaders;
  - settings that are ***sparsely populated*** and where ***agriculture*** is the major means of economic activity;
  - areas of ***dense settlement*** created by colonial and apartheid-driven land settlements; and
  - ***'mining' areas*** in rural contexts where mining is no longer active.


TOWARDS A PLACE/CONTEXT SENSITIVE APPROACH TO RURAL EDUCATION (Langa, 2012)
EDUCATION POLICY
- Rural context has some bearing on rural schooling matters
- Education policymakers' disregard of context
- One size fits all approach
Disconnectedness/ Disjuncture between education policies, schooling matters and rural communities
SCHOOLING MATTERS
- The internal factors that negatively affect teaching and learning
- Schools which are in states that are unfavorable to teaching and learning
- Inadequate teaching resources, and poor infrastructure
- Curriculum relevance
RURAL COMMUNITY
- Contextual challenges
- Poverty and low socio-economic status
- Rural people's way of life
- Rural household
- Rural development

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL EDUCATION: *ENHANCING ACCESS, EQUITY AND QUALITY IN RURAL SCHOOLS*, 2021

- The research team used a ***research and consultative-based approach*** to develop the Framework – to capture the voices of rural communities.
- The purpose of the Framework is to give guidance to the development of ***context-specific, relevant*** **and** ***sustainable*** programmes for rural schools.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?
ONE SIZE FITS ALL vs CONTEXT-SPECIFIC



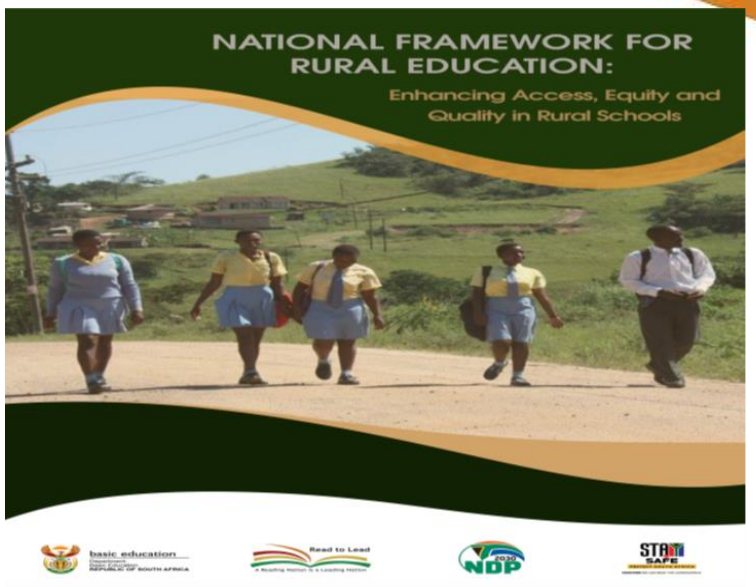
TOWARDS A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL FOR INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION for Rural Schools & Multi-grade Teaching Schools

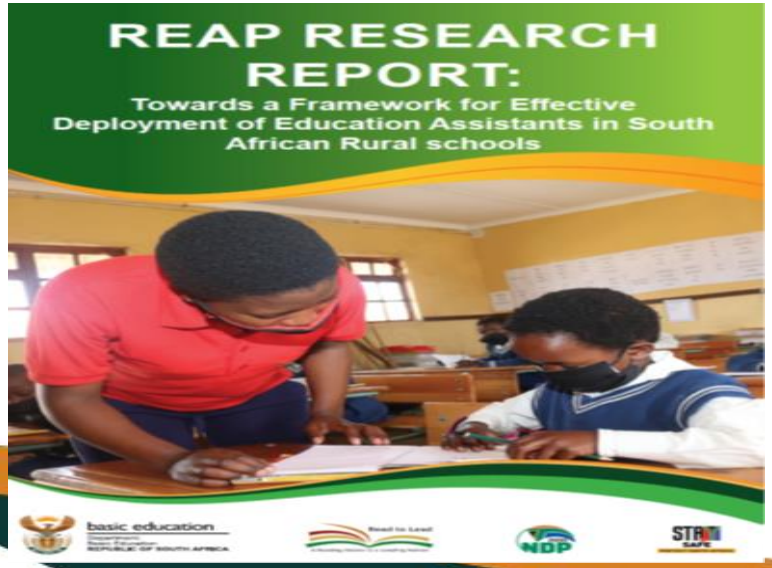
WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING AND INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

