POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LITERACY IN DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN SWAZILAND

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Abstract

Lack of literacy still presents a challenge to governments in less-developed countries such as Swaziland. The purpose of this research was to examine literacy formation in Swaziland among low- and marginally literate adults. It focuses on investigating the economic, political and educational factors promoting or inhibiting development of literacy, and analyses the discrepancies between stated policy in official government documents and the strategies that were being implemented.

Four questions guided the study: (a) How has Swazi literacy policy reflected the dual challenge of providing universal primary education (UPE) for children and promoting adult literacy education? (b) How have notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives played out in the Swazi national literacy policy? (c) How have international NGOs influenced Swazi state literacy policy formation? (d) What factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland account for the particular successes and failures of literacy formation?

To this end, a case study design using a range of data collection techniques was employed to carry out the research. Data were collected through individual interviews of officers in government, educational institutions and other organisations, by a review of the relevant educational literature and by examination of official documents and records. All the information collected was analysed, subjecting it to a critical examination through an approach focusing on the conditions of the economically vulnerable and socially excluded in society.

The study generated several key findings about literacy formation in Swaziland. (i) The government still had challenges balancing the provision of primary education alongside promoting adult literacy education. (ii) Notions of human capital development informed the strategies for promoting development, including reducing poverty and unemployment in the country, to the extent that alternative notions were almost neglected. Education and training
were provided above all to meet the needs of the economy. (iii) International agencies and NGOs influenced most development efforts in the country; at crucial times creating some dependency on these organisations. (iv) The effect of government policy capacity on the particular successes and failures of policy was found to depend on the resources available to the government (financial and human), governance structures in terms of representing an enabling environment for domestic and foreign direct investment, and the extent to which the government was perceived to co-ordinate policy implementation among government agencies and NGOs.

Based on these findings, three general conclusions about literacy formation in Swaziland can be drawn: (a) education and training in Swaziland is, on paper, rated highly. However, there is a mismatch when considering overall support. This is true of formal education – particularly primary education - as it is of adult education and literacy training. (b) Structural limitations at the economic, political and cultural levels present a limitation for literacy formation generally as well as literacy formation among particular population groups based on their age, class, gender or rural-urban location. (c) While the conditions in Swaziland reflect those in the wider continent, the country is unique in important respects in the manner it shares resources – including education, status and power.

Policy recommendations include involving all stakeholders in policy-making so as to benefit from the diverse expertise of various groups. They also include paying attention to all factors that might hinder successful implementation of policy, especially resources considerations. Participation in education by adults and children should centre on access based on ability to pay fees and timing of programmes to fit adult working schedules. Poverty reduction should earmark specific groups rather than be general, and there should be openness to other opinions in a climate of national dialogue. Policy decisions should be based on research. Finally, further research is required to analyse learner perceptions of adult literacy, in particular.
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List of abbreviations, acronyms and conventions

CANGO – Co-ordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations
CBS – Central Bank of Swaziland,
CCCO – Coalition of Concerned Civic Organisations
CD – Community Development
CRC – Constitutional Review Commission;
CSO – Central Statistics Office
DEPS – Department of Economic Planning & Statistics;
EFA – Education for All
ESRA – Economic and Social Reform Agenda
ET – Education and Training
EWLP – Experimental World Literacy Programme
GSP – General System of Preferences
IRIN – Integrated Information Networks
MEPD – Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MOAC – Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives
MOE – Ministry of Education
MOHSW – Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
NDS – National Development Strategy
NEC – National Education Commission
NEP – National Education Policy
NERCOM – National Education Review Commission
NFE – Non-Formal Education
PPCU – Public Policy Co-ordinating Unit
REC – Rural Education Centres
SACU – Southern African Customs Union
SNC – Swazi National Council
SNI – Sebenta National Institute
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA – United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UPE – Universal Primary Education
Conventions

I use *italics* for foreign words and phrases and titles of books and journals.

I use single quotes to indicate a novel or special use of a word or phrase.

I use underlining only on rare occasions to mark off sections within broad headings, for emphasis.

I place abbreviations, for instance, e.g., i.e., within parenthesis and always write them in full outside parenthesis.
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Chapter 1

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

The pace of discovery has almost out-paced the ability of the human race to handle information or knowledge overload in a century when rapid change is commonplace. At the turn of the information millennium, it is more difficult than ever to carry out the duties of citizenship without being able to read. Statements in UNESCO documents maintain that literacy is necessary in societies that rely on written information, even if images and oral traditions can be effective. However, despite its inherent value, literacy remains a challenge for many so-called 'developing' countries. Swaziland is no exception to this challenge.

This thesis seeks to make a case for literacy in nation-building and to maintain that adult education/literacy training programmes, while not a universal solution for societal problems, are "part and parcel of all aspects of national development" (Wagner, 2001: 5). The overall purpose of the study is to investigate literacy formation in Swaziland particularly among low- and marginally literate adults outside the regular, formal school system. The aim is to examine how literacy is developed in light of political, economic and social factors that either promote or inhibit its formation. The thesis argues for an understanding of literacy beyond mere mastery of the technical abilities of reading, writing and arithmetic (the 3Rs) to a level which enables new literates to better read their world (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Situated in a low development context in Africa, the thesis initially argues for wide-spread distribution of literacy from basic to higher levels (including professional or technical) to make possible independent functioning of Swazi people to 'cope with practical problems or choices' to paraphrase Wagner (as workers, citizens, parents, learners) in a changing region. Even Swaziland, an undeveloped nation small in size and population, is not immune from the wave of changes engulfing the continent generally, and the Sub-Saharan African region specifically (Figure 1).
Figure 1: Map of Africa showing position of Swaziland
A history of international literacy policy for development

The role for literacy in nation building is not new. Literacy training in less-developed countries has traditionally been promoted as alternative education for many adults who did not have a chance to attend formal school (Giere, 1994). In fact, the history of adult education, generally, and literacy training, specifically, has been characterised by landmark declarations from world conferences and statements of intent by international organisations, governments and political parties to reduce social, educational and economic disadvantage. The Second World Conference on Adult Education in Montreal in 1960 urged member states to consider adult education including literacy "not as an addition but as an integral and organic part of their national systems of education. It should receive within the system the attention and economic resources which this status justifies" (UNESCO, 1960: 5). The Conference urged UNESCO to convene regional seminars for groups of countries with similar problems about adult education generally and 'illiteracy' specifically. The establishment of a special fund for the particular goal of increasing literacy in the developing and newly-independent countries (Ibid., p. 8) perhaps represents its most concrete proposal.

The Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1961 sought to take stock of educational needs for economic and social development and developed a programme to meet those needs. The Conference declared that "African countries should aim at providing universal primary education (UPE) within two decades and at the same time give special attention to adult education" (UNESCO, 1961a: 11). The Conference ended with what came to be known as the Addis Ababa Plan for African Educational Development. The core argument of the Addis Ababa Plan for African Educational Development was that education is the basis for economic and social development in Africa. This education had to be rooted in an effective and efficient formal education for children and adult education/literacy training for adults. The Plan's main elements included a five-year (1961
short-term plan for expanding education in Africa and a 20-year (1961 – 1980) long-term plan. Under the short-term plan, the objective was to raise primary school enrolment Africa-wide from 40 percent to 51 percent. The long-term plan sought to achieve universal, compulsory and free primary education.

The Addis Ababa Conference designed quantitative educational targets in the form of an educational pyramid for Tropical Africa\(^1\) to achieve its agreed proportions in two decades. It intended this pyramid, based on percent enrolment of the relevant age groups (primary, secondary and tertiary education), to stand in the relationship of 100: 23: 2. That is, the final assumptions about the pyramid were as follows: “Primary education of six years’ duration will be universal, free and compulsory. Enrolment at the primary stage will, therefore, be 100 percent” (UNESCO, 1962: 145). The ratio of enrolment at the second and third level of education to the relevant age group would be 23 and 2 percent respectively (Ibid., p. 147). In summary, many governments opted for the dual or two-pronged strategy to literacy development, through providing primary education for all children and considerably reducing adult illiteracy.

A year later, in 1962, the Meeting of Ministers of Education of African countries participating in the implementation of the Addis Ababa Plan for African Educational Development identified, too, the role of literacy in national development. It asserted that adult education is an important complement to formal, school education, "whether in respect of the acquisition of literacy or of the improvement of the conditions of community life, the provision of schooling for late beginners or the social integration of young people" (UNESCO, 1962: 17). As a final resolution of the Meeting, the ministers recommended that member states "give special attention to adult education programmes in the countries" (UNESCO, 1962: 26), in

\(^{1}\) Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Cameroun, South Cameroons, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Leopoldville), Dahomey, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Federation of Rhodesia & Nyasaland, Ruanda-Urundi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanganyika, Togo, Uganda, Upper Volta and Zanzibar.
keeping both with the Addis Ababa recommendations and the plan for a world literacy campaign
developed at that time by UNESCO. They should also consider revising in 1963 the Addis
Ababa Plan to make sure “there was sufficient budgetary provision in each country for such
urgently required programmes” (UNESCO, 1962: 26).

In support of the dual strategy for promoting literacy formation, the first World
Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy held in Tehran in 1965
urged member states to design educational systems that provided for the educational training
needs of both children who had not yet begun working and adults who had not benefited from
the necessary minimum of primary education (UNESCO, 1965). The Conference observed that
development of both the formal school system on the one hand and adult literacy work on the
other did not present a conflict. As it argued: "National educational plans should include
schooling for children and literacy training for adults as parallel elements" (UNESCO, 1965: 7).
The Conference concluded that: "Adult literacy, an essential element in overall development,
must be closely linked to economic and social priorities and to present and future manpower

The Conference argued that literacy teaching had to be oriented towards development
and made an inseparable part not only of national educational plans but also of plans and projects
for development within the overall economy. And, given human needs at the time, education
could no longer be restricted to the school: "the necessary promotion of adult literacy makes it
essential to integrate all the school and out-of-school resources of each country" (UNESCO, 1965: 7).
UNESCO (2003) reported the following results: "In 1965, only 12 out of 45
developing countries in Africa had more than 51 percent of the relevant age group enrolled in
primary school. The gross enrolment ratio in primary school in Africa in 1980 was 80 percent"
p. 4). Although there had been significant progress, enrolment was still 20 percent short of the
plans. UNESCO set another goal - that of a universal campaign against illiteracy, designed to
reduce illiteracy by two-thirds or 350 million of the estimated 500 million illiterate adults in Africa, Asia and Latin America within 10 years, beginning in 1963 (UNESCO, 2003).

In spite of the two-pronged literacy development strategy adopted by the African States, the corresponding disparity between formal schooling and adult education/literacy manifest in the Addis Ababa Plan could still be found in educational plans of most member states. This situation, which was at odds with the essence of the resolution for co-operation for the eradication of global illiteracy, adopted by the UN General Assembly, could be resolved when two conditions were met. First, a budgetary effort; and second, an effort of inter-ministerial co-ordination given that “adult education is the responsibility of ministries other than those of national education” (UNESCO, 1962: 17). Even so, it is important to note that in some countries Ministries of Education are responsible for adult education.

In the next wave, the Udaipur Conference on Literacy, organised by the International Council for Adult Education and the German Foundation for International Development in 1982 and attended by UNESCO and its member states, adopted the Udaipur Declaration. This sought the complete elimination of illiteracy by the Year 2000 (Bhola, 1984; Hall, 1989). The 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, identified literacy as one of six international goals for education. The goal was "to reduce the number of adult illiterates to half of the 1990 level by the year 2000" (Wagner, 2001: 1). It can be noted, therefore, that the Jomtien Conference scaled back the earlier promises and chose a more modest, and potentially achievable, goal of reducing illiteracy rates in half by the Year 2000. It is somewhat ironic that the goal had to be shifted in 1990, the year that had been designated International Literacy Year (Hall, 1989). As many reports reveal, different countries using various methods have made important gains in adult education/literacy over the past decade since Jomtien; however, many still perceive the general literacy situation today remains one of the challenges of the new century (Wagner, 2001).
The present situation of illiteracy

In the most recent wave, the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 observed that the Jomtien literacy goal of reducing the illiteracy rate in each country by 50 percent in one decade had not been met. It is perhaps in light of this observation that the Forum shifted the literacy goal to 2015 and, even then to reducing illiteracy by 50 percent but not eliminating it altogether (Wagner (2001). It is of special interest to note how shifts in the attainment of the adult literacy goal correspond with shifts in the goal of achieving universal primary education also to 2015 when it had been set for about the same period as the literacy goal, that is, for 2000 (Chowdhury, 1995). Even with the new target date of 2015, some are not optimistic. The World Bank (2003), for example, makes the point that the prospects of achieving universal primary education by 2015 present a challenge in Africa, noting that barely one child out of two completes six years of schooling. These identified challenges, which can be traced back to the 1960s, have become even more pronounced as we enter the twenty-first century. The challenges are more pronounced than ever in Africa, in general, and Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular.

Despite a decade of seemingly stepped-up basic education efforts following the World Conference on Education for All in 1990, many people still do not have access to education. Among those who have it, strong regional differences in literacy levels characterise the continent. The World Education Forum (WEF) re-endorsed two objectives, namely: "Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by the year 2015, especially for women and raising the share of children who complete an adequate quality basic education, towards the goal of universal basic education completion by the year 2015" (UNESCO, 2000: 1). The Forum noted that progress made since 1990 had not improved the situation much and that the lack of literacy remained a barrier to the development of some African countries. Strong demographic growth as manifested in high birth rates and fertility rates has been thought to be one of the
factors (Wagner, 1990; Craig, 1990). In 2000, UNESCO estimated the average literacy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa at 52 percent for women and 69 percent for men, with gender disparities manifesting in 75 percent of the countries in the region.

In spite of the failure in the developing world to achieve universal primary education by the Year 2000, the view that primary education is the initial place for literacy in most countries has remained dominant in the education literature. Wagner (1990) observes that programmes for raising literacy often entailed the expansion of educational programmes generally and primary schooling specifically on the one hand and the mounting of literacy programmes and campaigns on the other. Several scholars (e.g. Chowdhury, 1995) have tried to draw attention to the two-pronged strategy and the need to develop a complementary literacy strategy. They acknowledge that formal primary education is an important means for increasing literacy but argue also that adult literacy not only promotes productivity and well-being of the adult population but also acts as a means to support educational investment in the so-called “next generation” (p. 2). Still, Chowdhury argues that: "While the causes of low literacy are many, the immediate cause is the low levels of enrolment and retention at the primary level" (p. 6). And, that is the necessary step to guarantee sustainable literacy at the adult age (World Bank, 2003). Beyond education, rapid population growth, particularly the proportion of children (in the population) has been cited as a key (contributing) factor for the slow progress towards universal basic literacy (Craig, 1990; Department of Economic Planning & Statistics, 1969; Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990)

Apart from the economic returns, education also produces non-market benefits. Some literature argues literate people are more likely to be aware of their health status and likely to take advantage of social services available for them. This may, in turn, reduce child and adult mortality rates. Bown (cited in Chowdhury, 1995) notes how a research project based at a health clinic in South Africa established a close correlation between women's literacy and commitment to the immunisation of their children. Also, a Health Education and Adult Literacy (HEAL)
project in Nepal found that women who had become literate were more likely to use oral rehydration solution (Smith, cited in Chowdhury, 1995). Some evidence (Cochrane, cited in Chowdhury, 1995) suggests also that educated women have fewer children, a correlation whose conclusiveness, however, others dispute. As Wagner (1990) has argued, "the available evidence indicates that it may be formal schooling, rather than literacy per se, that changes the motivation and aspirations of women that then could be the potential cause for decreased fertility" (p. 133).

Parental education also plays a role in shaping children's schooling and employment. Parents who are 'educated' are more likely to understand the importance of schooling from their personal experience and are more likely to send their children to school. As a study of school enrolment among Philippine households found, parental education, particularly a mother's education, was an important determinant (King & Lillard, cited in Chowdhury, 1995). Bown's study in Nepal found also that literate women were more likely to help their children with homework than non-literate women (cited in Chowdhury, 1995: 6). In a sense, writes Chowdhury, "literacy also instils a sense of empowerment to those who hold it" (Ibid.). From this analysis, the importance of completing the primary education cycle for the acquisition of literacy skills therefore seems evident. In sum, if adult literacy programmes are in place there will eventually be an increase in literacy among parents which, in turn, will help with child literacy. This link is worth pointing out, particularly if people raise funding objections against adult literacy programmes.

In general, formal primary education is the preferred means of teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills (Magagula, 1990). However, it is often argued that non-formal education methods may be appropriate in contexts where many students drop out or where formal schools are inaccessible. Despite its waning recognition among some policy-makers and educators, adult education is an important investment. Apart from sending their children to school and providing them with a nutritious diet, literate adults are also more likely to be better equipped to participate
in economic activities outside the subsistence and unpaid sectors. Studies of recent non-
governmental organisation adult literacy projects bear out these arguments (Chowdhury, 1995). The potential effect of adult literacy on the productivity and well-being of present and future generations is evident. Yet, some scholars have noted how previous literacy campaigns and programmes have met with mixed outcomes. In many cases, the poor performance of learners and the rate of drop-out and relapse into illiteracy have disappointed programme planners. Chowdhury cautions against governments giving up support of adult literacy programmes that potentially have economic and social benefits for adult and child populations. She suggests taking required steps to overcome the usual barriers to programme success, including on-going research into the relative effectiveness of various types of literacy programmes and policies.

**Literacy development in the context of Swaziland**

The enormous social and economic challenges presently facing Swaziland have led to a renewed urgency in broadening its literacy strategy and to finally embrace the original ideas of a dual UPE-adult education strategy. Swaziland faces challenges with the economy, with democracy and civil society. Affecting these and other inter-related elements are low literacy levels, a high incidence of poverty (66% of Swazi people live below the poverty line), a rise in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, slow economic growth characterised by declining (or stagnating) investment, high and rising unemployment and a high rate of population growth. As well, a costly and relatively inefficient public service and unstable labour and political relations compound these factors (Prime Minister’s Office, 1997, 1999a; UNDP, 1998; Forster & Nsibande, 2000; Ministry of Finance, 2003).

Literacy is linked to an understanding of the preceding challenges to the extent that they require certain knowledge, skills and sensitivities from the wider population. Educating and training young people to contribute to a country's development takes time, a point that Nyerere
(cited in Bhola, 1994: 315) stressed, "First, we must educate the adults. Our children will not have an impact on our economic development for 5, 10 or even 20 years. The attitudes of the adults ... on the other hand, have an impact now". For this reason, educating and training adults makes political and economic sense as they are readily available for work (broadly conceived) in various sectors of the economy. This was the point made by Tanzania's First Development Plan, that "the nation cannot wait until the children have become educated for development to begin" (Unsicker in Mayo, 1995: 374); hence the rationale for adult education/literacy training.

In the Swazi context, the government argues that raising the standard of living, especially the reduction of poverty, will come from developing the potential of the Swazi people, starting with education. Recognising that basic education (10 years of schooling) provides the means for higher level types of education and training (OECD, 1996), Swaziland stresses primary education where, it argues "the essential skills of literacy and numeracy are acquired and, hence the social rates of return to education are highest" (MEPD, 1996: 147). Psacharopoulos (1996) and UNDP (1998) make similar observations about returns to investment in basic education. It is of interest to note how the government's notion of basic education, in practice, referring to primary education, is limited. Yet, stressing primary education should be viewed against the statistical evidence that 23 percent of primary school-age children were not in school during 1990/91 and 2001/02 (UNPD, 2004). This shows how enrolment still presents a challenge.

The literacy rate (of persons age 15 and above) in Swaziland is estimated around 80 percent. This represents a 36 percent increase from the estimated 44 percent during the first decennial census in 1966 (CSO, 2001; UNDP, 2003). As shall be shown, despite this somewhat high overall literacy rate, Swaziland has a low level of literacy, in general, and among women and rural Swazi in particular. Those with literacy skills function at a low level even within the government. Further, these figures often ignore complex social, cultural and economic realities (for example, age, gender, income). The political and economic conditions in the country are
likely to be both a result of and a deterrent to literacy; suggesting that poor or low literacy has contributed to and maintains low political and economic positions. These literacy levels reduce the country's capacity to deal with some of its great socio-economic challenges, especially the need to reduce poverty.

The UN classifies Swaziland as a lower middle-income country where, "socio-economic indicators continue to point towards high poverty incidences and deprivation among the population" (Prime Minister's Office, 1997: 45). The fact that poverty is more common in rural areas points to the varying levels of development and agricultural potential in the various agro-ecological zones of Swaziland. The literature on poverty is cluttered with problems about "defining, measuring and accessing the data necessary for capturing all aspects of poverty in a given setting". Generally, "poverty is inability to attain pre-determined minimum levels of living" (UNDP, 1998: 55). Given the difficulties accessing up-to-date data, governments including Swaziland often use the cost of a basket of goods and services considered important for life sustenance in measuring the lowest acceptable standard of living (Social Planning Council, 2003).

Estimates by the 1995 Swaziland Household Income & Expenditure Survey (SHIES) of the extent of human deprivation in Swaziland show an adult illiteracy rate of 23 percent (defined as persons 15 and above who cannot read and write), the percent of population living below the national poverty line being 48 (for food) and 66 (total poverty line). The population without access to potable water stood at 14 percent (urban) and 54 percent (rural) while those without access to sanitation stood at 40 percent in urban and 64 percent in rural areas (Stenflo in UNDP, 1998: 55). A person's health status and poverty is likely to be connected to their literacy level; those who have fallen behind in literacy have also lost ground in basic health and nutrition.

As noted above, the question of HIV/AIDS makes the situation of poverty worse. Swaziland has one of the highest rates of infection with the HIV/AIDS virus; the incidence of
which was estimated at more than 20 percent (of the .98 million population) in the 1997 Census (UNICEF, 1998) and 38 percent of the one million population in 2002 (Ministry of Agriculture et al., 2002: 66). The direct costs and foregone growth potential resulting from the epidemic are likely to weaken economic performance for many years to come. The available labour pool is likely to be reduced; demands on social infrastructure might rise and household economics and the overall demographic structure might be skewed by a rising death rate in the normally most economically-productive age group (IFC, 2000; MEPD, 1999). In concert, rapid population growth and a rising HIV/AIDS epidemic compete for resources that would have otherwise been used to deliver increased and improved services in education, health and other social sectors.

Increasing poverty and the HIV/AIDS epidemic present serious challenges to Swaziland. However, the present economic structure, as presented below, does not have the capacity to deal with these problems. Swaziland's economy is complex. The small land and population size of Swaziland makes it, to a certain extent, inherently dependent on neighbouring South Africa (SA), the region's dominant economy and Swaziland's major trading partner. The decline in world commodity prices in the late 1990s negatively affected Swaziland because employment of and remittances from Swazi workers who usually travelled to work in South African mines fell sharply (International Finance Centre, 2000). Other external forces such as global economic conditions and trends and direction of aid and capital flows influence the country's economy. These, therefore, are some of the important considerations that have to be kept in mind when formulating development strategies that aim at making the economy strong (MEPD, 1999).

In Swaziland, there is a shortage of local employment opportunities for a rapidly growing labour force. There is a high level of domestic under-employment and subsistence farming. As will be shown in Chapter 4, an estimated 10 percent of the workforce is employed in South Africa as miners, teachers and domestic servants or truck drivers. A surplus of unskilled labour and a shortage of trained workers result in heavy reliance on expatriate technicians, accountants
and engineers. This presents difficulties for new businesses hoping to draw on the domestic workforce for such jobs (Tradeport, 1999). Swaziland's high population growth rate (2.9% in 2002), which exceeds the rate at which the economy is growing (1.6% in 2002), creates problems related to an expansion of social services to meet increasing demands for education, health and housing facilities and contributes to the existing poverty among the population (Prime Minister's Office, 1997: 20; Central Bank of Swaziland, 2003: 13). In recent years, government-labour relations have become somewhat strained over political matters. Paradoxically, some analysts report that the relationship between labour and employers is friendly and strong (Tradeport, 1999), much against what many would have thought.

Given the above-mentioned problems in most facets of the economy, a number of NGOs, both international and local, are involved in the social sector helping community groups to become self-reliant in producing goods for subsistence and generating income to meet basic needs. They are involved in agriculture, education, health care delivery services and disaster relief work. The NGOs disseminate timely information to all communities, particularly disadvantaged groups. Among the agencies involved in poverty reduction, NGOs feature prominently (UNDP, 1998; Prime Minister's Office, 1997).

Not only are NGOs working closely with grassroots communities; they also engage in civic education designed to promote awareness of health, population planning problems, human rights and women's empowerment. More importantly, they have the resources to supplement government assistance to disadvantaged groups. In the process, NGOs in Swaziland are playing a major role in defining the literacy strategies aimed at overcoming the problems noted above.

A political economy approach

The ability and approach of the state to deal with the pressing social and economic challenges is, as Carnoy (1995) points out, dependent on the social-political structures. These possibilities and
limits of the state are, then, a key issue in understanding the form and content of adult education (p. 3). Following Carnoy, this dissertation employs a political economy approach in the search for a holistic understanding of adult literacy. It centres on how the adult education/literacy policy is situated in relation to these economic and other challenges of poverty and deprivation, HIV/AIDS and population matters (Clement & Williams, 1989; Baptiste, 2001). Literacy is located in the economy rather than in education alone. Mills (2002) makes the point that "training or learning follows rather than leads economic development" (p. 351). Despite that, it can be argued that the training-economic development influence is mutual, that is, it flows in both directions. UNESCO (2004) makes a similar point, that making sure there is coherence in developing various literacy levels requires connecting up with broader economic and social development frameworks. The state of the economy depends, in large part, on political conditions - how they represent an enabling environment for economic development and literacy formation (through, for example, developing appropriate legislation for economic or education reform). As will be shown, the country's economy and politics represent possibilities and limitations for literacy formation in time and space.

In discussions and writings about adult education, Walters et al. (2004) deplore that the link between the economy, political forces and adult literacy practices are seldom analysed. Some writers usually treat the shaping context of adult education in an unproblematic and deterministic manner, continually repeating the slogan of neo-liberal economics that: "adult education must help economies become lean, mean and internationally competitive" (p. 137). As they have shown, "this is no analysis but a rationalisation for a set of policies and practices that help some people and hinder others" (Ibid.).

A political economy perspective further situates adult literacy in the debate on economic opportunities, education and inequality (Brown, 1999). It compels individuals to reflect on who benefits from improvements in productivity: employers, employees or the state? When applied to
literacy formation, political economy raises questions about 'social purpose' and 'social justice' as well as those of economic performance. As Brown (1999: 239) argues, "it reconnects the question of means: how to improve productivity and competitiveness, to questions about the ends of economic competition". It helps political economists to transcend the limited view that the decisive goal of literacy formation is to maximise business profits, towards an examination of distribution questions of who gets what and those of social justice and the quality of life (Ibid.). In this study, these analytical frames were important, since the more human potential and vision develop into an inseparable aspect of economic performance, the more social and political matters of inequality, opportunity and democracy can be expected to decide Swaziland's economic performance, to paraphrase Brown and Lauder (2000).

The political economy approach fits with the overall intention of this study, which is to promote a critical literacy public policy initiative as a way to achieve equality of opportunity and social justice within Swazi society. It helps the researcher to think critically about the kind of society being aimed at through literacy formation, the changes required to bring about this society and the agency that might deliver these changes. The utopian aim for literacy as presented here is a society made up of 'critical thinkers' and 'life-long learners'. That is, a society in which a member's mastery of or competence in the basic 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic or numeracy) enables her to 'read her world', that is, political, economic, social, historical and cultural context between, on and beyond the usual lines through a process of transformative action and reflection (praxis) that empowers and enables him to better appreciate the depth and limits of traditional explanations of reality, for example, "the structural and systemic bases of oppression" (Mayo, 1995: 367). It is argued that critical thinking evolves from a process of constant renewal or learning in specific sites but not others; it is not a one-off acquisition of some knowledge or skills.
This thesis will reflect that the study of literacy formation requires inquiry at the core of the social sciences, particularly education. It requires a multi-disciplinary approach given that an understanding of literacy with all its cultural, economic, political and social consequences (Wagner, 1995; Walter, 1999) is "beyond the scope of any single social science discipline" (Brown, 2001: 261). The study of literacy formation is important because it is poorly understood, yet it has become a central platform in national debates about economic performance, political participation and national unity. However, given "there are alternative ways of being competitive other than on the basis of a highly educated or broadly skilled workforce" (Brown, 2001: 249; Lloyd & Payne, 2003: 94) - such as on the basis of price, it is important to recognise that there are limits to the wisdom of subjecting education and training (ET) to the needs of the economy alone.

Definition

At this point, I want to clarify the manner in which I use the term ‘literacy’ in this study.

It is perhaps useful to begin with UNESCO’s standard definition. A literate person is someone “who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his everyday life”. A functionally literate person is someone “who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and calculation for his and the community’s development” (1988: 8). According to these definitions, notes Hinzen (1989), a person can at once be literate and functionally ‘illiterate’. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2000) defines literacy as the ability to read and write, for example, basic/adult literacy. Swazi government policy documents reviewed in this study use a definition based on the National Education Review Commission (NERCOM) Report. The Report defines literacy (in the context of the adult literacy programme) as "that which teaches adults and youth how to read and write
and also provides numeracy education and Basic English" (Ministry of Education, 1985: 39). The definition covers both 'generic' and 'specific' skills. The Swazi government does not distinguish between adult education and non-formal education except to state that the former "tends towards acquiring literacy in terms of basic reading and writing skills and the latter as tending towards providing vocational skills to prepare an individual for employment" (MEPD, 1999: 187).

Many writers caution against the danger in confining oneself to a specific definition or view of literacy and argue for the liberty "to re-think constantly what is entailed in shifting and expanding understandings of literacy, its role and its power" (Bailey et al., 1998: 122). Chowdhury (1995) agrees with them, adding "definitions of literacy have varied over time and continue to evolve today..." (p. 3). Jackson (2003), too, raises the point that literacy is "not a uniform, neutral, functional skill..." (p. 106). Still, rather than provide a cycle of definitions, others suggest using frameworks that show the bases upon which the definitions are rooted. One of these is Scribner's (1984, 1988) famous metaphorical description of literacy as adaptation, as power and as a state of grace (1984: 9 - 11; 1988: 73 - 78). Lytle and Wolfe (in Walter, 1999), too, adopt a metaphorical description of literacy, namely: "literacy as skills, literacy as tasks, literacy as practices and literacy as critical reflection" (p. 31). Another is Heathington's (1994) classification of current definitions of literacy based on "the reading and writing ability, the years of schooling or grades completed, the grade level equivalent and the competency-based or functional literacy meaning" (pp. 13 & 14).

Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to examine how literacy is formed in Swaziland in light of political, economic and social factors that either promote or inhibit its development. Taking into account the history of international literacy education policy, the literature on literacy and national
development and the role of inter-governmental agencies in literacy policy formation, the following research questions guide the study:

1. How has Swazi literacy policy reflected the dual challenge of providing universal primary education (UPE) for children and promoting adult literacy education?
2. How have notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives played out in the Swazi national literacy policy?
3. How have international NGOs influenced Swazi state literacy policy formation?
4. What factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland account for the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case?

Overview of the thesis

This chapter has introduced the study, providing its background, its purpose and objectives. Chapter 2 critically examines the relevant literature on literacy and development. Chapter 3 reviews the methodology, concepts and strategies used in the collection of data for the study. It details data sources, data collection procedures and techniques and the approach to data organisation and analysis. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of Swaziland and its development over the last 100 years - since the British colonial administration in 1902 to independence and to the present. Chapters 5 presents, first, the findings of the study and consists of evidence contained in the official documents analysed for the study and second, the results of interviews conducted with officers in Swaziland. Chapter 6 discusses these findings. In this sixth chapter, I analyse the data presented in Chapter 5 and interpret them to explain how and why the process of literacy formation unfolds as it does. I attempt to identify patterns in the data that relate to how government formulates policies and strategies around education and how stakeholders make meaning of these policies and strategies. Discussion of the research findings
also considers the discrepancy between the rhetoric expressed in the policy documents on adult education/literacy training and strategies being implemented. Chapter 7 concludes the study with a summary of the research, situates the findings in the wider literature and draws implications for policy and further research.
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

Introduction

For decades, economists have posited a link between a country’s economic development and its investment in human resources, particularly in education. They have made strong arguments concerning the quantitative evidence of this link that policy-makers in highly-developed countries readily accepted it. They based these partly on the rates of return on investment in education (RORE) criteria (Lauglo, 1996), “measures by which an investment policy in education may be assessed” (Appleton & Teal, 1998: 7). The human capital theory which was developed in the early sixties saw education as a means of stimulating economic growth, particularly in terms of increased productivity of workers (Jones, 1999). Based on this concept, development agencies working within less-developed countries also designed and implemented programmes on the thesis that economic growth directly benefited from aid for education and human resource development (HRD), an argument accepted as well by politicians and policy-makers in those countries. This link has been increasingly questioned by development scholars. So, too, have been questions about the effect both of internal policy-making within less-developed countries and the manner of providing foreign aid by donor/multi-lateral agencies.

This chapter first examines the human capital argument. It then proceeds with a critique of this argument. It looks at the understanding of development from an inter-governmental perspective. It then attempts to look at adult education/literacy policy in these discourses. This includes the question of explaining success or non-success of education reforms in less-developed countries, or why there are sometimes no such reforms. In the context of this study, this relates to literacy campaigns, programmes and projects. The next section examines what can be learned about the state from this literature, that is, the state and policy. A summary,
identification of gaps in the literature and set of conclusions from which this research's design was partly developed concludes the chapter.

**Economics, education and national development**

In both theoretical and empirical terms, the idea of economic growth has long dominated policy research at international and national levels. Constant economic growth and an increase in production have historically been linked to increases in *per capita* income and a shift from the agricultural to the industrial and service sectors (Fagerlind & Saha, 1989). The literature provides evidence of various analytical perspectives on the contribution of education to economic, social and political systems in industrialised countries. Through studies by international donor agencies on less-developed countries, a consensus has emerged that assumes better education and training leads to improved economic growth (Burnett, 1996). Popular support from international publications and funding programmes of UNESCO led to perceptions of education as an important means for the fast economic growth of countries.

Given so much faith in education and training to foster national development, the next section examines the human capital theory, a concept that has influenced strongly much of the understandings and discourse about development.

**Human capital theory**

Perhaps the most compelling argument for human resource development (HRD) since World War II is that literacy and schooling will lead to economic growth in countries that make sufficient investment in them. This is the approach sometimes referred to as investment in human capital (Wagner, 1990). Human capital theory evolved from Theodore Schultz’s generalised theory of ‘capital theory’ in the early 1960s in concert with Gary Becker and later with Mark Blaug (Bloé, 2004; Oyelaran-Oyeyinka & Barclay, 2004). In particular, Schultz and
Becker elaborated Adam Smith’s initial idea that investment in education and skill formation was as important a factor in economic growth as in physical equipment (Schuller & Field in McIntyre, 2003: 142; Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004). Through an analysis of census data, Becker (in McIntyre, 2003) offered observed ‘rate of return’ evidence illustrating that “investment in education and training (ET) to increase one’s human capital was as important (and measurable) as investment in other forms of capital” (p. 142). Central to the theory of human capital is the idea that “acquisition of more knowledge and skills raises the value of a person’s human capital thereby increasing their employability, income potential and productivity” (McIntyre, 2003: 142).

The human capital concept “includes people’s knowledge and skills, acquired partly through education, but can also include their strength and vitality, which are dependent on their health” (Appleton & Teal, 1998: 6). The term refers also to “the present value of past investments in the skills of people” (Blaug in Baptiste, 2001: 185). The process by which such capital is consciously developed is called ‘human capital formation’ and the expenditure (in money, time etc) is ‘human capital expenditure’ (Becker cited in Baptiste, 2001: 185; Bloe, 2004: 1). In the context of national development, Bloe (2004: 2) argues “the primary focus for developing countries should be on endogenous development, specifically one based on human capital”.

**Application of human capital theory to education policy**

Human capital theorists argue that an ‘educated’ population is a productive population (Chowdhury, 1995). Some have noted how educators in the World Bank study groups initially also embraced the powerful idea of human capital theory to the extent that there could be no alternative to it. “It seemed (so) clear that countries needed to achieve the highest possible degree of literacy and universal schooling to ‘succeed’ in a globalising economy” (Hickling-Hudson, 2002: 567). The Bank educators maintained that social problems and inequalities could be resolved by an increased investment in education as a means of improving the quality of
human capital. Their faith in the theory finds expression in the World Bank’s 1999 *Education Sector Strategy* document. “It has long been self-evident that education, in addition to its immediate benefits, is also a form of investment, building people’s capacity to be more productive, earn more and enjoy a higher quality of life. The rise of human capital theory since the 1960s and its widespread acceptance now after thorough debate has provided conceptual underpinnings and statistical evidence” (World Bank, 1999: 6). Other scholars (Baptiste, 2001: 189) have noted common assertions to the effect that for any economic activity, “highly educated workers will always be more productive than their less educated counterparts”. Others, such as Ali (1985: 42), make similar assertions that adult literacy:

> Raises output per worker or labour productivity by providing necessary skills to manpower [sic], facilitating innovations and enhancing geographic and occupational mobility of labour. Viewed in this perspective, expenditure on adult literacy amounts to investment in human resource that raises the quality of people as productive agents.

Baptiste (2001) notes how the production function Ali used to estimate the rate of returns on adult literacy “includes measures of physical capital, marginal productivity of labour, level of adult literacy, a scalar for technological know-how and dummy variables representing a country’s overall level of economic development” (p. 190). For human capital theorists therefore, “educational investment is a sure-fire route to socio-economic mobility. With adequate educational investment, nothing can hinder one’s socio-economic progress. Those who invest bountifully in education will always reap bountiful socio-economic rewards; those who invest stingily will reap sparingly” (p. 191). They assert that two requirements are necessary for any economic growth and development to occur: a) improvement and efficiency of technology, as higher technology results in increased production and b) use of human resource in the employment of technology. These tenets suggest that formal education gives the skills and the motivation for productive behaviour.
Proponents of human capital theory (e.g. Gary Becker, Theodore Schultz) argue that investments in education (literacy in this case) lead to increased labour market participation, productivity and market earnings. Individuals with similar levels of education attain similar levels of labour market participation, productivity and earnings, on average, as other individuals with similar socio-demographic and labour market attributes (Blunt, 1998). Human capital theory suggests that literacy programmes, whether community- or workplace-based, that centre on fostering levels of literacy, but do not offer a recognised and transferable credential, will allow participants to attain increased labour market participation, productivity and earnings (Ibid.). Presented this way, human capital theory would appear to represent the supply side of labour; other theories (e.g. market signalling theory) representing the demand side.

Researchers therefore argue that mainstream economics offers the techniques as well as theoretical framework with which to determine the matter of the economic effectiveness of various skill formation programmes and institutions. Others see a parallel: “The theory of human capital constitutes the economists’ complement to the liberal educationalist approach” (Ashton & Green, 1996: 14). Human capital theory posits a correlation between the supply of skills and the outputs of a productive system, in which the human capital inputs have equal importance with the physical capital input. Human capital theory represents a theory of the individual’s demand for education and training (Ashton & Green, 1996). Applied to the nation as a whole, the writers argue for a separate even if parallel structure from a sociological perspective that accounts for society’s demand for increased education and training for both investment and consumption purposes.

Even as some (Psacharopoulos, 1988) defend the relationship between education and economic benefits, they note economists have gone further to provide evidence of a direct link between increases in the level of schooling in the population and distributional equity. Endorsement of this relationship, also, is not restricted to economists. Sociologists too have
found a relationship between education and upward social mobility, at a time when historians have provided evidence linking early increases in literacy with the economic take-off of nations. Some (e.g. Anderson 1965) including UNESCO (Kintgen et al., 1988; Jones, 1990) even suggested that a certain percentage of the population has to be literate before economic development (or ‘take-off’, to use Walt Rostow’s term) can occur (Rassool, 1995: 424), a hypothesis that recurred with apparent authority in many literacy programme outlines. As Anderson argued, “the data appear to support a generalisation reached also by cross-sectional analysis of societies. About 40 percent of adult literacy or of primary enrolment is a threshold for economic development”. Even so, “that level of education would not be a sufficient condition in societies lacking other supporting conditions” (p. 347). This is the point that Wagner (1995) makes that “numerous claims have been put forward that a given minimum rate of literacy is a ‘pre-requisite’ for economic growth in developing countries” (p. 342). Still, the ‘literacy threshold’ does not specify “what literacy practices and concepts 40 percent of the population are supposed to acquire” (Street, 1984: 2).

Other disciplines have found the relation between education and further developmental outcomes in fields such as health and fertility (Psacharopoulos, 1988; Moock & Harbison, 1988; Altbach, 1989). Some argue that demographic and health surveys coupled with government censuses that most countries conduct have yielded evidence on populations with rising school enrolments. They observe how statistical analyses reveal correlations between school attendance, especially among females, and lower birth and death rates “suggesting that literacy could be involved” (LeVine, 1999: 300). LeVine argues that another reason for the strong connection between literacy and health could be the effect of improved communication skills which literacy gives people - in understanding both written and oral messages from others. Other scholars (Altbach, 1989; Chowdhury, 1995; Lauglo, 1996) make similar observations that apart from economic benefits, education also produces non-market benefits. The implication is
that the question of benefits accrued from investment in education is multi-faceted and has to be explored from diverse viewpoints.

The argument that there is an inherent logic to the process of industrialisation and that the changes of industrialisation require the establishment of ‘knowledgeable’ workers dedicated to basic industrial production has received sympathetic support. Industrialisation is argued to stimulate the establishment of modern forms of production that require some structural changes (Ashton & Green, 1996). This type of production requires ‘knowledgeable’ workers that are capable of coping with new productive systems. Education and training is therefore a factor in economic well-being for both individuals and society even though some benefits such as quality of life, human rights and democratic society might be difficult to measure quantitatively (Rassool, 1995; Wagner, 1995). With a general acceptance of human capital theory has also emerged critiques and alternatives. Recent analyses of the theory highlight complexities and criticisms, a subject to which our attention now turns.

**Critiques of human capital theory**

Related to education, human capital theory created a powerful concept that became firmly established in public opinion. The perspective gives the sense that pursuit of education translates into individual and national economic growth. This viewpoint has placed local educators and policy-makers under pressure from the electorate and has led to an over-statement of the ‘economic purpose of education’ (Wagner, 1995: 342), in public opinion (Streetland, 1996).

Other scholars argue, based on the outcomes in practice that human capital theory has failed to perform up to the expectations held for it (Fagerlind & Saha, 1989). Questionable assumptions and the international occurrence of a ‘slow-down’ in the world economy of the middle seventies and early eighties capture evidence of this failure coupled with persistent inequalities among world societies amid rapid educational expansion in many countries. These
scholars argue that education has to be examined more critically in its relationship to development, an argument that others (e.g. Bowles & Gintis, 1976) had made earlier. The ideas to be included in such a critical examination include concerns that human capital theory is mainly interested in analysing individual benefits of participation in the labour market. Besides, given that human capital theory is quantitatively-biased, it might exclude factors seen as important for analytical purposes (Fagerlind & Saha, 1989).

Some of those factors arise from a consideration of how generally human capital theory can apply. It has been suggested (Torres, 1990) that human capital theory applies more easily to countries with advanced economies than to less-developed countries (largely owing to low state of technology). Education generally and adult education specifically is used in economic systems for screening and job matching purposes (Marginson, 1993). It is of interest to note how some think "the traditional role of education as a selective device for slotting individuals into an hierarchical division of labour based upon ‘thinkers’ and ‘doers’ is...losing its raison d’être" (Lloyd & Payne, 2003: 5). Such approaches tend to prevent those without credentials from participating in the labour market. Human capital theorists contend that a more ‘educated’ population is more productive and would have the attitudes and behaviours required for sustaining a modern industrialised economy, presumed to be the goal of most development strategies. Still, the simple belief about education and its connection to development strategies (Wagner, 1995) is rooted in the role of producing a knowledgeable workforce.

Scholars have examined this topic; analysing human capital theory from the stand-point of less-developed countries. They assert that the theory does work though within a framework of modernisation and even there it suggests particular consequences not found in highly-developed countries (Torres, 1996). The modernisation approach perceives education as a variable linked to the processes of socio-economic development. Development, therefore, is presented as growth of the social product, following the model of technologically-advanced western societies.
The approach explains underdevelopment of so-called 'developing' countries in terms of individual personality qualities. In this respect, industrialisation retains the position of achievement based on the idea of specialisation and functional division of labour. On the contrary, underdeveloped societies strive towards achievement of statuses that mirror a particular outlook about the world-view stressing a non-specialised division of labour (Torres, 1996).

Earlier work by Torres (in Mohapi, 2001) suggests that the human capital approach points to the need to isolate the mechanisms by which people can transcend economic backwardness and achieve economic development within different contexts. Literacy features among the mechanisms for increasing contacts with modern societies and their products. Also, "literacy has the power to dislocate traditional cultures" (Lauglo, 1996: 223; Aikman in Hickson-Hudson, 2002: 569), often of oral origin, which are perceived backward. It acts also as a catalyst for the development of a social heterogeneity in the diffusion and adoption of innovations.

Against claims for economic consequences of literacy, some (e.g. Wagner, 1990) argue it would probably be just as correct to claim that literacy rates, like infant mortality rates, mirror the degree level of economic development in most countries. If a country achieves social and economic progress, one usually finds that literacy rates increase and infant mortality rates decrease. Wagner notes how Mark Blaug, one-time advocate of human capital theory, "has since come to the conclusion that neither years of schooling nor specific literacy rates have any direct effect on demographic growth in 'developing' countries" (1990: 117).

The human capital argument has come to have a profound impact on conceptualisations of development, a topic to which I will now turn. In particular, I will examine the understandings of development by inter-governmental organisations. The latter include multi-lateral agencies (the World Bank, IMF) and international NGOs (UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF).
Conceptions of development from an inter-governmental perspective

International organisations have variously influenced both previous and current conceptions of development. The conceptions, in turn, have been diffused to many parts of the world particularly from countries of the North to the South. Colonialism, neo-colonialism and/or imperialism and, more recently, globalisation have been the primary processes yet dressed as 'trade', 'co-operation' or 'partnership' between the countries or regions involved (Youngman, 2000; Kless, 2002). The aim of this section is to examine the process of how this understanding has come to form the core elements of development policy generally, and education policy and strategies specifically, in borrower or donor-dependent countries. This includes an understanding of the mechanisms by which these conceptions become legitimised in these countries. Finally, the aim is to determine the effects in terms of success or failure of development initiatives or education reforms. But, first I present inter-governmental organisations' understandings of development that have come out from the review of the educational literature and the role then of adult education/literacy.

