



**FROM A CLASSROOM
TO A PLATE OF FOOD:
LEADING EDUCATION
FOR SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS IN THE
ERA OF 4IR**

By Prof K. Yassim





Zero Hunger By Victory Akasha

Once upon a generation,
Upon families of distinct descents in a nation,
Famished to behold with less than nothing to eat,
Whose children starve with bellies ruptured by hunger and
bloating - the pangs of emptiness,
Towards fainting and deficiency.

Is this the land that flows with milk and honey?
Or the exchanger of natural resources for money?
An ironical unspoken grief with deafening silence,
In sight of the hungry who weep upon a green land.
But must be redeemed from the cusp of degradation and
malnutrition of stunting, of wasting and overweight.

The bedrock of a child's survival is good nutrition,
Strengthened by the arms of sustainable agriculture,
To thrive from dawn to dusk with sumptuous delicacy
That gives a yummy tastebud of ecstasy.

If the pangs of starvation become ocean of tears
The ability of youngsters gets compromised for years.

Every child deserves solace in a standard living,
As the nitty-gritty in quest for a life worth living.

Children as the hope for years to come
Need to survive in spite of a land as a giant whale,
By having access to adequate and balanced food
That their future may not disappear.

Selling a false dream...

- Livelihoods in Southern Africa are in crisis despite it being referred to as the “breadbasket” of the continent.
- High unemployment and school drop-out rates contribute to a never-ending cycle of poverty.
- The belief dies hard that education cannot have anything directly to do with poverty, and that it plays a secondary or marginal role.
- The conscious pursuit of empowerment of the poor should be an overt objective of all basic education programmes (Penyaza Lesufi, UJ School Leadership Conference, 2021)



Is education working?

- Gini-Coefficient of 0.68 making it one of the most unequal countries in the world;
- Unemployment levels are high at 34.4% in the second quarter of 2021
- 5.5 million youth in South Africa who are neither in education nor employed
- Half the number of grade 1's in any given year complete matric (drop out rate of 48.3%)



Question of re-purposing education...

Miller (2021) perceived four educational implications of a broader conception of development:

1. Education must become less formal.
2. Education must be freed from system restrictions and be developed through a variety of specific projects on a smaller scale.
3. Education projects must be recognized as experimental and must be monitored so that we may find out what works in specific situations.
4. Education must become more of a service within a complex of development efforts and less of an instructional program for the sake of instruction.



Relief Recovery

- The “one-size-fits-all” approach to education should be revisited as a post-covid reconstruction approach, since livelihood strategies are considered to be a layer of resilience capable of promoting sustainable livelihoods.
- A number of studies, (like Oliver, 2022; Twigg, 2019, Rusel *et al.*, 2019 etc.) advocate that relief recovery and reconstruction should be linked to livelihood provisioning, livelihood protection, and livelihood promotion.



Life-Line vs Dividing Line...

The main focus of this research was to empower school principals towards a reorientation of the purpose of education, that develops contextually relevant livelihood pathways that could lead learners towards being prepared for sustainable livelihoods (whether they complete their schooling career or not).