- Work Integrated learning (WIL) aims to combine **academic learning** of a field of study with the **practice of work** through a specific program.
- WIL can have many different models depending on the context.
- Currently HEIs prescribes a 20-25 weeks of teaching practice/WIL for teacher education students.
- There is a need for a **context-specific WIL model** that will:
  - Close the gap between theory and practice
  - Prepare student teachers for challenging rural contexts

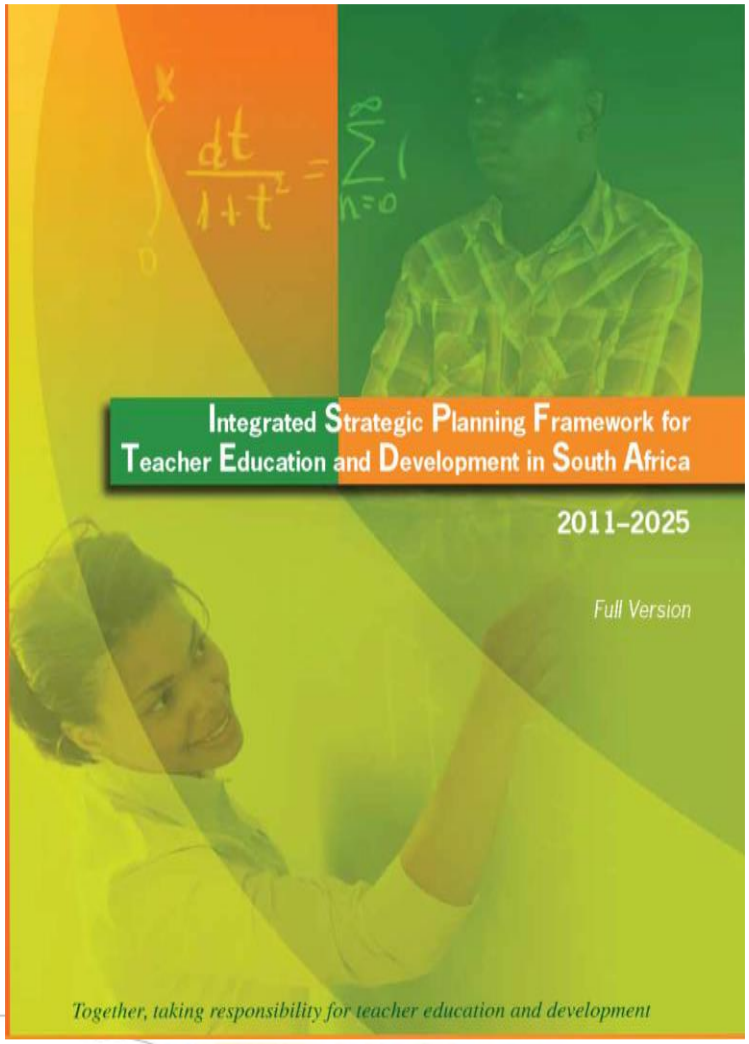
DEVELOPMENT OF A CONTEXT-SPECIFIC WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING MODEL