From an inter-governmental perspective, development means economic growth measured in terms of gross national income or product plus social change. The view "that development was a question of economic growth, stressing capital-intensive development and high-level technical skills" (UNESCO, 1976: 121) dominated the UN First Development Decade, 1961 – 70. The growth pattern follows closely Walt Rostow's (1990) schema of linear economic stages posited in the early 1960s. It reflects Rostow's classification complete with its essentialising connotations of universal prescription for all countries. Even as Rostow's schema has been rejected, the underlying thinking has not been completely discarded – the same thinking comes back although in a new form (the notion of old wine in new bottles). The problem with Rostow's classification, which "implies that the entire world is and should be on the identical development path" (Klees, 2002: 453) is who sets the model path? Klees notes how in a similar
vein the 1999 World Bank *Education Sector Strategy* presents a development model reminiscent of Rostow’s schema in that all development including education systems in the world are and should be on the same path to ‘modernisation’, “which seems to mean rationalised by current Western thinking as to content, methods and governance” (2002: 453).

Using the ‘economic stages’ model referred to above, development entails shifts from traditional to modern economies characterised with high mass consumption (Rostow, 1990). If anything, this includes an increasing shift towards technology to which the World Bank’s vision of development including education’s future, for example, is oriented (Klees, 2002). It can be inferred from this argument that the envisaged social changes are not ‘open-ended’. Rather, they are geared towards seeing underdeveloped countries adopt modern Western ideals. As Klees points out about World Bank-client country relationships, the inter-governmental agency and beneficiary country would ideally reach a common position as to what the best strategy is for the country’s development. However, rather than reach consensus, client countries are presented with rigid alternatives. The “mutual respect, careful listening, openness to new ideas and responsiveness to new challenges” that some (e.g. Lauglo, 1996: 221; Klees, 2002: 454) would expect in the decision-making process is largely absent. And, this explains the relative weakness of the South (Lauglo, 1996; Youngman, 2000).

So, development from an inter-governmental perspective means to present Western countries’ development patterns and education systems as models for non-Western countries to adopt (often wholesale). Development assistance therefore represents the recipe for the latter to ‘catch-up’ with the former or risk stagnating or sometimes even sliding backwards (Klees, 2002: 454). So, too, even as technical advice is presented as optional, inter-governmental agencies are careful to state that countries that respond positively to ‘astute choices’ recommended to them stand to “experience progress in education, with major social and economic benefits, including ‘catch-up’ gains for the poor and marginalised” (Ibid.).
In regard to social changes and development, the thinking among some intergovernmental organisations particularly the World Bank has been to make sure the South followed the North's development patterns including education reforms that the North prescribes. This is the point Klees (2002) makes in reference to the World Bank. For the Bank, there is "a world of resistors that want to grind...to a halt the needed changes that the richer world is helping to bring to the poorer, struggling world" (p. 453). Yet, some (Goulet, 1985) would not call that 'development'. He maintains that the collection of benefits given to people in need do not represent development, however well-intentioned.

On the role, then, of adult education/literacy training, there have been mixed reactions to the World Bank's claim that it understands the need for "ensuring ...that every adult has access to life-long learning opportunities" (World Bank, 1999: 7). Against a backdrop of playing a lead role in arguing for closing down some adult and NFE programmes in the 1980s as part of its giving full weight to primary education (Samoff, 1996; Klees, 2002), few would believe the Bank was genuine in its 'supportive' claims for the field. The Bank is even quoted as having threatened the other UN agencies with pull-out from participating in the 1990 Jomtien Conference "if the focus on basic education were to include adult education" (Klees, 2002: 461). Klees observes how even as pressure from NGOs and others at the Conference got adult education included in the Education for All Declaration, the funding for it was reduced even further during the 1990s.

In 1945, UN commitments to literacy provision were made explicit in a programme framework of functionality and norms guided by the principles of peace, progress and standard setting. Among the organisations of the UN system, the mandate for literacy fell on UNESCO, which went on to dominate international efforts in literacy. Even the World Bank's 1980 Education Sector Policy Paper noted "UNESCO's role as the international education technical assistance agency" (Samoff, 1996: 267). By the 1990s, however, other UN agencies, especially
those with mandates to promote development in poor countries, came to support education as an important development strategy. Leading among them were the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF. As I show below, differences among them abound, not least in their financial strengths (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996), the terms under which they provide assistance, their rationale for promoting development, education and more importantly their perspective approaches to literacy for children, youth and adults (Jones, 1999).

From a policy perspective, such bold policy objectives as accelerated development partly through the rapid achievement of universal literacy are best seen as moral or persuasive positions that are intended to encourage governments into taking action. What the agencies themselves can afford or are prepared to undertake is often a different matter. Jones (1999) cautions that agency policy rhetoric directed to the world community needs to be distinguished from the policies that determine their programming – rates of return or internal and external efficiency.

The World Bank and IMF are mainly concerned with lending as their way of working as financial institutions. Multi-lateral financed projects are often designed to have broad system-wide effects and are often accompanied by programmes of reform and ‘adjustment’. Technical assistance, training, research, policy advice and ‘side conditions’ attached to loan agreements are all standard means by which the multi-lateral agencies seek to influence the economic and social policy setting in borrowing countries. Agencies rhetoric stresses their technical strengths and their capacity to provide advice free of political considerations and compromise. However, the steady growth in World Bank financing of education has meant that the Bank is by far the largest external source of funding for educational development world-wide, accounting for some 25 percent of such aid. Its policy influence, coupled with its financial influence, combine to give the Bank important power in shaping educational policies throughout the ‘developing’ world (Lauglo, 1996: 231; Jones, 1999: 356).
Bank support for literacy is two-fold. First, the Bank sees the production of a literate world best promoted through universal primary education (UPE), its highest priority for education lending. It places great pressure on governments to adopt this strategy (Altbach, 1989; Lauglo, 1996). Second, it persists with a position that rejects the potential of adult literacy programmes to contribute to worker productivity and therefore economic growth. Even with some rhetoric to the contrary, only a small percentage of Bank lending has been made to support adult literacy. Chowdhury (1995) makes the point that the percentage of Bank-financed projects with an adult literacy component has dropped considerably. Contrary to the concentration of projects in the 1970s when non-formal education (NFE) was popular (Müller, 1997), the Bank has only invested in one adult literacy project since 1990. Today, it is generally argued that “resources are better invested in the ‘next generation’” (Jones, 1999: 14). At no time has the Bank urged a government to place adult literacy training higher up on its list of priorities for education. Despite its huge policy and programme influence in educational development, the World Bank has chosen mainly not to be linked with the world’s advances in adult literacy.

Clearly concerned with formal schooling, the Bank hardly mentions in Priorities & Strategies for Education (1995) literacy or education programmes for those out of school. It states it will not tackle systematically the education of adults. It argues that it is putting on hold consideration of any adult education support (Samoff, 1996). This should be expected given the Bank’s perception that adult education programmes have a poor performance record and that large-scale literacy programmes have generally failed. It notes that its recommended reforms will not contribute to solving contemporary problems of adult literacy. While acknowledging importance of the topic and regularly re-iterating its commitment to education for all, the Bank announces that its major policy review on education will not consider the education of adults. It is of interest to note here that among the recommendations of the Bank’s evaluation of its support to human resource development in Africa is: “Greater efforts to find cost-effective
approaches to provide the large number of persons unlikely to receive much education through the traditional classroom route with something of social and productive value" (Samoff, 1996: 260). Noting the likely role and status of the Priorities and Strategies for Education document, the Bank decision effectively assigns to adult education a lower priority on the international education agenda and on many national education agendas (Ibid.).

Although the Bank has actively sought to find evidence of economic returns from investing in primary schooling, it has declined to launch such a search with respect to adults. Jones (1999) observes how its rationale for rejecting adult programmes (that is, that the evidence is not there to support such programmes) mirrors its rationale for rejecting primary education loans in the 1960s. Sceptics might claim that the matter is one of ideology. The Bank, like some governments and politicians (Nyerere, 1982), remains nervous about programmes that might 'unsettle the consciousness' of adult citizens (Jones, 1999).

Another UN agency, UNDP, remains the largest provider of grant aid (not loans) to 'developing' countries. Its programmes are large and seek to promote balanced development planning and partnerships between public and private sector efforts to promote increases in living standards and economic growth. Two activities in the literacy field can be noted in UNDP's history. First was its funding of UNESCO's EWLP (1965 – 1975), intended to test the 'functional literacy hypothesis' that increases in worker productivity and so economic growth were a direct result of newly acquired work-oriented literacy (Jones, 1990, 1999). Chowdhury (1995: 14) makes the point: "UNDP was in every respect a cautious, even reluctant, participant".

Its key funding role can only be understood in terms of politics of the UN, particularly US demands that Soviet proposals for the decade-long World Campaign for Universal Literacy be put on hold (Jones, 1990). UNDP's low interest towards the EWLP and to the thinking behind it has kept subsequent commitments to adult literacy programmes modest. The year 1990 marked its second undertaking into the adult literacy field when it co-convened the World
Conference on Education for All, with important rhetoric paid to the area of literacy programmes for adults, but with programmes and funding realities reflecting a UNDP position much closer to the World Bank's position, relative to UNESCO's. Like the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF remain more associated with the development of formal education. In the non-formal education field, human resource development, the promotion of work-related skills has assumed priority (Jones, 1999). The North, notes Youngman (2000), provides aid to the South in its self-interest.

While many UN agencies provide support for adult education/literacy training, UNESCO appears to have put literacy training among its list of educational priorities in recent years. The founding of two UNESCO-supported institutions - UNESCO Institute for Education in Hamburg that organised the fifth international conference on adult education in 1997 and the International Literacy Institute, which organised the World Conference on Literacy in Philadelphia in 1996 and a series of regional forums on literacy - have helped UNESCO's international agenda in adult education/literacy (Wagner, 2001).

At its founding in 1945, even before any feeling for operations had crystallised, UNESCO had its political boundaries of programmes firmly decided. The organisation was composed of governments; it had a clear moral purpose; its programme was to promote intellectual contacts and collaboration; it was to have an explicit functional orientation and it was to have a standard-setting mission. To this day, these boundaries have shaped UNESCO's education policy. Persuading governments that universal literacy was a basic element of human rights was of great concern (Lauglo, 1996). Given its budget, UNESCO's main strategy has had to be persuasion - gathering together moral arguments based on analysis of needs (Jones, 1999), demonstrations of best practice, limited-scale experimentation and pilot studies - and promoting contacts collaboration among governments, the academic community and practitioners (Ibid.).

Some believe if UNESCO had enough resources, it would have demonstrated its belief that "education is important as a right and as a means to improve conditions of life" (Lauglo,
1996: 221) by launching a global campaign to reduce illiteracy (Jones, 1990). Given this limitation, it has provided international leadership in the literacy field by formulating conceptual approaches to literacy that stress its definition and its social consequences. These two aspects have usually been linked, UNESCO's inter-governmental structure promoting an instrumental and pragmatic approach. The organisation has stressed the potential of literacy to produce a more developed world by encouraging modernising thought and behaviour and in so doing economic transformation (Jones, 1999). The first four decades of its work witnessed UNESCO promoting a sequence of conceptual approaches to literacy along certain lines. The intention of each concept was to shape government thinking and priorities, reinforced through the relatively small operational programme UNESCO could afford to mount. By the 1950s, UN development policies stressed community development, around which UNESCO briefly organised its literacy thinking. As noted, the 1960s witnessed the re-birth of human capital theory, an approach that led to an expansion of formal schooling in many newly-independent states. UNESCO embraced the approach as a general concept and as a means of implementing its functional literacy agenda (which reflected a Deweyan pragmatic instrumentalism) but was re-shaped into a 'work-oriented' literacy approach when UNDP funds had become available for the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) noted, intended to test and measure the productivity gains of newly literate workers in rural and urban development settings (Ibid.).

UNESCO has pursued its intellectual approach in a context of encouraging balanced educational development, arguing the need for out-of-school strategies to find their balance with school-based programmes. Contrary to the other UN agencies interested in education and literacy, UNESCO has seldom been tempted to promote one dimension at the expense of the other (Jones, 1999)). While noting the functional, work-oriented focus, what is not seen much in the discussion is the 'critical' perspective on literacy. One such perspective is the Freirean idea of literacy as political empowerment, the subject of the next section to which I will now turn.
The alternative, radical perspective

Literacy is a highly politicised concept and there is no consensus on its desired ends. It at once serves as an instrument for individual empowerment and a means for social control and even political domination (Rowling, 2000). Mason and Allen (1986) make the point that, “some historical data demonstrate that the literate few in power intentionally restrict literacy, if they feel threatened by low literate factions” (p. 5). Central to this understanding of literacy is Paulo Freire’s idea of critical or emancipatory literacy. According to Freire and Macedo (1987), literacy is vital to what it means to be human. Exploring the complexities of this understanding, Freire recognises literacy as “a creative act that involves the critical comprehension of reality” (p. 156). Influenced by Freire’s ideas, Stuckey perceives literacy as “a social restriction and an individual accomplishment” (1991: 64), a compelling conceptualisation that captures the current view of literacy among many researchers in education who promote progressive or ‘critical’ pedagogies.

Involvement with social movements and adult education, and working with deprived people helped Freire develop his methods of tackling questions of low literacy. For him, many social relations in capitalist societies including those involved in education derive from relations of oppression. In the Brazilian context where he developed his theory and practice, political, economic and social inequalities (as elsewhere) affected many people, excluding them from social, economic and educational capital. Realising that dominant ideas in education could not reverse the reproduction of the forms of exclusion that manifest in society, Freire insisted on the need for a new conception of education; one rooted in both a radically different worldview and one that would require a different epistemological approach. This partly explains the founding of his conception of education and methodology on “the culture, knowledge and conditions of disadvantaged, excluded and oppressed people first” (Apple et al., 2001: 130).
Perhaps his most generative idea is that education is always a political act. For Freire, education always involves social relations and therefore involves political choices. He insists that questions such as 'what', 'how', 'to what end' 'and for whom' are important to any educational activity. Therefore, it is not hard to see why he thinks it is impossible to remain neutral in education; that one has to realise that all educational policies and practices have social implications: "They either perpetuate exclusion and injustice or they assist us in constructing the conditions for social transformation" (Apple et al., 2001: 129). The thrust of Freire's theory is a reminder that what seems as the mere learning of the alphabet is a complex political relation. For him, that education is usually not seen as political is part of the problem and the transformation of this situation is in itself part of the "explicit political project" (Ibid., p. 132).

To better understand Freire's arguments and his ideas of literacy, it is important to note how language constrains understanding. Language places limits on the ideas that an individual has to work with in their construction of reality (Magalhães, 1995). Thompson (in Magalhães, 1995) makes the same point, that "language is the main site of ideology" adding the latter "contributes to sustaining unequal power relations to the extent that they are represented as legitimate". It can "deny or conceal power relations and can work by reification when it represents a transitory state as permanent or natural" (p. 266).

Some critics challenge the radical tradition of Freire – as articulated in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). They maintain that Freire's ideal was a 'classless' setting for literacy campaigns, while in practice urban, middle-class state officials facilitated literacy skills, raising questions as to their moral commitment to the cause of oppressed people. Still, in the Latin American context, Prins (2001: 61) makes the point "studies that have examined the implementation of Freirean pedagogy have found that dialogue is difficult to achieve". Citing Stromquist (1997), she observes that Movimiento de Alfabetización de Jovens e Adultos (MOVA), a state-civil society partnership in Sao Paulo, Brazil, that sought to promote
citizenship, had mixed success. Although women fairly increased their literacy skills that then led to rich psycho-social gains, they were not able to maintain literacy practices. van der Westen (in Prins, 2001) examined success in terms of stimulating dialogue and discussion, including gender matters vis-à-vis men and women and found that Honduran facilitators did not stimulate dialogue mainly because they used traditional teaching methods – memorising, copying and rote learning. In discussions, “learners tended to merely confirm what facilitators said” (p. 61).

Freire has been pressured to concede that his practice can work only if other conditions are also present. As he said of the Nicaraguan National Literacy Campaign: “literacy only has meaning in a society undergoing revolutionary change” (Api, 1988: 3).

However, revolutionary change is no better solution. During the 1950s and 1960s, development was synonymous with economic growth measured in aggregate terms. As noted, during the UN First Development Decade, 1961 – 1970, its definition shifted to ‘economic growth plus social change’. This definition, some development scholars felt (Goulet, 1996), either said too much or too little, since not every growth will do without attending to the question of distribution of the wealth created. And, not every change will do for development. A ‘revolution’ is one such change; the point being it might take its own logic and dynamics such as leading to a military take-over and subsequent dictatorship.

From a gender standpoint, some (e.g. Stromquist, 1997) argue that Freirean programmes often give primacy to ‘class’ analysis (Mayo, 1995: 364). Stromquist (1997) observes that “gender issues appear less often than class issues in Freirean dialogue and that Freire’s definition of citizenship, for example, did not include women’s rights” (p. 21). Given this inadequacy in Freire’s pedagogy, van Es-Scheffer (in Stromquist, 1997) concludes that, “adopting a Freirean approach to literacy does not guarantee that attention will be paid to the perspectives of women or that the dynamics of women’s oppression and emancipation are identified in the political
analysis" (p. 21). Since literacy does not “make women ipso facto more powerful”, Stromquist (1997: 21) argues that educators have to balance class and gender analysis.

Despite the above discussion, it is evident that the dominant perspective has been the human capital theory although we have to note that there might be some slight ideological and methodological differences between the agencies and this comes out in the operations of the inter-governmental agencies. These differences are described briefly below.

**Dynamics in the operation of inter-governmental agencies**

Agency rhetoric has always privileged notions that the division of labour among agencies has been carefully staked out and that in areas of common interest careful planning and collaboration promote a balanced approach to development strategies and the best possible use of available resources. A long-standing principle is the co-ordination of programmes at the country level. Closer to reality is the concern of each agency to conceal its boundaries in terms of political influence, financial strength and status in the UN system. Jones (1999) notes how agencies are often set against one another as they compete for ‘favoured agency’ status, both in terms of donor country perceptions and those of recipient governments. Inside agencies, the need to protect each agency’s territory, to out-smart other agencies that might succeed in claiming a piece of one’s mandate looms large. Second is the need to win the campaign for aid dollars, to conceal the size of competing agencies’ budgets and programmes. Third is the policy struggle, the drive to be the organisation “most listened to and the agency whose advice and technical assistance is seen as the most respected and influential” (Ibid., p. 357).

Literacy provides an old example of such inter-agency dynamics, given the lack of enthusiasm with which each perceives adult literacy, apart from UNESCO. The policy struggle often involves providing the most convincing reasons why ‘not’ to support adult literacy programmes and why to promote universal literacy through primary schooling alone. Such
policy tensions and struggles tinted the inter-agency commitment to the WCEFA in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, an integral part of International Literacy Year in 1990 and the catalyst for much subsequent programming designed to make sure a quality basic education for all people by the end of the century. It was the heads of UNESCO and UNICEF that conceived the Jomtien initiative; it was the World Bank that moved swiftly to “dominate the intellectual and policy climate surrounding it, the conference documents and declarations giving primacy to universal primary education and the proponents of literacy strategies for adults and youth at all points needing to play a ‘catch-up’ game” (Jones, 1999: 357).

Somewhat at the heart of inter-governmental programming is the typical tension between policy and programme prescriptions designed for universal application (thus stated in the most general terms) and formulations designed for local application (therefore far from universal). Jones argues that a characteristic of large inter-governmental bureaucracies is to prefer standardisation over variability and their adult literacy work is no exception. With standardisation and generalisation have come repeated failures to take country programming seriously. Matters of local culture and local determination have failed to have a place in the scheme of multi-lateral programming (Klees, 2002).

As a customary practice, too, have been the political boundaries of literacy strategies, whereby limits have been placed on the awareness-raising potential of literacy. Despite some occasional UNESCO rhetoric promoting the liberating potential of literacy, the prevailing politics of UN literacy work has witnessed primacy given to technicism, standardisation, domestication and economic and employment relevance. Jones (1999) concedes this is perhaps to be expected from inter-governmental agencies of a bureaucratic nature.

Such ideological constraints on literacy have witnessed, with the exclusion of UNESCO, “emphasis placed on the achievement of a literate world through primary schooling alone, despite evidence that no society has approached universal literacy through such a focused and
limited strategy” (Jones, 1999: 358). Doubts surrounding adult programmes have thus tended to see a questioning of literacy programming in general, with no clear approaches identified by agencies wishing to effect an articulation of school-based and out-of-school strategies (Ibid).

What is clear is that conceptual and political clarification is far from institutionally neutral within the inter-governmental system. Agency mandates, their underlying ideologies, their sources of funding, and traditions of programme delivery combine to prevent objectivity in striving to shape policy through seeking reliable research evidence or through the objective interpretation of available evidence. Organisations with vested interests to protect are not often open to such objectivity, especially when international secretariats see themselves needing to fend off the politicisation inherent in any inter-governmental framework. Political compromise and bureaucratic simplification of complex matters are natural partners in today’s global order. Such a climate has done little to stifle the tendency for the inter-governmental system to be dominated by ideologies of the main providers of finance, ideologies that prompt reductions in the role of governments in social and economic affairs, promote ‘user pays’ principles even in such areas as basic education and eventually work against systems of democratic and participatory education. Such are the contemporary contradictions of much inter-governmental literacy policy work (Jones, 1999).

From the above analysis, it is not hard to see why most national literacy programmes are implemented the way they are. Any government collaborating with international organisations such as those just described is likely to be encouraged to implement programmes according to the ethos of these agencies. It takes governments committed to providing not merely economic ‘empowering’ literacy to find jobs in an economy characterised by high distribution inequalities to do otherwise. The test remains how, in light of resource limitations, governments insist on offering the kind of literacy they perceive appropriate for their citizens even if it means losing the financial and technical support of particular inter-governmental agencies.
Although the inter-governmental agencies differ in some respects both in terms of their approach towards development and financial strengths, they seem to share the same ideology. That is, presenting development including education policies that appear merely as ‘technical’. For example, the inter-governmental character of UNESCO has shaped its overall pattern of literacy commitment, arguably leading to a politically-driven approach shaped by the demands of universality and, therefore, “political and ideological compromise. It has stressed the social and economic consequences of literacy rather than its political and consciousness-raising potential” (Jones, 1999: 355). It has promoted social rather than individual transformation but in a way intended to leave political structures and norms unchallenged. It has privileged literacy as a technical achievement, introducing the newly literate into a world of modernity and technique.

Taking the understanding of development, operational rhetoric and priorities held by inter-governmental agencies, as a point of departure, it is not difficult to see how national policy-making is carried out and why the state-education relationship evolves as it does. This is the subject of the next section to which our attention now turns.

Inter-governmental agencies, national policy-making and the state-education relationship

From the literature on the understanding of development, including education by the inter-governmental agencies/organisations, one can draw a few lessons about the state and policy. While generally assumed to be a major national player in policy-making, the state generally and in ‘developing’ countries specifically, is not entirely free. From the literature reviewed above, it is clear that the state is increasingly becoming more constrained in the policy process. This is particularly the case with education policy-making as it is with other social policy sectors. Internally, the policy outcomes (in the form of a policy document or text) are the result of intense negotiation among competing interest groups – teachers, parents, students, employers and labour, civil society groups/organisations and NGOs, among others (Lauglo, 1996; Kless, 2002).
A number of factors help explain the limits on the nation state to formulate policies aimed at promoting development in the country. For this and other reasons, to use the state as the single unit of analysis in policy-making is to miss the point. It needs to be analysed in tandem with other important factors influencing policy.

Externally, a whole host of agencies exert influence upon the state, garnering support for one set of policies against other policy options. So, for example, questions around given states providing free primary education or higher education generate heated debate and power struggle among interests – national actors, donor agencies or NGOs (Lauglo, 1996; Klees, 2002).

Besides internal and external constraints, there are practical constraints as well. A Swaziland example illustrates the point. Amid aspirations to use the local language to forge cultural identity and nationalism, SiSwati had not been developed into a written language. It therefore had to use English, which had been introduced by the British during the colonial era. As Mordaunt (1990) notes, “even after years since independence, English continues to serve as the vehicle for education and economic development in a country where 95 percent of the population speaks SiSwati as the native tongue” (p. 134). Swaziland is not the only country to retain English as other Sub-Saharan African countries have retained it as an official or co-official language, a policy that appears compatible with Willmott’s (cited in Mordaunt, 1990) idea that “for a Third World country that desires to develop into a modern state, it is expedient that it selects an already significant world language” (p. 137).

In particular, one needs to examine certain policies and strategies used by intergovernmental agencies in their collaborations with governments in poor countries. For example, some of these agencies such as the World Bank and IMF apply pressure on borrower/client countries (as they call them) to design policies compatible with those obtaining in the geographical regions that they use to organise their work (justifying their preferred their
administrative structures by ignoring geographical or local context differences *between* and *within* countries) (Klees, 2002: 453).

The point being made here is to examine the position of the state in relation to these 'influencing factors' including the extent to which it is still in control over education or, again, other social sector policies. Talking about the state in a less-developed country like Swaziland, one has to note the colonial legacy in development and education left by the previous administration. Thus, for example, Swaziland inherited the British education system and elements of that system still persist. One needs to examine policies and strategies used by inter-governmental agencies in their collaborations with poor countries.

As many scholars (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996) point out, on the surface development assistance, including helping countries carry out educational reform, is a form of bilateral co-operation. However, at a deeper level, the discourse about this aid co-operation glosses over international underpinnings of the co-operation – extending domination over the poor countries targeted for development assistance. Samoff (1996) explains how, following the creation of the UN organisations after World War II, it was the powerful countries that sought to impose the will of the international system on former colonies. By the 1990s, the multi-lateral international finance agencies had become the principal enforcers of global dictates. Over time, "structural adjustment became both the description and the content of the imposition of external control" (Hall, 1996: 115-16). But more importantly and as pointed out elsewhere, "structural adjustment effectively offered access to capital in exchange for the adoption of external specified national policies and the surrender of some national autonomy" (Samoff, 1996: 267).

Contradictions abound in stated policy and practice in implementing recommended strategies among inter-governmental agencies co-operating with national governments in 'developing' countries. On the one hand, some agencies such as the World Bank acknowledge divisions between countries. On the other, they ignore them and adhere to their 'best strategy'
and issue prescriptive dictates to borrower nations (Lauglo, 1996: 221; Klees, 2002: 453). Taking the 1995 Bank policy review referred to earlier as a point of departure, Lauglo (1996) notes how it recognises that conditions will differ among countries and says that such variations need to be noted. It advocates also paying more attention to participatory planning and the need to take local stakeholders seriously as responsible agents in project preparation. The borrowers must have ownership of their projects. But, as Lauglo (1996: 221, 228) cautions, “The trick is to induce them to develop this in the direction which the Bank in its wisdom has staked out for them”. Following Lauglo, the World Bank stance raises questions about who is in charge; about who is making policy decisions – the Bank or borrower country? He makes point that, “in those countries which depend heavily on external finance for their development expenditures in education, donors are influential and the World Bank has much clout with government and among donors” (p. 222). Klees (2002) makes a similar point: “The Bank always insists that its role is advisory. However, simply the idea of the Bank formulating uniform recommendations across certain categories of countries or, worse still, global one-size fits all, recommendations raises questions about who is in charge” (p. 454).

The World Bank has always said that it does not and cannot force governments to follow policies it recommends. So, the rhetoric goes on, “nations are sovereign and policy matters are theirs to decide” and “those close to local conditions should have more say” (Klees, 2002: 454). Besides the important principle of each recipient country’s sovereignty, “it would seem that the Bank is itself rather remote from local conditions in countries that will now be strongly urged to reform their policy for the whole education sector under guidance of the recommendations in this review” (Lauglo, 1996: 228). So, while the Bank operating principles are noted, it does not seem to follow them. Thus, even with “the Bank’s mission in education is to help clients identify and implement their next strategic steps..., countries have to be in the ‘driver’s seat’ when planning their development...and the Bank’s approach to development is ‘ownership by the country’”
the reality can be quite different. If the country is in charge, argues Klees, it follows that “a primary task of the Bank in this process is to listen carefully to their clients”, something observers think the Bank does not practise (Ibid.).

“If the relationship between the client and the Bank is characterised by mutual respect, careful listening, openness to new ideas, responsiveness to new challenges, the Bank and client should reach a common position on what the best strategy is for the country’s development” (Samoff, 1996: 260; Klees, 2002: 454). Even in the unlikely event that a non-coerced ‘common position’ on best strategy for a country is reached, the Bank explicitly states that it is not responsible for policies that fail. A constant argument by the Bank is that because many actors and factors beyond its control determine the outcomes that Bank-financed programmes are intended to help achieve, it cannot be held responsible. This shedding off of responsibility coupled with the insistence that it is the client, not the Bank, who makes the decisions, “culminates in an almost ‘blame-the-victim’ outlook” (Klees, 2002: 454).

Elsewhere, we noted that collaborations between inter-governmental agencies and less-developed countries are often founded on a passion with ‘partnerships’. So, for example, some agencies have broadened these partnerships to include parents, civic groups, NGOs in addition to governments. However, this literature has revealed deeper intentions underlying partnerships, “an ideological shift in the US and UK and hence in the Bank, to neo-liberal policies that emphasised a diminished role for the public sector” (Klees, 2002: 455). Klees points out that working with NGOs rather than governments became part of the de-legitimisation of government. He laments how the shift by aid agencies including the Bank to funding programmes through NGOs has led to the emergence of more right-wing NGOs, competition and international NGOs assuming a more dominant role (Samoff, 1996; Brown, 1999, 2001; Klees, 2002). These writers point out also that the partnerships, as used by the multi-lateral agencies, are designed to stifle critique, debate, alternatives and, generally, any voices of dissent. Klees
makes the point that, "partnership has also muted the critical voices of some NGOs and other civil society organisations, especially since partnership comes with funding from the Bank" (2002: 456).

As noted, the multi-lateral agencies are able to have policies and strategies implemented according to their recommendations even as they take no responsibilities for policies that fail (but the country) through their financial strengths. As I show in Chapter 4, the multi-lateral agencies are actively involved in education in Swaziland. Lauglo observes how the Bank is well-known for imposing conditionalities that recipient countries are constrained to accept coupled with forceful involvement in the framing of proposals that governments submit to the Bank for finance.

In summary, the state and policy should be seen in this broader international context that ultimately shapes national contexts in less-developed countries like Swaziland. So, too, efforts to put on hold financial support for adult education/literacy training (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996; Klees, 2002) in part derive from influences of these agencies, particularly the World Bank.

The understandings of inter-governmental agencies have a profound impact on local literacy reforms. The next section examines the question of success or non-success of educational reforms and campaigns in underdeveloped countries including why there are sometimes no such reforms. It focuses on the impact of agencies in a local African perspective.

National literacy reforms

'Education policy' is perhaps the contemporary equivalent of what used to be called 'educational planning'. Regardless of its precise meaning and the many forms it takes (such as 'educational reform'), almost every country has at one point stated publicly an intention or made a decision that would affect some aspect of education in society. Educational policy is announced or a school reform enacted, not for its sake but to serve a specific purpose; the
combination of other good causes according to the judgement of that impersonal entity often referred to as ‘the policy maker’ (Psacharopoulos, 1989: 180, 1990: 1).

The idea of policy implementation is an important subject in public policy-making relating to education. The need for the study of policy implementation for an education policy “to achieve its intended goals” (Thakur, 1991: 386) is imperative. One such study critically examines some educational policies of Sub-Saharan African countries that span combining education with production at the primary level to the financing of tertiary education from selected African experiences. Psacharopoulos (1989) analyses education successes and failures of education policies in achieving their original intentions. He sets to find out what the record of educational policy-making has been in these countries, including establishing whether intended reforms that span the full educational hierarchy were implemented in the first place and, if they were, whether they did have their expected effect. He grapples with such complex questions by concentrating on some typical attempted educational reforms, evaluating the policies with respect to internal efficiency, external efficiency, equity and non-quantitative factors (national unity, localisation and language matters). The policies are briefly examined below.

The policies

A variety of official documents contain educational policy statements. Examples include:

a) Political statements or manifestos, for example, Julius Nyerere’s famous ‘education for self-reliance’ or Swaziland’s ‘Imbokodvo National Manifesto’; b) Reports of special commissions, for example, Zambia’s ‘Lockwood Report’ or Ethiopia’s 1972 Education Sector Review; Swaziland National Education Commission 1975 or National Education Review Commission (NERCOM) 1985. c) The country’s educational plan, often entrenched in the state’s

Policy statements in the above-mentioned documents typically refer to the following:

- Primary education: including increasing access, improving teaching quality, combining education with production, teaching in local languages;
- Secondary education: focusing on increasing access, diversifying the curriculum, improving links with employment (the notion of ‘transition from school to work’);
- Vocational education: intended to meet human resource requirements, providing the skills needed by a ‘modernising’ economy;
- Higher education: particularly for meeting the need for localising the higher civil service, meeting high level human resource needs;

Following the above taxonomy, he describes the specific formulation of policies for a few countries as stated in the official documents and, where possible, the outcome of such policies.
Primary education policies

Increased access

As noted in Chapter 1, such a policy intention can be found in almost every country in the region, from independence up till now. It draws attention to the Addis Ababa Conference resolution, that “All African states should aim at achieving universal primary education (UPE) within 20 years” (UNESCO, 1961b: 10). So, for instance, the government in Swaziland stated: “The ultimate goal is to achieve universal free primary education for every child” (Department of Economic Planning & Statistics, DEPS 1969: 47).

It is of interest to note how despite hosting the Addis Ababa Conference that proposed a 71 percent participation rate in primary education by 1971, Ethiopia had only achieved 18 percent by 1974 (Kiros in Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990: 3). Ethiopia launched also a major literacy campaign in 1979 to reduce illiteracy in the country by 1987. Yet by 1985, “the illiteracy rate in Ethiopia was (still) around 45 percent” (UNESCO in Psacharopoulos, 1990: 3).

Many commentators on education in Africa attribute the poor or non-implementation of UPE in the continent to rapid population growth (Foster, 1988: 105; Moock & Harbison, 1988: 104; Thakur, 1991: 386). Psacharopoulos (1990) observes, for instance, how when UPE was espoused in Zambia in the early sixties, the population growth rate was around two percent. By 1985, it stood at 3.4 percent. Achola (cited in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 182) explains how population growth has often undermined universal primary education efforts:

If the Zambian government insists on its goal of universal basic education (Grades 1-9) for all, 1.74 million additional school places would have to be added to the 1.3 million by 2000. This is a daunting task given that education will have to compete with other social services for dwindling national revenues.

Quality improvement

Beyond access, many African states set the goal of improving the quality of education children received. It stressed teacher training, building schools and the student-teacher ratio. In
Swaziland, the second Development Plan set the objective “to raise the quality of education by reducing the high incidence of drop-out and repeaters” (DEPS, 1973: 11). This would be achieved by reducing the student-teacher ratio from 45:1 to 36:1 within the Plan period. While this happened, the expected effects were not realised:

Despite the reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio...instead of the normal seven years to produce a primary school graduate, it took 12.6 years in 1981. The number of repeaters went up over the Plan period by nearly 50 percent. There was no improvement in the overall primary certificate examination pass rate during the period (Magagula, 1990: 39).

Combining education with production

The motivation for such policy changes came from the search for relevance in education. The Plan for African Educational Development (UNESCO, 1961b: 21) stated “that measures be adopted for absorbing the surplus of unskilled manpower [sic]: that primary education be given a practical bias”. Swaziland established programmes for curriculum development, the purpose of the reform being a “combination of education with productive work” (MOE, 1985: 55). Yet, in Tanzania, consistent with ‘Education for self-reliance’, its Third Plan stated that “work is to be more integrated with theoretical subjects” (Tanzania Govt., in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 183).

Secondary education policies

With some progress achieved in primary education, it was the next stage of education that received attention: “the urgent need for expansion of secondary education is emphasised”, stated a 1963 Uganda Education Commission (Psacharopoulos, 1989: 184). Yet in Swaziland, the government decided in 1975 that “secondary system expansion was to be determined by the manpower [sic] requirements” (Psacharopoulos, 1989: 184) and so, at first, did Tanzania. In all African countries, the expansion of secondary education had to be linked somehow to productive employment, for example, “Education will be made more relevant to the world of work...” (Botswana Government, cited in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 184).
Curriculum diversification

Curriculum diversification has been the equivalent of combining education with production at the secondary level:

To meet the demands of African social and economic life...is the need to expand the curriculum at the secondary level in the direction of more vocational and technical education. Such programmes are necessary to provide the skilled and semi-professional manpower [sic] essential for economic growth (UNESCO, 1961b: 6).

Better links to employment

As pointed out, the Addis Ababa Plan (UNESCO, 1961b: 22) recommended that “the first step in the educational planning process should be estimation of forward manpower [sic] requirements under the dual system of occupational and educational classification...undertaken by each country with the help of UNESCO”. Most countries followed this recommendation. Still, Psacharopoulos (1990) laments how a survey of human resource plans in Africa in 1972 by Richard Jolly and Christopher Colclough concluded that “these manpower [sic] plans...inadequately served the planners” (p. 185). Yet, observes Psacharopoulos, many African countries in the late eighties continued to elaborate such plans.

Vocational education policies

Vocationalism has a long tradition in Africa. The 1961 recommendations of UNESCO’s Plan of Action noted above found expression in the policy documents of many countries. In Swaziland, for example, “…the content of the education system must be work-oriented from the primary to the highest level” (Imbokodvo National Movement in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 186; Magagula, 1990: 14). The Second National Development Plan 1973-78 sets the objective “to re-orient the curricula at both primary and secondary levels so as to counteract the non-technological bias and enable school leavers to move naturally into the employment sectors” (DEPS, 1978: 181; Psacharopoulos, 1989: 186, 1990: 10; Magagula, 1990: 14).
A permanent machinery should be established to ensure an adequate link between the supply and demand for trained manpower \( [sic] \) and to relate school curriculum to national employment prospects. A National Manpower Survey should be conducted to identify manpower \( [sic] \) requirements at all levels (Ministry of Education, 1985: 137).

Despite such human resource direction, Psacharopoulos notes that unemployment was still high in Africa in the late eighties, at the same time as there were shortages in some skill areas.

**Higher education policies**

Attempts to meet high level human resource needs or to localise the higher civil service have dominated policies at this level. For example, “the economic role of the post-secondary sub-sector is to provide middle and high level manpower \( [sic] \) for both the public and private sectors” (Magagula, 1990: 6). Or, “The...University...will be strengthened to meet future skilled manpower \( [sic] \) requirements in those disciplines for which the manpower \( [sic] \) study...shows it to be necessary” (Lesotho Ministry of Education in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 187). Despite such orientation, severe shortages were (still) reported in some fields in Africa in the late eighties, while there were surpluses in others (Hinchliffe quoted in Psacharopoulos, 1990).

**Other policies**

Apart from the above series of policies relating to the respective levels of education, other policies were formulated to serve various objectives that cut across levels. They include national unity, political ideology, financing and regulation. They are briefly examined below.

About national unity in Swaziland, for example, “the purpose of education is to produce an enlightened and participant citizenry...the policy...is that all education should...inculcate love for the land, loyalty to the King and country, self-respect, self-discipline, respect for the law accompanied by the highest degree of knowledge and the building of character” (Imbokodvo National Manifesto in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 187).
Concerning political ideology, Tanzania perhaps comes close to this policy initiative given that soon after the 1967 Arusha Declaration on socialism and self-reliance, Nyerere issued a major policy blueprint on education for self-reliance. This paper became the basis of all key educational changes in Tanzania, implemented by a 1969 Education Act (Psacharopoulos, 1989).

About financing, although every educational reform has financial implications, some scholars observe how this matter is not often attended to by governments. Or if it is attended to, it is referred for further study or to third parties. Some argue that it is a mistake to think that the ambitious programme set out in the 1961 UNESCO Addis Ababa Conference did not consider the financing aspect of the programme. Even so, it delegated it to others: "...invites UNESCO to approach competent international organisations, governments and public and private institutions capable of providing assistance with the request that they contribute to the financing of such programmes recommended by the Conference as are beyond the present normal resources of the African countries concerned" (UNESCO, in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 188). However, as the UNESCO/UNDP critical assessment of the Experimental World Literacy Programme found, "the complexity was greater since the generation of specialists in industrialised countries – who were expected to provide expertise for designing, implementing and assessing EWLP – simply does not have personal experience of literacy as a chronic problem" (UNESCO, 1976: 11).

In the context of global literacy formation, the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) provides a typical example of why reforms often fail. Despite UNESCO rhetoric, there is growing evidence the effort was hurriedly conceived following political differences among the UN agencies coupled with individual countries bent to stop a Soviet-led World Campaign for Universal Literacy. As Jones (1990) puts it: "What emerged was UNESCO’s EWLP launched in an effort to ‘save face’ with developing country governments whose expectations had been raised by the earlier proposals for a massive campaign" (p. 14). For its role in the programme,
UNDP provided funding to 'prove' a point – whether work-oriented literacy programmes contributed to economic productivity (Jones, 1999).

UNESCO/UNDP critical assessment of the EWLP revealed how well-intentioned reforms may sometimes fail. So, for example, applying technical solutions to non-technical problems (UNESCO, 1976: 122), targeting 'illiterate' adults as 'enemies' in a war on illiteracy (p. 124) and complacency in the competence of experts rather than their commitment (p. 136) or communicating top-down instead of bottom-up (p. 140) emerged important drawbacks in the conceptualisation and implementation of the EWLP. In his memorandum to literacy decision-makers, Bhola (1984) and in her examination of 'obstacles to educational reform', Little (1988) agree on the need to tackle economic and political factors for educational reforms to succeed.

At the regional level, Moulton et al. (in Hyde, 2004) deplore how the major funding agencies (for example, World Bank, USAID) still persist to approach educational reform as though it was “a package of technical exercises with little if any acknowledgement of the political dimensions involved, either within the countries being assisted or within their institutions” (p. 100). Hyde (2004) wonders whether the decade of isolated success has changed much the funding agencies tendency for promoting a single paradigm, “the structured top-down strategy, for educational reform in all Sub-Saharan African countries” (Ibid.).

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the Plan of Action that followed the Addis Ababa Conference stated that “it must be possible to finance both the recurring and non-recurring costs of education...from loans as well as taxation” (UNESCO, 1961b: 10). And later, “that an increase in national education budgets requires use of new financial resources, both public and private, national and foreign, material and human” (UNESCO, 1961b: 20).

It is of interest to note changes in the financing policy of schools, even within a few years of Addis Ababa Plan. For example, in Swaziland, the Post-Independence National Development Plan (1969-73) states “that primary and secondary education should be free” (DEPS, 1969: 47).
In the *Second National Development Plan* (1973–78), however, the word ‘free’ is dropped (Magagula, 1990: 14). This would seem to compromise the stated policy initiative of ‘increased’ access. In Botswana too, “...a proportion of the costs will be shared by the community” (Ministry of Finance & Economic Planning in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 189). Yet, given such efforts, the financing of the recurrent cost of educational investment is the main constraint to further expansion or improvement of the system’s quality in many African countries (World Bank cited in Psacharopoulos, 1989).

As to regulation, all African states have chosen to regulate non-government educational institutions for quality control, equity and political ideology. Thus, for example, “the control of education lies with the Government of Swaziland whether it concerns state schools, subsidised schools or private undertakings” (Imbokodvo National Movement in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 189). Yet even in a socialist country like Tanzania, over 40 percent of the enrolment in secondary schools in 1979 was in private institutions (Psacharopoulos, 1989).

From the foregoing examples of educational policy objectives and outcomes in some African countries, some generalisations can be drawn. Looking at the past record of educational policy-making in Africa, Psacharopoulos (1989) delineates three main reasons for the non-implementation of education policies in these countries. First, the intended policy was never implemented to start with, for example, Swaziland’s ‘free’ primary and secondary education. Second, some policies were partially implemented and therefore failed to achieve the minimum critical mass to have an effect and third, although the policy was implemented, it did not have the intended effect (Psacharopoulos, 1989: 190, 1990: 16; Thakur, 1991: 386).

Other reasons for failure within each of the above categories include the following:

(a) No implementation

- The policy intention was vague, for example, ‘the quality of education should be improved’.
- The statement of intended policy was political rhetoric: 'there will be free education for all'.

(b) Partial implementation

- A pre-requisite factor was overlooked, for example, the financial implications of the proposed reforms were not worked out, which made implementation of the policies difficult.

- Social rejection weakened the effects of the programme such as vocational education, because parents boycotted vocational schools. Oyeyinka and Barclay (2004) too make the point that: "The colonial governments unsuccessfully attempted to introduce technical and vocational schools. However, African societies, partly influenced by the colonial elite, regarded academic education as the sole means of social and economic mobility" (p. 121).

(c) Implementation but no effect

- The policy was based on an unsound theoretical model, for example, educational expansion was based on human resource requirements

- The policy was based on insufficient information or evidence, for example, it was not known how many teachers were on the establishment register in the first place (Psacharopoulos, 1989: 190; Thakur, 1991: 386).

The definition of success or failure is a subjective matter and the vague formulation of policy objectives makes evaluation even more difficult. Even so, announcing a policy and raising people's expectations of an outcome that everyone knows at the outset to be unattainable
is a failure. Psacharopoulos (1989: 190) has explained it this way, “the impossibility of full or even partial implementation of a policy negates its validity”.

To demonstrate the problematic of policy-making and implementation, Psacharopoulos calls attention to the report of the Conference of African states on the Development of Education in Africa (UNESCO, 1961a: 18) that set the following targets for the 1961–1980 period:

Primary education shall be universal, compulsory and free; education at the second level shall be provided to 30 percent of those who complete primary education; higher education shall be provided...to 20 percent of those who complete secondary education; and the improvement of the quality of African schools and universities shall be a constant aim.

Some argue it does not take a thorough analysis to conclude that few of the good intentions put forward in this and many other documents have been achieved. While progress has been made in African education between the 1960s and 1980s particularly on increased access (Bellew in Psacharopoulos, 1989), still, the outcomes had fallen short of expectations. Data on how the Addis Ababa quantitative plans compare with their realisation show that actual versus planned enrolment in Africa during the 20-year period fell short of the target by 24, 30 and 50 percent for primary, secondary and tertiary education respectively. Even as the above averages mask the situation of individual countries, they do capture the broad performance (Ibid.). Foster (1988) observes, too, that educational outcomes in Africa have rarely reflected the Addis Ababa Plan noted in Chapter 1 since the dynamics of educational growth stemmed from factors external to educational systems rather than from the efforts of African educational planners. He concludes that, if anything, this might be a “lesson...that policies and implementation are different things” (p. 105). Psacharopoulos (1989) posits that the degree of success or effect of a policy is the product of two probabilities: that of the policy’s being implemented in the first place and that of its yielding the intended effect.

At least in one African country, “…more has been achieved in enunciating new policy statements or in perfecting change rhetoric than in implementing or institutionalising change”
(Maravanyika in Psacharopoulos, 1989: 191). This statement may apply to others given that Craig (1990) in reviewing 153 educational policies in Sub-Saharan Africa, concluded that only a handful were implemented. The policies that were not often implemented mostly referred to educational expansion. So, even as there were moments of optimism or pragmatism, but these are exceptions rather than the norm.

