

Perceptions of everyday quality of life and employment opportunities among South African youth: A Grahamstown East/Rini case study

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What opportunities have opened up to the young people growing up in the new South Africa? Since democracy in 1994, South African youth have aspirations of a 'better life' with access to education, jobs, and a fashionable lifestyle. Youth and school children were in the vanguard of the movement which led to South Africa's adoption of democratic rule in 1994 and a new constitution in 1996. Youth saw themselves as leading the older generation to freedom (Straker, 1992 : 19). Having rid themselves of the shackles of the race laws that restricted their parents' social mobility, will contemporary black South African youth be allowed to realise their dreams?

Theoretically, youth should be better off in the new democratic era. Successive election promises have raised hopes for a better life for all. A National Youth Commission has been created to shape youth-friendly policy. However, realities are very different – especially in the Eastern Cape, one of the poorest and least developed provinces of South Africa with the highest youth unemployment rate. A 1999 study of 862 black youth, aged 15-24 years, living in the Eastern Cape university town of Grahamstown checks how far reality matches the ambitions and expectations of youth.

The chapter first outlines youth policy for development and the research setting by way of background for the case study. The rationale for the study is introduced next. Select findings from the sample survey of youth compare young people's ambitions in life with their perceptions of development opportunities and life chances.

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Youth policy

On the eve of the first open elections the government in waiting drew up an ambitious plan to provide a 'better life for all' its people and the material underpinnings of the new democracy. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) sought to provide housing, infrastructure, jobs and education for the masses (ANC, 1994). Although macro-economic policy, aimed at improving fiscal discipline and creating economic stability to attract investment, has overshadowed the populist RDP, many of the latter's goals of building houses for a million households, and bringing electricity and clean water to poor households have been achieved by the millennium (Devey and Moller, 2002). However, neither the RDP nor the macro-economic policy, Gear, has succeeded in creating sufficient jobs to keep pace with young people entering the job market. The South African unemployment rate stood at 26.4% in 2001 according to the strict definition which excludes discouraged workseekers; at 37% according to the expanded definition (SAIRR, 2002). Youth unemployment is 40.9% according to the latest census statistics available from 1996 Statistics South Africa (2001 :3).

It is against this background, that the National Youth Commission (1997; 1998), which came into being shortly after the first democratic elections of 1994, seeks to promote youth development. In its key policy document, the National Youth Commission defines youth development as a process whereby young men and women are able to improve their skills, talents and abilities to extend their intellectual, physical and emotional capabilities to express themselves and live full lives (NYC, 1997:70). The study reported here focused on pro-social (in contrast to anti-social and criminal) development, which prescribes life career paths for youth which conform with dominant norms and values in society.

Since its inception, the National Youth Commission has envisaged a national youth community service programme which would combine community service with youth development. The pilot project, jointly undertaken with the Department of Public Works in 2001, engaged youth in building access ramps to public buildings for the disabled. However, the National Youth Programme has still to develop a comprehensive youth service programme countrywide. Its job-creation efforts have been overshadowed by those of other government departments. For example, all graduates from medical schools must complete a year's internship, a programme devised to increase the number of doctors in the rural areas. In 2002 the programme is to be extended to other health workers on completion of training. The most high-profile government employment scheme, Working for Water, seeks to eradicate alien vegetation to improve the level of the water table in a country with erratic rainfall.

Since 1995, the national programme, which specifies quotas for women and young people, has provided some 20 000 temporary jobs per annum for the poor.

The research setting

The job situation is particularly bleak in the Eastern Cape. There is a crying need for jobs for young people. According to a 2001 Statistics South Africa report the Eastern Cape has the highest youth unemployment of all the provinces with a rate of 55.7% compared to 41% nationally. The high unemployment rate is a legacy from the past. The Eastern Cape province includes two former homelands whose development was neglected under the previous government. The vast majority of the population is African and rural. The standard of living is low. Formerly, the economically active sought jobs outside the province and remitted from their wages to support their families at home. Global trends have decreased the profitability of gold mining. As a result, Eastern Cape men, who were formerly employed as migrant workers on the mines near Johannesburg, are out of work. The Eastern Cape's unemployment rate (expanded definition which includes discouraged workseekers) is 45.1% against South Africa's 37.0% (SAIRR, 2002). Those who are employed earn lower wages than in other parts of the country. Major sources of household income are remittances from members of households who work in South Africa's industrial and commercial centres and government transfers in the form of old-age pensions. Unsurprisingly, the people of the Eastern Cape report lower levels of life satisfaction and happiness than other South Africans (Moller, 2000).