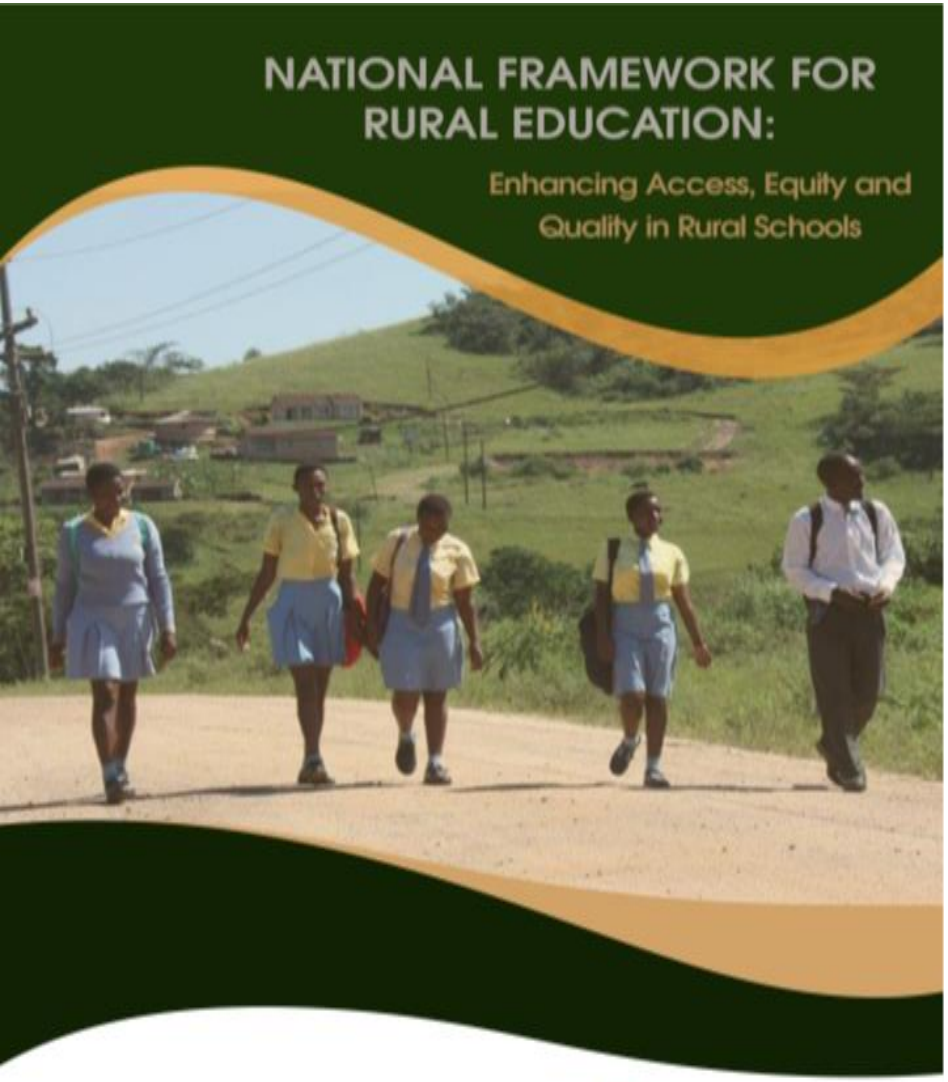
INTEGRATED STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN SA, 2011-2025



Improve teacher recruitment and retention which is mostly pronounced in rural schools through:

- Targeting high achievers and offering bursaries
- Effective teacher training initiatives

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RURAL EDUCATION



- **PILLAR 2:** Mobilising Rural Communities
- **PILLAR 4:** Teacher Recruitment, Retention and Development
- **PILLAR 5:** Support to Schools in Unique Circumstances