It is often said that educational reform is not possible without parallel transformations in society (Ergas in Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990). Yet countries that have adopted holistic social transformations and placed education within such transformations (e.g. Tanzania since 1967 and Ethiopia since 1974) do not appear to have shown major successes compared with other countries that have adopted some of the same policies in isolation (Psacharopoulos, 1990).

Psacharopoulos’s (1990) analysis paints a gloomy picture regarding the success of educational reforms that were proposed between the 1960s and 1980s; a picture that Foster (1988) shares completely. To avoid past drawbacks, Psacharopoulos (1989) recommends satisfying the following conditions in formulating educational policies: First, a policy statement should be concrete and feasible in terms of objectives, including a timeframe, source of financing of its implementation and institution. Second, research-based cause-effect relationships – rather than on goodwill or intuition - should inform the substance of a policy. For example, this should exclude expanding the educational system according to the human resource needs or compelling students to enrol in particular schools and curricula (Psacharopoulos, 1989; Thakur, 1991).

Other reasons for the non-implementation of education policies in Sub-Saharan Africa have been attributed to factors beyond the education sector, including “worsening economies of Sub-Saharan African countries, shrinking education budgets and unprecedented population growth rates” (Thakur, 1991: 386). Psacharopoulos (1989) argues that no one should be surprised by ‘no implementation’, ‘partial implementation’ and ‘implementation but no effect’
policy initiatives given that "concreteness is not easily observed in political statements and the intuitive power of 'I know what the country needs' is much stronger than whatever research results demonstrate" (p. 193). He urges policy makers to reduce the 'passion' from educational policy and focus on the documentation of cause-effect relationships; not ambitious but rarely implemented, non-effect policy statements.

In summary, where reforms happen, a host of factors influence policy success or failure of educational reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa generally and Swaziland specifically.

**Conclusion**

Having seen the status of the nation state evolve, it is possible to analyse the role it plays in literacy formation. The 'global consensus' fosters a literacy designed to fit recipients (e.g. students) as cogs in a modernising world according to the ethos and principles of western civilisation. Trade, co-operation and partnerships are mechanisms to incorporate poor countries into a capitalist world economy; literacy follows and is not a precursor of these developments.

There are still some who claim that being literate (however they define the term) will improve standards of living for those on the margins without affecting the standard of living of those already in the mainstream. These theorists see being 'illiterate' as the major restraint, if not the only restraint, to 'progress' for these individuals. For them, literacy is the one path to development. On the other side of the debate, are educational theorists who see literacy as part of a project that seeks radical social change (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Stromquist, 1997).

These two perspectives about literacy in development establish the ends of a continuum. The instrumental model end posited by the inter-governmental agencies envisions literacy as enabling individuals to participate in society as already constructed ('conformist'). The 'ideological' end (to use Brian Street's term) model posited by Freire (1970) and others
understands literacy as a practice that seeks to enable people to take better control of where society is going and better shape the forces that construct their lives (‘transformative’).

In summarising what has emerged from the review, two contrasting views exist on the relationship between literacy and development. The ‘right’ conceives literacy as a necessary and beneficial condition for development that everyone can acquire and apply indiscreetly while the ‘left’ understand literacy as no more than what people make of it, depending on their circumstances. The extent to which literacy empowers depends on who speaks to it: dominant mainstream or marginalised minority. The examination of the processes by which literacy empowers or does not empower (Mayo, 1995) has to consider political influence, the agendas of interest groups and interpretations placed on policy by those affected and outcomes of the policy.

One gap that emerges from the Swazi literature reviewed is the attention paid to different societal groups based on age, class, gender and ethnicity. For example, inter-governmental agencies embrace the technicist approach and assume that everyone is equally placed in terms of acquiring literacy. In so doing, they mask structural constraints that prevent some from accessing literacy. The critical-inquiry (or Freirean conscientização) approach, as noted earlier, speaks of the oppressed as though they were a homogenous group; ignoring differences among oppressed people in terms of age, gender or ethnicity.

To the extent that the technical rational approach draws from modernisation theory and in relation to education, human capital theory, I draw attention to the Swaziland economic conditions that do not easily lend themselves to analysis using only the human capital theory. In light of these gaps, this study is situated somewhere in the middle. It is informed by this literature initially but ultimately goes beyond it. Drawing from these traditions, the thesis argues that Swazi people need to be ‘technically capable’ to cope with everyday demands and that literacy offers this opportunity.
Given competing interests in education, Swazi adults need also to be ‘politically aware’ of existing power relations spanning the family/household, community and nation. The point made here is being able to “apply literacy skills to negotiate various tasks of day-to-day life” (Walter, 1999: 33) amid the relative power relations. And, connected to this point is that those in and with power including adult educators – as “beneficiaries of literacy” (Bailey et al., 1998: 131) themselves are ‘ethically responsible’ in exercising their authority (Prins, 2001: 65).

A complex mix of approaches is required to fully understand literacy formation generally and in the Swazi context specifically. As will be shown, different approaches have different strengths and weaknesses in adequately explaining the state of literacy formation in Swaziland as elsewhere in the region. The purpose of this review has been to learn the ‘conversations’ and to contribute to a revised understanding of the links between literacy and national development. In the next chapter, immediately following, I present an overview of the methodology of the research.
Chapter 3
Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological design of the study, including research approach, context, data sources, and methods of data collection and analysis. As noted in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study was to examine literacy formation in Swaziland. There were four questions that guided the study, namely:

1. How has Swazi literacy policy reflected the dual challenge of providing universal primary education (UPE) for children and promoting adult literacy education?
2. How have notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives played out in the Swazi national literacy policy?
3. How have international NGOs influenced Swazi state literacy policy formation?
4. What factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland account for the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case?

3.1 Research approach

Methodology, as used in this study, can be understood as how the researcher gains knowledge about the world under investigation. Methods are techniques for collecting and analysing data (Schwandt, 1994). Other scholars argue that, “methodological questions cannot be reduced to a question of methods. Rather, methods must be fitted to a pre-determined methodology” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 108). Some writers have observed that in less developed countries (LDCs) the use of qualitative research strategies has been rare (Merriam, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). As Davis (in Mohapi, 2001) shows, some researchers in LDCs have adopted quantitative research strategies even in those situations where either a qualitative research
strategy or combination of qualitative and quantitative research strategies could be suitable and relevant to the phenomenon under study. This should be expected given that before the end of the so-called ‘paradigm debate or wars’, some researchers viewed as suspect studies using mixed method strategies (Hammersley, 1992). Historically, the idea of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches owed much to earlier discussions about mixing methods, linking paradigms to methods and combining research designs in a single study (Creswell, 1998). Denzin (1994) uses the term ‘triangulation’ to argue for the combination of different data collecting methods in the study of the same phenomenon. The concept of triangulation assumes that any bias inherent in particular data sources would be ‘counter-balanced’ when used with other data sources, investigators and methods.

Researchers have traditionally viewed multi-method studies, sometimes referred to in the literature as the ‘multi-case’ approach, as appropriate in studies designed to analyse the extent of existing discrepancies between educational policies and practices (Creswell, 1998). In this view, it is argued that the choice of this approach might result in ‘thick descriptive data’ (Creswell, 1998: 184; Merriam, 1998: 8) that will produce insights into the patterns of multi-stakeholder perceptions. While some perceive ‘the case’ an object of study (Stake, 1995) and others view it a methodology (e.g. Merriam, 1998), a case study is “an exploration of a ‘bounded system’ or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998: 61). In this research, this bounded system is delimited by time (four months data collection) and place (a single country, Swaziland) and it is the case being studied – a programme, an event or an activity. Multiple sources of information include observations, interviews and documents and reports (Creswell, 1998).

Case studies are descriptive and exploratory in nature. They are designed to gain familiarity with and achieve new insights about a phenomenon, particularly where there is little knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon to serve as a guide. Cases involve the
intensive study of selected phenomena (Sellitz et al. in Bartunek, 1991). In this case study, I draw upon Lincoln and Guba’s case study structure – “the problem, the context, the issues and the ‘lessons learned’” (in Creswell, 1998: 36).

3.2 Selection of organisations and participants

In this study, two primary sources of data were used: a) official government policy documents and institutional records and b) interviews of key stakeholders and others involved in the educational policy-making process. Official government and institutional records and policy documents were obtained from a cross-section of government ministries or departments, literacy providing institutions, workers’ federations or unions, NGOs and aid/donor agencies (Table 1). Criteria used to identify these organisations were developed in part on the advice of staff within the Adult Education Inspectorate Division at the Ministry of Education, the most important government ministry for developing literacy policy and overseeing literacy provision. Two criteria determined which organisations, and thus which participants, were included in the study:

i) The organisation was an educational organisation with educational provision as its primary purpose;

ii) When not an educational organisation, its members participated in educational policy-making and implementation in a multi-stakeholder arrangement (that is, social partnership made up of government, employers and workers).
Table 1
Stakeholder Organisations in Formation of Literacy Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Section/Unit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Director of Education Office</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adult Education Inspectorate Unit</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Economic Planning and Development</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Macro-Economic Division</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Population Unit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Enterprise and Employment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Department of Labour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Directors of Agriculture &amp; Veterinary Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Correctional Services Department</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister’s Office</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Community Development Section</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing Institutions</td>
<td>Sebenta National Institute (SNI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry – Sugar companies (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Organisations</td>
<td>Swaziland Federation of Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Swaziland Federation of Employers (FSE)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid/Donor Agencies</td>
<td>UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectuals (including</td>
<td>University of Swaziland (UNISWA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional associations)</td>
<td>Swaziland Adult Education Association (SAEA)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the government level, the work of three ministries was particularly important for educational planning and policy formation. These were the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development and the Ministry of Enterprise & Employment. Within each ministry, the work of certain units was especially important for the themes examined in this study. In the MOE, these units included the Director of Education Office, the Planning Unit and Adult Inspectorate Unit. In the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, the Population Unit and Macro-Economic Unit were considered relevant much as the Labour Department was in the Ministry of Enterprise & Employment. In addition to these key units and ministries, the Directors of Agriculture & Veterinary Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Correctional Services Department (Ministry of Justice) and the Community Development Section of the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office supplied stakeholders in literacy formation in their provision of extension, literacy and other related adult education.
At the level of literacy providing institutions, the Sebenta National Institute (SNI) was the only organisation in the country mandated by government to run the National Literacy Programme, and thus a key stakeholder in the study. SNI was founded as a voluntary organisation in 1961 before it was subsumed as a parastatal unit under the MOE in 1978. The Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC), also important to literacy provision, was founded in 1970 by Ephesus House as a correspondence education project to provide Swazi and refugees, especially from South Africa, a ‘second chance’ to continue with their secondary school education. It provided students with self-study materials that were supported by residential sessions. From this early stage, it offered face-to-face support as an important component of the delivery of the programme. In 1972, Ephesus House changed its name to Swaziland International Education Centre (SIEC). In 1978, the Centre adopted the name Emlalatini Development Centre (Ministry of Education, 1983, 2001). Some graduates from the SNI literacy programme continue their education with EDC. The private sector represented by the agro-based sugar companies offered adult education and literacy training to their employees and neighbouring communities as a community service.

A final category of relevant educational policy and planning stakeholders was that of other organisations for which direct provision of literacy education was not a primary activity: employers and labour federations/unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donor/aid agencies, university intellectuals and professional organisations. Employers, labour unions and NGOs had special education programmes aimed at improving their primary service to members. Within the landscape of Swaziland’s twelve higher education institutions (one university and eleven colleges, institutes and training centres), the University of Swaziland’s Departments of Adult Education, Agriculture and Health Sciences were key stakeholders in literacy formation, as was the Swaziland Adult Education Association.
3.3 Study participants

Within the key stakeholder institutions identified above, twenty eight (28) respondents participated in the study (Table 2). Some held senior positions, others not. They were chosen based on their direct or indirect participation in policy formulation and implementation processes of literacy education and training in Swaziland. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding and insight that would complement the official picture portrayed by documents and records through respondents from whom a much richer variety of informed opinions could be obtained. While the selection of participants was designed to assure variety, it is not representative. As a result, the selection was purposeful or ‘judgemental’ to use Augsburger’s (2001) term, to represent the typical education policy maker or implementer in the research context and weighted by considerations of access and the opportunity to learn most about the area under study. Some have argued, “sample selection in qualitative research is usually (but not always) non-random, purposeful and small as opposed to the larger, more random sampling of quantitative research” (Merriam, 1998: 8). They add, “The investigator in qualitative research spends a considerable amount of time in the natural setting of the study, often in intense contact with participants” (Ibid.). I selected interview participants from those ministries, providing institutions and organisations that had provided the documentary data.
Table 2
Distribution of Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Director of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9 interviewees)</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Senior Inspector – Adult Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD)</td>
<td>Director of Agriculture, DVS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Enterprise and Employment (Labour Department)</td>
<td>Senior Population Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Labour Commissioner/Deputy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputy Prime Minister's Office</td>
<td>Labour Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ministry of Health &amp; Soc. Welfare</td>
<td>Adult Educator/Staff Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comm. Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Health Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Institutions</td>
<td>Sebenta National Institute</td>
<td>Board Chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8 interviewees)</td>
<td>(5 interviewees)</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emlalatini Development Centre</td>
<td>Head of Programmes and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Industry (private sector provision)</td>
<td>Curriculum Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Head – Field Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Literacy Instructors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sugar companies (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business/Employers</td>
<td>Swaziland Federation of Employers</td>
<td>Deputy CEO/Training Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Federation/Unions</td>
<td>Swaziland Federation of Labour</td>
<td>General Secretary – SFL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2 interviewees)</td>
<td>Swd. Federation of Trade Unions</td>
<td>Secretary General - SFTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Government</td>
<td>Family Life Assoc. of Swaziland</td>
<td>Head of Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisations (NGOs)</td>
<td>Women's Resource Centre</td>
<td>Head of Field Programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4 interviewees)</td>
<td>The AIDS Info Support Centre</td>
<td>Head – Counselling Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Commission for UNESCO</td>
<td>General Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectuals, Education</td>
<td>University of Swaziland</td>
<td>Head (Adult Ed., Agriculture Ext.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 interviewees)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Health Sciences - Nursing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Associations</td>
<td>Swaziland Adult Education Assoc.</td>
<td>General Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28 interviewees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: DVS – Director of Veterinary Services; SFL – Swaziland Federation of Labour

As noted previously, the respondents participating in this study ranged from senior policymakers to curriculum designers, from business leaders to labour union leaders and from institutional administrators to extension or field workers. Table 3 presents respondents’ highest level of education attained while Table 4 presents the distribution of respondents by sector.

Table 3
Distribution of respondents by level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of education</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate, diploma</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's degree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's degree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

71
From the table above, it can be observed that the respondents interviewed were a highly 'educated' group by national standards. For example, of the 28 respondents, 20 (73%) had university degrees (n = 28). As can be noted in Table 5, the study’s purposive sample drew respondents from different sectors representing varied occupational backgrounds and experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Agriculture</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economic Planning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community Development</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health and Social Welfare</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enterprise &amp; Employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Institutions</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Employers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Federations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (intellectuals)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher was also interested in the gender composition of participants. As pointed out, 28 respondents participated in this research; 16 male (57%) and 12 female respondents (43%). As can be observed, the gender composition of respondents almost balanced or levelled out; even so, there were slightly more (14%) male than female participants.

3.4 Data collection strategies

The researcher sought permission from organisations participating in the study to make copies or to read and makes notes of documents and records considered relevant. For the interviews with participants, a letter giving details about the study served as a means for obtaining consent. The letter included a description of the procedures for making sure participants’ anonymity and confidentiality of the data were up-held. It assured them of the right to withdraw at anytime from the study without prejudice and asked for the completion of a ‘consent form’ to show their
willingness to participate in the research. Data were collected during the months of January – April 2003. No research assistants were used, as the exercise was intended to be a learning experience for the researcher.

3.4.1 Documents

Documents are an important source of data in many areas of research. Document material included such documents as, for example, the Education Act or National Education Policy. These were typically government policy documents designed to guide different sectors of the economy. Even where input was obtained from outside agencies (bilateral agencies or NGOs to name two), the documents examined were primarily government instruments and they supplemented the interview technique described below. In the interest of triangulating evidence, the documents served to corroborate the evidence from other sources (Tellis, 1997). Use of material from these documents depended upon their availability or upon the organisations allowing the researcher to have access to them.

3.4.2 Interviews

The major source of data for this study were in-depth semi-structured interviews of officers involved in educational policy planning with special reference to literacy formation. The aim was to establish a “one-to-one relation with the respondent and the need to understand as well as to explain” (Fontana & Frey, 1994: 366). The interview served the specific purpose of gathering and exploring material that might help as a resource for developing a deeper and richer understanding of the human phenomenon under study. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to obtain descriptions of the interviewee’s life-world about interpreting the meaning of the phenomenon described (Kvale, 1996). It was to understand perceptions of participants about education policy and matters of practice in the provision of literacy education.
and training and their relation to the labour market. I followed a semi-structured interview schedule involving close- and open-ended questions. Even as questions were designed before the interview, the wording and sequencing of questions were adapted to suit the specific setting, particularly ensuring a relaxed feeling. To make sure one had an accurate record but also for reliability checks, all but two interviews – verbal interactions - were tape-recorded. For both types of interviews, I also took notes as the interview continued. Interviews were conducted in English. However, some respondents occasionally switched over to SiSwati whenever they felt constrained by the English language. This did not create a problem since I knew both languages. Some interviewees spoke so softly it resulted in low sound levels that made transcription difficult. With the supplementary notes, however, I was able to make extensive records of the core subject of the interview. Table 5 summaries the interview codes while Appendices A through C present the initial contact letters, consent form and interview schedules respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee category</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>GM 1 - 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Employers</td>
<td>BL 10-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Federations</td>
<td>LF 12 - 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Providers</td>
<td>LP 14 - 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-governmental Organisations</td>
<td>NG 22 – 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectuals (including professional association)</td>
<td>AI 25 – 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having identified the specific settings, the researcher followed the correct procedures of contacting the head of the organisation and obtaining permission as required by the UBC Ethics Review Committee. Before submitting the forms to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board, an invitation to take part in the study was sent to the head of each organisation (with follow-up telephone contacts made to obtain approval to proceed) to make sure the purpose of the study was being understood and to obtain names of officers to be interviewed.
For interviews of government ministry officials, questions revolved round participants’ perceptions about the provision of literacy education and training related to the labour market. Questions asked what factors participants considered as improving or worsening this provision, what relevant policy changes they wanted to see, their suggestions for the implementation of change and the outcomes they would expect to see as a result.

At the institutional level, the interviews focused on what participants considered as the role of educational institutions in meeting the economic demands of a nation. The officers also described what they sensed as matters that helped or hindered the provision of literacy education and training related to the labour market in Swaziland. Subjects were asked to comment on who decided what programmes were included in their offerings; what change the authorities wanted to see; whether the changes were in response to economic demands; under what limitations educational institutions operated; what helped the institutional operations; what linkages existed between educational institutions and the labour market, and what strategies acted as ‘guideposts’ towards the future.

The interviews typically lasted at least one hour although many were two hours. The interview schedules used to interview representatives of various organisations are presented in Appendix C. This focused on their involvement in the provision of literacy education and training related to the labour market. Questions concerned the educational role of organisations, the extent to which they participated in educational policy reform and their involvement in the governance of educational institutions. Subjects were also asked what they perceived as limitations, if any, in realising their organisation’s goal for involvement in literacy education.

The credibility or trustworthiness of the interview data were checked using interactive questions in the three sets of interview schedules. Other sources used to check credibility included official statistics and personal notes taken during interviews. For instance, official and
institutional statistical data were used to check the credibility of the interview data about political commitment in terms of financial support to literacy education and training.

3.5 Data analysis

Data analysis is the interplay between the researcher and data. It is both science and art—science in the sense of maintaining a certain degree of rigour and by grounding analysis in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The literature is full with works dealing with the analysis of qualitative data (e.g. Dey, 1993; Wolcott, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, among others). Even as various authors approach data analysis from different positions including language, they converge in stressing the importance of categorising data and recognising or understanding connections between and within categories to provide meaningful interpretation and understanding of the data. This is one approach that was used in the current study.

As noted earlier, the documentary data were interpreted; the researcher summarised key ideas such as changes in stress while also observing the source and chronology of ideas and changes. Presentation of interview data began with transcription of the interviews. It is important to keep an accurate record of one’s interviews (Nolan, 1981). As pointed out, interviews were tape-recorded and later edited and transcribed. The edited transcriptions were the principal data of analysis. This was followed by isolating relevant portions of data transcripts for each of the 28 participants using the interview schedule for the study. The aim was to look for patterns or common themes. The themes identified were next assigned to categories developed partly from the ideas revealed in the literature review and partly from the data themselves.

Data in the form of participants’ words and direct citations from documents have been included to support the findings of the study (Merriam, 1998). Data were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Merriam, 1998) centring on themes in the data dealing with inter
ala ideological assumptions about education/literacy and success. Although qualitative research by its nature leans towards internal validity, Merriam (1998) has suggested several strategies to increase the internal validity of a project. As noted, I used triangulation, or “multiple sources of data or multiple methods to confirm the emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998: 204). The nature of the case study design allowed me to collect multiple sources of data (Sandlin, 2004). I was able to formally interview participants from different perspectives – government, employers, labour, NGOs and academics – and to consult government and other documents and records.

Data units were also analysed by the frequency of their mention and by their source to find out whether they were mentioned by subjects in each of the six categories of respondents (government, providing institutions, employers, labour, NGOs and intellectuals). Some items appeared to deserve the description of ‘issues’, a label that was assigned only when subjects in each group mentioned the item. I next analysed ‘issues’ in terms of whether they were perceived as promoting or inhibiting the provision of literacy education and training. More analyses were carried out using the factors identified in the literature review as important in the development of literacy education and training for certain labour market and other outcomes.

This study combines quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative data are mainly words and full transcription of interviews. One needed some framework to organise and manage the data to facilitate orderly analysis. The overall framework used was based on a combination of an inductive (creative) process and a deductive (linear) process. Given the importance of both making the data analysis stage manageable, yet cautious of the dangers of imposing pre-set categories, the researcher followed the process for the study outlined below:

Open coding: As used here, open coding refers to “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in the data” (Strauss & Corbin,
Each interview was reviewed and open coded or 'unitised'. Each coded item was identified by interview and line number and placed in a typed list.

**Developing an initial code list:** The researcher identified and developed 'regularities of meaning' into an initial or preliminary list of codes, which evolved as the process continued.

**Assigning items to code list:** The researcher coded the key items according to a code list. The code list was an initial or preliminary list and this iterative process was reworked, reduced, expanded and refined.

**Developing data display charts:** To represent the coded items in a more manageable form for analysis, where suitable, data display charts were developed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Searching for themes, patterns and relationships:** The researcher sought for categories, themes, patterns and relationships; a search for regularities of meaning held by participants in that setting (Kvale, 1996). This included acknowledging an interest in some areas: namely, the officers' use of language and metaphor, perceptions of key aspects of the organisational context and understandings of their roles and responsibilities.

To briefly describe this data organisation and analysis stage, transcriptions of all interviews included the raw data and content/documentary analysis, the supplementary data. The data were organised and analysed following the guidelines that Miles and Huberman (1994) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) offer. Data were analysed in a deductive and inductive manner. This iterative process required constant movement back and forth between initial interpretations, the categories of code, the data summaries and the original transcripts. Through this process, key findings were identified that the researcher analysed in a later chapter.
To summarise the data organisation and analysis section, documentary and interview data were analysed using the research questions. Outside this framework, some data themes not amenable to the research questions were analysed using a critical feminist perspective (Prins, 2001) or the gender analysis approach (Sikoska, 2003). The findings of this data analysis are presented in Chapter 5.
Chapter 4

Swaziland: Socio-Political and Economic Background

This chapter examines the main features of Swaziland pertinent to the research. It starts with a description of the country's administrative and political structures. It then provides an overview of the distribution of wealth and poverty, unemployment, the economy and labour market systems. The chapter then gives an account of developments in education and training in general and adult education and literacy training in particular. The chapter concludes with a summary and the identification of what appear as central topics in relation to the development of education and training generally and adult education and literacy training specifically.²

Introduction

Swaziland is the smallest country in the southern hemisphere in terms of both area and population and the second smallest in Africa after The Gambia (Kowet, 1978; Booth, 1983; McDermott, 1997). The country is one of three Kingdoms remaining in Africa, the others being Lesotho and Morocco. The Swazi people have been led by a monarch since the middle of the seventeenth century. Swaziland remained independent until around 1890 when it came under the protection and administration of the British Governor of the Transvaal in South Africa. It had been assumed that the three High Commission Territories of Bechuanaland (Botswana), Basutoland (Lesotho) and Swaziland would eventually be incorporated into South Africa, despite assurances that no such transfer would take place against the wishes of the people. In 1910, when the Transvaal became a province of the Union of South Africa, Swaziland came under the

² In developing the chapter, I draw upon some major general sources including but not limited to Davies et al. (1985), Potholm (1972, 1988), Nuscheler (2002), Swaziland Youth Congress, SYC (2002), Kuper (1997), Schmidt (1992), Booth (1983) and Malan (1985). I cite other sources (government reports and publications of international agencies) as they are used.
According to tradition, the people of the present Swazi nation migrated south before the 16th century to what is now Mozambique. Following a series of conflicts with people living in the area of modern Maputo, the Swazi settled in northern Zululand in about 1750. Unable to match the growing Zulu strength, the Swazi moved gradually northward in the 1800s and established themselves in the area of contemporary Swaziland. They consolidated their hold under several leaders. The most important was King Mswati II, from whom the country of Swaziland and its people the Swazi derive their names. Under his leadership in the 1840s, the Swazi expanded their territory to the north-west and stabilised the southern frontier with the Zulus (Booth, 1983:1; Malan, 1985).

Contact with the British came early in Mswati’s reign, when he asked British authorities in South Africa for assistance against Zulu raids into Swaziland. It was during Mswati’s reign also that the first whites settled in the country. Following his death in 1865, the Swazi reached agreements with British and South African authorities over a range of topics, including but not limited to independence, claims on resources by Europeans, administrative authority and security. South Africans administered the Swazi interests from 1894 to 1902. Following victory in the Anglo-Boer War (1899 – 1902), Great Britain assumed control (Malan, 1985). After almost 66 years of British colonial rule, Swaziland regained its political independence in 1968 under the leadership of King Sobhuza II (Potholm, 1972; Booth, 1983).

Until 1968, the colonial administration made little effort during those years to fashion the economy for independence as will be recalled it had always been assumed that the country would ultimately be incorporated into South Africa. The administration developed infrastructure to facilitate communication with the South African economy and assumed the proper role for Swaziland to be that of a labour reserve for the South African coal, diamond, gold and platinum
mines, industries and farm plantations. Education too, supported by missionary groups, was designed to produce a level of literacy favourable to Christianisation and to provide a modest middle-level civil service cadre for the colonial administration (Kowet, 1978; Booth, 1983; Davies et al., 1985; Moock & Harbison, 1988).

**Administrative and political structures**

Swaziland is an executive monarchy and an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations. King Mswati III is the head of state (since 1986). At present, there is no constitution; King Sobhuza II (1899-1982) repealed the independence (Westminster-type) constitution in 1973 (Malan, 1985; Constitutional Review Commission, CRC 1997; FCO 2004). As head of state, the monarch presides over the executive and the prime minister is head of government. The king appoints the cabinet at the recommendation of the prime minister. There are no elections for the executive branch of government as the monarch is hereditary and the prime minister is appointed by the monarch. Regarding the legislature, there is a bicameral parliament consisting of a 65-seat House of Assembly (55 members are elected through popular vote and 10 are appointed by the king) and a 30-seat Senate (10 members are elected by the House of Assembly and 20 are appointed by the king). The king must approve legislation passed by parliament before it becomes law. Finally, a dual court system of traditional courts under chiefs and a Roman-Dutch system made up of magistrates courts, a high court and court of appeal characterises the judicial arm of government. Within the judicial branch, judges for both the High Court and Court of Appeal are appointed by the monarch. Swaziland's legal system is founded on South African Roman-Dutch law in statutory courts and Swazi law and custom in traditional courts; the country has not yet accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction. Political parties are banned by the 1973 Royal Decree; even so, suffrage is universal after 18 years of age (Malan, 1985; CRC, 1997; UNDP, 2002a).
In regard to administrative divisions, Swaziland has four regions, namely: Hhohho, Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni and the following administrative sub-divisions: nine municipal governments and 55 constituency (tinkhundla) centres (or traditional administrative units). The country's capital is Mbabane in the Highveld, with a population of 69,000; Manzini, the principal commercial centre with a population of 75,000 (2003 est.) is the other major town. It should be noted that between Mbabane and Manzini is Lobamba in the Ezulwini Valley that is the spiritual, royal and legislative capital (Booth, 1983; Malan, 1985).

The governance of Swaziland, like the land tenure, is a product of the two main historical influences - the traditional sector and the modern. The former is dominant upon Swazi Nation Land and the latter on Title Deed Land. The former uses mainly unwritten customary codes, the latter written law, predominantly Roman-Dutch. At the apex of both systems is the king. In theory, that sounds simple; in practice it is complicated because, as noted above, Swaziland is an inter-mixed country and, so, there is a considerable amount of confusion, over-lapping and clashing within the governmental structures. When the British took over Swaziland's administration in 1902, they reduced the king's status to that of a paramount chief. Previously, he ruled as king-in-council, together with the queen mother. The 1968 Constitution made the king a constitutional monarch; parliament was sovereign.

According to Swazi law and custom, the monarch holds supreme executive, legislative and judicial powers. In general practice, however, the monarch's power is delegated through a dualistic system: modern, statutory bodies, such as the cabinet and less formal traditional government structures. The prime minister, who is head of government and the cabinet, which is recommended by the prime minister and approved by the king (or regent), exercises executive authority. For local administration Swaziland is divided into four regions, each with an administrator appointed by the king. Parallel to the government structure is the traditional
system consisting of the king and his advisers, traditional courts and 55 tinkhundla (sub-regional districts in which traditional chiefs are grouped) (Malan, 1985; CRC, 1997; UNDP, 1998, 2001).

Governance is a highly contentious subject in Swaziland and the dual system is problematic in some ways. Apart from leading to a certain amount of confusion, it results in over-lapping of functions and sometimes even clashes within the governmental structures. Concerns around dual governance centre on matters relating to which system prevails when there is disagreement – which matters are referred to either system for final decision? Even as authorities have argued the Swaziland system of governance has a host of checks and balances to it not meaningfully reducible to an organogram, certain elements in society are not sure. With the banning of political parties, such sentiments have increasingly been expressed through legitimate and necessary organisations such as labour unions and human rights associations. Many see these calls as threatening, including but not limited to deep-seated interests and the lines have hardened in recent years. A Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) was tasked with attending to constitutional reform. However, the progressive formations condemned the CRC as a pretence aimed at consolidating the power of the vested interests (McDermott, 1997).

Political analysts and critics argue that Swaziland’s constitution or lack of one lies at the heart of political risk in the country (Kowet, 1978). For the past forty years “Swaziland has been struggling to find a way of marrying the demands of the ‘modern’ bureaucratic state with the power and privileges accruing to those owing their position to a ‘traditional’ system centred on the ruling Dlamini royal lineage” (UNDP, 2002a: 1)\(^3\)

Swaziland is now the only country in Southern Africa that does not subscribe to multi-party democracy. As political changes sweep across the region particularly in South Africa and Mozambique, the traditional Swazi political system increasingly comes under pressure as a barrier to the country’s progress. Partly fuelled by generational differences and regional trends,

\(^3\)Dlamini is originally the surname of the royal family and also the most common name in Swaziland.
a wave of grass-roots activity is rising and calling for changes in the country (Moscarella, 1997; SYC, 2002). I seek to understand these pressures and struggles for and against change by examining the class structure in Swaziland and appropriate Marx’s analysis of class. Clement and Williams (1989) observe how Marx summarises ‘the method of political economy’ in the *Grundrisse: Introduction to the critique of political economy* (1857), stating:

> When we consider a given country politico-economically, we begin with its population, its distribution among classes, town, country, the different branches of production, export and import, annual production and consumption. The population is an abstraction if I leave out the classes of which it is composed. These classes are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest: wage labour or capital (p. 6).

**Class structure**

While no detailed analysis yet exists of the Swazi society’s class structure since independence, some commentators (Davies *et al.*, 1985) have made broad observations. During the 1976 census, nearly two-thirds of the population lived in the Swazi Nation areas, while 18 percent lived on farms in the individual tenure areas and 15 percent in urban areas (Department of Economic Planning & Statistics, DEPS, 1978). The bulk of the population living in Swazi Nation areas are usually described as ‘peasants’. However, even given the pattern of differentiation in land ownership noted earlier, more than 80 percent of such households depend for their survival on the regular sale of the labour power of one or more family members in the wage economy at any given time. This high incidence of constant migratory labour outside of these areas suggests that the process of proletarianisation of such rural producers is high. Therefore, far from representing a ‘peasantry’, the bulk of the population of these areas are a semi-proletariat who form a reserve army for South African capital (Kowet, 1978). More and more, argue Megassik and Wolpe, “they are coming to constitute part of the absolute surplus
population which the development of capitalism in Southern Africa has scattered across the region" (in Davies et al., 1985: 37).

The size of this proletariat becomes especially important when one considers that the majority of the Swazi population living in the Swazi Nation areas themselves represent a semi-proletariat, subject to increasing economic pressures driving them off the land (Davies et al., 1985; SYC, 2002). Therefore, there is a close link between these two class forces, the proletariat and the semi-proletariat. Cautioning against exaggerating this point, Davies et al. argue: "There still exist sufficient differences in their objective socio-economic positions and experiences of the processes of capitalist exploitation that act to divide these two related class forces from each other" (p. 38). Therefore, the urban (or plantation) wage labour proletariat, experience exploitation through wage labour. They confront, as their exploiters, foreign monopoly capital, both British and South African. The Swazi state seems to protect such foreign monopoly capital. As noted above, one objective of this state is to check the effective blend of the Swazi proletariat in a struggle against their exploitation by such capital. In this sense, therefore, the governing royalist alliance which controls the apparatuses of the Swazi state confronts the proletariat as the supporter of foreign monopoly capital and seeks to prevent the organisation of Swazi workers in order to advance both its position and that of its monopolistic allies.

But, for the semi-proletariat in the Swazi Nation areas, whatever the objective similarities of their position to that of the proletariat, the experience of the effect of capitalist exploitation differs in ways that influence their real and possible political practice. For this semi-proletariat, the major impact of capitalist exploitation is not directly and constantly experienced through the wage labour relation. For those working on the land, their falling living standards, their inability to reproduce their labour power, does not appear as the direct result of the operations of foreign multi-national companies, but somewhat as a shortage of land and cattle. Such producers are not directly confronted with monopoly capital as their immediate exploiters and oppressors. Davies
et al. (1985) and SYC (2002) agree; even for those who engage in normal, if uninterrupted, periods of migrant labour outside these areas, a shortage of land and cattle more than the private ownership of the means of production by monopoly capital seems to drive them into such labour.

All of this has important, if contradictory, effects for the political position of this semi-proletariat. In Swaziland, ‘traditional’ chiefs, operating under the banner of the institutions of the monarchical system, control access to land in these areas. Although there is little information on this point, available evidence points to some form of surplus or ‘tribute’ that has to be paid to the chiefs in return for the ‘right’ to use the land (Kowet, 1978). Various ‘traditional’ ceremonies too, such as the annual rite of kingship (incwala) and reed dance (umhlanga), make sure there is a flow of surplus labour from all such households in Swaziland to the monarch’s kraal. Therefore, at one level, argue Davies et al. (1985), at the level of daily experience it is the chiefs and the monarchical system that appear as the immediate exploiters and oppressors of this rural population.

But, more pressing aspects of this system of production relations counteract such appearances. First, the ideological strength of ‘tradition’ even now remains powerful – the levels of surplus extraction by the chiefs and monarch through this form do not appear to give rise to acute forms of social differentiation in the Swazi Nation areas such as would lead to popular resistance against these ruling groups. More importantly though, since the division in 1914 of the country of the then British Protectorate of Swaziland into Swazi Nation Land (SNL) and individual tenure farms, the Swazi monarch has intensified its efforts to reclaim for the Swazi Nation land expropriated during the colonial era (Nuscheler, 2002). This should not be misinterpreted. The monarch and the chiefs have not led a popular struggle to get back ‘seized’ land. Somewhat, they have operated strictly through negotiation and land purchase (Kowet, 1978). Even so, this importance given to reclaiming ‘traditional’ Swazi land for ‘the nation’, has directly affected the political practice of the Swazi semi-proletariat.
Therefore, if the shortage of land appears to this class force as the main cause of its increasing deprivation, the mere weight attached to the land question by the chiefs and the seeming attempts to reclaim Swazi land for the nation has won general support among many people on the SNL. It has consolidated the political hold of the chiefs over these areas through the traditional councils, called Tinkundla. Hence, argue Davies et al. (1985), “the political support given by the semi-proletariat to the traditional chiefs is institutionalised through the tinkundla system, consolidating even further the traditionalist and monarchist ideology which has such a powerful hold in Swaziland, mainly in the rural areas” (p. 40). This differential experience of the effect of capitalist exploitation between the urban proletariat and the semi-proletariat in the rural areas has been an important factor inhibiting the emergence of a mass popular movement in Swaziland. At times, when such an alliance appeared a possibility, the intervention of the monarchy against the struggles of the proletariat and its manipulation of the land question to win the support of the rural population, has isolated the Swazi working class from the mass of the population. The series of workers’ strikes in 1962–63, 1977 and more recently 1996–97 provide a typical example (Booth, 1983; Davies et al., 1985; Bureau of African Affairs, BAA, 2000).

This leads to the third major class force in Swazi society, which is a differentiated bloc of the ‘traditional’ rulers operating under the monarchy. The constitution of this traditional bloc is complex and requires further research. At its head stands the royal family presided over by the monarch – either the King or Queen Regent. The monarch, the many lineage descendents of the Swazi Kings, together with the ‘elders of the Nation’ make up Swazi royalty. The latter are the hereditary heads of the main clans of Swaziland. The King (or Queen Regent) and the elders jointly make up the Swazi monarchy. Even as the King is the most powerful member of the monarchy and enjoys a wide range of discretionary powers, his powers are not unlimited (USDC, 1997). The elders collectively are entitled to check and, at times, reverse his actions.
This system of checks and balances within the monarchy is vital to an understanding of how ‘traditional power’ operates in Swaziland (ECS, 2001).

Below the monarchy are the headmen and the chiefs. Unlike chiefs, the headmen do not inherit their positions. Instead, they are councillors and administrators appointed by the monarch and elders. Jointly with selected chiefs, a number of the more important headmen are clustered into an advisory council to the monarchy. The whole traditional bloc of royalty, headmen and chiefs are also organised into an institution known as the Swazi national council (*Libandla*). Together, the traditional bloc organised through the monarchy represent the most influential group of local class forces in Swaziland (Davies *et al.*, 1985).

The power of this traditional ruling class stems initially from their control over the basic means of production for the bulk of the Swazi population – land. Whereas in principle the Swazi nation communally owns land, effective control vests in this group, and they may dispose of land. This control of land has guaranteed the supremacy of this bloc in Swazi politics since the 1960s. In turn, this political dominance and control over some important apparatuses of the Swazi state since independence, has been the key factor allowing the transformation of its objective position. It will be recalled that through the monarchy, the traditional ruling bloc has aligned itself with the interests of foreign monopoly capital and transformed itself (or aspects of itself) into a royalist *bourgeoisie*. As Daniel and Vilane (1986) argue, the relationship of Swaziland to South Africa is not due to geo-political factors or structural features, but particularly to the ‘compradorial’ nature of Swaziland’s ruling class.

The last important class force of the Swazi is the petty bourgeoisie. This term includes small capitalists and petty commodity producers as well as wage earners and professionals who occupy positions allocated to comparatively educated persons in the blue- or white-collar labour market structure. This second category consists of groups such as lawyers, teachers or government officials. Given the paucity of Swazi statistics (CSO, 2001), it is hard to
approximate the size of this class force. In an economy subjected to foreign monopolies and a monarchical state under the firm political control of the governing royalist alliance, this petty bourgeoisie is subject to multi-faceted and conflicting pressures. More especially, the closely protected system of support operates to the disadvantage of small Swazi capitalists who face increasing competitive pressures from more cost-efficient monopoly enterprises. This leads to individualism and competing for positions within and through the state apparatus. The structures created by the royalists represent the path to progress in Swazi society and this has produced an opportunist 'royalism' in elements of this class force. As noted, some of its leading members have succeeded in tactically pursuing favours within the governing royal alliance (Booth, 1983; Davies et al., 1985).

Such conditions have not been favourable to the emergence of a popular alliance between the petty bourgeoisie and the exploited classes of Swazi society. Even as the almost total foreign, chiefly South African, dominance of the Swazi economy might be expected to create a form of economic nationalism in reaction, the strong ties maintained between the Swazi ruling class and foreign monopoly capital make such a stand both economically and politically futile in the meantime, for the Swazi petty bourgeoisie. However, latest political moves by the royalists, in addition to the increasing economic uncertainty of the lower strata of the petty bourgeoisie, have formed certain symptoms of alienation at different levels in the period following the death of King Sobhuza. The last influential class in Swaziland is not Swazi. As noted earlier, Swaziland is subject to South African economic and, less openly, political domination – but British monopoly capital controls important sectors of the economy as well. Such foreign monopoly capitalists represent the dominant class in Swaziland. But, they maintain this control through co-operation with the economic and political aspirations of the governing royalist alliance (Davies et al., 1985; SYC, 2002). Apart from dominant classes, how has inter-class competition affected the life chances of ordinary people? This is the subject of the next section.
**Poverty and unemployment**

Global (UNDP and World Bank) rankings classify Swaziland as a lower middle-income ‘developing’ country with a gross domestic product (GDP) of US$1,300 (2003). As discussed above, the economy performed reasonably well in the early seventies and eighties assisted by a strong manufacturing sector and increased foreign direct investment, FDI (Ministry of Economic Planning & Development, MEPD 1999). Even as the country recorded modest to record performance (nine percent in 1986), it is estimated that two-thirds (66%) of the Swazi population live below the poverty line defined as "E70.00 (about US$7.00) per month" (Ministry of Health, 2002: 10). As in most African countries (Schmidt, 1992), poverty particularly affects women.

Poverty affects much of Sub-Saharan Africa in general and Swaziland in particular as governments attempt to find a long-term solution to what has become endemic of this region. For Swaziland, poverty is a societal threat much as malaria and small pox were in the early days. A poverty reduction strategy then is a deliberate intervention to what are perceived causes of poverty and in the Swazi context the causes include: stagnant and declining economic growth, unemployment, lack of skills, social services and broad participation in development (MEPD, 2002; Prime Minister’s Office, 1997, 1999a). Most government documents (Economic and Social Reform Agenda, National Development Strategy and Poverty Reduction Strategy) tend to associate stagnant economic growth with the current incidence of poverty in Swaziland. Following this government logic, economic growth ‘resolves’ the problem. This is particularly the case for the economically-active population that has suffered jobs losses as a result of firms closing down or relocating to other countries in the region. This translates into fewer jobs people need to compete for in the labour market and some people taking jobs for which they are over-qualified. It is not yet clear what influences employers’ decisions to hire highly skilled or low skilled workers – whether they base such decisions on demands of the work to be done. Whatever decision is finally made, intense competition for the few jobs should be expected.
Tensions in competition for jobs apart from advantaging some and disadvantaging other people necessitate some government intervention in the economy.

The flipside of employment is unemployment. Limited investment in labour-intensive industries, the closing down of some factories and slow growth of output on Swazi Nation Land have contributed to keeping general unemployment at high levels. The 1997 Population & Housing Census defined the ‘unemployed population’ as “those persons who were actively looking for work or were available for work in the last 12 months before the census” (CSO, 2001: 7-27). It showed that 28,748 males were unemployed in 1997 compared to 25,724 in 1986 (11.8% increase) and 27,942 females were unemployed in 1997 compared to 18,200 in 1986 (53.5% increase). The 1997 figures represent about 20.2 and 26.2 percent of the male and female labour forces respectively (Ibid.). The distribution of unemployed persons by level of education and rural-urban location (Table 6) shows that secondary school leavers form a major share of those unemployed for both male and female, particularly in urban areas.

It can also be observed from the table below that for both male and female Swazis in rural areas, the unemployment rate is higher for those who had completed only primary education while the reverse is true for urban areas. This has implications for policy earmarked to the conditions of rural populations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level Attained</th>
<th>Rural (Number)</th>
<th>Urban (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Education</td>
<td>Male 5,418</td>
<td>Female 3,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Education</td>
<td>Male 10,247</td>
<td>Female 9,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Education</td>
<td>Male 11,336</td>
<td>Female 13,268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Male 92</td>
<td>Female 78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Male 1,085</td>
<td>Female 1,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not stated</td>
<td>Male 570</td>
<td>Female 668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28,748</td>
<td>27,942</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Distribution of unemployed population by highest education level, sex & rural-urban residence, 1997


92
Even as some portray unemployment mainly as a youth problem, it affects other age groups too. In recent years, decline in formal employment has led to the importance of informal sector employment. This follows the restructuring of many companies in the 1990s partly in response to globalisation. The informal sector plays an important role in creating alternative employment opportunities for the majority of unemployed Swazis. Even so, this role cannot be sustained without the training of local Swazi entrepreneurs in 'relevant' skills. Jobs in this sector rose by 0.3 percent in 2000 from the previous year's level. The reluctance by the banking industry to extend credit to this sector contributes to the slow growth in informal sector employment. Many employees who lost their formal employment joined this sector. For that reason, the encouragement of informal sector activities and the promotion of Swazi-owned businesses remain important for reducing the unemployment rate (CBS, 2001, 2003). Yet, the youth unemployment problem should be expected to continue given the rapid population growth noted above as an increasing number of young people join the labour force each year.

The 1986 census and the 1995 Swaziland Household Income & Expenditure Survey (SHIES) both found that the number of unemployed persons increased. As pointed out, employment opportunities outside Swaziland particularly in SA continue to play an important role, though have steadily declined in recent years owing to changes in the political and socio-economic conditions in that country. According to the 1998/99 Development Plan, 12,960 Swazi men were employed in the South African mines at the end of 1997 showing more than 10 percent fall from the 1996 figure (Table 7). As can be observed, the number of job openings for Swazi people in the South African mines has been falling, posing a challenge for the country to generate more employment opportunities internally. About 60 percent of the migrants’ earnings are spent in Swaziland through remittances arranged between the miners and The Employment Bureau of Africa (TEBA), the recruitment agency. These remittances are either invested or used to finance consumption expenditure in the country (Central Bank of Swaziland, 2001).
Semi-skilled and low skilled workers feature highly in the agriculture, industry and service sectors in Swaziland. This seeming low skill level of most employed persons is related to the level of economic and human capital development and may also suggest a barrier for further economic growth and social mobility in Swazi society. The modern sector of the economy has not created enough employment to absorb all the job seekers in the country (CSO, 2001).

