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Title: Equipping teachers to promote foundational skills for learning in the rural Eastern Cape

Theme: MDG 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education

Abstract:

A high drop out rate, Grade 6 learners who cannot read and write, low Matric pass rates and exceptionally high unemployment. These are all signs that the education system in the rural Eastern Cape is in crisis. This paper presents the journey of an Occupational Therapist's experiences in understanding and beginning to address these issues. It outlines the reasons in believing that many of the psycho-social and health challenges in this community have their roots in the inability of the education system to provide adequate foundational and school-readiness skills.

The approach of this therapist has been to use the Health Promoting School's philosophy that schools present opportunities for social, cultural, and political change. The core health promotion strategy used is that of promoting personal skills of the teachers at various levels in the education system to address the large numbers of learners who are not progressing well at school. Many methods have been employed to meet this aim including a workshop for teachers developing their skills in assisting learners with difficulties and promoting foundational skills for learning. In conclusion, the need for advocacy is highlighted in order to make the Department of Education aware of the needs of this population and the role that Occupational Therapists can play.