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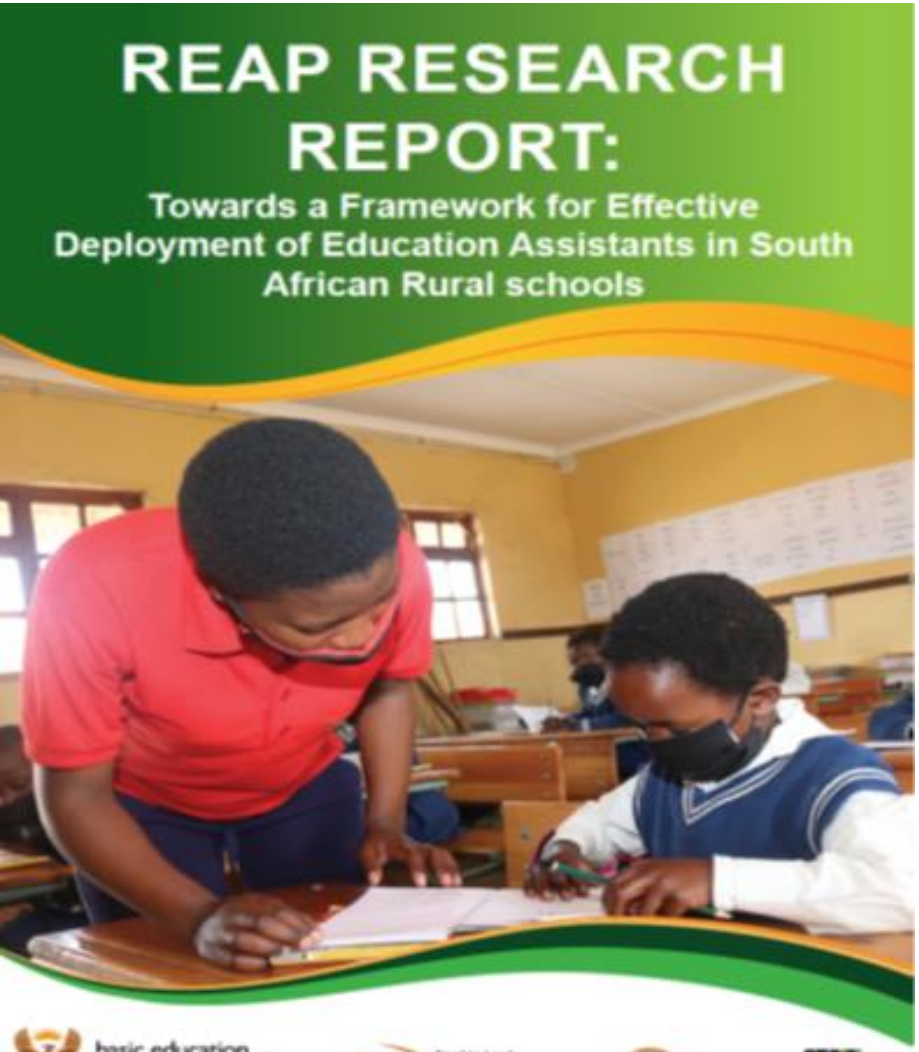
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RURAL EDUCATION ASSISTANTS PROJECT (REAP)



- The REAP was a three-year project aimed at piloting and researching the use of Education Assistants in rural schools for *improving the quality of education* and at the same time *improving livelihoods* of rural youths.
- It was piloted in *188 schools* in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo.
- *750 unemployed youth* with a minimum of matric were placed in primary schools to work as Education Assistants to assist with curricular and co-curricular activities.
- The main output of the REAP was a Research Report on the implementation of the project which informed the development of a ***Strategy for Recruitment and Retention of Teachers in Rural Schools***

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EDUCATION ASSISTANTS IN ACTION









FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REAP: SYNOPSIS

The REAP has demonstrated how an effective EA Programme can revolutionise Initial Teacher Training, through Repositioning Work Integrated Learning.

Strategy for teacher recruitment and retention in rural schools which is cost effective, relevant and sustainable.

Facilitating access to further education

Opportunities should be created for EAs to register for teaching qualifications, facilitating and assisting EAs to apply for the Funza Lushaka bursary.