A study conducted on behalf of the National Youth Commission in the mid-1990s found that Eastern Cape youth were generally disadvantaged due to high levels of poverty and unemployment, and due to homes and schools lacking basic facilities. A higher than average percentage were defined as 'hard to reach' youth in the sense that they were alienated and frustrated. Four-fifths were unemployed. The main perceived problems of Eastern Cape youth included lack of money, inadequate education and unemployment. The young people described themselves as frustrated but ambitious. Nevertheless, the majority was positive about the future (Everatt and Jennings, undated).

Grahamstown is a small university city in Eastern Cape Province. Since the redrawing of local government boundaries to reduce the number of South Africa's municipalities from 843 to 284, Grahamstown falls under the Municipality of Makana. Grahamstown was established as a market town in the 1830s soon after the first settlers arrived from Great Britain in 1820 to protect the frontiers of British expansion.

Reminders of a grander past, the city boasts a cathedral at one end of its main street. The university entrance is at the other end of High Street with the high court situated half way between the sacred and secular landmarks. In the last century, the town's economy has not kept pace with industrial development. Major employers are the municipality and the university, which caters to 5 000 students mainly living in residence. The many private schools and the general and psychiatric hospitals offer limited numbers of additional jobs.

While the job situation remains depressed, the city of Grahamstown nevertheless offers some unique and exciting development opportunities for young people. Grahamstown is a leading educational centre, known for its excellent secondary education institutions. It is home to Rhodes University which sponsors a number of local students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Technical training is available at college-level and through a number of development agencies which encourage young people to improve their employment skills or to start their own businesses. Local organisations are eager to reach out to the underprivileged and have launched a number of skills development and training initiatives. The Grahamstown Foundation runs the annual National Arts Festival and the National Festival of Science, Engineering and Technology, popularly known as SciFest, which attract youth countrywide and encourage the development of talent. One of the incentives to conduct a youth study in Grahamstown was to inquire whether local youth tapped into this wealth of opportunity.

The largest concentration of youth is in Grahamstown East or Rini as the township is known locally. The township is home mainly to the African population of Grahamstown. The estimated population numbered between 53 000 and 97 000 in 1999¹ (Moller 2001a: 14). Unlike other African townships in South Africa, Grahamstown East was never removed to a 'homeland' under the previous government so that Grahamstown East and West are contiguous areas. Although divided by a stream and the railway line, a major road connects the two sides of town and development opportunities in the city centre are easily accessible to residents of Grahamstown East.

Earlier studies conducted among Grahamstown East youth reported mainly negative prospects for youth development. Manona (1994) found that due to the political unrest of the 1980s, some 98% of the schoolgoing youth surveyed had a backlog in their education and 70% of the school leavers were unemployed. However, the youth were overwhelmingly positive about

1.Th : first estimate is based on a household sample survey conducted in tandem with the youth study in 1999. The second estimate is the population figure which the municipality used to service the township in the same year. The 1996 census figure is lower than the two estimates.

themselves and keen to improve their situation. A second study on Grahamstown youth, conducted for the South African Youth research programme to inform youth policy in the democratic era, found that matriculants had raised expectations for finding good jobs. The majority stated that they would not be prepared to work as manual labourers and saw self-employment as a last resort (Haines and Wood, 1994).

The study reported here was informed by the Grahamstown studies above and national youth policy research conducted in the early 1990s and their updates (Everatt and Sisulu, 1992; Everatt, 2000; Slabbert et al., 1994; CASE, 1996; CASE 2000). More focussed research undertaken by the author and colleagues on African youth informed the questionnaire design for the study. This earlier research covered topics of spare-time use among township youth, educational achievement and the home environment, and the role of youth clubs and community service in youth development (Leggett, Moller and Richards, 1997; Leggett, Moller and Sotshongaye, 1997; Moller, 1991; 1992; 1993; 1994a; 1994b; 1995; 1996; Moller, Mthembu and Richards, 1994; Moller and Richards, 1990; Mthembu and Moller, 1991).