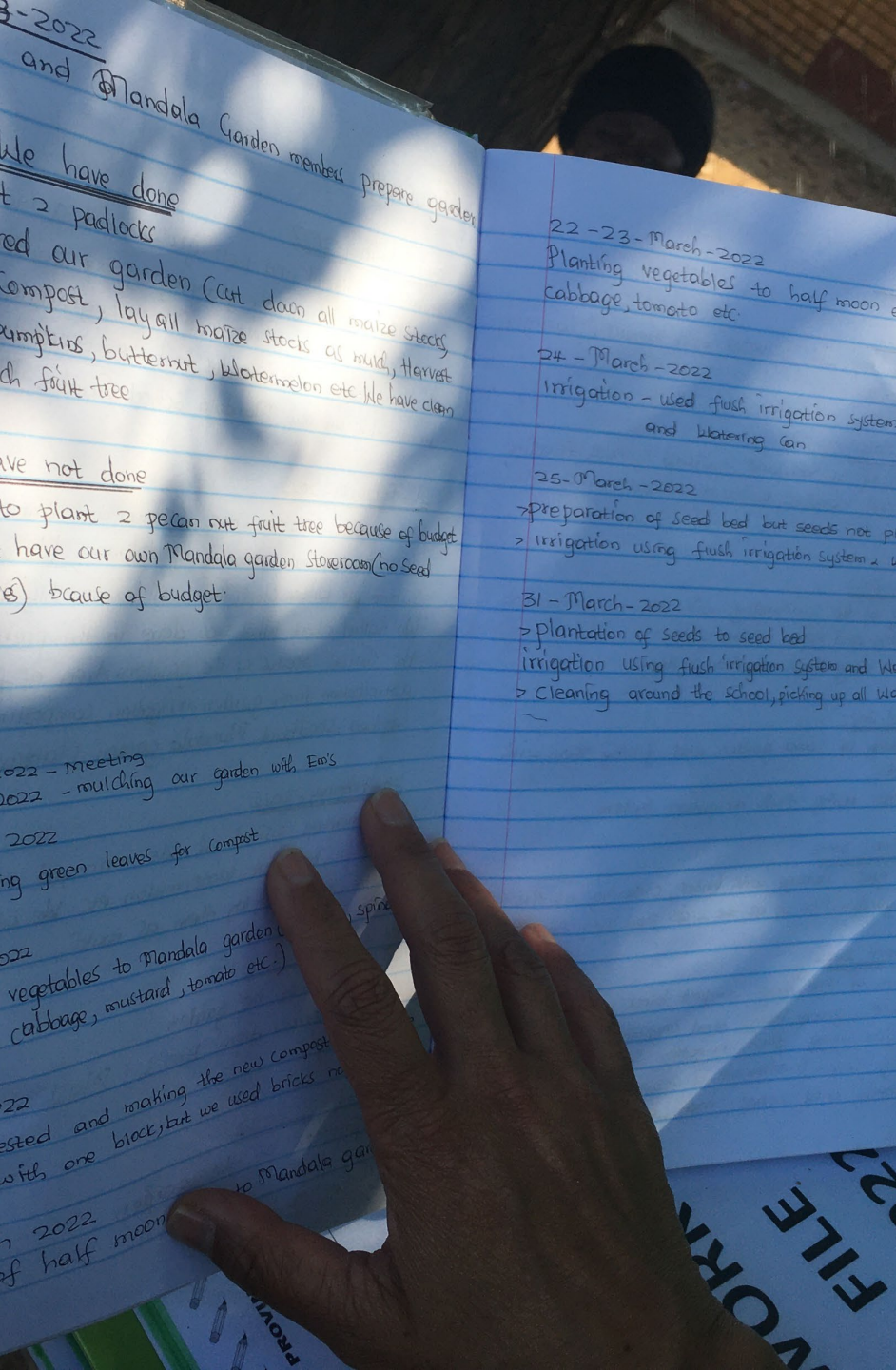
What is a “livelihood”?

Robert Chambers, (1997) proposed “livelihood” as something that:

“...can include food, health, a strong family, wealth and income. It can be described as a level of wealth and of stocks and flows of food and cash which provide for physical and social well-being and security against impoverishment. But there is also the quality of living and experience...the value people set on the familiar, on being needed, on a purpose and role in life, on love, on religious observations, on dancing and song, festivals and ceremonies, on things in their seasons, and bringing in the harvest.”

Participatory Research Methodology

- Conducting research **with**, rather than **on** people
- Minkler (2005) pointed out, there is a difference between research that is “community placed” and that which is “community based”, the latter requiring authentic collaboration rather than token involvement which is usually accepted as adequate in the first.
- Participants come to see themselves as active agents in improving their own and their community’s quality of life.
- PALAR and VPR were the chosen methods for the purposes of this study





Three Schools (Context)...

- Maatla Primary School
- Dipone Secondary School (offers Agricultural Sciences)
- Kwagana Secondary School (offers Agricultural Sciences and Agricultural Technological Sciences)

[Hoedspruit Video](#)



Mandala Gardens

Mandala gardens - series of keyhole beds that reduces the amount surface area used for walking, it increases the growing space, and makes harvesting a row a "one-stop shop" with the ability to reach many of the crops in it from one spot.

Sheet mulching technique is a method of constructing both raised and no-dig garden beds.

Rather than digging and turning nutrients into soil to make it fertile and loose, sheet mulching builds it atop the ground as is, leaving intact all microorganisms, mycelia and soil life.