School-based Initial Teacher Training

The DBE should collaborate with Higher Education Institutions to develop School-based Initial Teacher Training courses (leverage 4IR through Blended Learning - *Distance, Online and Block release for face-to-face sessions)* and EAs can enrol for teacher qualifications.

Exposure to realities of rural contexts

Exposure to work-related experiences

Exposure to on-going school-based mentorship

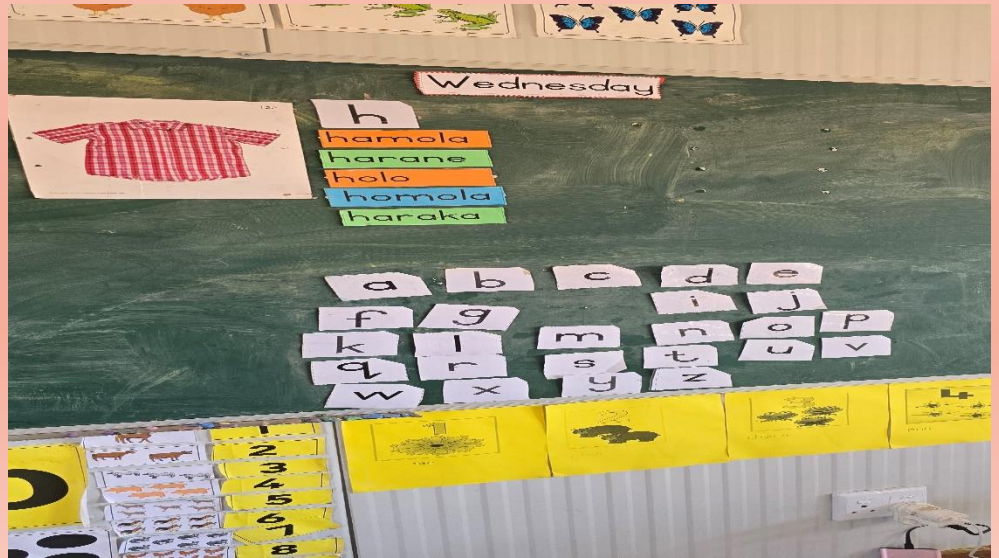
STUDENT TEACHER WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

- DBE has partnered with Thuto Trust to implement a Student Teacher Work Integrated Learning Programme for Rural Schools.
- BEd Foundation Phase UNISA student teachers are placed in primary schools in LP as Teacher Assistants/ Education Assistants.
- They receive on-going support through:
  - Taylor-made ***Induction Programme***
  - Ongoing ***mentoring*** (on-site and online)
  - Ongoing ***Training***:
    - ***Subject Content and Pedagogy***
    - ***Mother Tongue based Reading Literacy***
    - ***Trauma-informed Teaching***
    - ***Emotional Intelligence for inclusive teaching and professional sustainability***
  - ***Theory-to-practice application*** in diverse classrooms
- This transformative partnership:
  - **Addresses critical teacher shortages**
  - Advances **inclusivity and diversity** and **professional resilience**
  - Will produce **holistic teachers** who are able to respond to **contextual issues**

STUDENT TEACHERS: PHUTI MAKIBELO PRIMARY, LIMPOPO







CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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Towards a Framework for Effective Deployment of Education Assistants in South African Rural Schools: *Repositioning Work Integrated Learning*

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING CONFERENCE, UNISA, PRETORIA

20-21 October 2023

PHUMZILE LANGA



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Towards a Context-Specific Work Integrated Learning Model for Initial Teacher Education

EASA CONFERENCE, 20-22 JANUARY 2025, SUNCITY, NORTH WEST

PHUMZILE LANGA



CONCLUSION

- We must shift in perspective away from solely focusing on the challenges and shortcomings of rural areas and move towards recognizing the strengths, resources, and assets within these communities.
- While rural areas face unique difficulties, they also possess valuable social, cultural, and economic capital that can be leveraged for development and positive change.

Thank you!

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