Method

The target population

The target population was defined as youth resident in Grahamstown East/Rini over 14 years of age and under 25 years of age. In South Africa, the official definition of youth used by the National Youth Commission is young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years. The Grahamstown study selected a narrower age band to focus on young people at the onset of their life careers. The household survey, which was conducted in tandem with the youth survey reported here, estimated that youth in the target age group accounted for some 28 836 individuals in 1999 (Moller, 2001a: 14).

Rationale and scope of the research

The research among Grahamstown East youth was undertaken to produce baseline data for development and policy planning as well as for academic purposes (see van Hees, 2000, a, b; Moller et al., 2001a, b). From a practical perspective, it was hoped the project would provide insight into what initiatives could be undertaken to improve the life chances and well-being of young people in the area.

The survey covered the topics of living conditions, family, education, spare time, knowledge of and access to development opportunities, risk behaviours, life concerns and aspirations for social and residential

mobility. Quality of life indicators captured global subjective well-being, a set of some 23 domain satisfactions, and civic and national pride. A specific item, cleared with the Eastern Cape Youth Commission, probed the appeal of a community service programme and motivations to participate in collective development initiatives.

Sample design

In total, 862 youth from Grahamstown East were interviewed for the study. The sample used an area probability sampling method to cover the whole township which was divided into 27 neighbourhoods according to tenure and housing (Manona, 1987). The oldest neighbourhoods in Grahamstown East with the largest plots had been offered to members of the Mfengu tribe as freehold property in recognition of their assistance in the frontier wars of the 1820s. The newest neighbourhoods established in the 1990s were farther from the city centre. Plots were much smaller in size, and featured mainly core-housing units subsidised by the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). A self-weighting sample design was used: Within each neighbourhood, target households were selected randomly in proportion to the total number of plots. Within households, a target youth was selected randomly. The sample design allowed for replacement of households that did not include a young person.

The fieldwork was carried out in May 1999. Trained local interviewers administered a standard questionnaire to respondents. The interviews were conducted in the young persons' home in the local African language, Xhosa. The questionnaire was divided in two parts. The first part of the interview dealing with youth issues was administered to the young person; the second section on household characteristics was administered to a responsible and knowledgeable person in the youth household. In very few cases the young target person doubled as the household informant.

The questionnaire contained mainly closed-ended items. However, response options were based on knowledge gained from earlier youth studies cited earlier. The questionnaire schedule included over 112 items in the youth and household sections. The analysis worked with some 140 variables and constructs. This paper presents select findings with a focus on life ambitions, development and job opportunities for youth, and perceived quality of life.

Sample characteristics

The youth in the survey were approximately equally distributed over three age groups 15-16 years, 17-20 years and 21-24 years. Young women accounted for 55% of the sample. Three-quarters of the youth were still in high school (73%).

The majority of youth in the survey were raised in Grahamstown. Some 45% of households had stayed in the same area for over 11 years or had never moved. If given a choice, most households would not wish to move from their present location.

In 1999, youth households were housed in brick or cement block dwellings (48%) or else in homes built of mud in the traditional style (35%) or with cement plaster applied (16%). One-fifth of dwellings were built as part of the post-1994 Reconstruction and Development housing programme. The majority of youth households had access to electricity (76%) and amenities including radio (85%), television (74%), and refrigerator (55%). Only 1% had access to a personal computer in the home. In 1999, most households relied on the bucket system and pit latrines for sanitation and only 5% of youth households had piped water in the home². The estimated average household size was some 5.6 persons. The largest proportion of youth described the economic situation of their household as one "of making ends meet". One-quarter were reportedly "scraping a living or poor". The majority of the households described as "poor" or "scraping a living" earned up to Rand 500 per month (approximately equivalent to the World Bank's definition of a poverty income of one dollar per person per day).