Atypical sheet mulched area will create nearly of foot of organic material—a mixture of manure, soil, grass clippings, hay, cardboard, newspaper, yard waste, compost, etc.—atop the existing surface, in effect making a raised garden.



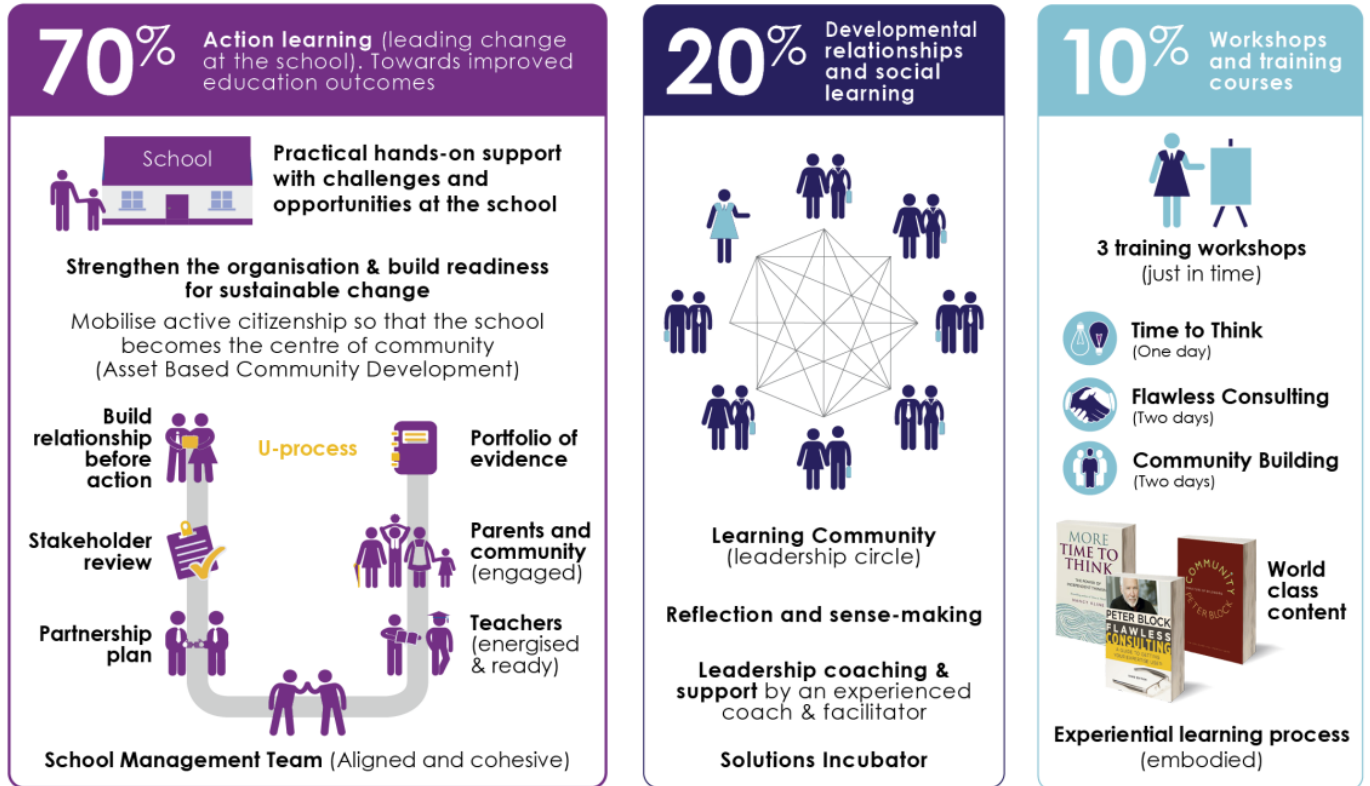


Leadership development model



1-on-1 partnership with someone who cares deeply

Mutually beneficial, respectful, co-learning partnership. Boundary crossing. Out of comfort zone. Not knowing (open to learning).