As a cause of poverty, unemployment transcends all levels of society – the working and non-working although in different ways. The young (1–15) and older (64+) depend for their sustenance on incomes of the working population, including the taxes they pay to the state that finance social services. Unemployment is therefore a threat to sustainable development, other things being equal. As I shall show, available employment statistics do not often capture fully distributional effects of benefits that may be skewed in favour of certain groups.

Lack of employment is a key indicator of poverty in a country and a large proportion of people out of employment might be seen to contribute to the incidence of poverty – income poverty. In Swaziland, this proportion is rather high, at more than 20 percent of the workforce, even by regional (e.g. Southern African Development Community, SADC) standards. “Ensuing from the significant declines in the flow of foreign direct investment and the slow growth of the economy in the 1990s, unemployment in Swaziland has reached high levels. The labour force is
growing at a much faster rate than the economy” (MEPD, 2002: 12). This poses a challenge to the government in making sure that it pursues policies that will achieve sustained high levels of economic growth and at the same time deal with the problem of unemployment (Ibid.).

As noted, official statistics estimated unemployment at 22 percent of the economically active population during the 1997 Census, slightly higher for youth. Episodes of growing unemployment exacerbate the plight of poor people. Low skill levels mean that even those poor people who secure employment do not attract high enough wages in the labour market. Additionally, families suffer when employed members lose work as their wage incomes are used to sustain families, the cost of which has increased over the years. Poor people who have traditionally kept large families can no longer provide for and educate with the little income they receive. Besides, many poor people are more likely to be doing seasonal work, which makes their income source unreliable and unpredictable (MEPD, 2002).

Empirical evidence has shown that “poverty and social disadvantage are closely related to educational failure and subsequent unemployment” (Halsey et al., in Brown, 2001: 254). Income disparities and poverty will make it further difficult for the working class poor trying to compete with their middle-class counterparts, the reason being the market rules of competition reinforce the advantages of those with affluent personal histories. This is especially true if the competition continues for an extended period, such as to post-graduate school; “it benefits those with the financial resources to stay in the competition” (Hirsch in Brown, 2001: 254). In Swaziland, problems abound the question of external investment and the wealth created as a result. The dark side in that wealth is the inequality that prevails. Questions around matters of class formation and exploitation on the one hand and national integration on the other generate interesting and often heated debates. In examining questions of exploitation and dependency in relation to the outside world, one has to recognise that Swaziland is part of a global system (Taylor et al., 1997; Forster & Nsibande, 2000).
HIV/AIDS epidemic

In addition to slowdown in economy and drought, the advent of HIV/AIDS has exacerbated the poverty situation. Even with modest earlier interventions, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has spread rapidly in the country. Swaziland uses the sentinel sero-surveillance method to generate information on the spread of HIV in the population. It has since 1992 conducted biennial surveys and uses three population groups to generate the HIV prevalence data: ante-natal care (ANC) clients, patients with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and tuberculosis (TB) patients. It recruits the target groups at some rural and urban health centres, asking them to volunteer for an interview and blood collection. It uses the ‘unlinked’ anonymous testing for HIV-specific antibodies (Ministry of Health, 2002). It is estimated that the prevalence rate among women attending ante-natal clinics (ANC) increased from 3.9 percent in 1992 to 38.6 percent in 2002 (Table 8), one of the highest in the region (MOAC et al., 2002: 66; CBS, 2003; Ministry of Finance, 2003). It can be observed that the HIV rate has risen for all groups.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>58.1</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: n.a, - date not available; ANC – ante-natal clinic; STI – sexually-transmitted infections; TB - Tuberculosis


HIV/AIDS is everybody’s concern in Swaziland as, in a sense, all are affected. Even so, the fact that some are only affected while others are infected makes a difference and we need to look at the circumstances of the latter. Who are they in terms of age, gender or social class? That partly answers the question: What resources (including educational) do they have to effectively deal with their condition and to what extent can they gain financial and political support for their
plight? Available data show that while everybody is at risk, it is youth, women and other working-class individuals who are vulnerable particularly in regard to managing one’s HIV status once confirmed negative. “The poor have higher HIV/AIDS prevalence and struggle to send their children to school or to see them through high school” observed MEPD (2002: 9).

Poverty reduction policy

Given that unemployment is a problem, what policy guides government employment initiatives? The National Development Strategy (NDS) states, “The long-term objective of the government’s employment policy is to ensure that every citizen finds creative employment whether through self-employment or waged-employment” (MEPD, 2002: 14).

Lack of skills speaks directly to people looking for salaried and self-employment; both groups of labour require certain skills to secure and retain employment. The government argues that “one of the main causes of unemployment is low literacy. Human development and the development of skills is one of the major subjects that are needed to deal with unemployment particularly that of a structural nature” (MEPD, 2002: 19). Its assertion that ‘people lack skills’ and are therefore poor needs to be examined in light of jobs that remain unfilled owing to a lack of appropriate skills. Lack of skills raises questions about people accessing appropriate education and training opportunities at different stages in their lives to equip them with skills consistent with their changing socio-economic roles. It forces the writer back to the ‘access to options and entitlements’ pointed out in the broad conceptualisation of poverty. Skills acquisition is a product of accessing social services that the state has to provide – basic education, primary health care and housing amenities among others. The extent to which lack of skills is a cause or a symptom of poverty is debatable. However, it is important in examining how government regards lack of skills, for it treats it as a cause and sets itself free from dealing with the more serious (mainly ‘structural’) causes of poverty – at least, in the meantime.
From the perspective of the government, it is perhaps helpful to situate the analysis of poverty from the overall policy objective guiding the poverty reduction strategy: “To reduce the incidence of poverty in Swaziland by more than half from the current level of 66 percent to 30 percent by the year 2015 and to eliminate it altogether by 2022” (MEPD, 2002: 6). Halving poverty by the year 2015 is consistent with the global goal enshrined in the UN millennium development goals. Central to any discussion of this theme are some strategies that the Swazi government has identified for reducing poverty in the country. Among these are the following:

- rapid acceleration of economic growth based on broad participation in development;
- empowering the poor to generate income through economic restructuring, and
- equitable distribution of growth benefits through public expenditure (Ibid., p. 10).

**Rapid acceleration of economic growth based on broad participation**

Belief that improvement in living conditions of the majority of Swazi people will come from an accelerated growth of the economy is still widespread in Swaziland. This partly explains concerns with the current state of the economy as captured in such statements as: “It is imperative that Swaziland’s stalled growth needs re-kindling and sustaining to the levels attained in the late 1980s” (MEPD 2002: 7). The writings of development economists of the late 1950s and 1960s (Sen, 1996) seem to have made a lasting influence on several governments’ approaches to developing their economies; often equating economic growth with development.

**Empowering the poor to generate income through economic restructuring**

Under this strategy, what the government seems to be saying is that macro indicators of economic growth and thus ‘some’ development attained in previous years failed to capture the true economic status of the people. Macro indices captured merely the overall, aggregated
condition while individual groups or regions had not enjoyed the growth benefits. This should be expected in a free enterprise economy. However, this also suggests a role for government noting there are no entirely free enterprise economies – some government intervention, however small, often exists. If the point that markets operate with private capital is accepted, it follows they reward according to the different levels of capital sources and those who participate in the labour market according to varying skills perceived essential to perform particular tasks – provided they followed that rule to the letter. As it often happens, several imperfections manifest in market economies – hence the need for state intervention. For various reasons, among them lack of timely information, policies designed to ‘empower’ poor people often benefit the non-poor owing to certain malfunctions in the government system. Although it does not come out well in the documents, the government appears to believe in the ‘trickle down’ effects of a well-performing economy as summed up by: “A small proportion of the population generates the national income” (MEPD, 2002: 8). While acknowledging the stated strategy of ‘empowering the poor’, we still require empirical evidence is to see how this apparent political commitment has translated into concrete proposals for improving the conditions of poor people.

Equitable distribution of growth benefits through public expenditure

As a strategy, equitable distribution of growth benefits through public expenditure suggests that in a market economy benefits vary according to the interests of capital. Therefore, states have to intervene to check the effects of social advantage or disadvantage. Left to the forces of demand and supply, markets allocate their benefits disproportionately. Even as intervention is noted, the deficit perspective is still disturbing: “low health standards incomparable to non-poor Swazi or their total consumption is below the minimum requirements for a decent way of life” (MEPD, 2002: 9).
This strategy seeks to equitably distribute growth benefits by re-orienting the focus of the national budget. As the government explains it: “Public expenditure will be shifted towards primary health care, basic education, water and sanitation and other basic needs likely to be demanded by the poor” (MEPD, 2002: 9). In regard to education, governments seek to shift resources away from tertiary education to basic education, arguing government provides tertiary education free but parents are responsible for financing primary and secondary education. Apart from problems with the government definition of basic education, which tends to equate it with primary education, shifting resources away from tertiary education ‘shifts’ the problem, rather than solves it.

**Economy and labour market systems**

Swaziland is a free market economy which is dominated by the private sector. Geographic isolation—particularly the fact that the country is land-locked—has had negative effects on Swaziland’s economic development efforts. Among other things, this has translated into considerable reliance on its neighbours – South Africa and Mozambique – for access to the sea.

Recent estimates place the gross domestic product (GDP) at $2.08 billion (2003) and GDP real growth rate (1990-2001) at 0.1 percent; *per capita* income was $1,175 (2001), while inflation (2002) remained at 12 percent. The country is endowed with natural resources: coal, asbestos, quarry stone, timber and talc (UNDP, 2003; Malan, 1985). Agriculture contributes 9.6 percent of GDP (1995) and the leading products include sugar-cane, corn, citrus fruits, livestock, wood, pineapple, tobacco, rice and peanuts. Manufacturing accounts for 36.3 percent of GDP and among types of manufactures are sugar refining, light manufactured goods, wood pulp, textiles, ginned cotton, processed foods and consumer goods. On the subject of trade, exports amounted to $820 million (2002) selling soft drink concentrates, sugar, pulp, canned fruits and cotton yarn. South Africa, the European Union (EU), Mozambique and the U.S make up the
major markets (Table 9). Imports amounted to $938 million: chemicals, clothing, foodstuffs, machinery, motor vehicles, oil and petroleum products (Central Bank of Swaziland, CBS 2003; Ministry of Finance, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 9</th>
<th>Swaziland's Global Trade Relationships (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal export destinations</td>
<td>Principal import sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. South Africa (72.0)</td>
<td>1. South Africa (88.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. European Union (14.2)</td>
<td>2. European Union (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mozambique (3.7)</td>
<td>3. Japan (0.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. United States (3.5)</td>
<td>4. Singapore (0.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other countries (n.a.)</td>
<td>5. Other countries (n.a.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GOS/Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (2003). Swaziland

The economy of Swaziland is largely dependent on agriculture. The agricultural sector employs 70 percent of the population and agriculture contributes modestly to gross domestic product (Central Statistics Office, CSO, 2001). The share of agriculture in GDP has however steadily declined in recent years. The share of agriculture fell from 21 percent in 1985 to nine percent in 1995. While the contribution of the manufacturing sector has increased, agriculture remains the major sector in Swaziland's economy directly and indirectly through agro-processing industries. The leading three exports in total value over the last five years are edible concentrates, sugar and wood pulp. Even so, the heavy reliance on agriculture makes economic growth vulnerable to climatic changes. For example, growth of real per capita GDP fell from six percent in 1990 to a negative rate in 1991/1992 during a severe drought that affected the country.

The contribution of agriculture and other sectors to GDP has varied (Table 10). Given that droughts have become a common phenomenon in recent years, the challenge for farmers is to find ways to cope with the situation. The role literacy can play, includes learning how
irrigation might help to reduce dependence on rain-fed agriculture; or, even foster the growing of drought-resistant crops.

Table 10: Contribution to GDP by sector (Percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector/Year</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>-4.4</td>
<td>-10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; Retail</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Agriculture in the country is largely dualistic, with mainly subsistence agriculture practised on Swazi Nation Land (SNL) and commercial agriculture sector on Title Deed Land which is characterised by comparatively high capital intensity, cash-crop production (mainly sugarcane, citrus fruit and cotton), irrigation, lease-hold tenure and corporate ownership. In contrast, the traditional small-holder agriculture sector on SNL includes household-operated farms with an average size of about 1.3 hectares, communal tenure, rain-fed technology and an over-concentration on maize production for subsistence (Ministry of Agriculture & Co-operatives, 2003).

The sizes of land-holdings on SNL are small and are becoming fragmented further as population pressure on the land builds up. In 2000/2001, land holdings less than one hectare in size made up total land-holdings on SNL. For example, in 1996/1997, land holdings that were less than one hectare were 68 percent of total land holdings while in 2000/2001 these small holdings had increased to 92 percent. Larger land holdings measuring 1 to 2 hectares were 25 percent of total land holdings in 1996/97, in 2000/01 they had increased to 3.3 percent. Rapid fragmentation of Swazi Nation Land threatens small-holder agriculture in the country (Booth, 1983; Ministry of Agriculture & Co-operatives, 2003).
Livestock production is the main agricultural activity and cattle are the main investment asset in much of Swaziland. Farmers, mainly those on SNL, are reluctant to sell good quality cattle unless forced by economic or climatic conditions. Swaziland has a quota to export 3,360 tons of beef to the European Union; however, it manages to export only a small fraction of this. In 2000, for example, it exported only 665 tonnes (Scutt in Malan, 1985; MOAC, 2003).

In regard to the institutional framework, Swaziland's major institutions for agricultural development are the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives and its parastatals (e.g. National Agricultural Marketing Board, National Maize Corporation, Swaziland Dairy Board) and some non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Private sector companies largely supply agricultural inputs and equipment (MOAC, 2003).

As noted, Swaziland has in the past been ranked among the more prosperous countries in Africa. While local Swazi are becoming more active, most of the high-level economic activity is still in the hands of non-Africans. Small entrepreneurs are moving into middle management positions. Although 70 percent of Swazi live in rural areas, almost every homestead has a wage earner. The past few years have witnessed unsteady economic growth, which has been exacerbated by the economy's failure to generate new jobs at the same rate that new job seekers enter the market. This is partly because the country's population growth rate strains the natural heritage and the country's ability to provide adequate social services, such as education and health care. Over-grazing, soil depletion, drought and floods are persistent problems. Nearly 60 percent of Swazi territory is held by the Crown in trust for the Swazi nation. The remainder is privately owned, much of it by foreigners. Land use and ownership remains a sensitive topic.

For Swazi living on rural homesteads, the main occupation is either subsistence agriculture or livestock rearing. Culturally, cattle are important symbols of wealth and status, but they are being used increasingly for milk, meat and income (Kowet, 1978; Forster & Nsibande, 2000).
The sugar industry, based solely on irrigated cane, is Swaziland's leading export earner and private-sector employer. Soft drink concentrate (a U.S. investment) is another large export earner, followed by wood pulp and lumber from cultivated pine forests. Pineapple, citrus fruit and cotton are other important agricultural exports. Swaziland mines coal for export. There also is a quarry industry for domestic consumption. Mining contributes about 1.8 percent of Swaziland's GDP each year but has been declining in importance in recent years. Recently, a number of industrial firms have located into the country. Apart from processed agricultural and forestry products, the fast-growing industrial sector also produces garments, textiles and a variety of light manufactured products. The Swaziland Industrial Development Company (SIDC) and the Swaziland Investment Promotion Authority (SIPA) have helped bring many of these industries into the country. Tourism also is important, attracting more than 424,000 visitors annually, mainly from Europe and South Africa (McDemott, 1997).

From the mid-1980s foreign direct investment (FDI) in the manufacturing sector boosted economic growth rates. Since mid-1985, the depreciated value of the currency has increased the competitiveness of Swazi exports and moderated the growth of imports, generating trade surpluses. During the 1990s, the country often ran small trade deficits. As noted, South Africa and the European Union are major customers for Swazi exports. The United States has been an important market for Swazi textiles since Swaziland became a beneficiary of the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa are members of the Common Monetary Area (CMA) in which repatriation and unrestricted funds are permitted. Swaziland issues its own currency, the lilangeni (plural: emalangeni), which is pegged at par with the South African rand (Kowet, 1978; Booth, 1983; Malan, 1985; UNDP, 2001; World Bank, 2000).
Structure of the economy since independence

Foreign monopoly capital has dominated Swaziland’s capitalist economy since independence. The government operates an open door policy designed to attract foreign investment to the country (Booth, 1983; UNDP, 2001). Three main features of this policy can be discerned:

- Generous incentives, particularly in the form of tax rebates. The rate of company taxation in Swaziland has been lower than in South Africa (Booth, 1983; World Bank, 2000).
- Avoidance of nationalisation. State policy of ‘participation with outside capital’ has stressed that investors should have a minimum 51 percent control and usually an even greater share of locally-based undertakings. Minority shareholdings are reserved for two public enterprises (Tibiyo and Tisuka). The free transfer of profits and dividends derived from local trading, subject to 15 percent non-resident shareholder’s tax (Booth, 1983: 103; World Bank, 2000).
- A guaranteed low wage structure. As a government agency advertising brochure entitled Guide for Investors in Swaziland put it: “Wages are low in Swaziland even when compared with those in other African countries...Swaziland has only one effective trade union...strikes are rare. Government policy is designed to maintain this situation” (Davies et al., 1985: 10).

Under these conditions, large foreign investment has flowed into every sector of the economy, with the exception of mining, where the closure of iron ore operations in 1977 led to a decline (BAA, 2000). The main beneficiary of this inflow has been the agricultural sector, and especially the sugar industry. Elsewhere, these policies have stimulated a growth in manufacturing for import substitution companies (UNIDO, 1992; Wooldridge et al., 1990), while a successful tourist industry has grown up, mainly around the casinos established since independence. In analysing the various sectors of the economy, three important changes since independence may be noted.
Domination by South African capital

Before independence, South African and British capital separately dominated specific sectors of the economy and was equally involved in others. South African monopolies now challenge British dominance of the agricultural sector, that is, large-scale capitalist agriculture, dominated by the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) and Lonrho groups. Hence, the South African conglomerate, Anglo-American Corporation, controls 90 percent of citrus production in the country. Even so, the sugar plantations that provide the largest single source of government revenue and other large-scale agricultural production are still British capital-owned (Davies et al., 1885). South African or South African-based investments have stimulated the growth of other sectors of the economy. In the manufacturing and commercial sectors, South African conglomerates have been the most active investors, controlling most activity in this sector. They dominate maize milling and maize importation and until recently (2003) held profitable motor dealer franchises in the country. Other important conglomerates maintain manufacturing subsidiaries in the country (Booth, 1983). This is the point Wooldridge et al. (1990) make that Swaziland’s commitment to a capitalist development has entailed promoting foreign capital investment in the economy; that in so doing it has developed a heavy dependency on foreign, and particularly South African, capital and is therefore vulnerable to its changing developments. They argue that large, increasingly capital-intensive, multi-national industries, many of them South African-owned and operated, dominate the Swazi economy. “These industries give Swaziland an appearance of prosperity. However, most Swazi people live in under-developed rural areas and are subject to exploitation” (p. 23).

Likewise, South African capital dominates large-scale commerce with many South African commercial undertakings operating in the country. More than 80 percent of the imports into the country come from South Africa (World Bank, 2000; UNDP, 2001). Therefore, with the exception of the few import substitution commodities produced in the country (mainly by South
African companies), Swazi commerce mainly comprises South African-owned companies selling South African-made products (Kowet, 1978). South African-based companies dominate also the tourist industry. Most important of these is the Sun International group of companies that owns hotels in Swaziland, including the Royal Swazi Sun casinos. Founded in 1969, these operations have inspired their reproduction in other neighbouring states. The casinos have been one of the profitable foreign investments in Swaziland (US Department of Commerce, USDC, 1997).

The domination of the economy by South African capital is somewhat institutionalised through the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), a free trade area between the four member countries, the BLS states – Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland – and South Africa itself. Founded in 1910 and re-negotiated in 1969, SACU provides for the tariff-free movement of goods among member countries and allows for the smaller countries to collect a certain percentage of total customs revenue generated in the region based on a multiplier-factor formula (Kowet, 1978; Booth, 1983; UNDP, 2001). During the colonial era, this arrangement gave South African capital free access to the markets of the BLS countries, as well as their raw materials. In principle, the agreement was supposed to provide mutual access to the South African market by producers in the BLS countries. However, in practice, BLS commodities that competed with South African products were excluded from the South African market (Booth, 1983). Following independence, the BLS countries attempted to negotiate better terms within the SACU agreement. They sought mainly a greater share of the total revenue and access for their products in the South African market. SA made small concessions on the revenue question. In 1969, it increased the total share going to the BLS countries to 2.58 percent. Swaziland’s share of SACU revenue rose from 0.53 percent to 0.95 percent (Kowet, 1978). In 1976, SA granted further increases. During the same period, SA made formal concession on the access of BLS-produced commodities to the South African market. Yet, in practice, some mechanisms continued to exclude all but BLS primary commodities. In return for these concessions, South
Africa demanded a greater say in the industrial/trade policies of BLS countries. As Davies *et al.* (1985) note, “In several cases, it delayed and, at times, blocked the establishment of new industrial undertakings in the BLS countries aimed at producing for the South African market” (p. 13). It should be noted that Namibia joined SACU later, after its independence in 1990.

Lastly, as a landlocked country, Swaziland is almost totally dependent on South Africa for its external trade. The Mozambique rail and road link is its only alternative access to the outside world. As noted elsewhere, most of the country’s imports arrive in Swaziland through a freight haulage system operated by South African Railways. The figure on exports is lower (World Bank, 2000), as the country sends much of its major export, sugar, together with some coal, through Mozambique (USDC, 1997).

*Dependence on a single crop: Sugar*

The dependence of the economy on sugar exports has considerably increased since independence. Based on high investment by British capital, mainly by the Commonwealth Development Corporation and Lonrho, sugar production increased rapidly between 1970 - 71 and 1982 – 83, making Swaziland Africa’s second largest sugar cane producer. The sugar industry uses the largest land in the country and is the largest single employer. The industry is also a major revenue earner for the government and the single biggest earner of foreign exchange. The contribution of sugar to foreign exchange earnings rose from 20 percent in 1970 to 50 percent in 1980 and an estimated 53 percent in 1983. As a signatory, Swaziland’s has benefited under the Lomé Convention through which it has received a price well above the world average. But, beyond the Lomé quota its sugar has had to be sold at world market prices, which have been declining since 1980 (Booth, 1983; UNDP, 2001; Nuscheler, 2002). This created a crisis in the country’s balance of payments and government revenue, stressing the country’s dependence on this crop and the ensuing vulnerability of the economy (Davies *et al.*, 1985). As
Booth (1983) observes, this prompted economic analysts to warn that, “this reliance on a single crop for export and foreign exchange earnings introduces an element of insecurity into the market” (p. 95).

Emergence of a royalist bourgeoisie

During the colonial era, the colonial state confined the traditional chiefs clustered around the monarchy to pre-capitalist forms of exploitation of the Swazi peasantry. They lived mainly off forms of tribute exacted from this peasantry and did not emerge in a controlling position within the capitalist economy. This position changed after independence. Through their domination of the political machinery of the state and mainly through the institution of the monarchy, the ‘traditional’ chiefs, and especially the royal family, have transformed themselves into a bourgeoisie in a close economic alliance with the mostly South African monopolies that dominate the Swazi economy. They have achieved this mainly through an institution known as Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (SYC, 2002), a royal crown investment corporation.

The institutional structure of the Swazi state since independence has been built on an implicit yet clear distinction between the ‘Swazi Nation’ and the Government of Swaziland. The former refers to so-called ‘ethnic Swazi’, mainly in designated Swazi Nation Land (SNL) areas and is organised through the administrative structures of the ‘traditional’ chieftaincy. The Government of Swaziland consists of the ‘modern’ administrative structures of the Swazi state and is charged with public administration, economic and social development of the country and its international relations. The monarch presides over both. However, since independence two separate administrative systems have attempted to control and manage the country’s economic resources (Booth, 1983; Davies et al., 1985).

The financial assets of the Swazi Nation include in the first instance the land holdings in the Swazi Nation areas and the mineral wealth of the country. Both are constitutionally vested
under the custody of the monarch (Booth, 1983; SYC, 2002), and controlled through the traditional institutions of the monarchy rather than the finance ministry of the government. This ministry, on the other hand, supervises the overall budget of the Swazi state and raises its revenue. But, it does not exercise control over the financial assets of the Swazi Nation and revenue from these does not enter into the annual budget of the Government of Swaziland. As Davies et al. (1985) argue, this dual system of financial control is important to an understanding of the emergence and position of a royalist bourgeoisie through the institution of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane and the controversies that have developed around it.

The Independence Constitution vested control over the country’s mineral wealth in the King, to be held ‘in trust’ for the Swazi nation. Royalties were paid directly to the monarch. For a period such monies were simply accumulated unproductively in the royal household. But King Sobhuza II established the Tibiyo Taka Ngwane Fund (Swazi National Development Fund) in 1968 as an investment undertaking based on funds derived from mineral royalties (Booth, 1983; SYC, 2002). Tibiyo’s revenue would not accrue to the Ministry of Finance. Tibiyo remains under the control of the monarch and is not accountable to any branch of government. This system was re-organised in 1975. Funds from mineral royalties were now placed under a new organisation, Tisuka Taka Ngwane. Tibiyo itself would begin to operate solely as an investment corporation. Its activities were after this to be financed by dividend payments from its shareholdings in foreign undertakings in Swaziland and from income generated in some of its other projects. The expenditures of Tibiyo are not incorporated into the public budget of the Swazi government (Booth, 1983). Until 1978, Tibiyo could finance its recurrent and capital expenditures from its revenue. However, Tibiyo’s large investments since 1978 have exceeded its resources and the Fund has requested and has been granted, money from the central budget. Tibiyo’s published accounts are vague and not subject to public audit (Davies et al., 1985). Despite being the main economic player (Booth, 1983), it is somewhat strange the Third
National Development Plan “does not once mention Tibiyo by name” (p. 106); it only refers to it as the ‘Swazi Nation’ (Department of Economic Planning & Statistics, DEPS, 1978: 101).

Tibiyo’s has consolidated its economic power mostly through its shareholdings in many undertakings, including almost all of the largest British and South African undertakings operating in the country. Argues Daniel (in Booth, 1983), “In a dependent, peripheral economy with a limited potential for domestic capital formation, Tibiyo has emerged as the major vehicle for domestic capital accumulation” (p. 107). Two important aspects should be noted here.

First, as observed earlier, the traditional rulers organised through the monarchy control Tibiyo’s revenue and assets, which do not accrue to the Ministry of Finance but to Tibiyo House at Lozitha, the king’s palace. Tibiyo is responsible neither to parliament nor the Cabinet. The monarch appoints its Board of Trustees, which serves at his will (Booth, 1983) and a Management Committee conducts the daily operations. Tibiyo has constantly resisted attempts to make it in any way responsible to parliament or to the Cabinet. Despite its resistance to any form of control by the Government, it has not, as noted, hesitated to demand large funds from the public account to initiate and maintain its operations. This situation has led to some conflict with officials in government, chiefly the Ministry of Finance; each time Tibiyo prevailing. Therefore, through the exclusive non-accountable control of the single local source of money capital, the traditional rulers have used their domination of the institutions of the Swazi state to transform themselves into capitalists. Their material position is now dependent on capitalist forms of exploitation. Booth (1983) makes the same point: “It appears that the Tibiyo Fund has become the vehicle for the item most conspicuously lacking to the royal house at the time of independence; a secure capital base for the reproduction of the monarchy” (p. 107).

Second, they have done so through increasing co-operation, collaboration and alliance with foreign, and mainly South African, capital (Kowet, 1978; Booth, 1983). The prosperity and material position of this royalist group now depends on the profitable investment of such foreign
capital. They use state power to promote the necessary conditions of accumulation for such
capital. Therefore, the material position of the Swazi ruling group is heavily dependent on their
collaboration with South African and other foreign capital. Davies et al. (1985) liken them to a
‘comprador bourgeoisie’ in a typical sense of the term. They are able “to maintain this position
through royalist control of Swazi politics and the consolidation of traditional institutions” (p. 21).

At the apex of Swazi politics and economy is a powerful class force that influences provision of social services, in this case education and training. The following sections present an overview of the education system in Swaziland generally, and adult education/literacy training specifically, given the political and economic conditions just described.

**Education and training (ET) in Swaziland**

Christian missionaries are often credited with pioneering formal education in Swaziland, the first having been the Methodist Church in 1844 at about the same time as the Wesleyans mission arrived. The South African (Dutch Reformed) and Scandinavian Alliance missions established churches in the 1890s. The Roman Catholics arrived in 1914. Later, the Anglicans, Lutherans, the South African General Mission (SAGM) and many others followed. In particular, the American Church of the Nazarene established a major presence in the country in the 1920s building churches, schools, colleges and health facilities. Over time, the government slowly increased its share in the provision of educational facilities and by 1981 there were 470 primary schools and 86 secondary schools. Of these, about 400 were still grant-aided mission schools (Scutt in Malan, 1985; Moock & Harbison, 1988).

The formal Swaziland education system (SES) offers seven years of primary education (Grades 1-7 for ages 6 - 13). This is followed by three years of lower secondary (Grades 8 – 10 for ages 14 - 16) and two years of upper secondary education (Grades 11 – 12 for ages 17 - 18).
Strong competition and selective examinations, high repetition and drop-out rates characterise the system at all levels. Grade 7 pupils take the Primary Certificate examination. Secondary education is divided into two sub-systems, namely three years of junior secondary and two years of senior secondary commonly referred to as secondary school and high school levels respectively. At the end of the three-year junior level programme, students take the Junior Certificate examination set by the Lesotho & Swaziland Examinations Syndicate that pupils have to pass to proceed to the senior secondary level. At Grade 12, students take the University of Cambridge Ordinary (‘O’) - Level examinations. Some schools offer a 4-year secondary school programme that culminates in International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) examinations. Some students proceed to do A-Levels at centres that offer it within and outside Swaziland. A student normally takes four years to complete a university degree. There are few tertiary institutions in the country and, therefore, limited places for qualifying candidates (Ministry of Education, 1983, 1993; Mordaunt, 1990; World Bank, 2002).

The proportion of children of the relevant age-group estimated to be enrolled in primary schools is about 70 percent. This is low when compared with other countries with similar income. Enrolment at junior and senior secondary level is below 50 percent of the relevant age group and narrows down from Grade 8 to 10. Families are required to pay in the range of E1, 000 to E6, 000 per student per year (US$100 – 600). This can include boarding costs in some schools and exclude costs of transport. Some elite schools charge more. In nearly all these schools, the financial contribution of the Ministry of Education (MOE) is limited to the teachers’ salaries, occasionally partly so. All other costs are being born by the parents, families and communities. This shows the sacrifices that families make to get their children into and through the school system at primary and secondary levels. There is high and increasing demand for education and training. Yet the current selection and examinations system produces wastage at all levels. As the World Bank (2002) found, “out of 100 students entering Grade 1 (primary)
only about 60 will reach Grade 8, only about 30 will reach the end of Grade 10 and only about 15 will reach the end of senior secondary school in Grade 12" (p. 3). An estimated seven out of the original 100 would enrol for higher studies at the university. Part of the wastage is attributable to poverty when families cannot send a child to school and keep it home in alternate years (Dawson, 1997; World Bank, 2002).

The schools are divided into three categories, that is, government, grant-aided and privately maintained schools. The 2001 Central Statistics Office (CSO) Education Survey covered 723 schools, of which 541 were primary and 182 were secondary/high schools. The survey revealed that total enrolment changed in: (a) Primary schools from 213,968 in 2000 to 212,064 in 2001 and (b) Secondary/high schools from 60,253 in 2000 to 61,335 as at 31 March 2001. There were 5,514 students enrolled full-time in the country's institutions of higher learning as at 31 October 2000. Of these, 3,692 were enrolled at the University of Swaziland and 1,822 at other institutions - Nursing, Teachers and Technical Colleges (CSO, 2003).

Between 1968 and 1993, the number of students in primary and secondary schools increased three-fold, the number of teachers quadrupled and the number of classrooms doubled. At Swaziland's independence, the overall pupil-teacher ratio dropped from 40:1 to 33:1 and while one-third of primary school teachers were unqualified in the early 1970s, only two percent were unqualified by the 1990s (Dawson, 1997). One result of these achievements has been an increase in the literacy rate of about ten percent per annum, from 44 percent in 1966 to the current estimate of 80 percent, noted earlier. However, while these achievements are impressive in quantitative terms, problems emerge upon further analysis. For example, only 79 percent of children between ages 6 and 12 years were in primary school in 1992. About one in ten of those were displaced by older children. Only 25 percent of children in primary school were in the appropriate grade for their age (Government of Swaziland, 1992).
In Swaziland, as elsewhere in colonial Africa, the authorities recognised early on the value of education as the secure means to social mobility. By the late 1950s, 92 percent of those completing secondary education secured employment in the towns; of those with no education remaining in the countryside, less than half found wage-earning jobs. In towns, employed secondary school-leavers earned on average twice the salaries of those without an education. The material rewards accruing from an education were therefore evident to all (Potholm, 1972; Booth, 1983; Kuper, 1997).

Despite the rapid expansion of formal education facilities since independence, many people have not had the benefit of schooling. This is the subject of the next section.

**Adult and non-formal education**

Adult education is described as intended to provide an opportunity to adults and youth who either had no formal education or who benefited little from their education. The aim is to educate and inculcate literacy and numeracy skills so that each individual can fully participate and contribute effectively both to his or her overall well-being and to society. Public sector adult education is offered on a non-formal basis through the Sebenta National Institute, Rural Education Centres and Emlalatini Development Centre (Ministry of Education, 1983, 1999, 2001).

**Sebenta National Institute (SNI)**

According to its programme description, Sebenta National Institute (SNI) is a non-profit organisation whose responsibility is to provide literacy to the adult population. A voluntary organisation then, it was established in 1961 as an adult literacy project. At present, Sebenta is the major delivery organisation in the field of adult basic education (ABE) better known as ‘adult literacy’. When it was founded, its scope of work covered the promotion of community
development and the reduction of ‘adult illiteracy’ in Swaziland. Sebenta is still committed to
deliver programmes for the advancement of the marginalised groups. However, because of the
existing socio-economic challenges, the institution has had to extend its coverage to include
orphaned and destitute children and those who for some reason cannot be accommodated in the
formal education system. The institution mainly depends on government subventions for
funding. Currently, the institution stresses the development of a literacy programme aimed at
providing life-skills in order to deal with, among others, the problem of poverty (Sebenta
National Institute, 1999).

The number of adults graduating in the national literacy programme has increased over
the last ten years (Table 11). As can be observed, more participants have graduated from basic
SiSwati than from the English class during this period. And, more adults graduate in Basic
English compared to those proceeding to post-basic English over the same period. It is
important also to find out how many men or women participated in the literacy programme in
light of the observation others have made that more women than men enrol in literacy
programmes. Yet, overall literacy rates seldom bear out this high participation; instead they are
skewed against women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Graduating in SiSwati</th>
<th>Graduating in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>1415</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,876</td>
<td>1,595</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is of interest to note the number of literacy learners who participated in the programme based on gender (Table 12). As can be observed, more (that is, 453 more) women participated in the Year 2003 than men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (2003)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SiSwati</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>1,079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>1,631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Rural Education Centres (RECs)

The Adult Education section within the Ministry of Education is responsible for running the RECs. These RECs, eight in all, were established in 1978 with financial assistance from the World Bank and provide training in practical skills and income-generating activities for rural adults and youth. The RECs offer a diverse curriculum that includes computer literacy, typewriting, agriculture, sewing and knitting, carpentry and welding (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Each Centre offers formal academic school education and adult education including literacy training and community development, with all elements being mutually supportive. The adult activities appear to attract a high level of local support. That said, government has expressed concern over the future of this programme. As it stated: “Unfortunately, support from donors is phasing out, threatening the sustainability of such Centres. Within the umbrella of the Adult Education Council, the Ministry is proposing a study to consider ways to make the operations more viable and self-sustaining” (MEPD, 1999: 188). Apart from not finding anything strange with relying further on donor support, the government hoped to use a Council that had been dormant for some time. As I shall show, this partly showed how much committed the government was to this field.
Emlalatini Development Centre

Emlalatini Development Centre (EDC) was founded in 1970 by Ephesus House as a correspondence education project to allow some Swazi and refugees, especially from South Africa, a 'second chance' to continue with their secondary school education to Grade 12 and beyond. EDC offers Ordinary ('O') Level and Higher General Certificate of Secondary Education (HGCSE) level courses to students preparing for the University of Cambridge school certificate examination (Scutt in Malan, 1985). It has provided students with self-study materials that were supported by residential sessions. From this early stage, it offered face-to-face support as an important component of the delivery of the programme. In 1972, Ephesus House changed its name to Swaziland International Education Centre (SIEC). In 1978, the Centre adopted the name Emlalatini Development Centre (Ministry Education, 2001). Some graduates from the SNI literacy programme continue their education with EDC.

Other organisations provide many adult education programmes; some general, others more specific depending on the intended clientele. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sector and voluntary agencies including church-based organisations provide these programmes; many provide education as a secondary service in addition to their core mandate.

Summary and comments

This chapter has provided a background on historical, economic and political features of Swaziland from the colonial to post-independence era. The information serves as basis against which the results of the research are to be understood. The natural givens of a small land-locked country almost completely surrounded by a huge, economically powerful neighbour has particular implications for how Swaziland shapes its destiny. Against this back-drop, it can be observed that while the country is 'politically' independent, it is economically dependent on South Africa initially and on Mozambique for access to world markets. Economically, as stated
elsewhere, it is of interest to note how past political instability in South Africa and Mozambique translated into a ‘gain’ for Swaziland as certain firms chose the country as an investment destination. It no longer has that comparative advantage. Even as I draw attention to these developments, there is no hiding behind regional political developments for Swaziland’s current economic and political performance. If anything, the developments imply adopting new ways of creating employment, in both formal and informal sectors noting that even South African mine work has tapered off.

The challenge lies in exploring alternative possibilities of returning the economy to a favourable growth path. This might mean investing in education for everyone, avoiding previous self-limiting views of education as ‘schooling’ and occurring in formal settings. Related to education, it might mean involving a wide spectrum of the population – employers, labour unions and civil society – in policy design, which remains a challenge. It can be noted that some features relevant to a study of education generally, and adult education and literacy training specifically, emerge from this account.

These features include the challenge Swaziland has to deal with perceptions about lack of popular political participation in ways concomitant with the global consensus. This remains a challenge for everyone, but particularly the national leadership since it sets the boundaries for such participation or electoral competition. This includes dealing with the mistaken notion of developing a constitution that will promote national unity, Brown’s notion of ‘commitment to fostering social cohesion’ (1999: 246; 2001: 259). While ‘national unity’ is a desirable state, perceiving it as absence of differences and failure to accommodate them can be problematic.

The other challenge for the country relates to economic self-determination outside the South African orbit. There is no denying co-operating with South Africa or any country is beneficial; however, heavy dependence on South Africa becomes problematic. Dependence on natural resource-based manufacture and on a single agricultural commodity, too, places the
country at risk. Concerns have appeared in some quarters over governance, lack of discipline in the management of public resources, and accountability and transparency in the use of public assets. Swaziland has to explore the possibility of ‘learning’ from similar-placed low-income countries in the region that have made progress.

While acknowledging efforts to design policies, strategies and action plans that attend to various national projects, making sure that they feed into each other rather than remain as ‘stand alone’ instruments is more likely to support the good intentions behind their formulation. Many agree specific steps to a multi-sectoral approach remain to be taken by policy planners in the country. Transcending a history of colonial administration in which the development of economic self-sufficiency was seen as less important than smooth administration presents yet another challenge. In cases such as these, developing the capacities of the people through ‘literacy formation’ appears an important consideration for all stakeholders.

In Chapter 5, immediately following, I report on the findings of my research. I describe how universal primary education and adult literacy are negotiated in Swazi literacy policy, how human capital and alternative national development ideologies play out in national literacy policy, how international agencies have influenced the formation of these policies, and finally what factors account for their success and failure in the Swazi context.
Chapter 5
Findings of the Study

This chapter focuses on analysing policy documents alongside the views of respondents interviewed during the fieldwork from January to April 2003. The findings are organised around the four research questions, namely: (1) How has Swazi literacy policy reflected the dual challenge of providing universal primary education (UPE) for children and promoting adult literacy education? (2) How are notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives played out in the Swazi national literacy policy? (3) How have international NGOs influenced Swazi state literacy policy formation? (4) What factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland account for the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case?

The debate around universal primary education (UPE) and adult education

The dual strategy for literacy development among African countries participating in the Addis Ababa Plan committed countries to offering UPE and adult literacy education in tackling the problem of low literacy in their populations. In the case of Swaziland, from Independence in 1968 to the present, emphasis has been consistently placed on primary education for children over adult education and literacy training. At no time has Swaziland stressed a balanced dual strategy of the sort embodied in the Addis Ababa Conference recommendations of the early 1960s, and early government policy documents make no reference to Addis Ababa, UNESCO or other international literacy initiatives whatsoever. Instead, resources have been consistently allocated to education “with an emphasis on the primary level where the social rate of return is the highest” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1999a: 13). Moreover, while specific targets have been
regularly set for primary education, there is no evidence in government, multi-lateral agency or NGOs documents of similar objectives, for example, to increase national adult literacy rates.

**Primary education**

Although the post-Independence Swazi government stated it was pursuing an overall policy that sought “to improve the relevance and usefulness of education and training (ET) programmes for life and work among both adults and children” (DEPS, 1978: 23), it has developed only a detailed policy to offer primary education to all Swazi children, and no such policy for adults. To guide its action plan, immediate post-Independence policy stated the long-term objective of education and training thus: “Primary education should be free and universal; secondary education should be available, free, to all who want it and are capable of profiting from it and that the output of graduates, professionals, technicians and others with specialised skills should be sufficient to meet the needs of both public and private sectors” (DEPS, 1969: 47). A short-term objective during the *Post-Independence Development Plan (1968/69-1973/74)* therefore was to increase primary school enrolment by 2,000 a year. To demonstrate further its commitment to primary education, the government allocated it a recurrent and capital budget higher than any other sub-sector during the 1969/70 fiscal year. Thus, among the important projects at the time, and to cater for an increase in primary school enrolment, the government sought to build new schools and classrooms. Although the government did not implement free primary education, the National Education Review Commission (NERCOM) modified this in its recommendation, limiting it to “free primary education for Grades 1 - 4” (Ministry of Education, 1985: 10). To-date, however, neither full nor partial free primary education exists.

These early efforts at expanding access to primary education had paid off by the late 1970s, as a review of progress made during the *Second Plan (1973-1978)* made clear: “The quantitative developments have been satisfactory. Enrolments have increased by 13 percent from
1973 to 1976" (DEPS, 1978: 182). It was during this Plan period too that Universal Primary Education (UPE), a 7-year programme for all children of primary school age (6-13), became a national goal for the government. As the Department of Economic Planning & Statistics (1978) stated, “a specific target was set for primary education when Government accepted the report of the National Education Commission in early 1976. It was decided that UPE is to be achieved by 1985 and the Ministry of Education began planning to meet this objective” (p. 182). By the late 1970s, concrete educational policy proposals embodied in the Third Plan (1978/79-1983/84) further pushed the expansion of schooling, targeting “increasing primary enrolment to 122,000 and teaching staff to 3,400 by 1982/83, reducing the pupil-teacher ration from 46:1 to 36:1...(and) constructing 2,856 classrooms and 2,082 teachers’ houses” (DEPS, 1978: 198).

Even though on the surface the education system appears to have made some gains over the years since independence, as pointed out in Chapter 4, not all Swazi people who require education and training have benefited. In particular, much of the adult population never attended schooling in their youth at all, as Table 13 makes abundantly clear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (Years)</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 19</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 29</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 39</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 49</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 69</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>58.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70+</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>73.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18.2</strong></td>
<td><strong>19.8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Since the emphasis of post-Independence educational policy was on primary education, Swazi adults who missed out on schooling in their youth had few opportunities to ‘catch up’ with younger generations through adult education (Table 14). As can be observed, however, literacy
rates of older adults did improve in the decade from 1986 to 1997, reflecting the benefits of gradually expanding access to primary education these generations of adults had had as children. By 1997, rates of literacy above 75 percent for those adults in their 40s and younger, again roughly paralleled their rates of participation in schooling as children (Table 13 above). It is important to note that women historically had consistently lower literacy rates than men, again as a result of lower rates of access to primary schooling. It is only when women attained higher rates of participation in primary education as children (Table 13) that their literacy rates as adults also began to exceed those of men (Table 14). Higher rates of girls going to primary school can be explained by two factors. First, because most household incomes were low 10-30 years ago, schooling of children was unaffordable for many parents. Boys, unlike girls, were drafted to look after family livestock or could be hired to do so for other families. Girls did not face this constraint and thus could go to school on time. Secondly, work in South African mines was abundant and readily available to all able-bodied Swazi men and even male youth. These factors help explain the gender difference in school attendance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>80.6</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>91.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
<td>74.1</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>81.8</td>
<td>73.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>60.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>46.2</td>
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<td>65+</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>68.7</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adult literacy education**

In the late 1960s, several adult education initiatives were acknowledged in educational policy, but were given little support in funding or as priorities. First, the government undertook to “continue to support and encourage” the Sebenta National Institute for Adult Literacy, the national literacy provider (DEPS, 1969: 48). Yet the allocation to adult education/literacy did not even remotely match the primary education budget, nor was there much progress reported during this period, except to say that “SNI offered about 700 adult literacy courses” (DEPS, 1978: 190). Apart from these classes, there were no specific targets for adult literacy education. The establishment in 1977/78 of seven rural education centres (RECs) adjoining secondary schools, funded by the World Bank, represented another low priority and isolated effort in literacy for adults. Finally, under the Education (Consolidation) Order of 1975, the Adult Education Council was established, but left mostly to flounder on its own without government support.

From an analysis of current policy documents and in interviews, it can be seen that promotion of primary education for children remains a clearly prioritised goal of the government. This is evidenced, for example, by the three pages used to discuss primary education in contrast to one paragraph on adult and non-formal education in the 1999 National Education Policy (NEP). Under the NEP, the adult and non-formal education section does not even contain policy objectives for literacy education and training, and is limited to brief descriptions of the Sebenta National Institute and Rural Education Centres.

Although the current National Education Policy text was developed through consultation with stakeholders from a wide spectrum of the population in the late 1990s, its final form was apparently dictated by the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM) Political Manifesto, the founding manifesto of the Swazi state, promulgated in 1972. A government official explains it:

> We looked at the trend of education and development in Swaziland and realised that most of the events that occurred since independence stemmed from the Imbokodvo National Movement Political Manifesto – which spelt out the direction the country had to take.
So, we extracted this (National Education) policy from the Manifesto in regard to education ....We realised that certain clauses in that document were dated since some changes had taken place in the education system. We considered that we need an updated policy that will reflect current trends in education nationally and globally (GM1).

....after making the draft, we gave it to the Ministry management to examine. After examining it, management handed it back to the Ministry to enable it convene a meeting of stakeholders – that is part of the process. We identified our stakeholders: interested parties in education. The stakeholders extensively deliberated on the policy. As the deliberations proceeded, stakeholders raised their concerns (GM1).