Findings

Table 1 gives select indicators pertaining to issues of education and training, ambitions, skills development, perceptions of job opportunities, and subjective well-being. The text places the indicators in context and examines select linkages between the indicators. The discussion turns to possible solutions to improving the life chances and quality of life of the youth in the light of the survey findings.

Education and training

The majority of the youth in the survey were either still at school or planned to continue with education or training. Some 35% of youth over 17 years were not "on-track" with their education in the sense that they were two years behind the right class for their age. Only 11% had ever had a job of any kind, mainly a casual job. The out-of-school youth in the sample appeared to be at a loss as how to approach the job search. They reported there were no jobs available, they lacked job skills, and the right connections. The survey confirmed that the youth had few job skills. Some 6% in the total sample had received training in arts and crafts, the highest

2. By 2002, a larger proportion of households, mainly in the newer neighbourhoods, have water and sewerage connections.

in any skill category covered in the survey ranging from typing and secretarial skills, computer literacy, small business skills, to a driver's licence. Although training in arts and crafts are sought after in Grahamstown's premier arts festival city, it is unlikely to be a job requisite in most cases.

Self-esteem

Over four in five youth in the survey indicated they felt confident about their abilities and achievements in life and equal to their peers. A lower percentage (65%) expressed confidence in reaching their goals in life, which may be partly a reflection of the format of the statement, which was posed in the negative. Self-esteem was boosted by the good start in life provided by one's family and school. Noteworthy is that a slightly higher percentage of youth attributed a good start in life to support from their family rather than their school. Educationally on-track youth were more likely than others to say their school had given them a good head start in life.

Ambitions and concerns

The most common ambition in life, endorsed by 59% in the sample, was to find a job. The two top concerns for young people were teenage pregnancy (59%), followed by lack of job opportunities (38%). HIV/AIDS, a concern for only 17% of youth, figured at the bottom of the list of seven options put to respondents. In 1999, Grahamstown East youth were almost three times as likely to state they knew of persons who had become fatal victims of violence (65%) and road accidents (64%) than victims of illnesses such as tuberculosis or AIDS. While 35% knew of a person who had died of tuberculosis – a common illness in the Grahamstown area – only 22% knew of a person who had died of AIDS. Three in four reported that classmates had dropped out of school because they were pregnant. Approximately four in ten reported a female friend who had personal experience as rape victim.

Table 1 – *Select indicators of aspirations and expectations versus perceptions of job opportunities among Grahamstown East/Rini youth*

Life ambitions	%
Major ambition in life is 'to have a good job'	57 ^{*6}
Real home is Grahamstown/Grahamstown East/Rini	81
Plans to stay in Grahamstown in longer term	72
Preference for a local versus out-of-town job	59
Perception of job situation	
Major youth concern: 'lack of jobs'	38 ^{**7}
Major youth concern among 20-24 year olds: 'lack of jobs'	49 ^{*7}
Reason for not working in a job: 'no jobs available' (n218 school leavers)	27 ^{**10}
Perceptions of positive changes since 1994: job opportunities	6 ^{*5}
Satisfaction with job opportunities	19 ^{*23}
Lack of job skills	
Reason for not working in a job: 'not the right qualifications, skills' (n218 school leavers)	17 ^{**10}
Has training in life skills	5
Has training in at least one life or job skill	11
Has training in at least one life or job skill (n267 20-24 year olds)	22
Need for skills development	
Most important aspect of spare-time: to learn skills and develop talents	38 ^{*9}
Most attractive aspect of proposed national youth community service programme: to learn life skills	46 ^{*7}
Recommendations for youth initiatives to make Grahamstown a better place for youth: Life-skills, job-skills training; volunteer work; and community service	27 ^{**8}
Volunteering as job alternative	
Willingness to participate in national youth community service programme	69
Willingness to participate in national youth community service programme among youth who have heard of the National Youth Commission	78
Agree with statement that unemployed youth should take volunteer job: "if you do not have a job, you can always do things to help people in the community"	94
Perceived quality of life	
Global:	
Satisfied with life-as-a-whole	69
Happy	65
Life getting better (versus worse)	53
Optimism: satisfied with life in five years' time	60
Domain satisfactions¹:	
Satisfied with health	95
Satisfied with self	91
Satisfied with education	75
Satisfied with security from crime	39
Satisfied with family income	33
Satisfied with job opportunities	19 ^{*23}
Civic pride	
Proud to be South African (very often & often)	73
Proud to be from Grahamstown (very often & often)	56
Factor that most inspires national pride: RDP (Reconstruction and Development Programme)	33 ^{*7}

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^{*x, **x} ^{*} Modal frequency response category, ^{**} second highest frequency response category. ^x following the ^{*} denotes the number of response options provided for the item.