A year-long carefully designed, structured and facilitated learning journey as an enabler for longer-term sustainable change

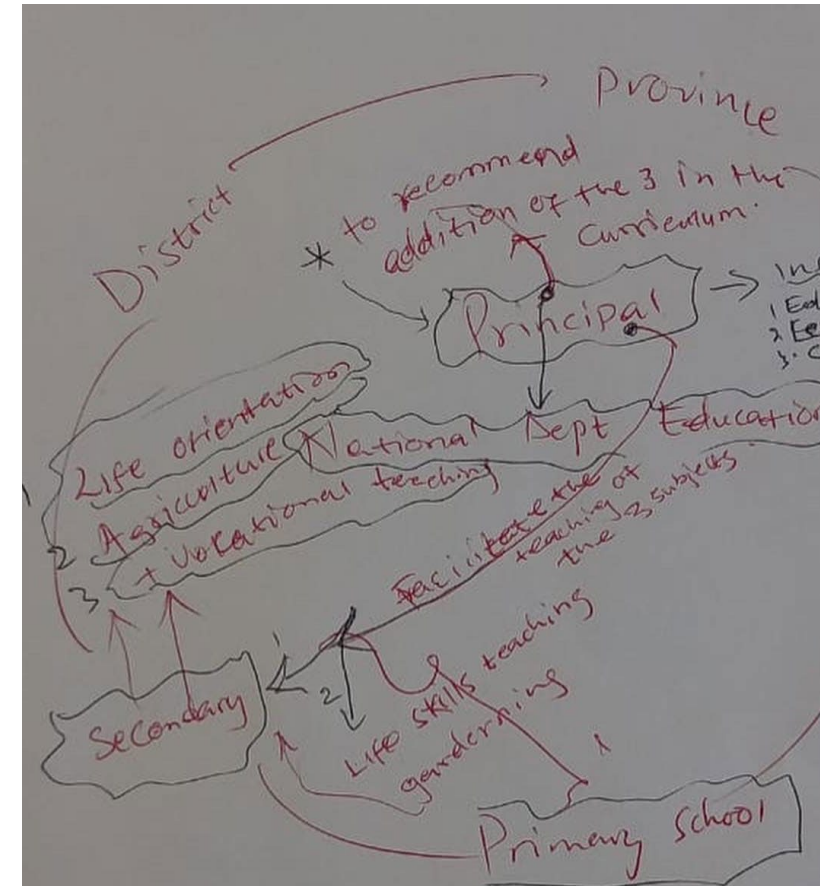
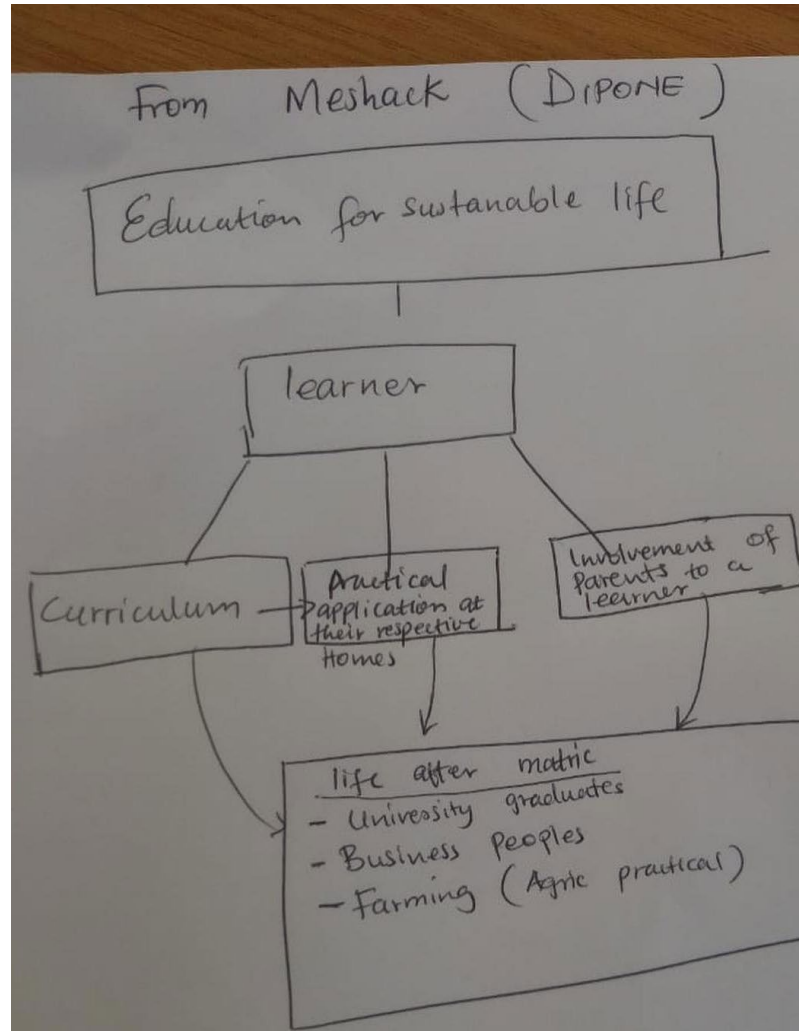
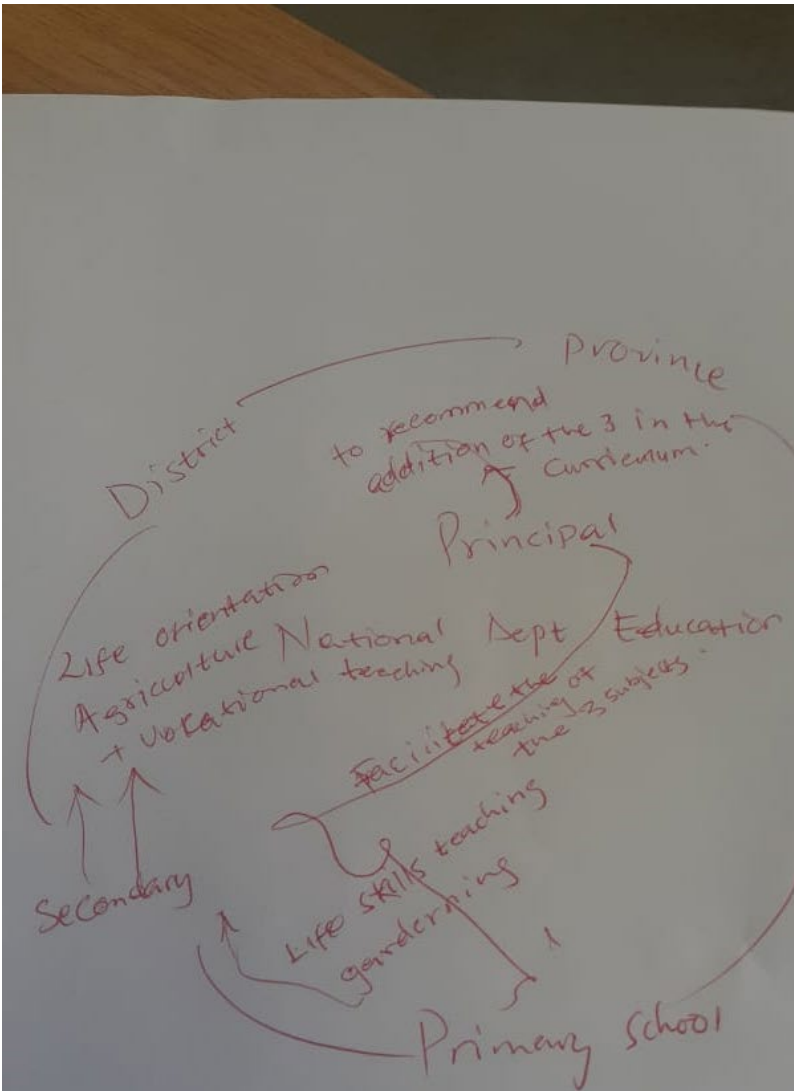
Time to Think