It will be recalled that the Imbokodvo National Movement Manifesto had been published more than 30 years ago in 1972 and at the time called for a policy of “rapid expansion in educational facilities” (Ministry of Education, 1985: 12). By the late 1990s, the stakeholders referred to above were identified by the Ministry of Education and considered representative of “all possible interests”. However, as it often happens, deliberate or unintentional exclusion of some interests cannot be ruled out. It is often convenient to overlook marginalised interests or those representing a dissenting view. Identification of stakeholders by the Ministry of Education was no exception, as the following accounts by a government representative indicate:

The policy process entailed all stakeholders of adult education, but in this case they were not consulted because senior officers at Ministry headquarters drafted this policy up until the last stage when some stakeholders were consulted. Some of these had to say something about the document but most will say they are not aware of that policy (GM4).

...The stakeholders were not consulted. They are now criticising it, saying it’s somebody’s policy, not something that included everybody. Some head-teachers--including the teachers’ organisation, Swaziland National Association of Teachers, were consulted. As for adult education, the stakeholders were not consulted” (GM4).

When drawn to comment on whether “stakeholders” were criticising the policy for certain items that were missing or that it did not attend to certain topics adequately, the same official responded thus:

Yes, they said the policy didn’t address some topics adequately. It is not clear how the adult education field will be ‘supported’ because all it says is that the Ministry is committed to support adult education activities in the country but does not state the kind of commitment. It is silent on many adult education issues and needs ‘unpacking’. Besides, there is a problem if all it refers to is that adult education is literacy only (GM4).
It is interesting to note here that even within government, there could be tensions between senior officials and low-ranking officials – each providing different opinions although representing the same perspective; the former pushing the 'official line' and the latter, less so. Describing the involvement of his institution in the formulation of a national policy on education with special reference to adult education/literacy, a literacy providers’ representative explains:

Our institution was involved only in the early preparation of the education policy. We attended the initial meetings but were not involved during the final stages – when our submissions were to be discussed. We just saw a final document, but did send in information on how we wanted different aspects of the policy to look like. We don't have a policy in this area of distance education per se, which we want (LP21).

If there was any consensus among study respondents on the education policy, it was that it required elaborating, particularly the adult and NFE section. As the same literacy provider stated:

But we are doing something although some senior officials felt there is no need for another policy. So, we have been developing their 'paragraph-long' section on adult and NFE; expanding it as it is narrow so that we include ourselves in a sub-policy arrangement. We might end up having something like what SNI has developed (LP21).

Drawn to give details on their involvement or non-involvement in the final stages of the present education policy to enable them follow-up their original input, the representative further explains:

We were not involved in the final stages and we consider the product shallow. It does not commit the MOE to anything. Government committed itself to support all adult education activities without stating how it will do so. Other people will start the initiatives and it supports them – it could be moral or financial – but all this is 'guided'; so, the support from government is subject to multiple interpretations (LP21).

....in the final stages the stakeholders no longer feature in the discussions. We simply see a final document and ask ourselves if these are the issues we submitted. The response we got was that the Ministry management had 'synthesised' the submissions hence the final document (LP21).

From the interviews, apart from being too brief, respondents observed that the adult education and distance education section of the education policy was ambiguous:

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We are not happy about the fact this policy says little about distance education and adult education. What perhaps captures the adult education enterprise is the National Development Strategy (NDS) document but not the MOE document – we are not happy that policy-wise, we are not properly represented (LP21).

Representatives of the professional adult education association, too, maintained that they had not been involved in the formulation of the policy, as one representative explained:

The Adult Education Association was not directly involved in this because as secretary of the Association I should have received an invitation from whoever was doing that kind of research, which would have opened doors for the Association to participate in the activity. I have never received such an invitation (AI28).

Government officials were drawn to clarify what they meant when they said ‘these people’ were involved; whether they meant the Ministry of Education invited them and they participated or that the Ministry had invited them but had no record if they had attended the meetings. The officials were quick to mention they were invited and had attended: “As far as we know, they had been involved” (GM1). The Association Secretary still wondered: “But they didn't produce any documentation or, may be, minutes to show that in these meetings these stakeholders participated – did they?” (AI28).

Concerning why the adult and non-formal education section in the overall policy was merely a paragraph and why it was so vague remained an important concern. This was in contradiction to the stated objective of the Ministry of Education: “the Ministry shall support all adult and life-long education initiatives in the country... while relevant ministries continue to run such programmes” (Ministry of Education, 1999: 7). While the Ministry offered more explicit details of support for primary, secondary and tertiary education, in regard to adult and non-formal education, it simply issued blanket support statements, without specifying objectives or resources to back them up. It is in this context that the question of participation of stakeholders seemed relevant. A member of the Association explains:
The Association is concerned about being sidelined in most of these undertakings that the Ministry of Education is doing. So, we wrote the Ministry a letter expressing our concern and made suggestions for changes we thought would somewhat bring into the forefront as members of ...as people who are custodians of adult education. It's quite a while since we sent our letter; but no response has come till now (AI28).

**Sebenta National Institute**

Apart from policy embodied in the National Education Policy, the national literacy providing institution—Sebenta National Institute for Adult Literacy (SNI)—developed its literacy policies to guide its work but had used a private management consultant to formulate them:

There has not been a literacy policy before. We asked ABC Management Institute to develop policies for us in various areas because we want to enter into a performance contract with Government. All along SNI has been relying on a policy developed by the MOE in general, which itself is only a paragraph that embraces adult education (LP15).

Thus, SNI prepared its draft policy guided by the Ministry of Education’s ‘one paragraph’ section on adult and non-formal education. It did not come out how effective that sketchy policy document served as the basis for development of a literacy policy by Sebenta. Although criticising involvement of some but not other stakeholders in policy formulation by Government, the wisdom of having the policy developed by a professional business firm in this organisation is just as troublesome: what guarantee can there be that there was wide consultation in this latter process, except that the document was prepared by a ‘technically capable’ agency?

Existence of a literacy policy was one important aspect of literacy formation strategies, as was the statutory backing of those strategies. The Adult Education Council was a key statutory body behind literacy formation. Surprisingly, the study found that the Council had been dormant for more than ten years much against the underlying principle for its creation. As noted above, the Adult Education Council was established by Act of Parliament within the *Education (Consolidation) Order 1975*. The Council is tasked with attending to any matter about adult education referred to it by the Minister of Education for its advice. According to the *Education
Act 1981, the functions of the Council include but are not limited to the following (Government of Swaziland, 1981: S15):

- co-ordinated development of adult education and the establishment of adult education centres and classes
- the financial and other requirements of adult education centres
- the standards of education to be maintained
- proper and adequate staffing
- the terms and conditions of employment of teachers and other staff

Stakeholders interviewed understood the role of the Council to be centred on promoting adult education from the lowest (basic literacy) to the highest levels possible. The stakeholders included adult literacy providers, correspondence/distance education centres, professionals engaged in adult education as an academic discipline and as a field of practice. They expressed concern how the Council even as a statutory body was inactive and why it was allowed to exist but not function as provided for in the instruments establishing it. They wondered who the last members of the Council were particularly the chairperson convening its meetings and what the last minutes of their meeting were seeing that it had not met for years.

Drawn to comment on whether the Council had met in recent times, government officials did not come out clearly except to concede it had not met for many years and that there was need to revive it; even so, the officials could not say when Government planned to have the Council revived and working. An official explained it this way:

Yes, that structure eventually collapsed. I don't know what lead to its collapse. It is a legal organ that must be revived to co-ordinate all these programmes. I believe that once it is in place everything stated by the policy ... then it would have to be revived – because the Adult Education Council is there by law and it has to be budgeted for (GM1).

It is of interest to note how the government had hoped to use this 'structure' to study ways of strengthening the operations of the Rural Education Centres (MEPD, 1999) noted earlier. Another respondent makes similar observations on the dormant status of the Council:

Yes, the UNESCO body works well; that one meets at least once a quarter but not the Adult Education Council. I was part of the team that was looking at how it could be re-
organised. There was backing... That's where there were arguments – when people said we need to create a Distance Education Council and we said ... create a Distance Education Council? (AI26).

A minor rift can be noted among the stakeholders of adult and distance education on the appropriate stand to adopt in regard to the Adult Education Council and a new Distance Education Council.

How about the Adult Education Council because that's the larger Council where this one should be a small body within a larger setting? There was a 'draw match' and people felt that we... That stalls things because when something is new people tend to see it as 'the thing' and forget that if you take it broadly this one leaves you with a vehicle while the other one will be the umbrella body (AI26).

Who convened the Council was also an important consideration. One official stated, "I believe it was the Director of Education who convened the Council" (GM1). Asked about whether the Ministry had plans to revive the Council in the short- or long-term, the official stated, "In the short term... because once we have unpacked the policy on adult and NFE, it will spell out that this organ has to be revived" (GM1). So, in the absence of the Adult Education Council, what body regulated the provision in this field? How and by whom were its functions performed? These are pertinent questions about articulation of policy. They also speak to implementation of the policy. If there is anything to pick from the preceding extract, it is that by not budgeting for the Council, the government was likely to be making a 'saving'.

**International NGOs and adult education**

The reader is struck by how multi-lateral agencies and NGOs, too, make no reference to adult education given it is one aspect of education promoted in the literature on life-long education; some perceive it as a viable option for youth and adults to formal education. Others perceive it as part of the solution to the perceived problem of low 'workforce skills'. In relation to education, while most of the documents (UNDP and World Bank reports, National Development
Strategy, Economic & Social Reform Agenda and Poverty Reduction Strategy) mention child education, few make reference to the role of adult education including literacy. The National Development Strategy (NDS) document commits government to: “The provision of opportunities for all pupils of school-going age and adults to develop themselves in order to improve the quality of their lives and the standard of living of their communities remains a central theme of the NDS” (MEPD, 2002: 35). But, then it stops there.

As can be observed from this quote, there is mention of ‘adults’ but nowhere does it elaborate how education opportunities for adults shall be provided as the NDS document does for formal education. Multi-lateral agencies and NGOs, too, make reference to disadvantaged, lowly educated adults and how low education of adult household heads contributes to poverty of the households. So, for example, UNDP (2001: 61) argues that, “poverty is most prevalent where the household head has no education (64%) and least prevalent in the group whose members have been to college or university (21%)”. The World Bank (2000) makes similar observations. “Country-wide, over 50 percent of the people who live in households headed by people with no education live in poverty” (p. iv). From these quotes and employment data gathered, the implication is to invest in formal education initially and adult education.

The reign of human capital development

This section analyses how notions of human capital development have played out in government policy discourses and international multi-lateral agencies and NGOs from the late 1960s to the present. In the immediate post-colonial period of the 1960s and 70s, Swaziland felt the effect of colonial policies favouring expatriates and foreign experts over Swazi-educated nationals as skilled human capital for development, while relegating Swazi nationals to the low skilled employment sectors. By the 1980s, the focus of investment then shifted to the provision of primary education, and by the early 1990s, to a concern with vocational training, health and
poverty reduction. In the late 1990s, an integrated view of socio-economic development – poverty reduction, employment creation, environmental protection, women’s empowerment and social integration – began to take shape, alongside a renewed call for investment in skilled labour to overcome slowdown in economic growth.

The study examined key government policy documents related to the role of education in Swazi national development. The analysis seeks to show how each document expressed notions of human capital development and how these notions had changed or remained the same over time. These documents included the nation’s five-year development plans, three-year ‘rolling’ development plans, various development-related documents, poverty reduction and population plans, and national education plans, as follows:

5-year National Development Plans
Post-Independence Development Plan 1969-1973
Third National Development Plan 1978-1983

3-year Rolling Development Plans
Development Plan, 1990/91-1992/93
Development Plan, 1992/93-1994/95
Development Plan, 1997/98-2000/01
Development Plan, 1999/00-2001/02

Development-related Documents
Economic and Social Reform Agenda 1999
National Development Strategy 1999
Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002
National Population Policy 2002

Educational Policy Plans
National Education Commission (NEC) 1975
National Education Review Commission (NERCOM) 1985
National Education Policy (NEP) 1999
A general observation about these policy documents is that they reflect the general issues of the human capital development literature regarding arguments for investing in people. The arguments come out such that we need to take stock of what the investment in education has yielded.

In the context of Swaziland, investing in the human capital development of the people should be understood initially against the backdrop of many Swazi having been prepared for low- or semi-skilled, routine (mostly clerical) jobs in the colonial administration. Few Swazi had been trained for the managerial and professional jobs in the public service; even fewer for holding such positions in the private sector. The Post-Independence Development Plan (1969-1973) articulates this position thus:

A characteristic feature of the post-war development is that a large number of expatriates have come to Swaziland, temporarily or for a longer period to take up professional, managerial and technician positions in the public and private sectors. These people supplement the population of European origin that is permanently in Swaziland (DEPS, 1969: 12).

As can be noted, the quote above does not mention Swazi but rather ‘expatriates’ supplementing landed European immigrants. To demonstrate how serious a concern this was, the government devotes a whole section in the Plan on the ‘Import of managerial, professional and technical skills’ (DEPS, 1969: 12), arguing also how necessary this make-shift strategy was at the time.

In regard to the human resource to run the government machinery, the Plan notes how this too was largely ‘foreigners’. As it states: “At the end of 1968, there were 350 expatriates in the civil service. In addition, there were several hundred expatriate teachers. Many of these expatriates have been recruited under various technical assistance schemes” (DEPS, 1969: 12). It is of interest to note the home regions – whether African or other world regions - of these expatriate officers. As the Plan notes, many of them came as part of technical assistance
received by the country under the British Overseas Service Aid Scheme (OSAS) and the Special Commonwealth Assistance to Africa Programme (SCAAP). It notes also how the United Nations and its specialised agencies have increasingly played an important role in these efforts. It adds: “The British International Voluntary Service (IVS), the British Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and the American Peace Corps have supplied a large number of volunteers” (DEPS, 1969: 12). Although no information is available on the size of the civil service at the time, it is reasonable to argue that expatriates formed the majority of public employees. As will be shown, few if any Swazi were displaced by these expatriates.

The Post-Independence Plan also makes an important observation on the state of the economy and distribution of appropriately qualified labour: “The post-war economic development, though impressive, has been unbalanced. It has resulted in increased employment opportunities for the Swazi labour force. Yet, in the private sector this has been confined to unskilled and semi-skilled occupations” (DEPS, 1969: 13). Even so, it notes that earnings in paid employment are usually higher than real earnings in subsistence farming as practised in Swaziland at the time. The expansion had resulted also in increased opportunities for Swazi business people. Adds DEPS: “Much of the returns to the investment, however, have accrued to foreign companies in the form of profits and loan interest and to foreign managers and skilled workers in the form of salaries” (Ibid.). Justifying this arrangement, the government argued that “without such rewards the large foreign investments would not have been made and the managerial capacity and other skills would not have been available to the economy” (DEPS, 1969: 14). In summarising the country’s employment objectives at the time, the Plan stated: “The Swazi people should be brought to as high a level of skill as the economy can afford” (DEPS, 1969: 17). The Post-Independence Development Plan represents developments in the human capital argument in the late 1960s and early 1970s and how policy evolved around them. As can be observed, the government rationale for such investment seems to have been strong.
Having begun the human capital development process during the *Post-Independence Plan*, it is not surprising that among the policies and programmes the government sought to pursue in the *Second National Development Plan* (1973-78) was to increase the supply of trained human resource (DEPS, 1973). The government stated the goal as: “To educate and train sufficient young people to meet the requirements of an expanding economy for high-level and middle-level manpower [sic] and to realise the highest rate of localisation consistent with the maintenance of efficiency” (DEPS, 1978: 23). The *Third Plan* (1978-83) seeks to pursue similar objectives. It states: “The aim for future work is to work towards UPE and to offer the products of the primary system further education and training which will equip them for satisfying life and rewarding work” (DEPS, 1978: 193). However, this plan gives also the promise of a ‘good life’ to recipients of ET, thus extending the positive claims for it noted elsewhere. The other point about the *Third Plan* is that Government committed itself to co-ordinating the efforts of all institutions working in the field of ET to achieve these broad objectives. As it turned out, this role has presented a challenge for the government. The last plan in the 5-year series, the *Fourth Development Plan* (1983-88), does not deal with human capital formation as such except to state that it seeks to consolidate the quantitative and qualitative achievements the ET system had made to-date in addition to striving to achieve the UPE goal that had characterised all such plans. However, unlike earlier plans, in the *Fourth Plan*, the Ministry intends to develop curricula that will be broad enough to cater for all talents and “assist the individual to achieve his or her talents” (DEPS, 1983: 421). For the first time, some shift from stressing the ‘nation’ to stressing the ‘individual’ can be observed; a shift that characterises subsequent plans.

Human capital development can be picked up also in the 3-year *Rolling Development Plans*. These *Plans*, developed in the 1990s, seek to review progress towards achievement of goals within a shorter time than the earlier 5-year *Plans*. Among reasons given for their introduction is the adoption of timely corrective measures. Related to promoting the human
capital argument, the common thread running through the *Rolling Plans* is provision of an education and training system for developing individual needs and abilities in addition to meeting the country’s development needs (MEPD, 1991, 1992) and the rationalising of resources (1993). Among the strategies, shifting resources from the tertiary to the primary level (MEPD, 1997) emerged important. The *1998 Plan*, for example, states that: “High school has been seen traditionally as the road to tertiary education, training and formal employment” (MEPD, 1998: 173). It suggests that: “ET at the tertiary level must concentrate more on meeting national manpower [sic] needs, while shifting its costs to the beneficiaries” (MEPD, 1998: 171). The latest *3-Year Plan* (1999/2000-2001/02) expresses similar sentiments: “An attempt will be made wherever possible to shift resources from other areas to primary education” (MEPD, 1999: 179).

Apart from the *5-Year* and *3-Year Development Plans*, the notion of investing in people comes out strongly in other government policy documents. The *Draft National Development Strategy*, NDS (1997), which “sets out Government’s role in key sectors, thus enabling resources to be targeted more effectively” (MEPD, 1996: 96) takes the human capital argument farther. It states: “Developing human capital is one of the country’s primary measures for sustained development and consists of numerous activities including that of education and training” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1997: 22). It blames imbalances in the educational system for the lack of local skills and capacity to take a lead in the structural transformation of the economy. As it argues, “Weaknesses in human capital formation constitute one of the main obstacles to the design of an effective strategy for long-term development and the identification of sustainable sources of economic growth” (Ibid.). Taking the *5-year Plans* as a point of departure, the NDS concludes:

In formulating strategies for human capital formation, the continued lack of full access to ET by many girl-children and women has to be addressed. Despite forming a majority of the population, primary school enrolment levels of girls are still below those of boys and, with progression through the system, their participation diminishes and subject choices become stereo-typed by gender (Ibid.).
The final NDS is even more forceful in promoting the human capital argument. It states: “Importance of human resource development as a key macro strategy stems from the fact that human resources are one of Swaziland’s primary resources. This resource can contribute to sustainable economic and political development if its capabilities and qualities are enhanced” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1999b: 3). The National Development Strategy (NDS) adds:

Important elements in this strategy are appropriate ET (including re-orientation away from the presently academic orientation to technical and vocational orientation) adequate incentives extended to businesses and households to encourage the full development of human capital and all other areas impacting on the quality of human capital: health, water, shelter (Ibid., p. 4).

The Economic and Social Reform Agenda, ESRA (1999), a government action programme designed to start the economic recovery process following “slow economic growth, stagnating investment, high unemployment, unstable labour relations, a costly and relatively inefficient public service and a high population growth rate” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1999a: 4) is a short-term implementation version of the National Development Strategy (NDS). The most compelling assertion that ESRA makes about human capital development is its argument that:

Raising the standard of living, especially the alleviation of poverty, will come from developing the potential of the people, starting with education. More resources are to be allocated, with emphasis on the primary level where the social rate of return is the highest (Prime Minister’s Office, 1999b: 13).

As can be observed, not only has the human capital argument increased over time in the government policy documents but it has also changed slightly. Thus, “recognising basic education as a right...” (DEPS, 1978: 181) manifested in the Development Plans during the 1970s has given way to stressing the economic model of measuring investments in particular forms or levels of education noted above. Interestingly, the high rate of return to investing in primary education is no longer stated merely as an assumption or observation but rather as a fact. There is perhaps no disagreement on equality of access to education as there is on equality of
educational attainment. Swaziland like other countries in the region devotes a large proportion of the national budget to education and health but each time these sectors are found wanting. Even so, investment in these sectors is one strategy to reduce deprivation.

The notion of investing in people comes out strong in the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2002). Like the other government policies, it attributes the poverty of some Swazi people to low education and training: “The poor in Swaziland lack skills; they have low health standards incomparable to well-off Swazi and struggle to send their children to school or to see them through high school” (MEPD, 2002: 9). Government claim that low literacy is the main cause of poverty has already been noted. Here, it is perhaps useful to point out what the government sees as a solution. Thus, “To facilitate the development and proper use of human capital, the government will consider universal free primary education and high school levels and re-orient its education system and school/university curricula to suit the needs of industry” (Ibid., p. 19). The development of human capital, asserts the document, “is closely linked to the quality and quantity of investment made for human development. There is a positive correlation between education, health and poverty. Knowledge is at the heart of economic growth and sustainable development” (Ibid., p. 35). It is of interest to note here how the *Poverty Reduction Strategy* makes reference to free universal primary education, a policy objective that dominated the 5-year Development Plans but was never implemented. However, it does not make any reference to the earlier attempts at universal primary education.

Finally, the *National Population Policy* (2002), in its analysis of the population dynamics in Swaziland, makes similar claims on the individual and social benefits accruing from investing in education and training. The relationship between education and population growth has already been noted in Chapter 2; more education/literacy being commonly associated with low population growth and size and little or no education/literacy being associated with the reverse. It is perhaps in this context that the *National Population Policy* makes a strong case for human
capital development of the Swazi people. The document concludes that a range of factors beyond culture, gender equality or marital status explain the strong influence on fertility in Swaziland. Among these, it singles out education. The Population Policy states: “Of these, education of the mother is the most significant... Women who are ‘uneducated’ have more children on average than their more ‘educated’ counterparts” (National Population Council, 2002: 15). The human capital argument is also evident in the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development’s Analytical Review of the 1997 Population & Housing Census: “Education is an important factor in personal and national development. There is a close relationship between education and the five pillars of socio-economic development – poverty reduction, employment creation, environmental protection, women empowerment and social integration” (CSO, 2001: 6-1). Further, “the basic measure used to determine the literacy status of the population is the literacy rate” (CSO, 2001: 6-3). Like others, the Ministry makes a bold claim for investing in the human capital development of the people, stressing the consequences of such investment for productivity. “Persons who are educated tend to be more productive than persons with no or little formal education. Thus, education increases the overall productive capacity of a nation” (CSO, 2001: 6-1). With few exceptions, documents of the government and other agencies attributed a positive role for education and training to increase social mobility, productivity and general well-being.

In national educational policy, the understanding of human capital development comes out first in the National Education Commission (NEC), a body established by Cabinet in 1972 “to investigate the organisation of education and to advise the Minister for Education on desirable changes and future developments” (DEPS, 1978: 182). Government officials, representatives of the University and others concerned with education formed membership of the Commission. It published its report in 1975. In regard to human capital development, two recommendations of the NEC stand out. First, it suggested that the government goal of
providing free primary education be given a specific time-frame, recommending in the process 1980 as target date for achieving universal primary education, as already noted. Second, among the terms of reference given to the Commission was that to do with offering advice on matters relating to the establishment of the new education act. It was in this regard that the Commission recommended the establishment of the *Education (Consolidation) Order 1975*, whose aim was to set up six statutory bodies, among them the Adult Education Council, noted earlier.

Ten years later, in 1984, the government established the second education commission, called the ‘National Education Review Commission’ (NERCOM) to review the whole education system which had become complex and had developed some problems since the last Education Commission of 1975. Government presented the NERCOM with the following purposes (Ministry of Education, 1985: 3):

(a) To review the development and improvement of the education sector in Swaziland
(b) To identify the major problems affecting the relevance of education to the needs of the nation
(c) To clarify the goals and objectives of education as perceived by the nation
(d) To recommend desirable changes and developments for the future advancement of the education system
(e) To present a programme of implementation which takes into account the resource requirements and integration with the objectives of the *Fourth Development Plan*

Among its terms of reference, the Commission was tasked with clarifying the future of non-formal education programmes, particularly correspondence/distance education at all levels. In addition, the Commission had to work out the establishment of structural links between formal and non-formal education (NFE). It will be noted that the Commission was formed at about the same time as the publication of the *Fourth National Development Plan* at the end of 1983. It is not surprising, therefore, that its programme of implementation should be consistent with the objectives of the *Fourth Plan*. The Commission consulted widely, including convening seven regional meetings, distributing 1,300 questionnaires, receiving oral and written submissions from the public and held 20 plenary sessions. It presented its report *Reform through*
Dialogue: Report of the National Education Review Commission to Government in 1985. In relation to human capital development, one of its observations stated: “It is now realised that one of the bottlenecks checking the acceleration of economic development in Swaziland is a shortage of educated and skilled personnel. Implementation of our Plans has suffered owing to these critical shortages of qualified manpower [sic] (Ministry of Education, 1985: 15). “...Unfortunately, only about 10 percent of the estimated labour force of our country falls within the definition of educated and trained manpower” (Ibid., p. 16).

Finally, the understanding about investing in people comes out strongly in the National Education Policy document, adopted in 1999, and framing current national education policy in Swaziland. This document is supposed to be a comprehensive policy direction for all forms and levels of education. Its vision captures the human capital argument when it states: “ET programmes shall foster the skills that are necessary to participate effectively in the development of the country. Formal education continues to assume importance. Hence, successful performance at school is still regarded as a pre-requisite for formal employment” (Ministry of Education, 1999: 5). In some ways, the document sums up the sentiments expressed in the policy documents published before it, including concerns with widening access to education and training at independence to consolidating the achievements made to-date, including the expectation that ET graduates will contribute to the economic development of the country.

In concluding this section, two or three observations can be made. While the first wave of human capital development paid off given the many positions in both the public and private sector then held by expatriate personnel, recent emphasis of the argument has to made based on the realities of the economy and the enabling or otherwise inhibiting political climate for employment creation. Generalisations about human capital development in the 1970s may have met the expectations held for their claims not because of the universal positive effects of education and training but rather because of other congenial conditions prevailing at the time –
shortage of professionally-trained or skilled Swazi labour. As the example of the civil service has demonstrated, during the early attempts to localise positions in the public service ET graduates could be guaranteed a job upon completing their studies. However, today and by the government’s account, the public service is not only over-staffed but inefficient. Besides, if the government were to follow IMF recommendations that it reduces the size of the civil service, claims made for the human capital argument might not hold true for some ET graduates. Second, the political atmosphere now obtaining in Swaziland compared to other neighbouring countries is such that it might drive out rather than attract new investors. Unlike in the past, as pointed out, investors now have more options where to channel their investments other than to Swaziland. Swaziland no longer has the comparative advantage of being the more peaceful country in the region; peace has been restored in others too. Third, the economy structure is such that the country is not the major ‘driver’ of economic activity including some policies regulating the economy. As will be shown below, the political economy of Swaziland is an important determinant of success or failure of policies designed to reduce poverty and disadvantage among certain population groups. Subsequent sections elaborate in some detail on these observations.

Influence of multi-lateral agencies and NGOs

The many development agencies of the United Nations, together with the global financial agencies of the IMF and World Bank made up the most important international influence on Swazi literacy policy formation. At the national level, business and labour, NGOs entered the policy debate as well.
International NGOS

Among the key multi-lateral agencies and NGOs influencing government policy were the World Bank, the IMF, UNDP, UNESCO and UNICEF. As was the case in government policy, these organisations also promoted the concept of human capital for development. However, unlike the discourse found in government policy documents, multi-lateral and NGO policy documents tended to focus on the circumstances of the economically vulnerable and socially excluded (EVSE) in society, to use Bennell’s (1999) expression. These agencies supported the strengthening of policies and programmes for poor people – women, unemployed persons and the urban ‘poor’, including making sure there were not only policies on paper but that they were being implemented. Agencies such as UNDP (1998) and the World Bank (2000) further echoed the Swazi government policy of the 1990s, and agreed that improved education and health of the people form the most valuable investment a country can make, which is expected to reduce poverty. Initially, these agencies underlined the government-stated goal of making sure there is ‘education and health care for all’.

The multi-lateral agencies and NGOs urged the government to make possible pro-poor policies, markets and political enfranchisement. This is because government has always maintained it facilitates an enabling political environment. They insist that poor people must become ‘more visible on the political map’ (World Bank, 2000: v), that national broad-based initiatives for the common good and broad political participation be created, even though only ‘in society as constituted’. This is a step further away from the government’s general ‘broad participation’ (MEPD, 2002: 10), strategy measured by labour market participation. This applies also to the notion of investing in people – their knowledge and skills in not merely the basic 3Rs but also political, environmental and other ‘relevant’ skills to create an effective civil society.

Government, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs stressed investing in human capital: “The greatest asset available to any country is its people” (World Bank, 2000: i). Multi-lateral
agencies and NGOs shared also the government’s concern with restoring full employment as a high growth priority (particularly, labour-intensive implementation strategies). This is to be expected given the high level of unemployment. While the World Bank offered technical expertise on economic matters, the UNDP provided economic expertise, combining this with an emphasis on social concerns. Agency policy directives were more specific than the Swazi government’s general statements of strategy implementation; UNDP and the World Bank argued instead that strategies had to be stated within a specific time-frame and for specific groups – women, rural people or semi-urban people rather than merely as the ‘poor’.

Even as the government made reference to empowering poor people, it believed in empowering them through a paternalistic ‘public expenditure’ approach, while the multi-lateral agencies and NGOs espoused an approach geared towards ‘people developing themselves’. For political reasons, it was convenient for the government to make poor people feel it was doing something they could not on their own – among other things, it reinforced the psychological effect of inadequacy; so, people were less likely to distinguish their rights from privileges.

Some have questioned the government commitments to secure and protect the political, economic, social and civil rights of poor people. While Government claims it does, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs argue it is not doing enough. Policy reforms and actions to gain access to assets for poor people such as security of tenure for land and housing, access to credit and other financial services, contend multi-lateral agencies and NGOs, have been slow or not forthcoming altogether from Government. In addition, social safety nets to prevent destitution have been minimal or non-existent for a majority of poor people (UNDP, 1998; World Bank, 2000).

The extent to which the government should concentrate upon pro-poor growth strategies in economic growth has been intensely debated and, depending on the language used to frame the strategy, there has been no consensus. While Government acknowledges inequalities, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs insist it should control the extremes of inequality, arguing that
inequality usually hinders growth. The government does not seem to perceive ‘extreme’ inequality. Where it does, it attributes those extremes to other sources – away from the government. So, for example, according to the government:

The poor should be provided with an environment that will empower them to participate actively in the ‘rehabilitation’ of their lives by taking advantage of existing and future opportunities. They should produce adequate food for themselves and sell any surplus. They should also generate enough income from other activities so they can meet their basic needs (MEPD, 2002: 6).

In regard to low literacy, some would worry over the deficit view implicit in the quote above: They point out that, “Considering ‘illiteracy’ as a ‘sickness’ or a ‘handicap’ can have different implications in terms of the course of action to solve what is seen as a ‘problem’. A sickness demands treatment, while a handicap calls for rehabilitation” (Magalhães, 1995: 267). Implicitly, poor people have themselves to ‘blame’. Multi-lateral agencies and NGOs urge the government to create an enabling environment for small-scale agriculture, micro enterprises and the informal sector and their plea appears to coincide with the government’s stated goals.

Government concern with the country’s ‘middle-income’ status is also problematic and sets it apart from the multi-lateral agencies and NGOs. Statements such as, “The rapid growth in the past propelled Swaziland to a middle-income status” (MEPD, 2002: 8); “despite Swaziland’s classification as a ‘middle-income country...’” (MEPD, 2002: 10) and “...these demographics are incongruous with the ‘middle-income’ status of the country” (MEPD, 1999: 20) send a wrong message. If anything, they suggest that the government perceives poverty as a ‘dent’ to the country’s image or status and poor people a ‘bad image’. While Government concern with ‘information on employment’ (MEPD, 2002: 19) is noted, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs are concerned with ‘poverty information’. So, too, is the government concern with how ‘low literacy frequently contributes to unemployment’ and ultimately to poverty (MEPD, 2002: 19).
UNDP and the World Bank both characterise low expenditure on education with poor households. Even as they converge, they offer different underlying motivations for the claims made and this is to be expected given that NGOs fill 'perceived gaps' in government service delivery. In a similar vein, the two perspectives converge around shifting resources from tertiary education to basic education, as noted. It could be argued the government 'buys' this position from the World Bank discourse of higher returns on investment in basic education than investing in tertiary education (Psacharopoulos, 1996). As pointed out, the proposed shift confronts a dilemma for poor Swazi, if not all Swazi people as they have no option but need to access the two education levels. Basic education alone might be insufficient to reduce poverty. It can therefore be argued that there is no 'choice' to make between basic and tertiary education as in the long-run both poor and non-poor people require assistance with accessing both levels.

Concerning improving the quality of life generally and of poor people specifically, the government's observation on the limits of education is particularly telling: "Sectors such as education and health are often perceived to have great potential to deal with poverty than they possess" (MEPD, 2002: 34). It is, however, interesting to note its plan of action. Despite privileging the neo-liberal approach, it seeks to subject education to the needs of the economy and/or industry much against the context, which consists of a large informal sector alongside the formal sector. Given that the provision of free universal primary education had dominated the 5-year National Development Plans yet to-date the government has not implemented it, any further statements towards free UPE are simply not believable; past statements have not been given any substance. While political conditions were a contested topic in Swaziland, some NGO respondents still felt economic survival had to take precedence over political matters even though the two were not mutually exclusive – none truly achievable without the other. One representative explains:
So, you could say by empowering ...first you need to nourish your body before you start satisfying your brain and demanding your rights. Before speaking to the groups about income-generating activities to support their families meet basic needs, we tackle their survival needs (NG23).

The above argument would seem to support the ‘food first’ or ‘health first’ notion to literacy formation that has been tried in past literacy campaigns, particularly those sponsored by UNESCO under the rubric of the Experimental World Literacy Programme (EWLP) and using a ‘functional’ approach. Even so, Swaziland was not part of the EWLP. “If people have enough to eat, they will then ask questions about how ‘democracy’ works in the country and will want to have influence on that area” (NG23). Other respondents shared the view that people need to satisfy their basic needs before they can be expected to actively engage in politics. In the Swazi context, they isolated reducing poverty a priority – as a political goal:

Though able to understand the information, the people in the areas we visit are poor. To have information, but not the means to practise that knowledge doesn't help. They understand but without the means like you will teach them about constructing pit latrines. They will dig the pit but don't have money to buy the necessary material (AI27).

From the above quote, there is no denying ‘literacy’ was important but rather that food, clothes and so on were a ‘survival’ need, at least in the short term; things that no one could go without. The respondent continues: “People have been taught; they know why it’s important to take their children for immunisation or to go for family planning but owing to the poverty that affects many rural and semi-urban areas, the people don't have money to visit the health centres” (AI27).

In the context of this study, there had to be other ‘interventions’ in place to facilitate the literacy formation as an intervention strategy. A respondent explains why this had to be so:

You teach them about balanced diet but if there is no money, they cannot eat a balanced meal because they need to grow these ‘health-giving’ crops. Our concern is the poverty that afflicts these people. Our teaching is not effective because we cannot provide them with the means to practise our teaching (AI27).
To some respondents, the politics of ‘lack of food’ (Ramdas, 1990) and the sheer violence of poverty (Prins, 2001) counted more important than the politics of human rights even as the two are, in the long term, inseparable. The point being stressed by this respondent is that:

Literacy or ‘illiteracy’ has no impasse to us; it's not so important to understanding what we teach because our information is translated into SiSwati. We hope they do understand but because of poverty other factors like in the peri-urban areas people want to have pit latrines but because there is no space they cannot build them. They cannot dig a pit, for instance, for refuse disposal and so they throw garbage in the valleys around (AI27).

Other respondents shared the preceding sentiments on poverty as captured by the extract below:

The high rate of orphans...because that is indirectly linked to poverty. But increasing the education budget shows its importance but more needs to be done in sensitising people to its importance because it's not always possible for some to link the role of education in poverty eradication. When you talk of poverty eradication, people think of somebody who will bring them ‘things’ or cash; that is not the way to tackle poverty (NG24).

It can be noted that human capital development came out strongly in the government, multi-lateral agencies and international NGOs documents and among the government senior officials interviewed. It particularly came out strong from the government documents, increasing over the years. However, the language had changed slightly. During the early years of independence education and training were viewed as a right. Recent documents view them more than simply a right but an ‘investment’ in an individual or society’s human capital development. So, for example, the Third National Development Plan (1973/74-1977/78) could state: “It is the right of every child to have access to education and to receive an education geared to their needs. Recognising basic education as a right, Government aims to open the door to UPE by 1985” (DEPS, 1978: 181). The trouble is individuals make investment initially and then society. It is therefore tempting to blame those individuals that do not invest in their human capital development as the argument often masks the structural factors that prevent them from doing so. As this interview excerpt with a government official puts it:
The decision to get employed either in the formal or informal sector depends on the market – the availability of jobs if you talk about employment in the formal sector but the objective of these ET programmes is that people must be economically productive. It’s either they employ themselves or if they want to be formally employed, they need to get formal training through any of the ET structures that are available in the country (GM1).

As can be observed, it is up to the individual to learn as the facilities are in place for people to up-grade their skills is the message received. The senior government official argues that acquiring appropriate knowledge and skills is one thing; getting employment is another.

Only then can they get formal employment. It also depends, as I have said, on the market forces. If the market forces are negative, ET graduates might have the skills but they will not get employed because, I think we must understand that if people talk about employment especially in a non-formal sector they have to choose a field in which they can generate money for themselves rather get employed (GM1).

Though occasionally attributing lack of jobs to labour market failure, the official quickly stresses individuals’ responsibility for making appropriate investment in their human capital. Local NGOs and intellectuals, as noted, provided a critique to the notion of human capital, arguing that literacy had to be understood in its context which, in the Swazi case included poverty, gender imbalances or unemployment.

Since its founding in 1945, UNESCO as pointed out has also played a key role in promoting education in general and specific education sub-sectors in member states such as Swaziland. Being a less developed country, Swaziland has benefited greatly from UNESCO – particularly in the form of technical and financial assistance. This also transpired during the interviews with providers. Interview participants were invited to describe the kind of relationship particular institutions had with UNESCO (through the National Commission for UNESCO Office). As noted, literacy work has been an important beneficiary from UNESCO. Even Sebenta National Institute, which appeared to have been an exception as it had both positive and negative experiences working with government departments and even some international NGOs could recount positive experiences working with UNESCO. As this excerpt illustrates:
Yes; our CEO is in constant contact with UNESCO and it often makes donations to SNI. For example, when there is going to be a function like when we were going to donate a grinding machine at Belinda Constituency, UNESCO did contribute something (LP14).

Another respondent within this interview perspective provides a similar account working with this UN agency:

Even UNESCO has helped us with a consultant who came here to ascertain the plight of orphans. I sent them a request that we have this problem of orphans, adding that I had carried out a study. So, I request that they make a brief compilation of my findings and analyse them qualitatively and quantitatively, which they did. And they also met with the Ministry of Education officials to present this study (LP15).

The above explanation was consistent with the description the researcher had obtained from the National UNESCO Office, about supporting literacy work within the rubric of education for all, namely that:

UNESCO has given the necessary support to assist member states to respond, as expected, to the Dakar Forum. It has given the necessary technical assistance or has sent a consultant to assist the country team assigned to work on the plan, that is, the plan that will try and address the six goals of education for all (NG24).

Explaining how UNESCO had supported member states to respond to the Dakar Forum, the representative explained it this way:

UNESCO gave financial assistance to make it possible for the meetings to take place – consultations within the country for the co-ordinator to attend various sessions in different parts of the world and there have been meetings held so that people can exchange ideas (NG24).

While it would be unsafe to generalise, it is reasonable to argue that there were as many organisations perceiving positive experiences as there were those perceiving negative experiences. So, the question of positive or negative influences of international NGOs also depends, as noted, on ‘who’ speaks to it. The extract below serves as evidence:

Yes and UNICEF is working on that in the rural areas making communities aware that they should take care of the orphans in the community; people should volunteer to take care of these. The UNICEF project is run under the DPM's Office. I will give you an
example of an experience I have had...assisting people receive as little as E120.00 per quarter from the government social assistance scheme (GM9).

As a member of the international community, Swaziland is not immune from being influenced by international developments. As already noted, some of these international developments and linkages have a positive effect on the country’s development while others, less so. On the dark side, the problem with some of these international organisations some of which used their economic power to get changes effected ‘their way’ loomed large in the interviews. This is clearly illustrated in perceptions some literacy providers held regarding such organisations. The role of UNICEF in literacy work, for example, presented a ‘mixed bag’ of positive and negative influences. Simultaneously: “UNICEF is doing a commendable job helping children, particularly since we have this growing number of orphans in the country amid poverty” (LP15). Despite this acknowledgement, the representative quickly mentions that:

…but we don't like its attitude because it is supposed to be working closely with us. UNICEF takes the children from our classes. We would like it to check with us as to how many children we have in our classes and how many it can take from this area. How many children are over-aged and how many are below school-age because we work according to a budget? Going to a class to find it empty creates problems for us (LP15).

As this provider explains, the source of disagreement revolves round ‘tolerance’ by this UN agency for the other party:

So, there is an absence of respect. A person will use their financial power to make this work systematic. This would enable us to adjust once we know that in this area we have no students. In this area, UNICEF has not approached them; may be it’s still coming. It ought to have a programme so we know it is coming to this area and what we would do is identify the children for it. We don't want to identify the children, put them in class and halfway in their studies UNICEF comes; take them out of class (LP15).

Use of economic power is not unique in extension work as it often manifests itself in many development programmes. If anything, it mirrors typical dominant-dependent relations.
So, that is what doesn't work for us with UNICEF. In other instances, UNICEF goes to a place SNI has not reached and takes some children to class but not tell us that there are children that UNICEF did not take to class – we ask that SNI take them. That disheartens these children who perceive themselves as 'cast-offs' – 'real' people are those that UNICEF has taken. This does not ensure smooth work (LP15).

While UNICEF caters for children, this has entailed it in strategies also designed to improve the well-being and skills of those who care for children, particularly mothers; hence its involvement in Sebenta National Institute classes. The problem of under-rating Sebenta National Institute derived from negative perceptions some people held that Sebenta National Institute catered for a ‘lost’ generation (that is, low literate adults) unlike formal schools, which catered for the present and ‘future’ generation (that is, young people). An officer explains:

Because everybody knows the role of Sebenta and we have tried to advocate that role; we have used the media to sell our services; we also write and distribute quarterly reports to advertise our services – Sebenta is an old organisation but most probably because people are not in touch with the person requiring our service, they don't see the need (LP15).

Against the back-drop of problems that literacy providing institutions encountered working with certain departments or organisations, many concluded that co-ordinating extension work appeared efficient at field-level where effective collaborations were quicker to initiate than institutional arrangements. This had less to do with organisations as such but, rather, more to do with the field of adult education in general and literacy training in particular. A representative explains:

…but because the extension officer knows their work is frustrated if the client fails, she will see the alternative as to how this person may be helped – to ease his work. So, I think, I prefer collaboration at that level; it's easier and you reach your targets on time, particularly because we are all fieldworkers. So, our mandate is that we meet in the field. But as you say, there is no networking (LP15).

Even with these mixed feelings, other respondents could recount some positive experiences working with the international NGOs as evident from the following excerpt:
The policy of the Family Life Association of Swaziland is in line with our donor, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). The policy is in line with the Ministry of Health & Social Welfare (MOHSW) and CANGO. When developing our policy, there were representatives from our donor, MOHSW and CANGO (NG22).

Poverty was as much a political subject as it is a social problem with no consensus on the best approaches to tackle it. With few exceptions, this study found that extension work was pre-occupied with poverty reduction. This should be expected in a country where 66 percent of the population live below the poverty line as pointed out in Chapters 1 and 4. Viewed from an international perspective, some interviewees held that:

UNESCO's programme has a different approach. Of course, UNESCO is not a fund. It will not give money to buy food items but will instead help you to change your policies so that you have an education that provides people with skills to cater for themselves — something with which to 'arm themselves'. If you give somebody the knowledge on how to start a garden; they know they will always be able to eat from that little patch (NG24).

Even though many respondents tried to move away from a deficit model, they often found themselves shifting problems to the individual — as responsible for their poverty. Commenting on how the poverty reduction strategies adopted by the government or NGOs were or could be linked to education in the long-term, the respondent added:

Yes, what I am saying is that very often I think when we look at poverty we tend to forget the role education has to play in addressing the incidence of poverty — however you want to put it. It shouldn't be seen simply as an economic problem — there is more to it etc., socio-economic; it has to be political (NG24).

**Labour and business**

It is of interest to note that while the government appeared to be shifting towards viewing education and training as an investment that individuals made, employer and labour union representatives still talked of education and training provision for the public and private sectors of the economy. As this employer representative explains:
... No consideration was made in ensuring that the system of education produced the people that would meet the human resource needs of the private sector. That was one of our major problems and I believe that employers have not been fully involved in terms of making input at national level so as to influence the system of education (BL10).

Labour union officials expressed concern about the government's commitment to educating and training Swazis in general, and workers in particular. A representative explains:

Government does not seem prepared to spend money educating workers... so they can produce more. It does not value people's education as many trained individuals realise upon completing their studies that they earn meagre salaries. They then leave the country. Indirectly, that drains the country's economy and this means the resources to up-lift the country's economy are wasted (BL12).

The labour union officials had resentful comments particularly about the government, which they labelled as 'uncaring' for the workers both as citizens and as learners. They argued:

Concerning scholarships, in the past there were scholarships but unfortunately there has been and there continues to be no training plan. In Swaziland, we train without paying attention to human resource requirements in the economy. When a person completes training but does not get employed, how do they pay back the government study loan? (BL12).

From the preceding excerpts, it can be noted that employer and labour union representatives still perceived education and training opportunities as 'a right' that citizens generally and workers specifically were entitled to receive through state provision. In addition, these representatives tended to focus on higher levels of education, particularly university studies and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) making little, if any, reference in the interviews to basic education and literacy. By contrast, the other perspectives (government, literacy providers, NGOs and intellectuals) spoke to the latter area or level and not so much on higher education. When asked to comment on the end goals of the literacy programme, some respondents although few perceived it as an end in itself. They maintained that the programme was geared to making participants competent in the basic 3Rs with no employment in view – as the goal. As this respondent explains:
Those doing basic adult literacy simply learn reading and writing for its own sake. However, with the introduction of the basic skills education, the intent is to help graduates find jobs. But most of the basic literacy learners seek to know how to sign their names, such as, at banks or to be able to read their bibles (LP14).