^{**x} Lowest frequency response category. ^x following the ^{*} denotes the number of response options provided for the item. In the case of 'satisfaction with job opportunities', the ^{*} denotes the total number of domain items in the set.

¹ The items read: your health; yourself as a person; your education; your security from crime, your family's income; your job opportunities.

Access to development opportunities

The majority of youth stated they knew of some eleven major community organisations serving the youth in Grahamstown. However, only one quarter had heard of the National Youth Commission. Nevertheless, most youth were keen to participate as volunteers in a hypothetical community service programme under the auspices of the National Youth Commission. The description stated that the programme offered only pocket money as payment. The opportunity to learn life skills was the most attractive incentive to participate in the programme, far ahead of the opportunity to serve the community or to learn self-discipline. Similarly, in response to a leisure item, youth cited that the most important motivation for engaging in spare time activities was to "learn skills and develop talents", ahead of the need to "belong" or to "have fun".

Subjective well-being

Towards the end of the interview respondents were asked to evaluate their lives. The global measures of life satisfaction and happiness and all but one of the domain-level satisfaction items used in the Grahamstown survey were based on earlier South African studies conducted among the national population. All items were personalised so that they would have direct meaning to the respondents. For example, the youth were asked to rate their own education, their own job opportunities, the food they eat, their right to vote, the loyalty of their friends and their own intimate relationships with a person of the opposite sex.

Some two-thirds of youth in Grahamstown East indicated they were satisfied with life (69%) and happy (65%) in 1999. The percentage satisfied was significantly higher than the national average of 53% among all South African adults and 47% among black adults in 1999 (Moller and Dickow, 2001 :34) or the 51% satisfied among township youth in a nationwide youth study conducted ten years earlier in 1989 (Moller, 1992). Some 53% of Grahamstown East youth thought life was getting better rather than worse. Youth were mainly optimistic for the future. Some 60% thought life would be better for young people like themselves in five years' time, 9% thought life would be about the same, while only 6% thought life would be worse. However, one in four (26%) were unable to project into the future.

Domain satisfactions

Grahamstown East youth rated 23 life domains in terms of a satisfaction rating. Domains scored from positive to negative in approximately the following order: health, personal and family life, food, education, housing, community facilities, safety and security, income and jobs (see select indicators in Table 1).

As is usually the case, the surveyed youth tended to be more satisfied with the central concerns of life, such as the self and family, than with the peripheral ones such as housing and community services. Satisfaction with "yourself as a person" topped the list of personal satisfactions. As might be expected, given their young ages, the health domain scored highest on the satisfaction scale. Youth also gave above-average satisfaction ratings to family life and the food on the table. The domain of education figured fairly high on the list of satisfied concerns. Youth appear to be mainly satisfied with the education they had received or were still acquiring, a result consistent with their positive assessments of the high school they attended and their reports that school life was 'rewarding' rather than frustrating³. Grahamstown East youth were mainly discontented with safety and security issues, family income and their own job opportunities. The lack of job opportunities for youth was by far the greatest dissatisfier.

National and local pride

In the last section of the interview Grahamstown East youth were invited to discuss civic pride issues. Feelings of national pride surpassed feelings of local pride by far. Although the majority (81%) of youth considered Grahamstown or Grahamstown East to be their "real home", and 72% wished to settle in Grahamstown in the longer term, local pride was less pronounced than national pride. While 73% of youth stated they were "very often" and "often" proud to be South African only 56% felt proud to be a person from Grahamstown. Local pride was most pronounced among youth whose pride was self-evident or rooted in diffuse affective notions of love and attachment to one's hometown. A fairly substantial group of youth expressed pride in the Festival City that provided extra income for the household and excitement in the air once a year. Youth who were not proud of Grahamstown tended to associate their hometown with underdevelopment, poverty and boredom.