Results (Baseline Data)

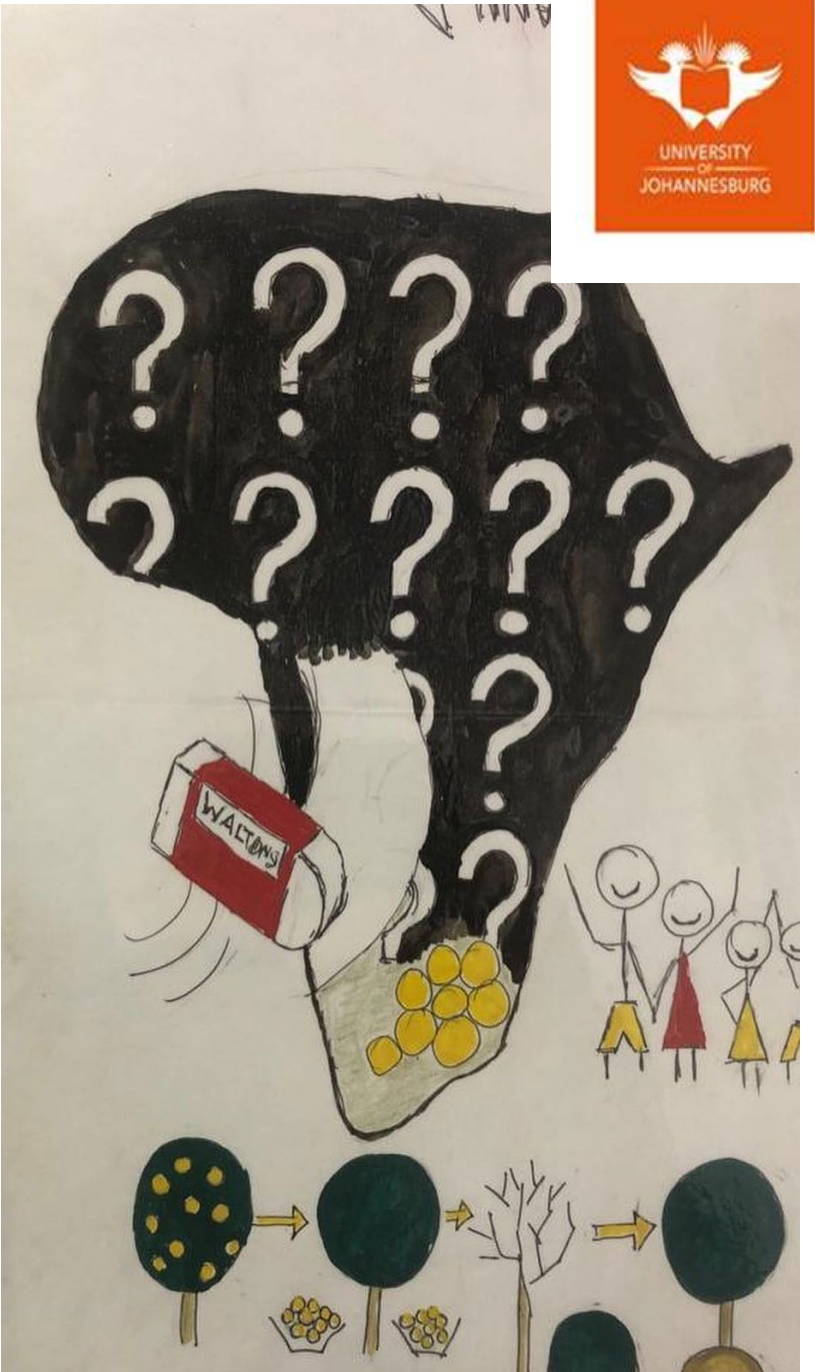
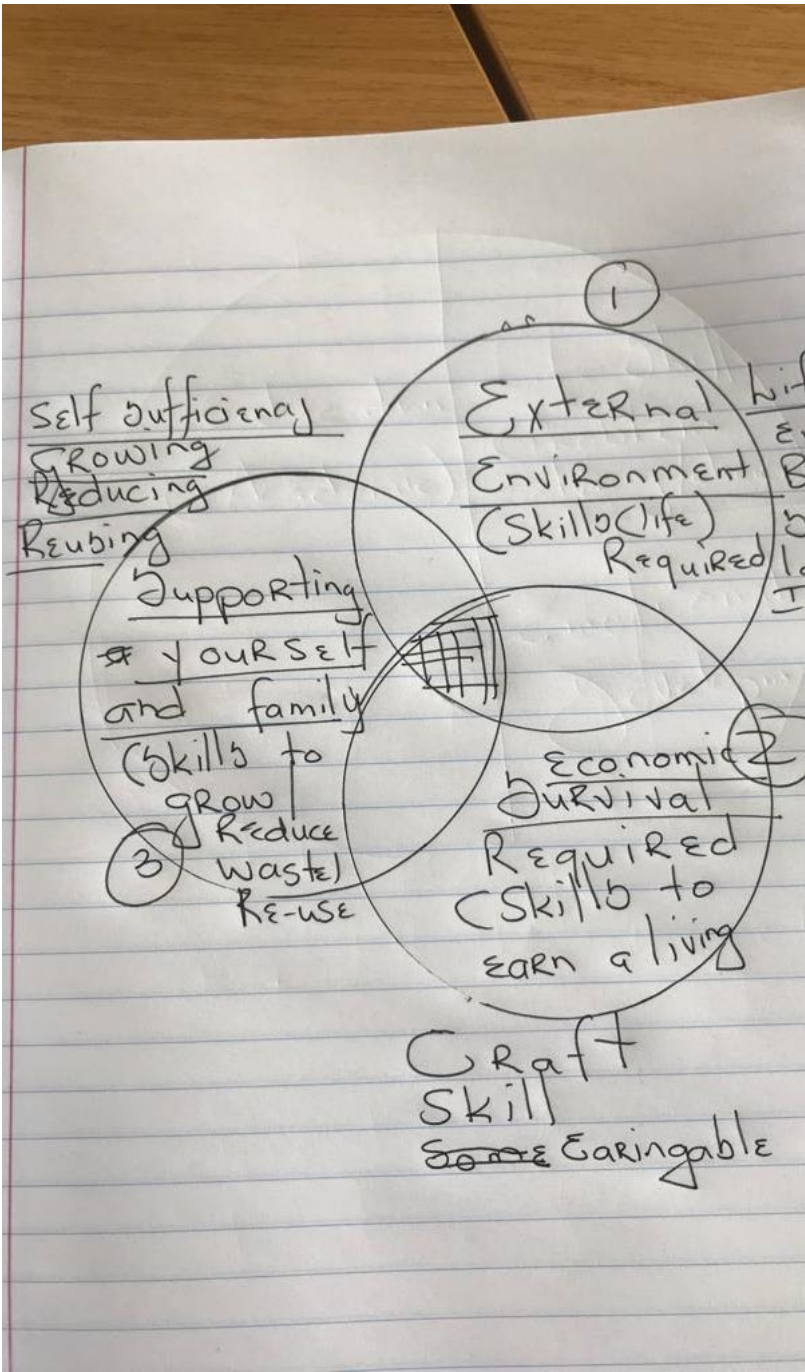