In summary, it is evident from the documents and interviews that the human capital argument was still strong. It had over the years, as demonstrated in the government documents, the multi-lateral agencies and NGOs, increased. In addition, it was changing from earlier emphasis of perceiving education and training as a right to perceiving it as an investment. This was noticeable in the government documents and the interviews with officials, particularly those higher up in the hierarchy. It was less noticeable in the interviews with employer and labour union officials. The latter group still perceived education and training as a right, which individuals in general and workers in particular were entitled to receive from the state.

While concurring with the government postulation of poverty for the most part, the analysis has shown that the multi-lateral agencies and NGOs drew attention to many areas that were taken for granted by the government documents and interviews. To some extent, the agencies challenged the notion of making generalisations about the positive claims for ET arguing, instead, for situating the argument in terms of age, class, gender or rural-urban location. So, people did not lack ET skills as such but lacked them based on their family or spatial background. Though government documents occasionally made reference to these attributes, they were an exception rather than the norm. Even as there were tensions between the NGOs and government policy perspectives as revealed in the interviews, it is difficult to say there were tensions also in the documents of Government and those of multi-lateral agencies and NGOs. The impression received is that it might have been different emphasis rather than tensions. Given the strong human capital argument on the relationship between ET and poverty reduction, the next section critically examines the understanding of poverty, its nature and causes. The analysis amounts to alternative conceptualisations of poverty, from the mainstream
A critique of the understanding of poverty

From the preceding analysis, it is interesting to note how notions of human capital are played out in the Swazi national literacy policy by placing the causes of poverty and deprivation to low literacy. Not much of the alternative perspectives, such as the arguments of ‘de-schoolers’ (Lauglo, 1996: 223) in the likes of Paulo Freire, Ivan Illich and others, feature in either the documents or came out in the interviews. The structural bases of poverty in terms of age, class or gender are largely missing. From the analysis, therefore, the discussion of human capital development in Swaziland has to be understood in the context of poverty.

Contrary to government conception, poverty does not refer merely to ‘income poverty’, even though that is central. Poverty is multi-faceted; it is much more than low income. As the UN defines it, poverty is “the denial of choices and opportunities for a tolerable life. It is a lack of access to options and entitlements that are social, cultural, political and economic” (UNDP, 1997: 147). UNDP’s notion of ‘human poverty’ therefore is encompassing since it looks outside income and includes social dimensions such as

- lack of political freedom,
- failure to participate in decision-making
- lack of personal security and
- failure to contribute in the life of a community and threats to sustainability and inter-generational equity (Social Planning Council, 2003: 8).

Poverty in Swaziland derives from unequal access to productive assets or resources, including employment income, between different population groups. Put another way, poverty stems from unequal distribution of wealth. Excepting language rule or semantics, the point being made is that poverty is a product of inequalities based on age, class, gender or spatial location rather than a poor performing economy as government would have people believe. While global classifications place the country among middle-income ‘developing’ countries as noted, this is a result of GDP calculations that often aggregate the national wealth. The World Bank (2000) captures this well: “The gains of the high growth have not benefited everyone
equally. The pattern of concentration in wealth and incomes indicates that only a small share of the population have garnered most of the national income” (p. i). Swaziland is third among countries with the greatest income inequality as reflected in its Gini index or co-efficient, “a measure of income inequality within a country”. According to the Bank, Swaziland rates 61.7 percent on the Gini index – the poorest 20 percent of the population receive 2.7 percent of income; the richest 20 percent receive 64.4 percent (2002: 135). It is important to note the convenient blind spot of official documents to this contributory factor to poverty in the country.

The welfare of poor people despite the official rhetoric has not been a priority of public policy; if it has, the requisite political commitment has been lacking. For example, in 1999 the government financed 47 percent of primary and 43 percent of secondary education as opposed to families financing 53 percent and 57 percent of primary and secondary education respectively (UNDP, 2001). Even as pro-poor programmes have been designed on paper but that has not often translated into practice. And, this information is not captured by the government documents on poverty.

Another cause of poverty is the fall in migrant labour opportunities noted above. While the reduced prospects of migrant labour employment negatively affect all Swazi migrant workers, it heavily affects low literate Swazi people for whom migrant work was the only option for paid work while ‘literate’ Swazi people can work also in other sectors of the South African economy. Possession of literacy skills widened their options, but not those of the low literate. They migrated to South Africa because the latter has had employment prospects for adults with little or no education. The World Bank (2000) observes that, “As unemployment in South Africa rises, migrant workers from neighbouring countries such as Swaziland find it increasingly difficult to find employment and are returning to their home countries” (p. ii). They return to their home countries to join the ranks of unemployed adults. Besides loss in monetary terms, declining migrant labour opportunities tend to have a multiplier effect: education, health or
physical comfort denied to the adult male and his dependents. As the Bank continues, “In 1990 there were over 16,500 Swazi migrant workers employed in South African mines compared to about 13,000 in 1997. Labour income from Swazi mine workers fell from an equivalent of 13 percent of gross domestic product in 1990 to only about six percent of GDP by 1995-97” (Ibid.).

Despite the high literacy and education rates noted earlier, UNDP observes how “poverty indices show that the majority of the poor are women and female-headed households (accounting for 53%). Also, their representation in politics and decision-making is as low as two percent, even though they constitute 53 percent of the population” (2002a: 4). Allocations within health and within education, despite large allocation of the national budget to these sectors (MEPD, 1993), are not pro-poor: Swaziland's education and health indicators are worse than expected and the inequalities are greater for poor people, rural residents and for women. World Bank (2000) analysis suggests that the allocation of public expenditures within each sector is prejudiced against the basic service levels used by poor people. The consequent relative under-funding of primary education and health services coupled with an inefficient allocation between wages and other essential items produces a poor quality of services available to poor people.

Still, another cause of poverty is what might be termed ‘educational poverty’ or poverty related to a person’s education. Research suggests that a person’s level of education is related to their poverty status. National studies too show half the people from households headed by people with no education are poor and that secondary education reduces that number by one-half. The dilemma for poor Swazi is they can hardly afford to acquire more education as their non-poor counterparts can, given the fee-paying policy (World Bank, 2000). Some have argued that public education subsidies in Swaziland are biased towards the tertiary level as there are no equivalent subsidies for the primary and secondary levels. For example, while families bear the cost of primary and secondary education (53% and 57% respectively) as noted, the government
finances tertiary education (83%). As UNDP (2001) argues, “this implies that education financing is not equitable” (p. 76).

As pointed out, shifting resources from one level to others is problematic since it only shifts the problem and, as will be shown, poor people require both basic and tertiary education if they are to escape from poverty. Thus, while in the short-term it sounds logical to concentrate resources to basic education while tertiary education participants share the cost of their education with the government, poor people would not afford to share the high costs of tertiary education. So, the assertion, “improved equity and efficiency in public education spending will lead to better outcomes - at a lower cost - for both poor households and the government” (World Bank, 2000: v) remains a moot point. Few or no years of school attendance often translates into ‘educational poverty’. In Swaziland, the proportion of persons with no ‘schooling’ increases with age. As Table 14 (p. 124) shows, for example, the older generations have a higher number of persons who have never attended an education institution than the younger generations.

Even as the government, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs disagree on several aspects of poverty, from its causes to the strategies suggested for its reduction, they converge on the extent to which they make reference to the role of education in implementing the strategies. All suggests allocating more resources to basic education relative to tertiary education as noted, arguing returns to investment in basic education are higher than returns from investment in tertiary education. Discussion of that complex topic is beyond the limits of this section. Multi-lateral agencies, NGOs and Government identify what they perceive as separate roles for primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as practical subjects. It is common to attribute failure of the education system to match labour market expectations to its academic nature but some would argue that practical subjects without a firm academic background are not a long-term solution to perceived deficiencies in the education system. If anything, they are a temporary solution. A long-term solution lies in an appropriate balance between academic and
practical (vocational) subjects (OECD, 1996) at appropriate levels of the system. However, with donor funding specifically targeting vocational education, the temptation by aid recipient governments to implement vocational curricula wholesale is high, as in: “Government would be seen to be providing an empowering system of education, through provision of a skills-based education (vocational training), curriculum reforms and cost-sharing mechanism” (MEPD, 2002: 36). It will be recalled that vocational education is a World Bank policy reform strategy for ‘developing’ countries. Given that there is not enough employment for everyone, the overall rationale for providing vocational skills seems plausible.

Impact of government policy capacity on successes and failures

This section looks at the whole question of the effect of government policy capacity to formulate and implement policies on successes and failures. One way of doing this is to examine the general role of government, its political economy and what the balance or relationship is that it maintains with others – national state agencies and international agencies. This should help to show whether the country does handle everything itself, what the relationship is between the national policy agenda and the international agencies. Finally, it should help in determining the extent to which the international agencies influence the national policy agenda. But, first there is need to present the national, Swazi state agencies in the context of the political economy of Swaziland. Formulation of appropriate policies is one matter. However, the government capacity to implement those policies in terms of both human and political resources is another. There is need, therefore, to examine the effect of the government policy capacity on the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case. From the data, Swaziland’s unique governance and economic structure and lack of policy co-ordination among government agencies and NGOs emerged as important factors that might explain the particular successes and failures.
Governance

Governance is a useful starting point for examining policy capacity on successes and failures. Not only is governance a contentious subject within nation states but it is also frequently contested between regions. So, for example, East European states have followed governance structures that were highly centralised and reflecting the former Soviet communist bloc while West European and North American states have followed governance structures that have been less centralised and reflecting the American capitalist bloc. Still, African, Asian and Caribbean states have followed a mix of governance structures reflecting capitalist alongside socialist values or unique governance structures altogether. The key ingredient in these governance systems appears to be the measure of people political participation perceived as ‘adequate’. Here, we confront a dilemma, for who is qualified to sanction certain forms of participation ‘adequate’, governors or the governed? The governance structure has implications for enabling or inhibiting the economy and all its sectors but particularly education in terms of a guarantee for people’s right to education and training. Partly drawing from the governance context, this section examines the extent to which there was co-ordination and efficiency in policy from formulation to implementing policies and strategies in various sectors of the government – aimed at improving the living conditions of Swazi people. Even as this is an education policy study, the section takes a broader approach. So, for example, it examines linkages between different economy sectors – agriculture, community development, education or health.

Economic structure

To provide a complete description of the political economy of Swaziland, there is need to examine its economy. Discussion of policy success or failure in Swaziland more than in other countries in the region is not as simply and straight-forward as some might assume owing to the complexity in which Swaziland’s economy is embedded. External factors before and after
independence have shaped its economy for better or for worse. Before independence, Britain in
congress with South Africa dominated economic activity including policy. In particular, two
realisations by the government illustrate the point. First, the country's ties with Britain
represented an important topic. As the Department of Economic Planning & Statistics, DEPS
(1969) explains: "A preliminary draft of the Post-Independence Plan was submitted to the British
Government and formed the basis of the aid negotiations held in London in 1968. These resulted
in less development aid from Britain than the Swaziland Government had expected" (p. 3).

Reduced aid from Great Britain had a negative effect on implementation of the
Development Plans, both in terms of the activities to implement and time-frame. The DEPS
(1969) makes the point:

Since then the administration has been editing and to some extent revising the Plan, the
main revision being that the reduction in British aid has caused a lengthening of the plan
implementation period. It is now considered that it will take about five years to
implement the Plan (Ibid., p. 3).

Following Swaziland's political independence (1968), South Africa has played a major
influence in Swaziland's economy. Partly, this is to be expected given that country's proximity
to Swaziland. However, South Africa's economic and less so its political influence has
manifested in the Swazi economy ever since. The Swazi government realised this early in its
history: "Swaziland receives what is considered to be an unreasonably low share of the pooled
revenue of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU). If this share could be significantly
increased, Swaziland's budgetary situation would be greatly improved" (DEPS, 1969: 13).

It is of interest to note how events could bear out the government's concerns over its
share of the SACU revenue pool noted above; that increasing it would improve the country's
financial position. In 1969/70 and as pointed out in Chapter 4, it reported (DEPS, 1978: 23):

Following many years of successive deficits in the current budget, a surplus was
achieved. This reflected the significant expansion in both the absolute and the relative
size of customs, sales tax and excise duty receipts received by Swaziland as its share of
the SACU's common revenue pool following a re-negotiation of the SACU Agreement in
1969. Government’s financial position has improved substantially in more recent years; from 1971/72 onwards there has been a progressive growth in current revenue.

Yet, control of some of its revenue by another country implied that any planning for it was tentative given the country was depending on how much South Africa was willing to share with the other member states, including Swaziland. As the government conceded (DEPS, 1969):

There are a number of important limitations on planning in Swaziland. One of these is the general scarcity of statistical and other data. Another limiting factor is the small size of the national economy which makes Swaziland dependent on economic developments in the outside world, especially South Africa. In Swaziland, therefore, planners have to face much more than in other countries, conditions which are outside their control (p. 1).

While critics might argue that Swaziland was using these external factors as defence for the given performance of its economy, the government viewed these as practical limitations. As it put it (DEPS, 1969):

Swaziland belongs to the Southern African Customs Union and uses the currency of South Africa. This imposes certain limitations on the government’s freedom of action in matters of economic and fiscal policy. South Africa decides the level and incidence of the customs and excise duties and direct taxation must take account of South African rates, allowances etc., in order to preserve incentives for foreign investment. There are similar limitations on the formulation of independent monetary and credit policies” (p. 1).

The limitations cited above led the government of the time to conclude that “Evidently, the various limitations call for a rather simple approach and use of common sense in Swaziland’s planning. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the limitations imply that not much planning can be done in Swaziland” ((DEPS, 1969: 1). As the government maintained, there was much to do and much could be done, adding that the limitations did not affect the magnitude of the planning itself.

Beyond the 1970s, the extent to which the government has been in control of the economic agenda has varied with different governments in office in South Africa and less so in Swaziland. About employment, wages and prices, the Third Plan noted: “Price changes in South Africa influence price movements in Swaziland. The labour force was estimated at 163,000 in
1977; of these, an estimated 17,000 Swazi men are migrant workers employed in the South African mines and farms" (DEPS, 1978: 20). The Plan draws attention also to the state of resources available to the economy for social projects. It notes that while, “it is the right of every child to have access to education and to receive an education that is geared to their needs. Yet in Swaziland, the nation’s limited resources must be applied for the realisation of national goals” (DEPS, 1978: 181). Sentiments can be noted in the 1980s to the effect that on the one hand, “As a member of the SACU and Rand Monetary Area, the country receives benefits including sales possibilities in a market larger than that which a small domestic market would normally permit” (DEPS, 1983: 11). On the other, “these memberships restrict the scope and tools available for the pursuit of independent monetary, fiscal and pricing policies” (Ibid.). What was only an ‘observation’ in the 1970s and 1980s has over time become a concern to the government, the continuing economic dependence of the country on South Africa. As the 1998 Plan states:

> It is estimated that more than 80 percent imports originate from South Africa. Furthermore, a high proportion of foreign direct investment in Swaziland originates from South Africa making the shareholding in the private sector heavily South African. Because of the high degree of regional integration, changes in economic performance indicators for South Africa and changes in its economic policy are of major concern for the Swaziland Government (MEPD, 1998: 9).

As noted above, employment and pricing conditions in South Africa affect Swaziland given that Swaziland imports a high proportion of consumer products from that country. The South African consumer price index is “directly relevant to economic activity in Swaziland” (MEPD, 1998: 10). The gold industry, which employs a sizeable proportion of Swazi mine-workers in South Africa, experienced problems in 1997. “The industry continued to experience rising extraction costs and a fall in the international price” (Ibid.). Economic ties imply that not only does Swaziland import South African goods; it might import also its inflation. Between the two countries, a declining mining industry negatively affect Swazi miners more than their South
African counterparts since, as foreigners, their employment would be terminated first. It is of interest to note that the latest Plan (1999-2002) makes similar observations about these concerns.

Apart from the external factors just described, Swaziland itself takes a share of the country's problems. With public spending increasing at a higher rate than revenue, mostly on personnel costs much against warnings by the IMF, the country might experience a worsening fiscal situation. As the UNDP (2002b) cautions, “There is need for a strong commitment to sound economic management, including the creation of an attractive macro-economic environment to increase investor confidence and jobs. The job losses of the past two years emphasise the need to expand employment opportunities” (p. 4).

From the above analysis, it is evident that the government capacity to influence policy change or reform has and continues to be limited in the economic domain. Even with the isolated incidences of high economic performance, the degree to which the government has been in control is open to debate. However, with continued dependence on external factors it is difficult to draw the line between lack of government policy capacity, (over) protection by these outside factors or the tendency of letting events to take their course (hopefully in Swaziland’s favour). Over-protection could be expected given that Swaziland is a former British protectorate state and Britain once entrusted South Africa to be care-taker during the colonial era. Any assessment of the government policy capacity in the economic domain, however, has also to take into account the inherent interests among the governing alliance in Swaziland collaborating with foreign, particularly South African, capital that has characterised Swaziland’s history as noted in Chapter 4.

**Lack of policy co-ordination**

The adult education/literacy training enterprise, owing to multiple stakeholders - central and regional government, NGOs, the private sector, professional associations and educational
providers - can be a complex entity noting that all have different objectives (OECD, 2005). Making sure that the different players are co-ordinated amid potentially conflicting objectives can be a challenge. Given many actors in policy formulation and implementation, responsibilities are often split. The study found that the Ministry of Education was in charge of initial education while the Ministry of Labour took some responsibility for in-service training or staff development. Companies and NGOs were also involved. The resulting picture is a fragmented one centring on different outcomes. Contradictions and tensions among and between interview perspectives demonstrated a lack of co-ordination between the different policy actors. More importantly, few links were found to exist between education policy and other public policies such as social welfare or economic policy. Failure to co-ordinate adult education/literacy training with related areas where policy would complement rather than conflict occasionally led to duplication of services, therefore compromising efficient use of public resources. In Swaziland, unlike in other countries, there is no model of a welfare system for unemployed or other people in need. There is no established register of welfare recipients but rather an ad hoc record of people appealing for state social support – mostly old people or those with disability.

The study found that there was little co-ordination between education policy, welfare and economic strategies. As the interviews will show, the extent to which agencies worked together and to which literacy formed the core of their strategies was weak, including the extent to which literacy was within the economic policy. The notion that there should be co-ordination between stakeholders in policy design and implementation remained a challenge. As pointed out elsewhere, this notion that the literacy initiatives are under the economy or that there has to be co-ordination between the different ministries is central. This is the point that is often raised in life-long learning, this kind of policy co-ordination. Government documents that discussed co-ordination in the different sectors were not matched by practical co-ordination between policy
actors. So, while the documents stressed implementation of individual policies, what is perhaps required is how the policies complement each other more than implementation as separate entities. The way the documents envisaged co-ordination in practice remained a concern.

It was difficult to find from the documents and interviews a government body responsible for co-ordinating all the different policies, strategies and action plans. Only one paragraph is used to describe the Public Policy Co-ordinating Unit (PPCU) in the Prime Minister’s Office, said to work with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, but no reference is made to it in the other documents or in the interviews. Documents described the PPCU as responsible for monitoring performance under the Economic and Social Reform Agenda. For example, “Ministries will submit standardised progress reports on a monthly basis to the PPCU and meetings to review progress will be held. The PPCU will also assist Ministries where possible to resolve problem areas encountered in meeting targets” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1999a: 19). It is worth noting that the ideas behind the Economic and Social Reform Agenda and National Development Strategy were conceived and published by the Prime Minister’s Office and were said to be products of mass consultation with stakeholders in government, the private sector and NGOs.

Policies and strategies even if well articulated and with potential to contribute to national development were generally not well co-ordinated. Here, it is intended to bring up two perspectives, namely co-ordination among the Swazi agencies and co-ordination between the Swazi public agencies and NGOs, noting collaboration and any tensions. The first part presents interpretations of the population policy formulation process particularly the educational events designed to raise people’s awareness to population matters that go beyond earlier laissez faire approaches. Such earlier statements as, “in view of the changes in the social attitudes that are taking place and are likely to continue, Government considers that the question of family size
can best be left to the families concerned” (DEPS, 1969: 16) served as basis for corrective measures. An official explains:

There were extensive consultations. The strategy was to conduct educational workshops at national and regional level. The Population Council convened also a national conference whereby all stakeholders were invited. It paid attention to special groups, for example, people with disability and traditional leaders. These were identified as groups whose input the Secretariat could not ignore (GM6).

Drawn to comment on who was involved in the policy planning, the official singled out “people with disability, sector ministries, NGOs, the private sector, donors (especially the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) and civil society. The aim was to involve everyone to ensure wide ownership of the final policy document” (GM6). It could not be established to what extent the private sector was involved apart from the employers and labour federations.

An important question concerned the major population topics that formed the basis of the policy development process and discussions around it. From the interviews, they included:

The population growth rate, owing to high fertility rates, was felt to be high. Apart from negatively affecting development, a higher population growth rate contributed to high unemployment levels. The overall goal was to improve the quality of life of the people. A slow population growth rate, however, should not be achieved in a negative manner, say, through deaths from AIDS (GM6).

The study sought to find out also how the government hoped to use education in the population debate as a means of informing and capturing people’s perceptions around this topic.

Besides studying documents, there were study tours to other countries in the SADC region including an analysis of their documents. Misconceptions abound population growth rate, checks and balances. We found that chiefs, too, now feel the pressure of large families and the need to allocate land – but where? (GM6).

From the interviews, developments in HIV/AIDS had contributed to a renewed interest in population. As can be noted the above formed the topics around population issues for national educational events. Respondents were also invited to describe the proposed policy implementation strategies, particularly the role envisaged for adult education in the exercise.

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The envisaged strategies include the following: Education, with emphasis being put on helping people to choose what is best for them and as a strategic tool, designing a comprehensive information, education and communication (IEC) programme. And, it is not planned to use coercive measures to restrain population growth (GM6).

It was pointed out earlier that there was no employment policy but various pieces of legislation designed to regulate the labour market. Drawn to comment on implementation of the combined employer-workers’ education and what strategies Government employed to make sure workers and employers were not only familiar but observed these laws, officials explain it thus:

We visit companies to educate employers and workers about these laws particularly the Wages Act because that is one where people can be exploited if not familiar with current government pronouncements. We also conduct inspections to see if weights and measures used conform to the law. Our goal is to educate first, then deal with those breaching the law – an ongoing process given the ‘fluidity’ of the labour market (GM7).

It was not possible to get the business employers’ or labour union’s version concerning the education initiatives and inspections of neither the Department of Labour nor who co-ordinated the different processes between the tripartite. However, labour union representatives mentioned that they taught their members about these pieces of legislation. As one union official explains:

We teach our members about the industrial relations law and the Employment Act that they need to understand. We teach them also about Workmen’s Compensation including filing claims. Finally, we teach the membership about health and safety – so that they know if the conditions under which they work are healthy and safe (BL12).

Adding to the economic problems, discipline in the use of public funds or resources referred to earlier, presented a challenge to the establishment. A labour union official explains:

Government is misusing public funds – lavishly spending in overseas trips. That affects the economy. It also makes questionable expenditures - the Fokker 100 aircraft our arrogant government bought amid public outcry. Today, it lies unused; not generating any income. There is the deposit, E28 million, forfeited when Government was forced to cancel the contract to buy the king a private jet (BL12).

The researcher also wanted interviewees to respond to the observation that others have made that it was easier to co-ordinate development/extension work at ‘field’ level but somewhat
difficult at institutional level owing to the failure to establish some formal ‘memorandum of understanding’. So, for example, one found that Sebenta National Institute (SNI) worked well with officers from Agriculture at field level because the agriculture extension officer knew that if they had a client (e.g. a small-holder farmer) who could not read and write there was an SNI class nearby; they could refer them to it. However, the study found that for the Ministry of Agriculture as a whole it was difficult that there be formal understanding between the literacy 'providing' agency (in this case SNI) and the Ministry. A senior government official admits the problem:

Co-ordinating work at institutional level is problematic but we collaborate at field level; there is no institutionalised system of co-ordinating the effort. Schools and the university teach agriculture, but they don't know what problems I encounter with farmers. There is no formal link except on individual basis. The university opposed efforts to prepare a memorandum of understanding. We wanted to see how the faculty of agriculture courses could be tailored – take it or leave it – but we are there daily (GM2).

Without all the details, it felt rather strange that some institutions could resist a seemingly important idea such as this, unless it had not been properly introduced. The official elaborates:

University administrators said the institution's structures for sorting that were such that it would not work; the proposal stopped there. I would like that these structures be there between the Ministry and the University and those structures with NGOs too. You will be surprised that it's not even lack of co-operation, but 'direct animosity' in some areas. Co-ordination nationally is a problem (GM2).

It is of interest to note here that despite the fact that co-ordinating extension work remained a problem; each respondent shifted the blame for it to others. As this extract illustrates:

With the memorandum of understanding there might be a toss game element, each institution pointing fingers at others. Unless there is a formalised way of interaction, we are not going to do much or get anywhere. Failure of the initiative has made it difficult for us as a university or department to interact with the Ministry of Agriculture (AI25).

From this extract, it is evident that some felt a minimum form of understanding even if informal was in the best interest of stakeholders. Yet, some institutions seemed to misinterpret
or equate signing a ‘memorandum of understanding’ with yielding their autonomy to other organisations.

We only consult with them on individual basis, but there is nothing formalised. That has led us as a department to rely only on those informal contacts. When this link initiative was discussed, the MOAC did not understand the essence of the link. They thought a link would mean subjecting the MOAC to university bureaucracies or practices (AI25).

Another respondent within the same perspective makes similar observations about coordination:

Yes, within the field we are collaborating but it is unfortunate we cannot take an official stand on the institution. There was a time when the university, especially the faculty of agriculture, intended to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Agriculture. But it was mostly the Agriculture Research Station; I don’t know what happened to it. But it did not materialise (AI25).

However, unlike the colleague in the earlier interview excerpt, this respondent believed that the solution for poor co-ordination at institutional level hinged on formalising the collaboration protocols. As he continues: “Yes, it is a problem and a practical solution would be to have a memorandum of understanding perhaps between the university and the MOAC. In particular, the faculty of agriculture and the MOAC need to have such a memorandum” (AI25).

From the interviews, the MOAC sensed that the absence of a formal memorandum of understanding was such that at field level agriculture extension work was well co-ordinated. But at institutional level little or no co-ordination existed. It would depend on officer-to-officer, something that could not be relied upon. It means that the work suffers. Drawn to comment on how they would describe the relationship between the Faculty of Agriculture and the Farmer Training Centres, the respondent put it this way:

Another perspective I should use here is that the university is under the Ministry of Education. The research station and farmer training centres are units under the Ministry of Agriculture. Our interaction with those institutions is only on individual basis. It’s only on professional understanding but there is nothing binding. We use the farmer training centres; we visit them even for placement of student teachers (AI25).
By failing to establish some formal understanding with the MOAC, the university had made working relations difficult for itself, negotiating student attachments, more than for the government.

Similarly, we place our students on field attachment at the research station. Again, there is nothing binding on them to take our students. So, the relationship is not perhaps close. At the same time, it is an informal, relaxed relationship. There is nothing like we have to report by such a time. If we were engaged in a formally agreed system it would mean a different approach to how we do things (AI25).

Other respondents, particularly those involved in extension work, shared the observation made by many as already noted. An extension worker describes the degree to which community development was co-ordinated coherently with other agencies at field level but less so at institutional level:

The collaboration is more pronounced at field level than it is at institutional level. We have had this problem before where you found that in the field there is this tension among extension workers from different organisations – the tendency of 'owning' people. But we resolved our differences as we serve the same communities. Now there is 'understanding' among extension workers in the field (GM8).

It is of interest to note how each perspective defended its position, identifying instead faults with others; none seemingly ready to face the challenge some had to initiate the corrective measures.

The area of co-ordination needs attention. Organisations engaged in extension work used to collaborate in the past. It's amazing that at regional and area level, the government workers try to collaborate but we at directorate level (agriculture, education, health) only meet at workshops. There is no institutionalised way to collaborate (GM2).

Apart from raising concerns with the education aspect in extension work, community development officers drew attention also to the problem of political motives inherent in extension work particularly when linked to generous funding, whether by the government or a donor agency. Such matter would manifest in the course of development/extension work. Drawn to comment on the proposition that development or extension work is inevitably linked to
poverty and to what extent community development was involved in poverty reduction, a government official explains:

Government work is often problematic. We are members of the Regional Development Co-ordinating Committee and of micro-projects, a unit of the Ministry of Economic Planning dealing with poverty reduction. Projects that come with sitting allowances complicate issues since field workers are often left out of these 'sittings' (GM8).

Who gets what and why ultimately complicated government extension work as each group of officials strived for the monetary gain. Community development questioned the very wisdom of locating the poverty reduction strategy as a portfolio under the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development (MEPD) rather than under the community development section.

But when matters get out of hand, Economic Planning comes to CD officers because it knows it can reach to the people through us. There is no sitting allowance at that point – the argument being that as government employees, CD officers draw salaries. Sitting allowances have ‘killed’ morale in government work (GM8).

Sitting allowances were the fees members of some committees received from government each time when attending (sitting in) a meeting. Apart from the subject of sitting allowances, expecting a CD officer to implement something they were not part of at the planning stage, including discussing with others how it would work emerged as a concern. For example, if the community development officer was not in the planning body that draws sitting allowances she inherited the project as a brochure that tells her to implement it in a certain way. Apart from the low morale arising from the sitting allowance that CD did not receive, she was not part of the planning meeting. How might this problem be solved? An official gives details:

It's like this E40 million regional development fund – in that when decisions are made, other people (who have their interests and agendas) approve. When the approved projects have to be implemented other people (that is, CD) are brought into the equation to sign invoices for material. How did the community project start; did approving it suggest that it would be viable? Admittedly, that's its weakness (GM8).
From the responses, it appeared the political clout of some project applicants and their connections to the hierarchy in the bureaucratic establishment complicated questions of who was involved in planning and who is accountable for the success of a project.

Initially, the politicians (MPs) are in charge. We civil servants remain in the background but come in when we have to sign invoices for material and auditors check that invoice. If there is a discrepancy between invoice amount and material stock-in-trade, auditors hold the CD officer responsible. It would help if they involved us at the initial meetings. Subject specialists too could advise on the viability of planned projects, if invited (GM8).

About whether community development officers could not withhold their signature and, if not, whether they could protect their signatures by making those who initiated the project (for example, the Member of Parliament) to be accountable, the officers clarified it this way:

No, you can't. If you withhold your signature, it means you are refusing to work. Presently, there is no way you can make MPs accountable; they are not civil servants. We are still negotiating that with our department – to tell our seniors that these things don't work because often times the people involved have different interests from CD, which is ensuring that what we teach in communities is sustainable (GM8).

As observed, professional work crossed path with political motives and compromised field work.

Politicians are after votes. If anyone has to be responsible, it is others not they because you are held responsible if you sign for material that is not eventually used. I can say the material was delivered to the constituency store and someone stole it. It's not the person who approved who is held responsible but the person who signed the invoice, attesting to having seen the material. Auditors look for the invoice I signed (GM8).

If there is any point that resonated with respondents in this category, it is that ‘education’ of community groups in ways that contribute to they conceiving projects more broadly rather than as quick ‘fix’ solutions. In part, this spoke to the need for politicians to collaborate with government officers. A government official stresses the point:

Teaching people is time-consuming; they could be accessing these funds (so the thinking goes) whereas without proper education, the project fails. When there were no such
development funds, CD financed people after they had proven they could do something (that is, at halfway point) rather than the present up-front funding (GM8).

The above extract demonstrates how officials low in the hierarchy often understood the same matters differently from those higher up in the hierarchy within the same perspective.

Community development (CD) focused on development – that if you talk about development, it's not providing housing or roads but the extension officer should first 'develop' the person until they reach the 'road' point and be able to say how they hope to construct a road; not CD providing communities with roads, dams etc (GM8).

While in principle, the 'development funds' had the potential to contribute to societal advancement, in practice, the way they were conceptualised and therefore co-ordinated was found to be wanting. As this official explains:

So, what's problematic with the E40m fund is that a group is given everything while CD required the 'commitment' of the person – how committed is the person or group to the project? That assured sustainability of the project for as the person 'matures' she does most of the work (GM8).

The official here draws attention to inherent contradictions between officers in the bureaucratic establishment and those in the political establishment even as the two are not mutually exclusive. The official explains: “But with the 'campaigning' for votes style, things fall off. It increases the demands people make on the development fund(s) – they ‘want’ and you provide fencing, fertilisers, tractor etc – where is their commitment there?” (GM8).

Amid various approaches and interests that different perspectives brought to bear in the field, as an isolated incident an extension worker explains how collaboration worked among officers engaged in development work and how it might be improved:

Extension officers act as a link between government and the community together with the NGOs. We work hand-in-hand with those agencies. Where we are not specialists, we link communities with relevant organisations that have the expertise. Community development links communities with NGOs that can finance certain projects (GM8).
It is of interest to note that while most respondents perceived collaboration as problematic at institutional level, some pointed to problems collaborating even at field level. This reflected the different values different organisations brought to the extension field. In particular, they pointed at tensions between government and NGOs in extension work. If anything, tensions between institutions engaged in extension work tended to undermine the sustainability of programmes with disproportionate benefits accruing to recipients depending on their connections to the agency facilitating the project. The extract below sums it up:

This is often the case with MOAC extension workers and NGO extension worker attached to an area, complete with resources such as fertiliser, transport vehicles etc. The community will say the government extension worker simply talks; s/he does not give us anything compared to the NGO extension worker who often provides resources. We need to harmonise these things because often the NGO will not be permanent (GM2).

That NGOs would be temporary in a community should be expected given they complemented rather than replaced government extension services. As the official elaborates:

It may be doing the work as a project and will eventually leave the area with the government extension worker. If the two workers came to the area together so that even the community sees they are working together that would help maintain sustainability of the work with the worker staying behind. This is because the government extension worker will not move – he or she is always there (GM2).

The buck for most problems in extension work often stopped (rightly or wrongly) at the door-step of the government – as NGOs that respond quickly to crisis in a community undertake the work as a project. As soon as the NGO pulls out people ask, “What is the government doing? The NGO has helped us in this way – why can't the government do the same”? The study gathered also that university teachers worked with certain groups as a form of attachment or internship in the teaching of their students. Informally, they end up knowing some of these communities. But that, too, is temporary because even those teaching practice groups graduate and leave. And, those communities complain that they are not being ‘serviced’ – NGOs and
university students have left. What is the government doing about this situation? As it transpired from the interviews:

Yes, that is true. The sad one is during the food aid distribution. MOAC has secured the food aid through the Food and Agriculture Organisation. We found that the food has to be distributed through the disaster task force and the NGOs. But since the NGOs are assigned areas, the communities know that they received food from NGOs (Red Cross or Lutheran) when the food comes from government. We need the close co-ordination so that each party's role is known and communicated widely (GM2).

If there is a lesson to be drawn from the government-NGO tensions it is perhaps that communities developed different if not incorrect impressions about how extension work was co-ordinated. The official explains what problems this created:

In the process, the credit goes to distributors rather than the party that secured the food in the first place. MOAC tells itself as long as people have got the food – not so much the credit denied it – at least for the time being. This is because we do not have the infrastructure and the capacity to distribute the food alone. The NGOs and disaster task force (at least food distribution-wise) are more efficient (GM2).

It would have been interesting to find out how the stalemate was finally resolved – the credit that communities unconsciously gave to where it did not belong. The official elaborates:

Even the distribution, NGOs do it for us for administrative costs within the projects itself. It is not as if they are doing it freely. So, we need to improve these things because by operating like a project you find that when you finish the project – things collapse and the community complains. At times, the government extension worker even operates against this project because of the way it was introduced - as if to undermine him or her (GM2).

Other government extension workers shared the observations that there were tensions between government workers and NGO workers in extension work. One worker describes the tensions this way:

Sometimes NGOs give things and don't follow-up because they look for funds and give people. After that, they don't seem to care and this would seem to compromise sustainability of the projects they support. There were projects that NGOs did not follow-up – one on the rights of the child and another on gender issues (GM8).

While the perception that NGOs had more 'resources' to carry out projects was widely held, it did not seem to be received well by some extension workers within the government.
Today, they look for funds for HIV/AIDS. They give children condoms; what happens with those condoms is something else – as long as they have looked for funds to give everybody condoms. How the person uses the condom is another issue. When you talk of sustainability...each person is striving for money. Whether you have given the person 'things' or 'life' is a different matter (GM8).

It appeared the government extension workers sensed that NGOs provided the required assistance (and rightly so) without sufficiently attending to the education component; a practice which tended to compromise sustainability of the projects once the NGO had left the community. An official gives details: “CD teaches the community groups beyond looking for money. We encourage people to develop themselves mentally before thinking about projects but because of the development funds around, things are getting out-of-hand” (GM8).

Even as the government extension workers expressed concerns about sustainability, some NGOs felt it would depend on how each officer interpreted ‘sustainability’. Drawn to comment on how they would describe the manner in which while they helped a group they allowed it to reach a point where it could remain on its own, an NGO representative explained it thus:

Yes, but nowhere in the world that these farmers are left totally on their own – they always go to some advisors. The objective is to reach a stage where they can afford to look for advice perhaps and also be better in formulating their questions (NG23).

From the conversations, it seemed different workers held different interpretations of ‘sustainability’, including the point when groups were well-established to be left on their own.

On sustainability, some groups are doing okay so that you feel you can let them leave; not to say you can stop altogether but reduce their dependence on you – you cannot say ‘withdrawal’ because they will need your help. But, we make them aware that you help up to a time after which they are expected to be on their own (NG23).

The subject of sustainability could create divisions depending on interviewees spoken to among the perspectives – mainly around the point at which groups could be left on the own.
But, it's a problem because despite the training you can give them so that they will be in a position to have good book-keeping skills, to have an interim process running well they will still need you as an organisation. It's a slow adoption process – of withdrawal on our part. But, slowly we introduce that. It's true we've been in it quite a long time (NG23).

The arguments from each perspective were so strong it was important to compare them carefully one against the other. So, for example, while NGOs provided assistance and accounted for this to their headquarters through writing timely reports, 'sustainability' remained a moot point. What happens after that translated into passing the buck (probably to government). Given this dilemma, how did government extension workers sensitise the people without appearing opposed to the assistance communities received from donor agencies or NGOs? “The issue is that some of the organisations have learnt from their past mistakes. In most cases, they now tell communities: We want to meet you (community) half-way whereas before they did everything for the community” (GM8).

As noted, while some government extension workers conceded there were tensions in government-NGO extension work, some NGOs expressed experiencing problems working with some government departments even if the overall relationship was good. As this excerpt initially puts it:

We work closely with MOAC as the first point of entry; with field officers from the Ministry. Besides having contact with the tinkundla centres we also talk with the MP to do some advocacy for the groups so that we can hopefully bring up issues. We also work with rural development areas. We co-operate with them and learn from each other – this benefits not only our member groups but also other farmers out there (NG23).

However, other NGO-Ministry protocols entailed straining this healthy relationship. A representative explains how this might happen:

Is that the co-operation with MOAC? Yes, setting out to have irrigation dams and because we are facilitators most of the time, we look to MOAC for help. Even if we see that this group has a problem with irrigation, we don't have engineers. We go to MOAC.
because we are an NGO to ask them to come and help the group. But the MOAC takes long to respond or at times they don’t show up at all (NG23).

This excerpt captures earlier observations that government took time to respond to community appeals for development assistance; including times when a community has had a disaster.

That comes back to us because this is our group and we find ourselves in a dilemma; we don't know what to do because those groups are in the rural areas – they don't have income to hire engineers to fix up all those things. We find ourselves helplessly looking at them as a group that should be in production but cannot if there is no water. To-date, there are those problems. We see ourselves as failures (NG23).

Even with this evidence, it is of interest to note that some respondents perceived smooth co-ordination of the extension services that different institutions provided. An officer explains:

Yes, we are a member of Co-ordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisations (CANGO). It's our mother body. But it's mostly like they co-ordinate. They see what each one does? So, they may know what's happening. They are supposed to be doing more than that...it's mostly co-ordination and networking (NG22).

Drawn to comment on their relationship with donor agencies and other NGOs, particularly those engaged in similar services to theirs, the respondent explained:

There is good networking among NGOs. There are usually workshops, which keep us up-dated. Through reports that we receive from CANGO, we get to know what the other NGOs are doing. It's just that Swaziland is not so poor compared with other countries (it's a medium-income country). Eighty percent of our income comes from donors; we receive small donations from the private sector in the country (NG22).

When drawn to comment on how they would describe their relationship with government departments or ministries, some NGOs stated:

We complement government activities; it brings students for training under the sexual and reproductive health component and we earmark the youth as a primary target, considering that our social structure is demographically broad-based. We design youth-oriented programmes. Government adopted our strategy; we collaborate with it (NG22).
Other respondents within this perspective had similar comments about the co-ordination of strategies between the government and NGOs even if at departmental or field level:

With our work we get involved with everybody: government, NGOs, schools, traditional healers – everybody. We provide education to everybody. We don't have a limit like focusing on the youth or on schools, but all institutions as long as we are invited ...that is a constraint – we are usually invited to so many of them (NG22).

It is of interest to note how some collaboration emerged out of the nature of work organisations did. For instance, in light of literacy emerging as a concern among some groups, the organisations involved had to collaborate with Sebenta National Institute. As one organisation's representative recounts: “We co-operate with SNI. It was introduced to these women but unfortunately...I don't know whether it was a burden for SNI or it was the manner in which it approached the whole task because it started but later stopped” (NG23)

From this interview excerpt, it can be noted how even minor interruptions in operations can contribute to how co-operating agencies sustain certain programmes. The officer explains:

I learn the women sensed that to participate in the literacy class they had to enrol with this institution but unfortunately they couldn't because at that time SNI closed down because of funds. It was not operating and for that reason not popular with some communities. Now it's like SNI has shifted its mandate from general adults. It's like now it only serves literacy needs of companies and foreigners (NG23).

Interviews with Sebenta officers, however, revealed it had not shifted mandate but rather broadened it to capture children unable to attend formal school. Drawn to describe collaboration with the community development section under the DPM's Office, the NGO had stated:

Yes we do – there is a time we even sent a proposal to set up these 'pick up' centres (in-between) but it's expensive...within the Tinkundla Centres because those are the structures we use. In some of those rural communities, we use the Tinkundla Centres to provide education. And, then with the open communication it's been helpful to us...there is good communication between us (NG22).
Other literacy providers shared some of the preceding sentiments about occasional problems around collaborating with other institutions or extension workers as one representative laments:

I think it goes back to attitudes as I had said that the mentality of undermining Sebenta National Institute (SNI) is common at executive level. So, trying to reach them and change their minds will take time and yet when you go to the field and talk with the field worker, it's faster. And, the person being helped benefits sooner (LP15).

The study wanted also to find out if providers considered the literacy programmes closely linked to people's participation and empowerment than merely securing jobs since at the workplace people might remain submissive to the employer. The objective was to test an assumption held upon entering the field that the skills acquired would at least allow trainees to participate in other socio-economic activities at community and national level. An official responds: "Yes, I think they do empower participants like when SNI donated some fence-making machines and brick-laying machines to the group in an adult literacy class for empowering the learners start income-generation projects" (GM2). It is of interest to note how some respondents could not imagine literacy participants beyond engaging in income-generation activities even if the latter were important projects.

Coupled with poor co-ordination, the development literature is fraught with aspects of marginalisation of women from decision-making and tinkundla is no exception, as prominent men from the area of the chiefdom dominate the traditional power structures. The participation of the disempowered sections of the community in these structures is limited (UNISWA in World Bank, 2000). So, for example, many chiefdoms were found to have no women in the inner council and only one or two women in the development committees, limiting their role in key decision-making structures. Even so, women are not passive in the community and tend to dominate the membership of implementation-oriented project committees (World Bank, 2000; UNDP, 1998, 2001) noted earlier.
From the data, it is reasonable to argue that the government policy capacity to formulate and implement policies remained a debatable point. While the enacted policies and strategies had the potential to bring about positive changes, the manner in which their implementation was co-ordinated was found wanting. From the interviews, differences could be sensed among stakeholders and between perspectives on what counted as ‘best practice’ at any given time. Unattended, these differences translated into tensions between and within perspectives. On the role played by international agencies on policy, where these influenced the agenda away from what national stakeholders perceived in community groups’ interest, financial power was often the basis. Government policies and strategies even when well-articulated were not widely disseminated among sectors. This particularly came out strong from the interviews with respondents. Interviewees expressed willingness to work collaboratively with others between and within sectors; many citing the government as responsible for initiating the ‘link’ forums.

Summary and comments

Starting from the broad challenges, it is important to note how the dual challenge of balancing the need for providing UPE and adult literacy education confronted the government, even with involvement of international agencies and NGOs in policy. From the evidence, notions of human capital are played out in the Swazi national literacy policy to the almost total exclusion of alternative perspectives. The close collaboration between the government and the international agencies in a way fostered these notions. A constitutional deadlock and stagnating, dependent economy form some of the factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland that explain the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case. While some areas still lacked policy guidelines, even those policies that did exist were often implemented in isolation rather than in a more holistic, multi-sectoral manner to take into account that agriculture, education, health and population issues were inter-connected.
Even as the Ministry of Education maintains to have widely consulted its stakeholders, it did not find anything strange about ignoring the adult education practitioners, professionals and scholars but consulting formal school teachers including the teachers’ association about a field with which they were not familiar. Yet, it still hoped to have these stakeholders identify with (and even ‘own’) the policy document. While wide consultation is acknowledged (and rightly so), it can still be argued that consulting the ‘relevant’ stakeholders would have been a high priority. That step would indicate that the Ministry acknowledges the pool of expertise besides the sheer strength in numbers of individuals engaged in this field. The lack of a well articulated adult education/literacy policy, is in a sense, a policy in itself, for it is difficult to hold the government responsible for anything done or left undone in this field. It is of interest to note, too, how the Adult Education Council was somewhat under siege from within, as divisions among adult education stakeholders undermined efforts to revive this body.

From the interviews, it is clear that some government officials focused more on high levels of formal education when many of the people participating (actual and potential) in the programmes captured in this study were not educated enough to begin with. Besides, pre-occupation with education and training quality had the effect of shifting attention away from what some would call ‘real’ concerns of parents, households and communities for basic education and training infrastructure. From the findings, the government seemed to embrace the neo-liberal notion of a reduced role for the state in the economy and, in the process, shifted more responsibility for education and training and employment to the individual. This was more pronounced in the responses of senior government officials partly because this shielded the government from its responsibilities. In addition, the government concern with availing ‘quality’ education and training institutions privileged young people and left out non-literate adults, a point that some NGO representatives and intellectuals made in interviews.
In regard to the economy, it is perhaps not the absence of appropriate policies and strategies that inhibits performance of the economy but a lack of capacity and commitment to implement them. That explains also why government’s Economic and Social Reform Agenda or National Development Strategy have not performed as expected; political will from the establishment to implement them cannot be assured. About poverty, even those policies and strategies that have been implemented, although framed in pro-poor terms often benefited non-poor people precisely because they have economic and political weight. The policies privilege the economically and politically powerful; hence, the need for ‘intervention’ in favour of poor people, of Swazi people, especially small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs) and for creating domestic investment alongside foreign direct investment.