Respondents were able to identify several achievements which inspire national pride. South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) headed the list. The single largest group, 33% of the sample, gave this response. Earlier in the interview youth named housing development as one of the key areas in which they had seen substantial progress since the first democratic elections of 1994. As reported above, some 20% of houses occupied by youth in 1999 are 'RDP' houses. In contrast, only a small minority saw any progress in job creation, an area in which the RDP has generally been found wanting.

3. Respondents' satisfaction with and rating of the quality of high schools attended did not match the schools' performance. Based on matriculation results of these high schools in the year of the survey, only some 36% of respondents stood a 68% or higher chance of obtaining a matriculation pass on leaving high school, the minimum qualification for most jobs beyond the most menial ones.

Subjective well-being, as indicated by life satisfaction, happiness, and perceptions of life getting better, are highly correlated with each other and to strong feelings of national pride. This finding is consistent with trends observed in national studies (Moller *et al.*, 1999; Moller and Dickow, 2001).

Youth initiatives

To end the interview session youth were invited to think how young people themselves could make Grahamstown a better place for the youth, that is a place that would make young people proud of their home town. The overwhelming response focussed on the need for a concerted effort to promote youth clubs and youth centres. Over one in two respondents thought youth clubs and centres where youth can grow and develop their talents would make a big difference to the young people of Grahamstown. Along similar lines, respondents supported voluntary work for youth in the community. Other ideas for making Grahamstown a youth-friendly city concentrated on the creation of jobs for youth and providing the requisite education and skills training to allow youth to enter the world of work. A substantial number of youth made specific mention of life skills training and moral guidance as a more general preparation for youth to succeed in life.

Differential well-being

Advantaged youth and well-being

Youth who were relatively advantaged scored better on subjective well-being. The three subjective well-being items referring to the present time, satisfaction with life-as-a-whole, happiness, and life getting better rather than worse, are significantly positively associated. In turn, these three indicators are also positively linked to social and personal advantages including self-rated household affluence, a rewarding school experience, being educationally on-track, and self-esteem. Youth from the better-off neighbourhoods were more likely to express life satisfaction, happiness and net optimism (calculated as the percentage perceiving life to be getting better less the percentage perceiving life to be getting worse). Economic hardship appears to colour perceived well-being among Grahamstown youth. Material as well as less tangible concerns are affected. Youth from households reportedly "scraping a living" were significantly more dissatisfied than others with the food they eat, their education, job opportunities, family income, and the size of their dwelling. Not even family happiness was exempt. Youth from economically weak households were significantly more likely to produce low scores on an

index of self-esteem⁴. For example, youth whose households were "scraping a living" were less likely than others to say they had done well in life or that their family or school had given them a headstart in life.

Disillusioned youth

Perhaps the most striking finding to emerge from the study is that older youth are less satisfied with life overall. Signs of age-related disillusionment among Grahamstown East youth are also evident in domain satisfactions. Dissatisfaction among older youth is concentrated in aspects of life which block advancement. Examples include below-average satisfaction with education, assistance with career guidance, job opportunities, and family income. Similarly, older youth are less happy and less likely to find life is getting better. A loss of confidence and sense of purpose in life is detected. Self-esteem, which is closely associated with subjective well-being, appears to be less evident among the older youth. For example, the youth 21 to 24 years of age are least likely to feel equal to others, to perceive that they have made progress in life and to be confident in their goal achievement capabilities. This finding suggests that youth shed their rosy view of the world as they grow older and become more disillusioned with life chances as they mature.

Discussion

The bleak prospects of finding work is a dominant theme throughout the study elicited in response to spontaneous as well as closed-ended items in the survey. While Grahamstown East youth expressed satisfaction with their education they were mainly dissatisfied with their job prospects. Other research has showed that township youth regard education mainly as a means to an end (Moller, 1991). The Grahamstown study highlights the mismatch between education that mainly satisfies but is not seen to lead to a job after leaving school.