Themes Leadership Development	Principal Perspectives	Business Leader Perspectives
Mutual Learning	"I learned how to think differently"	"I learned how to see leadership through another lens"
Sharing Expertise	"I could give my insights, he was ready to listen...not just tell me what to do"	"I felt I could share with him how problems can be solved, how we have to make it work. Business is less forgiving."
Co-creating Solutions	"We identified what we wanted to achieve together. We knew we had to start with feeding the children. The garden was something we both wanted to work on"	"I could bring resources, we have it, but I didn't want to just bring and make it mahala, I wanted them to think with me. What do we do in a situation of scarcity. How can we find resources in the community?"
Relationship Building	"We started as acquaintances and now I feel we are friends."	"I think the job of being a principal is hard and many times unrewarding. I want to help change that. The work here has to be from the heart...you must want to work with no reward."
Common Purpose	"The garden was our meeting place. Its where we felt we could make the most difference."	"Hunger, poverty, well being. We start there."
Bringing the world into the classroom	"I never thought of the garden as a place of learning. It has a negative image as it was a place for punishment"	"You have to convince me that there is something you cannot teach in a garden."
Sustainable Education	"I want the learners to make it in life not just in education"	"We employ people from this area and this spoon feeding, learn for an exam must stop. We need thinkers, creators, innovators."

What does "education for sustainable livelihoods" mean to you? (School Principals)



What does "education for sustainable livelihoods" mean to you? (Business Leaders)





Results (Metaphor Drawings)

- *"It takes a village to raise a child, so education that is sustainable is when the school and community work together to educate a child. Sustainability is in the working together."*
- *"I see sustainable education like a garden, there must be seeds sowed, the ground must be watered and nurtured and then it will bear fruit...what you put in is what you get out."*
- *"There is a part of Africa that has been erased due to colonialism and so local knowledge is not seen and not appreciated. Yet its wisdom cannot be erased. Sustainable education is when the excluded and included worlds meet...when children see themselves in the curriculum."*
- *The intersection between the external environment, economic survival, and supporting yourself and your family through self efficacy is sustainable education...and schools should be doing that."*
- *Its an learning ecosystem that makes the work that must be done the responsibility of everyone. That's sustainable education."*
- *"A learning cycle in which there is renewability and advancement into the future. Its not just the same thing year in and year out. Its growing together, moving forward."*

When learning goes home...





Our research journey so far...

Video Link: [Sustainable Projects.](#)