From the documents and interviews, factors about economic conditions related to the labour market revealed a tendency in the bureaucratic establishment to shift ‘economic ills’ to labour market system failures – thus setting the government free from its role of creating an enabling economic environment. Presenting self-employment the way the government did brought into play the notion of ‘blaming the victim’ where the individual is held responsible for their employment once the said conditions have been created by the state. If anything, this masks structural obstacles by shifting problems to individual agency. It is interesting to note, too, how business and labour seemed to be united over these topics when some would have thought otherwise.

Even as the government, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs wrote at length about poverty and how to improve the quality of life for poor people, the strategies and action plans seldom translated – even by their accounts - into mainstream provision though that included poor people. Low literate adults are a disadvantaged group much as women or ethnic minorities cited in the literature. Adult education and literacy training (particularly that of a compensatory, remedial nature), it can be argued, is a pro-poor programme and deserves separate mention.
Government, multi-lateral agencies and NGOs seek to design strategies that encourage participation, promoting the notion of 'people owning the process and product'. Government perceives participation of groups in programmes as designed for them but tending to be economy-linked. Multi-lateral agencies and NGOs use an expanded notion of participation – in economic, social, religious and political affairs – to influence outcomes. However, Government is modest in how it espouses political participation of people, poor or non-poor, and that speaks to the subjective values (Kogan, 1975) embedded in poverty reduction. It promotes certain strategies but not others. Ideally, NGOs intervene in the differential effects of treatment (government disproportionately bestowing advantage) of groups based on their poverty status.

Political conditions dominated the interviews with business and labour representatives – from a deadlock in the constitution-making exercise with no end in sight, to an unworkable dual legal system; and from suppressed political expression of the population, to perceived lack of accountability in the management of public resources. Even so, many government officials saw nothing strange about the country's political conditions. This should be expected given the present conditions suited the incumbent government. With opposition proscribed there was no urgency for change. Despite that, there is need to draw attention to the intersection of political and economic conditions, none truly functional without the other. Government, NGOs and intellectuals provided a mixed viewpoint ranging from some embracing of the political conditions on the one end, to showing some awareness (even if only willingness) that they were problematic or withholding any opinion at all on the other end.

In drawing these implications for education, policy analysts need to be aware that education policy is 'an arena of struggle over meaning' as is policy-making. Except from the standpoint of the Swazi state, there is a governance problem in general in Swaziland and a constitutional crisis in particular. Government and other interests need to reach a consensus over governance concerns for there to be progress. Even so, education can contribute towards
consensus-building by clarifying some governance matters. Multi-lateral agencies, NGOs, civil society groups and some external governments all agree that the country faces a challenge redressing its governance structures. The government, too, by its accounts, even with the occasional withdrawal, concedes the current governance structures are not conducive to sustainable economic and political stability. It is argued that besides making government behaviour unpredictable, present structures with often overlapping roles compromise accountability and transparency (Ball, 1998), yet with opposition forbidden, the authorities are able to get off ‘scot-free’. The constitution serves as a basis for the economy, providing the enabling environment in the form of appropriate legislation to promote or regulate the economy.

Within this context, problems about poor co-ordination, collaboration and monitoring may be explained in three ways. First, the government may be lacking the capacity to co-ordinate policies in a manner that results in efficient implementation of programmes. This should be expected given the literacy concerns pointed out in Chapter 1. Second, co-ordination could suffer as a result of elements within the government machinery opposed to the agency empowered with the co-ordination function. As the interviews have indicated, some government departments resisted the Ministry of Economic Planning co-ordination role, arguing that the Ministry had little to do with extension work within communities, thus rarely co-operated. And, given the financial resources and status attached to the co-ordination role, the Ministry of Economic Planning & Development was not ready to give up the function to other ministries or departments. Third, poor co-ordination might be a reflection of the narrowly-conceived image of adult education by some people in Swaziland. This should, however, be read for what it is – a reflection of what goes on in people’s minds when thinking about adult education and literacy. The other way to look at it is to draw attention to the power genuine literacy confers on its recipients and how that may feel threatening to others in the state hierarchy bent on ‘oppressing’ low literate adults. For, “if people who have been aroused cannot
get the changes they want or a substitute for them that is acceptable to them, they will become discontented – if not hostile towards whatever authority they regard as responsible for the failure” (Nyerere, 1982: 51). Nyerere’s observation about the power of adult education and literacy is particularly telling. “Adult education is a highly political activity. Politicians are sometimes more aware of this fact than educators and therefore do not always welcome real adult education” (Ibid.).

It is of interest to note how the multi-lateral agencies and NGOs (local and international) did not present a radically different perspective from the government’s view. Where they did, it was mainly on technical rather than on structural matters, such as noting that women formed a majority (53%) in the population yet they were the marginalised group, and that despite being home to more than 70 percent of the population, rural areas were more susceptible to poverty than urban areas. For example, none attributed inequalities to class differences in Swaziland nor did they offer political awareness education as an option to the political stalemate. This should be expected given that, as pointed out in Chapter 2, these agencies conveniently treat literacy formation as a neutral set of technical skills. So, programme participants should be competent, rule-following workers or law-abiding citizens participating in community life as expected by the dominant mainstream.

The next chapter, immediately following, presents a discussion and makes interpretation of these findings.
Chapter 6
Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation of Findings

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the findings from documentary evidence and interview data are summarised. The second section analyses the findings in terms of four main headings: (a) the enduring challenge of finding a balance between primary education and adult literacy education, (b) influence of NGOS on literacy policy formation (c) how notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives are played out in the Swazi national literacy policy, including inadequate treatment (even dismissal) of gender inequalities in Swaziland and (d) the effect of government policy capacity on successes and failures of literacy formation in Swaziland. The third section summarises the conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion.

Recapping the findings
The review of the socio-political and economic background in Chapter 4 revealed that the modern Swazi state emerged from a legacy of colonial rule in which the administration did not perceive the education of the majority of Swazi people important beyond efficient performance in the bureaucratic establishment. As noted in that chapter, education in Swaziland is attributable to the work of early Christian missionaries who, beginning in the 19th century, set up mission stations in the country that combined Christian evangelism alongside formal schooling in purpose-built schools and churches. However, their role in adult education/literacy promotion is not well documented in the literature. The field of adult education/literacy training in Swaziland owes its roots to the efforts of voluntary bodies in the early 1960s that pioneered work in this field up to the late 1970s when the government subsumed some of these efforts under the
national budget. As pointed out, Sebenta National Institute, the national literacy agency, became a government parastatal in 1978, about the same time Rural Education Centres were established.

The earliest education reform effort was undertaken in the early seventies with the establishment of the National Education Commission in 1972, which presented its report to the government in 1975. The next effort, marked by the establishment of the National Education Reform Commission (NERCOM) in 1984, represented the second major review of the education system. The NERCOM presented its report to the government in 1985. As pointed out in Chapter 5, while the first Commission sought to review achievements towards quantitative improvements (access), the second sought to review progress towards qualitative improvements. At the time, these were considered achievable through, for example, diversification of the curriculum. These reform efforts, both tied to national development plans, articulated the government objective of making primary education universal among school-age children. They included the achievement of the universal primary education (UPE) goal by 1985, expansion of secondary education culminating in a 10-year basic education programme and development of new tertiary institutions including expansion of the local university.

Following independence (1968), tensions between royal and commoner or conservative-traditionalist and modernist elements dominated the political arena, with each group striving for control of the political apparatuses. As noted in Chapters 4 and 5, tensions among the interest groups resulted in the monarch repealing the Independence Constitution within five years of self-rule. Many political commentators believe the uncertainty that continues up till now has held back national progress, even as a series of national development plans have been developed since independence. Natural resource-based production, heavy dependence on South Africa and reliance on a single export product – sugar – characterise Swaziland’s economy. Combined, these factors translate into an under-developed industrial capacity. Less than optimal processing and/or use of available resources have led to unemployment in the country, particularly among
the youth. Adding to these problems, a large but inefficient public service, even by the
government’s account, compromised the government’s capacity to deal with these challenges.

**Primary education favoured over adult literacy education**

When the Addis Ababa Plan for African Educational Development was agreed upon by
UNESCO and some African member states in 1961, ministers of education committed their
governments to develop literacy following the dual or two-pronged strategy (UNESCO, 1961a;
Psacharopoulos, 1990). According to this approach, as described in Chapter 1, governments of
African member states were to provide universal primary education for children and promote
adult literacy education and to allocate sufficient resources to them – financial, human and
material – including teaching-learning materials to aid instruction.

Chapters 1, 2 and 5 discussed at length the rationale for the dual or two-pronged strategy
for literacy development among African countries participating in the Addis Ababa Conference
of 1961. As pointed out in Chapters 1 and 2, African Ministers of Education adopted the
strategy against a back-drop of low primary school enrolments and high rates of ‘illiteracy’
among their adult populations at the time. This should be expected given that few African
countries had re-gained their political independence at the time and, as noted elsewhere, few
African children had had access to education during the colonial era. As many literacy scholars
have argued, failure to attend and complete schooling, particularly the primary school cycle, is
likely to lead to adult ‘illiteracy’ (Craig, 1990; Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990; Thakur, 1991).

Even though no specific reference is made to the Addis Ababa Plan, it is reasonable to
assume that when the *Post-Independence Plan (1969-1973)*, noted earlier, stated that primary
(and secondary) education would be universal, free and compulsory, it was expressing
sentiments of the Addis Ababa Plan. Alongside primary education, the state would promote
adult literacy training (DEPS, 1969; Magagula, 1990). The government also declared UPE as a
national goal to be achieved by 1985, at which time it expected a 100 percent primary school enrolment. However, it was noted in Chapter 2 that the Second National Development Plan (1973-1978) modified the initial framing of the goal even before it was implemented. Primary (and secondary) education was no longer to be free and compulsory. No reasons are provided in the documents for the government change of heart or ‘retreat’, to use Klees’s (2002: 465) phrase.

A number of possible factors can explain the change of heart by the government. First, the financial implications of free UPE were either not worked out or, if they were, had been under-estimated – something that is common in the region (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990; Craig, 1990; Thakur, 1991). Even so, given the strength of the economy at the time, free primary education does not appear to have been an unachievable policy goal. Second, the statement of policy was ‘made to political lip service’ (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990) and this should be expected given that the country still had political parties and a ruling party, desperate for electoral votes, might have been tempted to portray itself as concerned with education. That said, the comment does not deny the good intentions of the government. This is the point that Psacharopoulos (1990: 20) makes, “unrealistic policies lead to reversals, even within one year”.

As pointed out in Chapter 2, access to primary education has implications for adult education in the sense that children who do not attend school or complete the primary school cycle join the ranks of low literate adults in their adulthood. And, given the economic conditions under which primary and secondary schooling is provided in Swaziland, some low literate adults are more likely to experience difficulty sending and keeping their children in school. To this extent, the dual literacy development strategy appears to simultaneously deal with the lack of literacy problem in both the young and the old.

From the findings, while the policy documents gave the initial impression that the government tried to balance provision of primary education with that of adult literacy education albeit with different emphasis between the two areas, ultimately, it became evident that it tended
to promote primary education more than it did adult literacy education. A closer examination of
the documents shows how impartial attention to the two areas presented a challenge to the
government over time. This is evident, starting with the National Development Plans to the
and Social Reform Agenda) to the National Education Policy (NEP) document. What perhaps
attempted to present a more balanced attention to the two sub-sectors were the education
commissions, particularly the second commission of 1985. So, although there was some
reference to this balance, it is clear from the documents and interviews that the government did
not maintain a balance between adult and primary education. Close examination of the
documents further revealed a number of commonalities among them to suggest bias towards
primary education:

- **Development objectives:** As pointed out in Chapter 5, explicit development objectives for
  the primary education level characterised each Development Plan, the Development
  Strategy, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the National Education Commission and
  National Education Policy.

- **Targets for primary education:** Access goals defined in terms of increasing enrolments,
  expansion in terms of building and furnishing schools, deploying adequately trained
  teachers complete with suitable accommodation and resolving efficiency matters (e.g.
  repeating grades and drop-out) characterised this level.

- **Operationalising targets:** There were budgets in terms of finance for primary education.
  However, the budgeting process was found to include the sourcing of donor/aid funding
  for adult education/literacy training work. From the analysis, and as noted in Chapters 4
  and 5, it is to this donor/aid funding that the adult literacy education programme came to
  rely to the point where the government seemed to only occasionally devolve its
  responsibility towards the adult sub-sector.

- **Legislative or statutory back-up:** The Education (Consolidation) Order 1975, Education
  Act 1981 and National Education Policy 1999 were all explicit that primary education,
  even as the documents made some reference to adult education, was a recognised state
  provision. Data show that the government allowed the Adult Education Council,
  established in terms of the Education (Consolidation) Order of 1975 to ‘falter’ and did
  not budget for its operations.

To understand the government’s apparent pre-disposition to primary education, it is
necessary to locate the source of bias by drawing on the wider literature examining state
provision of 'basic education'. Some scholars observe that many people are in favour of making it possible for children to achieve literacy and consider reading and writing skills as important to develop informed members of society. Support for free and compulsory schooling tends to be common and most governments officially support it. “Adult literacy education receives less of a unanimous endorsement” (Stromquist, 1997: 2). Some international agencies (e.g. the World Bank) argue that investments in adult literacy are less certain than those in the younger generation. Others think that adult illiteracy is a ‘leftover’ of the past whose reproduction will be avoided by greater attention to primary education. Still, others argue that adults have, in any case, developed ways of coping with their low literacy – hence the rationale for stressing child, particularly primary education so that the ‘illiteracy’ phenomenon is not reproduced. Following this logic, therefore, there is no urgency to provide adults with literacy.

Making sure that every child of school-going age attends and completes at least the primary education cycle therefore receives strong support. Improving primary schooling entails dealing with repetition in school, to early drop-out and therefore inefficiency in the education system. Developments following the Education for All (EFA) declaration agreed upon by countries in 1990 reflect the greater attention paid to early literacy (that of children). Stromquist (1997) notes how EFA set up specific activities that countries were to carry out to promote access to basic skills for all persons. Yet, its implementation has taken a different course; “it now appears that the priority by most nations and international agencies supporting this programme centres on primary education” (p. 3). Other observers have expressed similar sentiments. Thus, Atchoarena and Hite (2001) make the point that in most African countries, “literacy has become the ‘parent pauvre’ (poor relative) of educational policies. The call for basic education for all has been mainly interpreted as developing access and participation in primary schools” (p. 213). Müller (1997) makes a similar point that literacy has “played the role of the poor relative of primary schooling (p. 47). Increasing investment in literacy for a large
section of the adult population who have been excluded from the regular school system requires evidence of the educational, social and economic benefits. This is the message in the World Bank’s 1999 Education Sector Strategy (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996; Jones, 1999; Klees, 2002), among other documents. The underlying assumption, it seems, is that ‘education’ is for children.

At a deeper level, sympathetic support for primary education seems to derive from the global discourse promoting this sub-sector, within EFA, and the international agencies helping to finance it. Thus, “Primary (and secondary) education will continue to be the highest priorities in the Bank’s lending to countries that have not yet achieved universal literacy and adequate access and equity at the primary and secondary levels” (World Bank in Heyneman, 2003: 327).

As pointed out in Chapter 5, despite achievements in primary education coupled with the fact that education receives about 25 percent of the country’s recurrent budget, the education system still faces problems of access. The Swaziland National Population Council (2002: 25) observes how “Since 1993, there has been a decline in enrolment. School fees are relatively high and beyond the reach of many families. Consequently, a number of children drop out of school”.

Still, on the question of access, particularly enrolment in primary education, it is worth noting that this problem similarly affects other countries in the region. At the turn of the century, it is commonly accepted that most governments and aid agencies are concerned with and working towards the enrolment of all the world’s children in school (Caillods in Atchoarena & Hite, 2001). In Sub-Saharan Africa, the relative emphasis in official national pronouncements on access to basic educational opportunities is nearly always a high priority. As discussed above, this emphasis is not new. Present policy in many countries appears to extend or repeat the tradition of the Addis Ababa Conference and the Jomtien Conference, which put emphasis on schools. So, the Swaziland policy continues to put emphasis on that, “based on the consensus that the opportunity to simply be in school was the first threshold to pass on the way to providing quality education to all the world’s children” (Atchoarena & Hite, 2001: 214).
Swaziland has, as pointed out in Chapters 4 and 5, a relatively young population with an estimated 44 percent of the population below 15 years (Okore et al., in UNDP, 1998). By contrast, only about three percent of the population is 65 years and older. This youthful structure, as earlier noted, is the result of high fertility. Such a youthful population has an inherent momentum for further growth. Thus, notes the National Population Council (2002), “even if fertility rates were to decline to replacement level, the population would still continue to grow for some time into the future before stabilising” (p. 12). The development of education, therefore, has taken place in a context of rapid demographic growth. This phenomenon is not unique to Swaziland as about 45 percent of the African population is said to be below the age of 15. “Education and labour markets face the challenge of absorbing an increasing number of children and young people. In many cases, they are unable to meet the challenge. Their inability to do so has created an ever-growing out-of-school child population” (Atchoarena & Hite, 2001: 205).

To put high demographic growth in a literacy context, it is important to recall what has happened earlier – general high population - and what is happening now – high youth population. Any fruitful discussion of the topic therefore has to be rooted in the context of future demands on adult literacy. The question, then, is to what extent the youth education system will be adequate in the future or whether we can expect that there will be large groups that leave the schools not sufficiently literate.

Another concern with primary education has been ‘efficiency’ in terms of retention in the school system and ‘repetition’ and consequent drop-out. Full participation in primary education, through completion, is an important subject in the efficiency of Sub-Saharan African education. With financial and human resources stretched to their limits, ways in which education can be made more efficient are coming to the fore. While schools strive to maintain or increase enrolments in basic educational programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa, a gap seems to remain in
research and evaluation on why enrolment challenges persist. The example below creates a grim outlook about the participation levels in primary education in Sub-Saharan Africa. "Counting all children, whether in school or not, a six-year old boy in Africa can expect to receive, on average, not more than two years of education and girls no more than one year" (Atchoarena & Hite, 2001: 215). The social and personal effect of such inefficiency in participation in primary education is high. Non-completion should be seen for what it is; a future problem for adult literacy. As pointed out in Chapter 2, primary education need not be seen just in its own right but in the wider education context, for future adult literacy or continuing education.

The growing problem of student drop-out and repetition in formal educational systems noted above compounds the challenge of making educational systems more efficient. Pupils who enrol in school and subsequently 'drop-out' create an effect on both the educational system and the local labour markets and economies. As Atchoarena and Hite observe, "Drop-outs generate one of the largest negative influences on the efficiency of African educational systems. Nearly half of all drop-out occurs before pupils reach Grade 2. ...To ensure adequate literacy, a student needs to complete Grade 4" (p. 215). They note that many factors involved in drop-out are linked to labour force and economic influences. Elsewhere in the region, recent unemployment in South Africa has been blamed for some student drop-outs as unemployed parents could not afford to pay the required school fees. In regard to repetition, it is important to note that "each year repetition absorbs financial and human resources that could be used to bring another child into the educational system or to improve the quality of the educational experience for the rest of the students (Atchoarena & Hite, 2001: 215). Apart from educational effects, Atchoarena and Hite maintain, "repeating grades is simply inefficient in an economic sense" (Ibid.). Inefficiency in primary education whether it is in terms of drop-out or repeating grades has implications for adult literacy. Rather than view it as a problem for primary education, it is
more useful to discuss it in terms of future problems for adult literacy as primary school drop-outs “join the ranks of the illiterate” (Giere, 1994: 440).

Although results of literacy programmes are difficult to measure, it is evident that this investment has produced a positive dynamic towards educational development, which was the essence of the Addis Ababa Plan and Jomtien Declaration. In the absence of adequate monitoring and evaluation systems, it is impossible to obtain comparable and complete data for most countries in Africa. The available information suggests that situations vary according to national contexts. Besides their potential to increase the overall educational level of the population, literacy programmes can produce strong inter-generational effects. Atchoarena and Hite (2001) observe how international experience confirms the existence of a positive link between the level of education attained by parents and children’s enrolment rates. They add that these findings support the need for investing more in the education of adults, particularly women. Providing education to low-literate adults can contribute to creating positive economic and social effects for the individual learners and for the community as a whole. As they put it: “It could produce also indirect benefits for the next generation through higher attention being paid to children’s education and health” (p. 225). Based on this holistic, life-long learning approach, it should perhaps surprise no one that Atchoarena and Hite speak of literacy programmes as simultaneously contributing to adult literacy and children ‘educability’ (Ibid.).

Though problems beset primary education in Swaziland, even greater problems were found to beset adult literacy education. However, unlike the problems besetting primary education, those besetting adult literacy education are to be found in the ideological and political domains. These problems are not new if it is to be recalled that adult literacy education in Swaziland was introduced by, and for some years remained under the auspices of, voluntary bodies (e.g. Sebenta Society). Government take-over of adult literacy education coincided with aid funding; the first being that of Rural Education Centres (RECs) by the World Bank and
subsequent funding of the RECs programme by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, as pointed out in Chapters 4 and 5. Reference by the earlier National Development Plans, too, described support of the Sebenta National Institute at the time by private sector funding including funding by some international organisations. With the end of aid funding to adult literacy education and the RECs in particular these initiatives came under criticism. An internal government evaluation of the programme reported that problems confronted these Centres, with charges ranging from inadequate funding to conceptual flaws in the RECs concept to begin with (Ministry of Education, 1985). Even so, the report did not indicate the organisation responsible for the ‘ill-conception’ of the programme.

From the document and interview analysis, there have been and continue to be lapses in the promotion of adult literacy education. This study found this to be the case both in terms of adequate formulation of policy and public articulation of this policy. The lapses also included funding. As an aspect of basic education, formal adult education generally, and literacy training specifically, have received disproportionate attention from the Swazi government, contrary to the growing evidence on its potential to contribute to national development and/or nation-building. Official documents focused on formal schools and on the benefits of schooling and the earlier concern, particularly shown during the mid-1970s, to include also non-formal education had almost dissipated.

At an even deeper level, it can be argued that low literacy in Swaziland as elsewhere in the region might serve some vested interests, notably as a basis for cheap labour (Parajuli, 1990). From the perspective of a traditional village setting, this often takes the form of tribute labour made available to chiefs for the right to be allocated land on Swazi Nation Land. It includes, also, tribute labour provided to the monarchy. The chief’s and royal kraal duties (ploughing, weeding and harvesting fields or constructing and maintaining the chief’s and royal kraal or household) represent free labour to these traditional institutions (Kuper, 1997). This is the point
that Chowdhury (1995) makes about literacy; that it allows individuals to engage in occupations beyond the subsistence and unpaid sectors. From the perspective of a workplace setting, low literacy is more likely to encourage docile, uncritical acceptance of authority, unquestioning of laid-sown procedures including 'submission' to low-paid, low-skilled jobs. As noted in Chapter 2, raising the consciousness of citizens, particularly adults (Jones, 1999), about unequal social relations might trouble some governments and international agencies.

**NGOs and literacy policy formation**

Any discussion of literacy policy formation in Swaziland, as in other countries in the region, has to take into account the role played by NGOs. As noted in Chapter 1, NGOs play an important role in development generally, and in national literacy efforts, specifically. Their role in literacy policy formation can be better understood when we realise the specific groups they work with, the economically vulnerable and socially excluded (EVSE) in Swaziland, to use Bennell’s (1999) expression. Parajuli (1990: 289) captures this well when he asks: “Who are these people who have remained illiterate? Are they illiterate by choice or because of other factors beyond their control?” And, recalling the groups that benefit from the marginality of the EVSE, it is not difficult to see that the role of NGOs is received with mixed feelings from the political and bureaucratic establishment. As the interviews revealed, NGOs were at once doing a ‘commendable’ job and still some government officials were critical of their way of operating.

Chapter 5 presented and analysed the role of NGOs. The aim here is to interpret those findings. As noted in the previous chapter, many of the international NGOs are involved in policy development of the various government sectors and at the local level. In particular, the interview data showed how at times NGOs used their financial power to influence policy direction and to get things done their way. Foremost among international NGOs influencing adult education/literacy policy were UNESCO and UNICEF, while related population policy
development involved the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Lack of resources compelled the government to work closely with these international NGOs at national and local levels.

The role of NGOs in literacy policy formation should be understood against the contradictions and tensions that characterise development work, particularly the role of the state. The dilemma facing the state is compelling – simultaneously serving the needs of citizens and of international capital. So, it would seem NGOs can educate community groups but not educate them sufficiently as to make them critical of the state. The argument would seem to be that people have to be educated so they are productive workers and law-abiding citizens but not critical thinkers (Jones, 1999; Lloyd & Payne, 2003), at least from the perspective of the state.

It is not surprising, then, that Swazi policy documents stressed making sure the NGOs remained within certain guidelines. As the National Development Strategy stated: “In recognition of their presence, the government seeks to establish a legal framework and an enabling environment for NGOs to continue to assist vulnerable groups” (Prime Minister’s Office, 1997: 6). Even though censorship would be a strong word, the legal framework can be expected to protect the government image. What is often ignored in these documents and the discourse are the structural factors giving rise to the vulnerability and, therefore, marginalisation of some groups. The government is careful to structure the documents in a positive light: “Introduce measures that will support the operations of NGOs that help specific groups” (Ibid., p. 40). In sum, the findings point to a government concern with passing legislation on the operations of NGOs. Besides, the repeated reference to the fact that NGOs support disadvantaged groups is troubling. It gives the reader the wrong impression that ‘disadvantaged groups’ are a necessary and permanent social category in Swaziland, even as social disadvantage is a universal phenomenon.
To the extent that they provided resources to the groups they worked with, they were welcome, but to the extent they did not teach the ‘official knowledge’, NGOs were resisted. Chapters 4 and 5 have presented examples of incidences where there was official resistance to NGO education around political participation in public life, including national elections. Since NGOs have resources, they are able to implement programmes that they consider beneficial to the assisted groups. For that reason, the government wants to be seen to work closely with them. What is often not said is how the government in subtle ways wants to monitor the overall agenda of NGOs. This is not unique to Swaziland as others (e.g. Hall, 1989) have noted how some governments can feel unsettled over the operations of NGOs. Hall (1989) observes how “various measures have been taken or proposed in some places to exert more control over NGOs in order to make certain that they are not taking an overly active role on the political scene” (p. 576). And, this can also be expected in Swaziland given its political climate.

On a different note, a growing body of literature seems to point to an increasing disenfranchisement with literacy among the donor community (Müller, 1997). Müller observes how “literacy is regarded as a sensitive area that German, British and Japanese aid has tackled with restraint or left to NGOs” (p. 38). If literacy is a gloomy area for major donor agencies and they leave it to NGOs, it can be argued that the underlying assumptions about it are likely to be reflected in NGO implementation strategies. Given that many NGOs receive support from the major donor agencies, it is reasonable to assume that the broad agendas of these agencies influence NGO work. Even so, Hall (1989) notes how few NGOs would be willing to act as conduits for the major agencies. Although he observes that NGOs have their agendas, these are nonetheless likely to be congruent with the major agencies funding their operations. As the interviews in this study revealed, funding agencies did wield their influence in Swaziland. Hall (1989) sums this up well about NGOs: “In some countries, they claim to have broader social support than the state institutions in literacy or adult education” (p. 299).
To reduce the possibility of NGOs or other agencies distorting the national policy agenda, it is expected that the host country will have a clear direction where it wants the policies to take the country. If it is realised that “policy is more than rule-making to regulate the behaviour of the public and public institutions; that policy-making is political decision-making involving allocation of resources and that policy intentions are distributive” (Bhola, 1989: 116), NGO help will be channelled accordingly. NGOs assistance is more likely to be used gainfully when policies seek to distribute resources – education, status and power – and adult literacy education initiatives promote the distribution of educational ‘goods’ to Swazi people disadvantaged by age, class, gender or income, providing them with a second chance for improving their lives.

Primary education and adult literacy education contribute to the personal growth of the individuals participating in them and have benefits for the wider society. One of the reasons for failing to strike a balance between primary education and adult literacy education is that primary education more than adult literacy education is seen as being the foundation for human capital development. It is to the development of the human potentials that the next section frames the findings on Swaziland’s experience within larger debates on human capital development.

**Human capital development and structural inequalities**

In Chapter 5, it was noted how the argument for investing in the human capital development of Swazi people emerged as an important theme in both the documents and interviews. Even so, the data showed that the benefits of literacy were often over-stated. As the interviews have shown, literacy makes more sense when accompanied by other congenial transformation in society (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990; Freire in Mayo, 1995). In the Swazi context, the literacy programme was found to have more meaning for adult learners when linked to poverty reduction. Evidence from other studies seems to support this finding. Hickling-Hudson (2002),
Economic development is more likely to stimulate widespread literacy and higher levels of education rather than vice versa” (p. 568). The human capital argument, therefore, as captured in the documents is somewhat flawed on a number of counts. First, in the case of Swaziland as in other countries in the region, human capital development has tended to promote elite education much against the socio-economic reality of the country. Thus, despite being an agricultural economy, Swaziland’s education has not until recently stressed agricultural education. As noted above, where it has, estate-based commercial farming (sugar, cotton) has taken precedence over subsistence farming on Swazi Nation Land (SNL) where most Swazi people live. Besides, these commercial farming undertakings have largely been foreign-capital owned, mostly by British and South African interests.

Human capital development has promoted education and training (ET) preparation for waged employment in the formal sector. As pointed out in Chapter 2, the potential of vocational and technical education has not been fully explored in the country because many parents have seen academic education as the main route to social mobility (Dunne & King, 2003). The bias towards elite formal sector employment by the Swaziland government over time should be seen against the backdrop of the global discourse promoting the human capital argument. Among the international agencies, the World Bank is often cited as one agency that is responsible for spreading human capital analysis of education to less-developed countries. Thinking of students (in this case, literacy learners) as human capital is rooted in the idea that government’s goal is economic growth. In this context, education becomes a form of economic investment and, so, the value of education is measured by its contribution to economic growth (Spring, 1998).

There is a marked resemblance between the conceptions of human capital development in Swaziland as in other countries in the region and those of the international agencies promoting this notion. So, for example, in the Sub-Saharan Africa context generally and Swaziland specifically, a parallel can be observed between the World Bank’s education reforms for
‘developing’ countries and school reform in the US. This is reflected in the Bank’s key policy statement, *Priorities and Strategies for Education: A World Bank Policy Review* (1995). While denying any claims it was imposing a single curriculum on developing countries, the policy statement declared “some generalisations can be made” (World Bank, 1995: 7). The generalisations represent a particular concept of the nature of schooling that is closely linked with human capital ideas, globalisation and US school reform. After declaring that basic education “helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor, by reducing fertility and improving health” (p. 1), the report defined basic education as including “language, science and mathematics and communication that provide the foundation for further education and training”. It also includes the “development of attitudes necessary for the workplace” (Ibid., p. 2). Spring (1998) laments how “subjects such as history, literature and the arts are missing from this definition of basic education. The primary stress is on education for economic development” (p. 181). Applying this logic to Swaziland, this partly explains why SiSwati was not taught in the schools until the late 1970s because, to use the Bank’s rationale, of uncertainties about “its importance for economic development” (Ibid., p. 7).

In sum, human capital theory is influential in the government and multi-lateral agencies’ analysis of education and social policy in Swaziland. The human capital argument also came out strong in the interviews with senior government officials, employers and labour unions. As noted, earlier notions of the argument were presented in terms of human resource development, particularly of the public workforce. Later notions stress individual participation in ET so as to participate in the labour market. There are no promises of public sector employment any longer as they were made in the years following independence, for example, to localise the civil service. The government encourages ET graduates towards self-employment if they cannot find waged employment. The findings have shown how the human capital language therefore can be seen to be gradually shifting more responsibility for employment away from the state to the individual.
The shift mirrors the neo-liberal ideology that stresses individual responsibility and this notion appeared to inform much of the recent human capital arguments. The arguments of scholars drawing attention to the alienating effects of schools as presently constituted (Lauglo, 1996; Hickling-Hudson, 2002), that is, moving the focus away from the land to urban centres, away from self-contained, small-scale farming enterprises to large-scale estate agriculture and commercial crops, are missing from the main human capital argument.

While strong supporters of the human capital argument might be reluctant to admit its flaws, others argue that admitting these does not prove false the argument of the potential benefits of education. Hickling-Hudson (2002) explains: “What it does is to refuse to mislead people and feed false hopes by making sweeping and unproven correlations between a particular model of education and particular benefits” (p. 568).

It is perhaps on these and other points that the human capital argument is criticised in the literature reviewed in this research. The wider educational literature provides similar critiques. This study also critiqued the dominant notions of human capital development in the context of poverty, starting with its postulations about the nature and causes of poverty and how it may be reduced in Swaziland as elsewhere in the region.

**Poverty**

Poverty represents an important barrier to human development in Swaziland. From the data analysis, more than two-thirds of Swazi people lived in poverty. However, this life-threatening situation is not unique to Swaziland when it is considered that it manifests in most Sub-Saharan African countries. Atchoarena and Hite (2001), for example, note how today, “more than two in five persons in Sub-Saharan Africa are income poor. Data indicate that 42 percent of the population lives on less than $1 per day, representing 220 million poor people” (p. 203). Apart from being the only region where poverty is increasing in both absolute numbers of poor people
and relative to the population, it is one region manifesting great inequalities. While it is not safe
to generalise, it is reasonable to assume that education remains one of the most important
institutions for breaking both poverty and social exclusion. Yet, Atchoarena and Hite (2001: 203) argue that empirical data are required to provide evidence on key questions such as: “What role does education play in the generation or the reduction of inequalities? How important is education as a mechanism of differentiation and stratification?” Even though further evidence is required to support the claims, “it is generally accepted that good relevant education plays an important role in enlarging people’s choices through individual empowerment, notably for women” (Psacharopoulos, cited in Atchoarena & Hite, 2001: 203).

Most government documents analysed attributed poverty to a lack of skills that some people had preventing them from taking advantage of government services, including education and health. Swaziland has no well-developed social welfare system; education and health are not free in the country. Where these basic social services for a less-developed country like Swaziland were subsidised by the state, the level of subsidy was small. As well, state subsidies in the health sector had been reduced in the 1990s and user fees introduced. As the interviews revealed, health care costs had negatively affected public access to the health facilities by some poor households, placing their health and livelihood at risk. The voices pointing at structural forces inhibiting people from accessing these services are often not captured. This is to be expected from documents of a government and agencies that boost education and health as worthwhile investments. Here, again, the neo-liberal ideology could be seen to be at work as individuals were implicitly being required to be ‘on their own’ once the state had put the education or health facilities in place. What this argument missed, however, was that the enabling environment had not been provided - such as in adequate low- to high-skilled employment opportunities to pay education fees or health costs. This shows how powerful the international discourses can be for governments in less-developed countries which propose and
sometimes introduce policy reform without paying due attention to the inherent implications of such reforms for the different social groups.

An interesting similarity between the multi-lateral agencies and the government is that while the agencies were often critical of the government in its manner of co-ordination, implementation and monitoring of policies and strategies including the capacity to do so, they too were not commenting much about structural obstacles. In a sense, their criticisms were technical in nature when the underlying problems around poverty in Swaziland are largely structural. Intentional or inadvertent neglect of the structural causes of poverty translated into pre-occupation with attending to its symptoms. This is to be expected since to tackle the causes of poverty involves structural transformation in the relations of production that are skewed against the economically vulnerable and socially excluded (EVSE) in society (Bennell, 1999). It is less likely that the dominant mainstream groups would be willing to alter these relations. Giere (1994) makes the point that even as adult education publications foresee that adult education will increase competitiveness in world labour markets, there is little evidence in the literature to support claims that there are economic benefits for those outside the ‘inner social circle’. Bhola (1994) makes a similar point: “The political elite dealing with adult education may be lacking political will. The policy-makers may not have the necessary commitment to seek to build a national consensus; some of them may be subverting the policy they are supposed to support” (p. 318).

At a deeper level, Müller’s (1997) account of donor agencies’ difficulties with literacy is particularly telling. Examining donors’ concern with adult literacy, he observes how ‘murky’ the field has become for donor agencies. Partly, the difficulty stems from the many positive claims made for literacy (Wagner, 1995) that, over time, were found to be untenable. One of these claims concerned the belief that literacy was the first step to development as captured in the ‘40 percent threshold’ that Anderson (1965) posited, as pointed out in Chapter 2. Later
studies, on the other hand, showed that literacy is only one phase in a process of ‘learning throughout life’ but it is not necessarily the first phase or the first step in a development process focussing on poverty reduction. Literacy is “potential added”, to borrow from Bhola (in Müller, 1997: 60) and can come at a later date when people are prepared for literacy. This is in stark contrast to the human capital argument portraying literacy as the pre-requisite for development.

If the proposition that literacy is neither the only phase in a process of life-long learning nor the first step in a development process is accepted, it is reasonable to argue that it has to support other aspects of development, a point that Mills (2002) has stressed, as already noted. As Mills has argued, a vibrant economy creates demand for literacy skills of particular kinds and levels and not the other way round. The data, too, revealed how literacy often made sense when linked to the participants’ most pressing problems which, at the time of the study, was poverty.

More importantly, "literacy implies a process of conscietisation and empowerment combined with the delivery of practical knowledge and skill-building" (Müller, 1997: 60). This point is at the heart of Freire’s (1970) notion of literacy ‘as political empowerment’. The ‘conscietisation’ and ‘empowerment’ potential and role of literacy finds expression in much of the work of Nyerere (1982) on ‘education for self-reliance’ in Tanzania, in Jones’s (1990) work on ‘UNESCO and the politics of global literacy’ and his 1999 work on ‘literacy and international development policy’. From the literature and the analysis of this study, many governments and international agencies supporting such programmes are likely to down-play the awareness-raising effects of literacy preferring, instead, to concentrate on its social and economic effects. They are likely to see its role in terms of socialising the learners, stressing literacy’s contribution to economic production.

A useful discussion of poverty in Swaziland, as elsewhere, has to examine not merely statistics of poor people but more importantly the conditions of the population groups most
affected by poverty in terms of age, class or gender. One such group is women. It is to their conditions that we now turn to gender inequality.

**Gender inequalities**

An important variable on Swaziland’s poverty situation relates to participation in the economy along gender lines. The following discussion examines participation in ET and the labour market based on male and female participation rates. Even so, the analysis focuses on the ET and poverty situation of women. The discussion is organised around three main themes: access, treatment and attainment, the notion of ‘educational outcomes’ (Bennell, 1999: 10). The analysis draws from the literature, the socio-political and economic background on Swaziland, documentary evidence and interviews. The interesting thing about gender is that it does not come out (at least strong enough) in the results. While the documents made reference to it, the interviews did less so. As an aspect of poverty, gender inequality scarcely appeared.

First, it is recognised that the literature (e.g. Brown, 1999) examines the subject of women participation in ET and labour market including established beliefs about that participation. So, for example, Brown notes “the entry of women into arenas of ET and employment previously restricted to men” (2001: 239), considering it as a positive development. He regards this fundamental change in the role of women in society. It is of interest to note, however, that it is mostly middle class women in Swaziland that have made in-roads into what have hitherto been spheres of male influence. These are an exception rather than the norm.

The objective here is to expand the analysis beyond Brown’s (1999, 2001) framework, particularly because working class women dominated programmes around which this study was carried out. Apart from the learners, the instructors too were mainly working class women. The analysis draws on a critical, feminist perspective to examine these matters, particularly the work of Prins (2001), Purcell-Gates and Waterman (2000) and Stromquist (1997). These authors seek
to illuminate the possibilities and limitations for literacy to contribute to women's empowerment initially and social change. Most of the work is based in the context of a less-developed region - Latin America. Even so, much of what they say is relevant to Swaziland. Adopting a critical, feminist perspective these authors believe that "literacy education should equip women to develop a sense of self, exercise power in relationships and work with others to solve collective problems" (Prins, 2001: 56). By contrast, the Swaziland context has been found to produce among women a sense of 'self' defined in dominant male terms; relationships are already structured in male terms in nearly all structures of society (family, school, church or workplace). As many women find out, it is difficult to work with others in women movements because these are resisted in many quarters of the male political establishment.

Women outnumber men in the population (53%, 1997 Census) and in literacy programmes (58% in 2003). However, as pointed out, patriarchy is institutionalised in all spheres of Swazi society, that is, within the family, education and religion. The ruling class has mystified the gender struggle. This should be expected given that women's oppression plays a role in the accumulation of capital for both international and local interests and has contributed in maintaining the status quo. Commentators on gender matters argue that the struggle for women's liberation has to be understood as a component of the class struggle and that empowerment efforts need to tackle the gender question in relation to the economy, to how society relates to production and the role of women. The struggle against women's oppression, they contend, has to be understood not as a struggle between men and women or be mystified as an abstract struggle existing outside the sphere of daily practice or specifically directed at the family but as "part of a larger class struggle" (SYC, 2002: 107), against 'domesticity' (Booth, 1992). Given its prevalence, some (Schmidt, 1992) argue that the struggle for gender equality needs to reach out to other countries in the region.
There are unpaid family workers too that mostly include women (CSO, 2001). Included under this category of unpaid family work is household production not reported in national accounting systems. This has the effect of making most work undertaken by women ‘invisible’ and therefore of no ‘economic value’. Sikoska (2003) makes the point that failure to recognise unpaid family or household work creates an incomplete account of productive activities within an economy. She laments how, particularly in ‘developing’ countries, “work, when done in the household, remains largely unrecognised by governments, men and women themselves” (p. 124).

In the Swazi context, an industrially-underdeveloped country, failure to recognise the value of household activities is a serious flaw given that these represent an important contribution to the national economy. The invisibility of unpaid household production in national statistics and the lack of recognition of its economic value represent the main factors maintaining women’s inequality. Some note how women working in the household are often regarded as ‘doing nothing’; they are housewives without a profession and are passive dependents upon ‘male’ bread-winners. So, constructed social relationships based on women’s subordination to men are reproduced in all other facets of human life (Brown, 2001: 260; Sikoska, 2003: 124).

Employing critical and feminist analysis, these authors argue that literacy is primarily a gender subject; therefore, it should equip women to confront oppression and create a more just society. It is of interest to note that the programmes these scholars studied were termed ‘Freirean’, yet none centred on gender matters. Weiler (in Mayo, 1995) makes a similar point; that among the limitations of Freire’s pedagogy is “his representation of the ‘oppressed’ as a unitary subject” (p. 364). The authors dismiss individualistic approaches that pay little attention to the structural causes of low-literacy and instrumentalist (technicist) approaches that use
women’s literacy to “foster economic growth, reduce population growth and other approaches that tend to reinforce women’s traditional roles” (Prins, 2001: 56).

While the Swazi literacy programme stressed literacy as a remote set of technical skills, was gender-neutral and concentrated on individual motivation and constraints, authors promoting a critical, feminist perspective perceive literacy as a social practice, underline the need for gender awareness in literacy training and analyse the individual along structural constraints that inhibit women from attaining literacy. Stressing these themes, argues Prins (2001), “enables educators to show how these concepts operate in programmes and in women’s lives and reveal how outcomes often do not reflect policy makers’ expressed ‘emancipatory’ ideals” (p. 59).

From the analysis, the extent to which the literacy programme had been designed based on the Freirean notion of literacy as a ‘liberating’ experience remained a debatable point. As pointed out in Chapter 5, respondents argued that they merely taught technical literacy skills because learners were not politically motivated. Where they were, they did not imagine any political alternatives. It should not surprise anyone, therefore, when Stromquist notes how “studies that have examined the implementation of Freirean pedagogy have largely found that dialogue is difficult to achieve” (in Prins, 2001: 61). As she found in the Latin American context noted above, women’s increased literacy skills led to important psychological growth, but unable to maintain its literacy practices, MOVA (Movimiento de Alfabetizacão de Jovens e Adultos) had mixed success (in Prins, 2001: 57). Given that literacy does not “make women ipso facto more powerful, educators should balance gender and class analysis”, concludes Stromquist (1997: 21). If anything, this shows how literacy programmes in these countries remain situated at the level of ‘individual defects’ rather than centred on ‘structural constraints’. As pointed out in Chapters 4 and 5, in the Swaziland context, structural constraints include the patriarchal nature of Swazi
society and the minority status of women, rooted both in statutory and customary law and in religion (Christianity or Islam).

In Swaziland, literacy instructors had little scope to teach the 'other' curriculum based on their moral commitment to 'empowering' literacy. Interview data revealed that they chose to teach the official curriculum, which is consistent with what others have observed elsewhere. This is the point that Sparks & Butterwick (2004) make that, “as agents of the state, ‘teachers’ are expected to morally and economically socialise adult/literacy learners into the dominant culture” (p. 284). From the findings (documentary and interview data), the role of women had not necessarily changed in Swaziland. Where it had, it had changed for few women and this was an exception rather than the rule.

A critical, feminist perspective allows policy analysts to move beyond concern with the ‘numbers’ of women participating in literacy programmes (access or the ‘add and stir’ liberal feminist approach) to raising questions of treatment noting that their special conditions (having time off for literacy classes), what they learn and what they achieve at the end of the programme (outcome) including the manner that attainment changes their social standing in a positive way, broadly conceived. It also involves moving beyond impressions with ‘increasing numbers’ of women participating in the labour market to examining the kinds of jobs they do, the treatment they receive at the workplace including provisions (if any) made for performance of their ‘traditional’ roles. The analysis has to investigate the prospects that exist for women’s career advancement vis-à-vis men in comparable occupations.

Resource scarcity, the post-colonial state and the failure of public policy

In examining the effect of government policy capacity on successes and failures, two definitional matters have to be resolved: the meaning of success and failure as regards policy implementation and the interpretation to be given the term ‘educational policy’. About the former, it is perhaps
tempting to think of implementation in either or terms: either a policy is implemented or it is not. Craig (1990) cautions policy analysts to guard against this pitfall and argues that few policies are implemented as originally intended. Yet there are probably few formally adopted policies that have no effects in practice or that have effects totally unrelated to or inconsistent with the original intention. Therefore, it is more appropriate to think of success and failure as ends of a continuum and be willing to assess policies in terms of levels of implementation. It is also important to recognise that a policy can be over-implemented, in the sense that its targets are over-fulfilled. With respect to education in Africa, Craig (1990) cites the unplanned increases in expenditure on schooling as typical examples. For present purposes and like Psacharopoulos (1989, 1990), Craig, too, considers over-fulfilment of policy objectives, similar to under-fulfilment, as “partial failure of implementation” (1990: 10).

Concerning the term ‘educational policy’, this section adopts a broad interpretation. As Craig (1990) defines it, “any formally adopted policy with implications for education, spanning minor innovations bearing on the internal efficiency of schools to wholesale curricular reforms and five-year plans for human resource development, has been considered eligible for consideration” (p. 10). This comprehensive approach is favoured because it seems preferable to make a mistake on the side of inclusiveness (Craig, 1990) and with a view to expanding the size and variety of the literature reviewed.