Volunteering as fall-back option

At the outset it was stated that the study aimed to provide pointers for solutions to enhance the quality of life of youth in Grahamstown. The findings, taken together, suggest that given the bleak job situation in the Eastern Cape, particularly for school leavers, it might be worth considering whether volunteer work will provide a bridge between school and adult

4. The index of self-esteem is composed of the four attitudes items: confident of abilities, feeling as good as others, confident of achieving goals, and perceptions of having done well in life so far. The fifth item, taken from the quality of life section of the interview, referred to satisfaction with the self. The sample was divided into three roughly equal-sized groups according to their overall score on the five items.

life. Volunteer status may serve as a stopgap solution that instils a greater sense of purpose and personal pride than the label 'unemployed' which has negative connotations in most parts of the world (Moller, 1993).

The importance of volunteering was only recognised when writing up the study⁵. The survey did not inquire about volunteering experience as such. However, several probes explored attitudes to volunteering indirectly. For example, fieldworkers were instructed to probe for participation in job creation programmes, such as Working for Water, when recording job experience. Even with probing, only a small number of the youth in the survey reported work experience of any kind and few youth had any practical job skills. Noteworthy is that Working-for-Water jobs typically include elements of volunteering, as pay is minimal. Working-for-Water youth learn discipline, some job skills, and are trained in life skills.

The most important probe into volunteering did not mention the concept as such. Youth were asked if they would like to participate, that is, volunteer – in the sense that payment would be pocket money only – for a proposed community service programme under the auspices of the National Youth Commission. Some seven in ten indicated they would like to participate.

In a later section of the questionnaire, virtually all youth agreed with the statement, which implied that volunteering might be a fall-back option for unemployed youth in Grahamstown (see Table 1 for wording of item). The vast majority supported the idea that volunteering was an appropriate alternative to a regular job. It appeared that the respondents seemed to take comfort in the knowledge that youth might opt for a job in volunteering if the job search failed.

Worth noting is that volunteerism is particularly attractive to youth who are committed to staying in Grahamstown and therefore wish to develop "in place". Investing in goodwill in the home community makes greater sense if one plans to be around to reap recognition for service in future. If community service work is seen to be a launching pad for the career path, time spent on volunteering may be considered worthwhile even in the absence of pay.

Would volunteering be attractive to youth in the consumer age? Grahamstown East youth watch television – the average is over three hours on a weekday according to self-reports – and are thus part of the global consumer culture. Virtually all youth have pocket money, even youth from poorer households. As most youth are dependent on parents or guardians

5. South Africa's president, Thabo Mbeki, declared 2002 the year of the volunteer. The conclusions reached from the findings of the Grahamstown youth study were drawn in advance of his public statement.

for their pocket money, they may feel obliged to spend it on schooling rather than on consumer goods. According to survey results, older youth who are less dependent on parents for their pocket money, tend to have more leeway to become consumers of fashion and entertainment. Consider that the consumer wants of youth might be met, if minimal pay is associated with volunteer jobs, and youth can dispose of this cash.

Volunteering and disillusioned youth

Would volunteer work appeal to the pocket of disillusioned older youth identified in the survey? A word of caution may be apposite here. The job issue is a major concern mainly for out-of-school youth. Youth in the oldest age cohort in the survey were less likely than others to think community service was an appropriate substitute for a regular job. It would appear that disillusioned youth are looking for "real" jobs not community service or volunteer jobs. While the volunteer job status may confer self-esteem it may still be regarded as a temporary or stop-gap solution by older youth. From a policy point of view, all stop-gap solutions buy time and keep youth meaningfully occupied, out of trouble and on the personal development track. However, from the youth perspective unless the volunteer "job" leads to a more permanent solution, youth may eventually become disillusioned as is suggested by the survey finding that older youth, from the tougher areas of Grahamstown East, are least attracted to this option. The wording of the item on volunteering in the attitude section of the questionnaire was heavily loaded towards acceptance which makes the disagreement of a pocket of older disillusioned youth all the more significant. Ensuring that the minority of disillusioned youth gets on to a personal development track may pose the greatest challenge to youth policy and practice.

The need for constructive time-use

One reason for the attractiveness of volunteering and community service may be the felt need to use time constructively. Many Grahamstown East youth are involved in church and club activities. The most popular spare-time activities are pro-social⁶ ones linked to church and sports. Engagement in active sports activities is widespread. Nevertheless, one in two youth say their days drag on with too little to do, suggesting that many Grahamstown East youth are not making constructive use of their spare time in spite of their self-declared need to develop skills through leisure activities. Community service work might fill the void here and be particularly attractive to socially integrated youth.

6. Pro-social attitudes and behaviours on the part of youth reflect acceptance of dominant norms and values in society. Pro-social activities can best be described as ones that enjoy widespread social recognition.

Earlier studies of time use among township and peri-urban youth (Moller, 1991, 1992; Richards, 1994) showed that means-to-an-end leisure is very sought after. In the Grahamstown East study, the need for skills development is the most frequently mentioned motivator for engaging in spare-time activities, ahead of "pure" leisure incentives such as having fun and relaxing. According to the Grahamstown study, it appears that leisure becomes a more serious occupation as youth grow older and mature. Having fun becomes progressively less important and is overtaken by the need to earn a living and to develop skills.

The need for life-skills training to overcome social exclusion

The popularity of life-skills training is a further recurrent theme in the survey which emerged spontaneously and in response to explicit cues. It is probable that most youth would prefer to learn *job* skills in preference to *life* skills as the latter are not specifically oriented towards earning vocational qualifications. However, there is plenty of support among the surveyed youth for the 'softer' option of life skills which might ultimately bring more returns to young people growing up in a jobless environment. Life-skills training for young people could make a difference in virtually all areas of subjective well-being covered in the survey. Life skills may be one of the most important development tools to assist youth, especially disillusioned youth, to gain self-esteem and competency in everyday situations. Potentially at least, life-skills training could promote personal capability to make optimal use of advantages and resources including leisure. It could help to fight disillusionment among risk-prone youth by assisting them to cope with problems such as teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. In short, life skills could play an important role in assisting youth to avoid the risk of social exclusion.

The youth survey conducted in Grahamstown in 1999 indicates that life-skills training has been brought only to the privileged few, the core group of advantaged youth identified by the survey. Only 4% of the youth in the survey stated they had received life-skills training. Ironically, it has required a crisis on the scale of the AIDS epidemic sweeping through South Africa to highlight the urgent need for life-skills training for youth⁷. One of the few benefits of the AIDS epidemic may be an increased number of interventions to promote life-skills training for youth⁸. In 2001

7. In the Eastern Cape, 20.2% of women attending ante-natal clinics were HIV-positive in 2000 (SAIRR, 2002).

8. The author is indebted to Dr Kevin Kelly, Director of Cadre (Centre for AIDS Development and Research Evaluation) for making to this point at a University Seminar held at the Institute of Social and Economic Research on October 23, 2001.

the finance minister announced that additional government resources are to be made available to strengthen life skills programmes in South African schools (Hartley, 2001).

The promise of life-skills training appears to be an important motivator for youth to engage in collective development initiatives such as community service and youth clubs. Almost one in two youth, the single largest category, were attracted to volunteering if life skills featured in the “job” package. There appears to be plenty of scope for such training in Grahamstown through local non-governmental organisations. However, further research is required to assess the impact that life skills training and volunteer work have on the development paths of young people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Grahamstown East has the potential to provide an ideal place to grow up in. By their own admission, the youth of Grahamstown are essentially optimistic in spite of the depressed economic situation. Building on this optimism, collective youth programmes operated by churches, community organisations and the youth themselves, play an important role in developing the youth along pro-social paths. If such programmes can protect youth at risk and engage both out-of-school youth and schoolgoers in their spare time, they may go a long way toward allowing youth to develop “in place” – as most would prefer if given the choice. No doubt, jobs of the conventional type will continue to elude many youth of Grahamstown in the near future. Meanwhile, alternatives in volunteering and community service, combined with life-skills training, may succeed in teaching youth self-respect and how to manage their lives. Such options may bring rich rewards and hope to the younger generation and the community at large in a context of high unemployment.

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