In discussing the effect of government policy capacity on successes and failures, it is perhaps useful to examine the state of the economic resources available to the government and to see how these set a limit for it. From the findings, it was clear that resources were scarce relative to the national needs to which they could be applied. This, again, is not unique to Swaziland as it characterises much of Sub-Saharan Africa. It is common for politicians and bureaucrats to blame failure to implement policies on resource constraints. Even so, it is dangerous to accept such claims uncritically. While shortages of monetary and other material resources often are the
immediate causes of implementation failures (Craig, 1990), it is important for analytical purposes to distinguish between those constraints that could have been foreseen and those that are unpredictable. In the former category could be placed instances in which resource difficulties occur because of mistakes at the design stage; because important costs have been ignored, because of unjustified optimism about domestic or foreign funding or because of inappropriate budgeting procedures (Stock in Craig, 1990). In this category, also, belong those instances in which financial difficulties occur because governments do not adhere to targets set for enrolments or for per-pupil expenditures. Craig cautions that “we should focus on resource constraints only when resources that have been promised or could realistically be projected have failed to materialise” (1990: 41).

Viewed this way, the problem of not enough resources is the starting point for Swaziland. These resource constraints have had an important effect on the implementation of educational policies in the country, as in Africa generally. Adding to these problems are instances where donor agencies have been slow to honour their pledges and therefore delayed implementation of particular projects or reforms. There are just not enough resources (broadly defined to include financial and human) to implement any major reforms. What is often a problem is that the government goals are not in balance with the resources. The discrepancy between what the government wants to do and what actually is possible to do with the level of resources and is sometimes difficult to recognise that. Craig (1990) notes how African governments, responding to a shift in the political climate or in the economic situation, have not followed through on funding commitments. Even so, education appears to have done rather well in the competition for resources. To use one indicator, in many countries education has been the only sector in which actual budget allocations have exceeded the levels projected by five-year plans. As noted in Chapter 5, the Swaziland data bear out this observation. Reflecting the broad popular commitment to education characterising much of Sub-Saharan Africa, however, private and
community resources have often been mobilised to fill the funding gap. All of this would seem to suggest that the focus should initially be on resource constraints when attempting to explain successes and failures of policy implementation including co-ordination.

The success or failure to implement policies and strategies as planned in Swaziland as elsewhere depends also on the policy capacity of the government. That, in a sense, reflects on the relevant skills of the policy planners to steer the economy [back] to a favourable growth path, including restoring employment for the majority of people presently out of work, other factors being held constant. From the documents and by the government's analysis, it is reasonable to argue that there were lapses in the government's policy capacity to implement policies. While many of the policies and strategies designed to bring about development were sound on paper, the extent to which they were implemented did not match this robustness.

Starting with the National Development Plans of the late 1960s through the 1980s, it is now generally accepted that some of the objectives and strategies remained on paper and were never implemented. The government goal of universal primary education is a case in point as all the four 5-year National Development Plans mention implementing universal primary education, but up until now, it has not been implemented. None of the Plans explain the reason for this. Passing remarks have occasionally been made to population growth as an explanatory factor but it was never directly cited as the reason for not implementing the universal primary education goal. Nor do the documents cite lack of resources as the reason for non-implementation. It is reasonable to assume lack of political will and vested interests, as noted, could be the explanatory factors. Similarly, support for adult education and literacy training has been assured in most documents but seldom backed with concrete measures of support. This speaks therefore to government capacity and, indirectly, its political commitment to implement these policies.
The administrative state

Perceptions about lack of policy co-ordination by the government might best be understood by locating the discussion in the larger African context over time. Deficiencies of government in post-colonial Africa have been said to have their roots in an important tension between the ambitious ends commonly pursued and the conservative and often inflexible procedures used. What might explain the inappropriate procedures? If the answer does not lie in the nature of bureaucracies, attention should focus in two general directions: on the legacy of administrative practices during the colonial era and on the effects of a weak post-colonial state and its concern with control legitimacy. Craig (1990) portrays colonial African governments as accustomed to the provision of ‘good’ but limited government. Through ‘rational’ administrative procedures super-imposed on still relatively stable traditional societies, they sought to maintain law and order, to provide basic services and to raise the revenues required to support these activities. Except at the end of the colonial period, they were not structured or disposed to respond to popular pressures and did little to promote development including educational development. In summary, African colonies represented what Craig (1990: 44) calls “the ‘administrative state’, the state in which public officials are dominant and pre-occupied with control rather than with service or promoting change”.

Elsewhere Bhola (1994) has posited that co-ordination is an exercise in politics, adding that it takes time and effort. “Even when people are willing to co-ordinate, they may not have the resources to do so” (p. 328). This helps to show how resources, as already pointed out, are central to the co-ordination process. Even so, argues Bhola, “without clear policy visions and without institutions to implement its mission, adult education work will remain misdirected” (p. 332). It will be noted that financial and human resources seem key to successful co-ordination.

From the preceding discussion, it can be observed why policy co-ordination has been found to be lacking in Swaziland despite elaborate policy documents designed to guide
development and span all the sectors of the economy. Lack of policy co-ordination largely reflected more complex questions located at the higher political and economic level. Where resources were available as they often were, lack of co-ordination reflected a weak policy capacity of the government. By its account, it had a large but inefficient public service, implying a lack of capacity to co-ordinate, implement and monitor policies and programmes.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions emerge from the discussion and interpretation of the findings in light of the broader literature on literacy formation and on adult education/literacy formation policies. These concern (a) the extent to which Swaziland is unique in the region, (b) the false promise of human capital theory and (c) the prospects of literacy formation in Swaziland.

First, the fee-paying policy works against the stated policy goal of widening access. Swaziland is one of the few countries in the region that have still not made basic education, particularly primary education, universal, free and compulsory much against the resolution of the Addis Ababa Conference to which it participated and the Jomtien Declaration to which it is a signatory. As well, all development plans developed since independence re-iterate the UPE goal.

The country, therefore, remains at odds with the dual challenge of providing universal primary education for children and promoting adult literacy education. It has not achieved 100 percent primary school enrolment 40 years after the Addis Ababa Conference and 30 years after the government goal of achieving UPE by 1985 following the recommendation of the National Education Commission it had appointed, as noted in Chapter 5. While Swaziland has no reason to be complacent, it is worth remarking that no African country has attained universal primary education. Swaziland is not promoting adult literacy education on a massive scale as expected in the Addis Ababa Plan, to which it participated 40 years ago.
The research revealed that the infrastructure is in place for literacy efforts. Even so, implementing programmes and sustaining the initial momentum have remained challenges. The non-governmental sector, increasingly critical of government hegemony and bureaucracy, insists even if in subtle ways on more autonomy to run programmes. The study also described the barriers that some women participants face, which prevents their full and continued participation.

Swaziland is unique in some details of its case. Its broad circumstances are comparable to those of other less-developed countries trying to promote their development and doing so to a considerable extent by means of help from international agencies. The country's circumstances are also different in an important way. It has political structures often suspect to maintaining present conditions rather than bringing about progressive change.

Swaziland's national development plans are couched in the language of human capital theory. The drawbacks of that theory are relatively well known (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996; Hackling-Hudson, 2002; Klees, 2002; Heyneman, 2003). Some of the critiques of that theory were discussed in Chapter 2 while others were noted in Chapter 5. Critics have argued that the theory may be more appropriate to highly-developed countries than to less-developed countries; that it pays little attention to crucial factors and that its portrayal of human resource development (HRD) as a 'win-win' scenario can be misleading. These criticisms appear to be justified by the case of Swaziland. Governments appear to have adopted the rhetoric of development without an analysis of what potential the country has for the kind of development envisaged in that rhetoric. Development in a country which is geographically defined (land-locked), resource-poor, agriculturally weakened and newly independent may need to be conceived differently than in highly-developed countries with established social infrastructure and industrial and commercial interests. In adopting for its development plans the rhetoric of human capital theory, the Swazi government may have made false promises (if not under illusion) about what could be achieved.
A nation's education and training system cannot be understood as something separate and alone (isolated from the economic, historical, political and social context). It is part of and influenced by a complex range of economic and social conditions, external factors and internal conditions. The extent to which the promises and aspirations articulated for education and training in Swaziland's policy documents have not been realised (even by government's analysis) can be explained from many viewpoints. Some improvements may be made by simple means. Most improvements will require important re-thinking not only of the system and what it can achieve but also of the political, economic and social context in which it lies. The re-thinking might include consideration of what 'development' means for countries such as Swaziland as they seek to improve their potential in the industrial (traditional) en route to a post-industrial economy.

In light of the complexities of the situation, the findings would seem to suggest that literacy efforts in Swaziland have the best hope of succeeding as a participatory people's movement, with the active involvement of diverse sections of society. An expanded vision drawing upon theoretical and applied research might be required as Swazi adult education attempts to determine how adult literacy efforts can become part of the larger goal of social transformation.

Even so, a collective effort located in social movements operating in non-formal education (NFE) settings (given that the provision of formal education tends to fall directly under government) can bring about some change. In other words, there might be room for manoeuvring in NFE settings. This is the point Torres (in Mayo, 1995) makes, that: "This autonomy is mostly enjoyed in NFE and it is more evident in pre-revolutionary processes. The educational work carried out by the revolutionary...movements in Cuba and Nicaragua provides examples of this assertion" (p. 99, 371). The social movements include social formations: civic organisations or women's movements or political movements. Together, they form the full
armour of the ‘cultural revolution’, to use Freire’s (1970: 131) phrase. Still, the extent to which non-formal education can stimulate social and political transformation hinges on the political state; an acknowledgement that Freire (in Mayo, 1995) makes. Naturally, “in countries governed by repressive authoritarian regimes, counter-hegemonic activity would be viewed with hatred. The repressive state apparatus would be called upon to trample it underfoot” (Mayo, 1995: 371).

In summary, the findings of this study have revealed that a multiple set of changes are required to bring about a more just and literate society: political, economic, cultural and educational (e.g. in reference to a supply of generic educational skills). It remains difficult to identify the agency to deliver these changes; one that is willing and able to push for change within the existing conditions in the country.

With this weight of evidence and despite the commitments made in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1961 and in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and ratified in Dakar, Senegal in 2000, it is clear that the Swazi government marginalises adult education in general and literacy training in particular in terms of both public policy and funding. The final chapter, immediately following, considers the implications of these conclusions for policy and research among those involved in the adult education/literacy training system in the country, and offers some hope for changes in the future.
Chapter 7

Discussion of Findings, Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to examine literacy formation in Swaziland, particularly among low literate adults. Four broad questions guided the research, namely: (1) How has Swazi literacy policy reflected the dual challenge of providing universal primary education (UPE) for children and promoting adult literacy education? (2) How have notions of human capital development and alternative perspectives played out in the Swazi national literacy policy? (3) How have international NGOs influenced Swazi state literacy policy formation? (4) What factors specific to the political economy of Swaziland account for the particular successes and failures of literacy formation in the Swazi case?

The research employed a range of data collection techniques. During fieldwork in Swaziland, the researcher consulted the documentary record to examine the formulation and implementation of adult education/literacy policy and, generally, how adult literacy education developed historically in the country. Formal interviews were carried out with government officials, representatives of business employers and labour unions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), professional associations and intellectuals (or academics) connected with education/adult education policy development in Swaziland.

The findings of this study suggest that a number of themes might be important in explaining literacy formation in Swaziland, particularly among low literate adults. The major findings of this research include the challenge of balancing provision of primary education with promoting adult literacy education, the dominant role of human capital development in understandings of development and poverty and considerations of gender balance in discussions of poverty. Other findings include the effect of government policy capacity on particular successes and failures of literacy formation in Swaziland.
This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses research findings within larger policy and research discussions, the second draws implications for policy and offers specific policy recommendations to the Swaziland government and to NGOs, respectively; and the last section provides directions for the future.

**Situating findings in the literature**

The general discussion of the findings of this study is organised around three broad themes, namely education as high profile, but low priority, re-visiting the influence of NGOs on literacy policy formation in Swaziland and re-envisioning adult ‘illiteracy’ as structural inequality.

**Education as high profile, but low priority**

The first chapter of this thesis noted how the Swaziland government, like others in the region, committed itself to providing universal free primary education alongside promotion of adult literacy education. Throughout this study, therefore, an analysis of the dual strategy for literacy development has been one main theme cutting across parts of the dissertation. While on the surface, the subject of universal free primary education appears as though it were merely a question of implementation or no implementation, close examination reveals that it is not all that simple; it is not that it is *either* the policy is implemented *or* it is not. Analysis of universal free primary education would benefit from an examination of why and how to implement universal free primary education. The why helps to answer the how part of the question. More importantly, analysis should consider the vested, deep-seated political and economic interests among the elite in Swaziland. There are political gains to the government in terms of its international image if it implements universal free primary education. The mere announcement of universal free primary education is ‘positive press’ for the government both within the country
and, as noted in Chapter 6, internationally, through agencies such as UNESCO and the country’s signing on to declarations such as Education for All (EFA).

What is perhaps more interesting about this finding is the extent to which universal free primary education is perceived as a subject of national importance in the educational and political arenas. From the data gathered for this study, it is clear that universal free primary education did not emerge as a national education topic of great importance. Among the national education symposia, too, none has set to bring to the fore universal free primary education. Nor has universal free primary education featured in major national political debates over education in the same way the economy has. The closest reference to it is when it is observed that some children cannot attend or remain in school long enough because of financial need. With the advent of HIV/AIDS, it is convenient to blame the epidemic on stretched resources among family households and within government. However, to use HIV/AIDS as an excuse is to overlook the fact that financial need has been a problem for some families long before the HIV/AIDS epidemic. To sum up, the extent to which universal free primary education is a national issue or concern in the educational and political establishment has been, like the population growth issue noted in Chapters 4 and 5, debatable.

Then, there is the subject of adult literacy education which, like universal free primary education, has not garnered enough support, but perhaps for different reasons. As noted in Chapter 6, slow progress in this sector derives from the wider international discourse promoting or criticising it over time. There appears to be a parallel in the development of adult literacy education in Swaziland and in other parts of the world. In particular, the coincidence of World Bank support of Rural Education Centres in the mid-1970s ties in well with the world-wide stepping up of efforts to promote adult and non-formal education (NFE) in the less-developed world by international agencies. This is what Müller (1997) calls “the NFE fashion in the seventies and eighties” (p. 41). It is not surprising, then, to observe such efforts in Swaziland.
Historically, these NFE efforts appear to correspond with the publication of Phillip Coombs and Ahmed Manzoor's *Attacking Rural Poverty: How Non-formal Education Can Help* (1974), a research report prepared for the World Bank. Though there is not enough evidence, it is reasonable to assume that Phillip Coombs' earlier work, *The World Education Crisis* (1968) might have inspired these Swazi NFE efforts. His work cast doubt on the capacity of education systems generally and formal education systems specifically to cope with the world's problems at the time and predicted a world crisis. In a sense, these crises may have been a blessing in disguise as they prompted attention to adult and non-formal education. To be considered here is the extent to which the funding of Rural Education Centres (RECs) was a Swaziland government initiative or that it happened to fall along developments in the region. The RECs programme was not specific to Swaziland. At the time, the World Bank supported this programme in other parts of Africa (e.g. Burkina Faso and Ghana). World Bank efforts aside, the mere fact that the 1970s marked the UN Second Development Decade (1971-80), Experimental World Literacy Programme and the launch of the Edgar Faure *Education Commission Report* (1972) implied increased support to the newly emerging 'developing' countries (Hall, 1989; Heyneman, 2003). In Swaziland, the legacy of missionary and metropolitan governments network of western-type schools and limited access to education remains. It can be noted, therefore, that perceived failure of one system helped to shift attention, focus and resources to another area.

Given the world efforts to support adult education/literacy, the Swaziland government has had short-lived experience supporting this field from national resources even when the international community had laid the foundation. As this study has shown, the adult education/literacy programme in Swaziland has for a long time depended on donor/aid support. It is not surprising that the government should be bold to attribute problems around sustainability of the rural education centres' programme to reduced donor/aid funding.
To speculate on the reasons for the government's seeming indifferent attitude towards the adult education/literacy field, it is helpful to think of it in terms of who benefits from 'illiteracy' rather than think of adult 'illiteracy' merely as a deprivation. Framed this way, the main barrier to literacy development is a political issue at the global and national levels. That is, the decision to make resources available to literacy is political. The problem of 'illiteracy' hangs on power relations between the centre and the periphery at the global and national levels, aided by dependency relations and uneven resources between the North and the South. At the global level, colonial rule and exploitation flourished on denying education to colonised people. In the post-colonial era, global illiteracy serves rich countries, including former colonial powers, by helping them maintain their economic and political stronghold over poor countries with high illiteracy rates. Trans-national corporations also benefit from illiteracy. Illiterate adults in less-developed countries deep in poverty form a cheap source of labour that produces huge profits. Some (Kassam, 1989) argue the pattern of beneficiaries from illiteracy repeats itself at the national level. Those who benefit from illiteracy include the political and economically powerful – the aristocracy, landlords, money-lenders, corporate employers, male household heads, village chiefs and politicians.

Throughout its history, literacy has been hated and literacy has been hoped for. To tackle 'illiteracy' requires what Parajuli (1990) terms an 'epistemic break' from the central ideas about knowledge, state and development. The relations between development, literacy and the state have to be re-examined. For illiteracy derives from a complex web of contradictory tensions between knowledge and power, the state and the people marginalised by developmentalist policies. The role of the state is somewhat paradoxical as its inherent contradictions to at once 'enlighten' its citizens and to supply 'cheap' and 'docile' labour to international capital mean it cannot deliver desired literacy programmes to adults marginalised by state development policies.
To balance primary education with adult literacy education might require a policy of lifelong education that first widens access to initial, child education; creates a lifelong motivation to learn. Some (Bélanger, 1991) argue that a lifelong education policy is also a policy for further training tailored to adults, providing them with various training prospects including literacy.

An understanding of Swaziland’s education and training system requires going beyond government documentary data that might give a distorted impression about the real picture. Policy documents analysed depict a nation emerging from a colonial past and creating a series of growth-oriented national development plans. They present a number of impressive growth-oriented plans for the development of the education system and a set of statistical indices that show growth in budget allocations to education/adult education and in educational enrolments.

It is by closer examination of these data and by an analysis of interview data from informative or knowledgeable officers that a more accurate representation comes out. There is no denying that progress has been made in the provision of education in the past 35 years. There is no question also that the officers interviewed recognised that the government is committed (however defined) to the development of a ‘relevant-skilled’ workforce and that it is providing maximum support, even as resources may be limited than it would like. They also recognise support in many other forms. Even so, it is evident that there is a gap between what has been promised (ideal) concerning education/adult education and what has been delivered (reality).

From the preceding paragraphs, it is evident that understanding of the dual strategy for literacy development requires transcending the false dichotomies of primary education versus adult literacy education, high or low socio-economic returns to investing in either field and the ‘future’ or ‘older’ generations’. Instead, an examination of how the two areas complement each other as noted in Chapter 1 rather than compete for attention and resources is required. It might then be useful to perceive them as lying along a continuum; with neither sub-sector being ‘the’ important one. What is required is a rather delicate balancing act that governments can put
together, weighing the strengths and weaknesses of each option, to meet the needs of both sub-sectors given the limited resources Sub-Saharan African governments in particular have to operate within.

This study challenges the separate distinctions between primary and adult literacy education, including the basic distinction that is often made to justify different approaches to adult literacy education in the educational literature. Given this challenge to categorisation of learners as primary or adult literacy education participants, it would appear that since most people participate in learning at some point in their lives, everyone is a 'participant' to some extent. It also challenges the 'management-by-crisis' that is often applied to adult literacy education. While publicity can draw attention to a poverty crisis threatening the lives of many people (Nusbaum, 2000), there is no equivalence in adult literacy education. It would be unethical to promote a crisis only to make adult literacy education more visible.

**Re-visiting the influence of NGOs in literacy policy formation**

The role of NGOs in literacy policy formation in Swaziland has been discussed at length in Chapters 5 and 6. The intention here is to make overall comments in light of their international, regional and national involvement. Some authors (Hall, 1989) have observed that NGOs have agendas of their own in addition to facilitating the national agenda of host countries. From the findings of this study, however, it can be argued that the agendas of NGOs would be a reflection of the international agencies that, in the first place, fund NGOs operations in the host countries.

As pointed out, interests of major funding agencies are likely to drive these agendas and, in the process, influence national policy direction. Nieuwenhuis (1996) makes the point that aid in general and aid for education in particular has always been controversial. NGOs provide a form of aid to the country but in the process, implicitly promote agendas of international agencies. As he observes, "World Bank policy tends to influence bilateral and multi-lateral
donors alike. No Sub-Saharan African country can, therefore, ignore the policy guidelines recommended by the World Bank” (p. 130).

Re-envisioning adult ‘illiteracy’ as structural inequality

With regard to human resource development (HRD), the key finding is that all education and training in the country has been informed by the wisdom of human capital theory in terms of why and with what consequences the education and training received would result in good jobs, improved health or low fertility, among others. It is of interest to note how the human capital argument has evolved over time. Earlier, the stress was on higher education including adult and non-formal education. Even so, rate of return analyses considered ‘educated’ people only as valuable through their higher earnings and greater tax revenues generated by the state. They largely overlooked the many other effects on society that educated people could produce — developed infrastructure, good governance and strong institutions. Thus, it can be noted that the primary reason for education was economic. Later, in the late 1970s and early 1980s it was realised that there were not enough jobs for some education and training graduates partly because of the economic recession. At this time, the discourse shifted and began to question the unit costs of providing tertiary education and then raising questions about its external efficiency. As noted, the discovery of rate of return on education investment (RORE) techniques and propositions that have been used to promote primary education as a superior investment to tertiary education, further promoted claims that the rates were higher for primary education compared to other levels, particularly tertiary education. RORE somewhat marked a turning point for the human capital argument. As pointed out elsewhere, human capital development as it relates to primary or basic education should be understood for what it is – a hiding of the underlying belief by some of its proponents that basic education is a basis for cheap and expendable labour in less-developed countries producing goods and services for the international
markets. It seeks to appease participants, their sponsors (e.g. parents) and governments that some education, however basic, is provided for them. The international finance institutions, too, make sure that this situation remains as is by making basic education a priority for funding over other levels or sub-sectors.

Besides, if it is observed that the prospects of employment have not been promising for some tertiary education graduates, how much more would they be for basic education graduates? Recent emphasis, too, on self-employment, as revealed in the Swaziland data, is an implicit acknowledgment that assigning many good attributes to education and training as such without attending to the other important conditions in the economy – political, economic and social – is misguided. However, to ‘save its face’, the government will not openly acknowledge so. Are the public officials aware of these flaws and if they are, to what extent can they offer resistance to the powerful discourse of international agencies and sometimes even their economists promoting human capital ideas?

The neo-liberal view that informs much of the new wave of human capital theory, through its emphasis on a reduced role for the state encourages shifting the responsibility for aspects of education (e.g. higher education) or for employment away from the state to the individual. To promote market solutions to the majority while reducing the public role to intervention in the case of market failure suggests a stress on minimum needs and on targeting intervention to the very poor. This view, concludes Esping-Andersen (2000), makes monitoring nation-wide welfare less important. The proponents of the human capital argument say so little about literacy, but speak volumes about human resource development, and they have not linked the two. As well, they do not sufficiently link human resource development with poverty. So, there seems to be two questions to discuss about human capital development. One is the manner in which it has been understood and the other relates to its somewhat narrow view of the scope of the education enterprise. Education per se cannot lead less-developed countries into western-
style progress given the distortions and constraints of neo-colonial economies brought by injustices of international capitalism. It would take more than higher levels of education/literacy to deal with economic problems (Hickling-Hudson, 2002).

At the rhetorical level, poverty remains in Swaziland as in the international literature, an important subject. However, when it is considered that poverty is not merely an economic or social problem but rather a reflection of structural, political and cultural inequities as noted, it is not difficult to see why the efforts to reduce much less to eradicate it, have been slow. Like ‘illiteracy’ and despite the rhetorical discourse, there is perhaps no urgency among the actors who ‘really count’ to change the situation. Human capital theory is only narrowly linked to poverty and this should be expected given that poverty is no longer the goal it once was but a ‘dream’ among international agencies (Klees, 2002). Today, it is easy for them to ‘dream’ of a world free of poverty but when it is realised that dreams do not always come true, that shows how they do not believe poverty can be eradicated, let alone soon.

This research has revealed problems in policy co-ordination. However, it is perhaps more useful to examine co-ordination beyond the false binary divides - as either present or absent. Co-ordination in Swaziland has to be understood from the perspective of the size and quality of the resources available to the state or government. More importantly, however, is the manner the available resources are allocated to the various priorities of the government and who decides on those priorities. It is reasonable to assume that there are education planners, health planners, physical planners and economists in government that state policy makers can consult. To do otherwise could be suicidal. Included in the quality of the resources is the ‘bureaucracy’ itself and its planning and decision-making skills to channel resources to where they are needed.

The other point to mention about co-ordination and resources is the discrepancy between the policies and resources available to implement them. The announcement of the universal primary education goal in the early years of independence perhaps represents a typical example
of this discrepancy. Given the economic decline of the mid-1980s onwards (Moock & Harbison, 1988), the basic fact of few resources constrains the options open to policy makers and has implications for Swazi education policy. If categorising the bureaucracy as a resource is accepted, then, control of the economy to generate ‘income’, noted in various places of this study, reflects on its quality. The government does not seem to effectively use the power it acquires as a result of co-ordinating (at least in principle) the various agencies of government and NGOs to work harmoniously as a team. So, whether it is the governance or resources or both, that are to blame for the perceived lapses in co-ordination would seem to reflect paucity in ‘relevant skills’ among the Swazi policy planners.

**Policy implications arising from the study**

Several matters stemming from the research have implications for policy-making in Swaziland. Of course, even as the study draws these implications, it may not be immediately feasible to implement them. To be as realistic as possible, then, the researcher makes a two-part statement of implications for each theme. The first implication under each theme is made against the assumption of the ‘best of all possible worlds’ and the second against the practical realities of the Swaziland context.

Various parts of this research have shown how, alongside with the government, NGOs have been active in the development of the social sectors in Swaziland, in the process earning themselves the name ‘partners in development’. Implications of this study, therefore, for policy in some ways are relevant to NGOs engaged in development work in Swaziland generally and in extension work, specifically. The implications drawn here thus include the broad policy domain.
Balancing primary education and adult education

The literature on education policy reforms in less-developed countries generally and Africa specifically has stressed the importance of broad sectoral involvement in policy-making and implementation (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990; Bhola, 1994). If educational reforms in adult education/literacy are to succeed in Swaziland, therefore, the evidence gathered in this study suggests that the full gamut of policy-making has to be re-examined. At present, the country’s policy makers and educational planners would appear to be displaying a paternalistic and patronising attitude and, in the process, systematically under-estimating the knowledge and concerns, let alone interests, of other stakeholders in the policy-making process. Therefore, rather than confining itself to a handful of politicians and senior government officials, policy-making about adult literacy education has to involve other stakeholders or social actors associated with literacy. If this research is any indication, therefore, incorporating the views of the government officials with those of agencies/organisations, instructors and learners is likely to enrich the reform policies that would be formulated. Such policies would acknowledge the differences in expectations, value orientations and, in the process, the complexity of the factors associated with designing and implementing adult education/literacy policies. This, in turn, would potentially improve the prospects for the successful implementation of these policies.

Apart from abandoning the non-participatory or top-down educational policy-making practices in favour of a broad sectoral involvement, another policy implication arising from this study relates to the need for the country’s policy makers and educational planners to move towards self-reliance through, for example, the stress on the production and use of local resources and decreased emphasis on foreign aid support. This approach is part of what has come to known as ‘eco-development’ (Bonnet & Towle in Bockarie, 1994), which accepts the value of national and international co-operation in the formulation and implementation of education reform policies in less-developed countries. Such policies have been designed with
emphasis on self-reliant strategies and efforts based on an effective political will and commitment. They have advocated a need for these countries to devise and implement strategies of action for adult literacy based on serious educational commitment and initiative on the part of a country’s political elite and senior government officials. Even so, this is not to suggest a reduced role for foreign aid. If the findings of this research are any indication, foreign aid would probably continue to form a key instrument for successful educational reform policies in less-developed countries for the foreseeable future. As the findings have revealed, external assistance was viewed, even by the government’s analysis, as the major factor in the limited success enjoyed in adult literacy programmes across the country. Yet despite this pervasive influence of foreign aid, it is important for the country’s policy makers and educators to continue to stress self-reliant strategies and efforts in literacy activities through, for example, increased education resources to adult education/literacy. The reasons for this are two-fold: (a) it is probably awkward to expect that foreign agencies would continue to spend more resources, like they have done, on adult education/literacy than Swaziland itself spends. (b) The emphasis on self-reliant strategies and efforts is likely to ensure the continuation of successful adult literacy activities even after external funding and assistance to programmes have come to an end. This latter point speaks directly to concerns about sustainability around funding of these programmes that came out strongly among some interview respondents. It also speaks to the national development objective of self-reliance noted earlier.

Researchers have stressed that policy makers and educators in less-developed countries have to avoid setting ambitious goals and targets for education/adult literacy in light of its limitations as a development tool and, for that matter, a cure for social, economic, political and other societal ills (James, 1990; Bockarie, 1994). The implication of the findings of this study suggest that Swaziland’s educational reform policies were probably based on an invalid model of education/adult literacy and development which, in turn, only raised expectations among social
actors involved in education/adult literacy work but also encouraged the setting of ambitious goals and targets. Without the courage by authorities to simultaneously formulate policies designed to transform existing social, political and economic structures to help create new conditions for the acquisition and uses of literacy in Swazi society, educational reform policies are unlikely to be successfully implemented.

If educational reform policies are to be successful, the various dimensions of reform policies have to be adequately dealt with in a clear, coherent and consistent manner, preferably on the basis of research information rather than intuition or goodwill (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990). The evidence gathered from this study suggests that some of these policy dimensions, such as the linkage between adult literacy and formal schooling or post-literacy activities generally, the relationship between the Ministry of Education and other literacy organisations, and the potential influence of contextual factors on adult literacy activities (as on education activities in general), were not adequately dealt with.

If adult literacy education programmes in Swaziland are to be successful, the priorities about the allocation of resources have to be re-examined. The literature suggests that educational reforms in less-developed countries fail, in part, because policy makers often do not pay attention to some major pre-requisite factors, such as resource allocation, in reform documents (Psacharopoulos, 1989, 1990; Craig, 1990; Thakur, 1991). The implication of the finding of this research suggests that this has been the case in Swaziland in general and about the implementation of free universal primary education in particular.

A further implication of this finding is that Swaziland should re-visit its earlier policy, one that it did not implement, and at once introduce free primary education. Given that some adults did not attend or finish primary school, literacy training for them should be provided as a short-term measure. As a long-term measure and as shown elsewhere, the government has to consider ways of introducing free education from primary to secondary levels. Primary
education is not a sufficient foundation for people to continue with their education outside formal schooling. Contemporary life demands, too, suggest that a primary level of education would hardly translate into ‘full’ literacy given it is only certain material that can be learned at the primary level. Noting that some individuals missed school in their childhood and other children are not in school today, it is reasonable to assume that the adult literacy programme will be required for some time.

Recognition of alternative notions to human capital development

While it was convenient for the government to shift reasons for poverty in Swaziland to individual factors ranging from low literacy to low income or poor motivation by some Swazi people, data gathered for this study seem to find the source of poverty initially in these and other, perhaps more important, factors. As pointed out, disproportionate distribution of the wealth produced by the economy meant that only a few people owned most of the wealth while the majority shared a small proportion of this wealth. This should be expected in a capitalist economy. However, no capitalist economy has been allowed to dictate the rewards of the economy – governments have at different times intervened. It is to this intervention on behalf of the under-privileged that the government has to be seen to be concerned with equalising life chances for fair livelihood. In this regard, most governments set a minimum wage. However, in the Swazi context this is so low it allows the average worker to lead a minimum of subsistence. And, with no welfare model similar to the western countries, a person has to work all the time. Upon reaching retirement age, they have not saved enough that they are likely to become destitute. Some people get assistance only if they encounter a crisis point and this, too, is not guaranteed state support.

If the argument that poverty is the result of distribution problems in society is accepted, the implication is that policy-makers would need to be aware how disproportionate distribution
manifests in poverty for some but not others in time and space. They would also beware which
groups based on class, gender or even education capital, are disadvantaged and which are not.
Even so, awareness is not a sufficient condition particularly if it does not lead to action; in the
context of poverty reduction, policy-makers should be more sensitive to the plight of ordinary
people by designing programmes that earmark poor people. In the wake of the HIV/AIDS
epidemic, this sensitivity becomes even more important. The implication suggests, too, that the
sensitiveness will translate into making sure that all have enough to lead a fulfilling life.

In regard to education, the findings have shown how it might, in harmony with other
initiatives, contribute to improving living standards, and how involvement of stakeholders was
differently perceived by various categories of respondents. Given that policies have a greater
chance of success if they have involved the whole ‘constituency’ and are therefore ‘owned’ by it,
the implication is that the government should define its policy stakeholders more broadly. In so
doing, all relevant stakeholders will feel part of the process and eventual product – the policy
text. This particularly speaks to employers, labour unions and NGOs that government had
involved less, if at all, in education policy-making; there is need to cast the net wide. However,
it has to be recognised that defining stakeholders ‘less broadly’ could be also a deliberate
strategy to ‘keep’ boundaries rather than to ‘push’ them and therefore keep out some interests.

On the finding about gender, this study as the literature suggests that the incidence of low
literacy maintains the inequality between men and women and the oppression of women by men.
Although inequality between men and women is a common experience, even among literate men
and women, low literacy is believed to make it worse. Since to be ‘illiterate’ is to be
disempowered and marginalised (Kassam, 1989), men equipped with literacy have an additional
influence in dominating ‘illiterate’ women and denying them equal rights in both the family
household and in society. That men in some ‘developing’ countries often refuse their spouses
permission to attend literacy classes for fear they might challenge their authority in the household is familiar to many people.

That gender disparities remain a challenge in many African countries, particularly beyond the primary level (Moock & Harbison, 1988) is relatively well-known. Like ‘illiteracy’, noted earlier, the same question could be asked about gender, that is: Who benefits from gender imbalance in Swaziland and why? The data have shown that men benefit from gender imbalance as they dominate positions of power and decision-making, particularly in this society where patriarchal values abound (Harris, 1993). This applies to economic, political and social activity (Ramdas, 1990) including education/literacy.

It is interesting, too, to consider the strategy of not making gender imbalance a concern. That is, to present it as a concern but not a serious one, this study found, was to talk less about it – whether this was by design or default is still not clear. The more the policy documents and interviews talked about it, however, the more it could be expected that it would become a concern and require public attention and/or debate. What perhaps subsumed the subject of gender was poverty that tended to affect women in the same manner as gender imbalances. However, the severity of poverty was often down-played by focusing on its symptoms rather than on its causes.

Male dominance in literacy policy-making is somewhat ironic since the statistics and the Swaziland data show that many of those that have been systematically denied equal opportunity in education and other areas and are considered as low-iterate are women and girls. From the findings and general literature, there has been little special focus on gender beyond familiar statements towards reducing gender disparities, whether in access to education or literacy levels (Ramdas, 1990).

If it is accepted that the underlying causes of gender inequalities are rooted in economic conditions and inherent societal biases that are influenced by patriarchy and institutionalised
through culture, family, religion and the educational process (Ramdas, 1990: 42), this has implications for the constitution to have a Bill of Rights clause that rectifies the minority status of women in the country. The effect of such action would be an improvement of women's rights to resources. Given its multi-faceted nature, the implication is that gender should form an integral aspect of development policy. The Poverty Reduction Strategy and Population Policy in particular should have gender-focused actions plans complete with time frames by which to attain gender balance.

Co-ordination of policy among government agencies and NGOs

From the discussion of the results, the lack of co-ordination and efficiency in policy emerged an important concern. Even where there were policies and strategies to steer development, they were not well co-ordinated. This applied to most sectors of the economy much against the multi-sectoral approach to development that the government documents had espoused. While isolated incidences of collaboration among extension providers could be identified, research respondents concurred that extension work required some form of co-ordination mechanism for it to succeed. The implication here is that government should re-activate the co-ordination mechanisms that in principle it had put in place. The point is extension has to be co-ordinated by government if waste in duplication of services is to be avoided. This came out well in interview data as respondents re-counted how their counterparts often concentrated in 'raising funds' for some groups while other groups went without similar assistance. In the process, funding took primacy over the 'education' of these community groups; something that undermined the sustainability of some projects.

Apart from economy-wide co-ordination of policies, strategies and action plans, the study draws certain implications for education/adult education policy. These include initiating or strengthening links between adult and formal education, particularly basic education. This
would include establishing recognition of learning from either setting, the notion of recognition of prior learning (RPL). This implication suggests initiating or strengthening structural lines of formal education and adult and non-formal education (NFE) to complement each other. It entails also smoothing the barriers of movement from adult to formal education for participants wanting to continue their education in a formal education setting. As pointed out, this implies that adult and non-formal education activities will form an important complement to formal education in the country’s total education efforts. Even so, this does not mean adult and non-formal education has to been valued only in terms of how successfully it ‘catches up’ (Coombs, 1968) with formal education. This involves also a change of attitudes as this study found that some officers, particularly in government, still had prejudices against adult education/literacy training favouring instead formal, child education.

Policy recommendations
Following the implications above, the study makes the following recommendations to the government and to NGOs, respectively.

Recommendations to the government

a) Implement the comprehensive literacy strategy

Initially, implementing the comprehensive strategy would mean the government has to provide free universal primary education and revive the now-dormant Adult Education Council. This macro structure is required to develop the national vision for adult education/literacy training, legal support systems and mechanism for resource allocation – programmes, training and research - to the field. The Council could contribute to stepping up recognition of the importance of ‘inclusive’ consultation and need for the government policy-making structures to be open and participative to accommodate the interests of all stakeholders (broadly defined).
Some research (Bhola, 1994) reveals how the structures should make literacy training more than just a state-administered programme. Ideally, there is need to create a new strategy for adult education. This might have to involve setting targets for adult education, complete with dates and budgets. However, to avoid a repeat of earlier mistakes, careful attention should be paid to all aspects of this provision including consultation with the nation. Unlike in the early 1970s, the government should draw on a sufficient pool of professionally trained officers in taking on this national task – education planners, economists or population experts, to give the exercise a holistic approach. As pointed out, while universal free primary education and adult literacy education are education matters, they also have economic, social and political dimensions.

b) Integrate formal and non-formal education into development strategy

Given the lapses in ways in which formal education may be inter-connected with adult education, the government should establish linkages to allow participants of adult and non-formal education to move to formal education if they want to pursue studies in the formal mode. One way of doing this could be to integrate formal education and non-formal education into the development strategy. In so doing, perceptions that these sub-sectors compete rather than complement each other for attention and resources could be avoided.

c) Create a working co-ordination structure

One way of tackling lapses in policy co-ordination, as revealed in this study, is to define more explicitly and, if necessary, expand the mandate of the Public Policy Co-ordinating Unit, a body created to co-ordinate policy implementation in government. In particular, information about this structure has to be disseminated widely to all government departments and those organisations co-operating with the government. As this study found, information about its
existence and functions had not been widely circulated. To strengthen its present services, the government would have to make clear what and when it will carry out given tasks.

**Recommendations to NGOs**

The recommendations to NGOs are not as detailed as those made to the government partly because the NGOs help to supplement government services; providing temporary relief.

a) *Give strong emphasis to educational matters*

It is recognised that NGOs provide funding for different projects in the country. From the perspective of this study, there is need to transcend the perception that funding is more important than the education and training of the community groups.

b) *Address inequalities in the funding of different communities*

There is need to recognise that communities differ in terms of resources including political resources. Some powerful communities may access more funding from NGOs while other, less powerful communities, do not have any funding. By following laid-down government protocols for dealing with communities, NGOs could effectively deal with inequalities in the funding of different communities since the government knows communities that have received assistance and those that have not.

c) *Promote civic engagement*

There is need for NGOs in Swaziland to provide civic education around popular participation in political affairs, electoral competition or constitutional and electoral reform. This is particularly important at this moment as the country formulates its constitution.
d) Strengthen the role of women

In Swaziland, like other countries in the region, women bear the greater responsibility in community life and it is to be expected that their role be strengthened through appropriate literacy and other strategies.

Directions for the future

At this point, there is need to step back and reflect on what kind of research would have an impact on some of these matters.

While the study reflects the general experience of other post-colonial states in Africa to a certain extent, it has striven to show the unique conditions under which literacy formation evolves in Swaziland. It is, above all, a detailed picture of Swaziland, drawing attention to inherent contradictions and tensions among different groups that have characterised its economy, education and politics over time – factors that most studies avoid, consciously or unwittingly. As pointed out, Swaziland is in some respects similar to other states – it has a weak economy and political structure, dominant–dependent relations with rich Western countries and educational provision that follows the international agenda of the global North. To that extent, the results of the study provide a basis for comparison with other countries.

As noted in the methodology chapter, the researcher had no control over the selection of participants in the study, as they were selected by the participating organisations. Owing to resource constraints - particularly time, the study could not include literacy learners in particular in the sample. If there is a perspective that the study failed to capture, it is the views of adult learners. If the researcher could have interviewed other stakeholders, they would have been in this group. The views of these key stakeholders – their experiences and meanings made of the literacy programme in terms of difference it made in their lives – would have helped to
corroborate further the evidence obtained from other participants. Adult learners’ experiences about the literacy programme thus form an important topic for further research in this area.

By grounding this work in the socio-economic and political experiences of Swaziland and presenting an overview and analysis of the local and historical context of literacy work within that society, the findings of this study have shown how complex and inter-connected international, societal and educational factors are in determining the success or failure of education/adult education policies. While recognising their inter-relationship, each of the factors deserves more detailed examination and analysis in order to help readers better understand the extent of its enabling or inhibiting influence on the outcomes of literacy. A study of the decision-making processes involved in the allocation of state education resources to literacy or the general attitudes of the country’s political elite and senior government officials towards adult literacy education (Rubenson & Beddie, 2004) forms a useful starting point for further research. It would better illuminate some of the reasons for the discrepancy between policy documents and the literacy programmes being implemented. Such research would also be useful in illuminating the extent of the government’s commitment to the implementation of educational reforms in support of adult literacy as outlined in the policy documents.

Looking at the many challenges of development in Swaziland, there are many directions for further research. These might include trying to understand the role of the state and understand the forces it attempts to manage; generally, to do a more detailed study about the inter-link between the international forces and Swazi aspirations. One frame of these studies could take the form of participatory research. Integrating adult learners’ perspectives into policy studies would be one aspect of this research, particularly important in understanding how the intersection between state, international forces and local cultures plays itself out in education/literacy policy. Participatory research could also be part of a larger study on how adult learners see the link between policy and the structural changes. In this equation, how do adult
literacy learners see literacy as meaningful to their lives? Thus, for example, the study could examine the conditions under which literacy could be part of reducing poverty. Literacy might be important for some groups in understanding, for example, the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and the various dimensions of democracy or gender inequality.

Viewed in this way, it can be noted that successful poverty reduction might result in 'economic democracy' while curbing the advance of the HIV/AIDS epidemic could result in 'health democracy'. Likewise, successful promotion of democracy might translate into 'human rights democracy', while reducing gender imbalance might translate into 'gender democracy'. A study that focuses on gender-based matters in adult literacy work is particularly needed since data gathered for this research revealed little or no gender-based differences in the views expressed by the different respondents. There is need for in-depth analysis of the causes of gender imbalances; one that transcends treating gender merely as another disadvantage and examines structural factors that keep women and girls subordinated, less-educated and at their homes (Ramdas, 1990) in Swaziland.

**Conclusion**

The findings of this study reveal the complexity of inter-locking factors that influence literacy formation in Swaziland. They also show how some people in the country have realised the 'dreams' of the 1970s development decade but not others. These dreams stated in overall development policy objectives (economic growth, self-reliance, social justice and stability), have with minor exceptions, remained only on paper. More importantly, however, is the discourse that has portrayed the country as committed to improving the well-being of its people. Few studies have challenged this misrepresented image. If the findings of this study are any indication, it is that while the pressing need to tackle poverty, hunger and disease would seem to suggest that 'literacy can wait', it cannot. The long-term solution to Swaziland's problems lies
in the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills (literacy) by the mass of the Swazi people. In addition, it is critical awareness-raising literacy, provided by selfless educators committed to equalising life chances that is required. Any other 'literacy' is unlikely to fully capture the conditions of ordinary people or the economically vulnerable and socially excluded in society.
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APPENDICES
Consent

I understand that my participation in the *Political economy of literacy in development: A case study of educational policy in Swaziland* study is entirely voluntary and I know that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without jeopardy. I consent to be interviewed on tape.

I have retained the top portion of this form for my own records.

I CONSENT / DO NOT CONSENT (Please circle the appropriate response) to participate in this study.

Name of Participant (Please print last name)

Date 
Telephone Number 
Participant’s e-mail (if possible)

Signature of Participant
Appendix C.1: Interview guide for government officials

1. How would you describe the government’s mission towards provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

2. Is there a national policy on adult literacy? If so, how would you describe literacy policy formulation?

3. How would you describe linkages between provision of literacy training and the world of work?

4. How would you describe the group that sets up the literacy policy? Who is involved in literacy policy formation?

5. How would you describe the relationship between the government and the educational institutions that provide literacy training in Swaziland?

6. (a) Is there a government body responsible for co-ordinating provision of adult literacy training in Swaziland?

   (b) If not, is there any other mechanism or body for co-ordination?

7. In what ways do the activities of this body affect provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

8. Is there any independent advisory body – with research capacity – responsible for policy advice on provision of literacy training programmes in Swaziland?

9. How would you describe any links between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour around the subject of adult literacy?
10. How would you describe any links of literacy programmes to the National Development Plans?

11. Does the government (in this case represented by the Ministry of Education) oversee industry provision of literacy training programmes?

12. How would you describe any labour union involvement in adult literacy policy development?

13. (a) How would you explain the factors that enhance provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

(b) How would you explain the factors that constrain provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

14. What have been the general outcomes of the literacy training programmes offered in Swaziland and in what ways are they related to national policy objectives?

15. What strategies would you recommend for improving the provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation!
Appendix C.2: Interview guide for providing institutions

1. Please describe for me the nature of your institution’s involvement in the formulation of an adult education/literacy policy.

2. How would you describe (a) the broad goals and (b) specific objectives of the literacy programme as defined by your institution?

3. How would you describe any links of your literacy programmes to employment?

4. (a) Where do the literacy programmes take place?
   (b) Please describe the setting(s).

5. Does your institution oversee industry provision of literacy programmes?

6. Which government ministries are involved in the provision of literacy education and training?

7. How would you describe the composition of the members in the policy formulation body?

8. How would you describe the relationship between Sebenta National Institute, Emlalatini Development Centre and the government?

9. (a) Is there a government body responsible for co-ordinating the provision of literacy training in Swaziland?
   (b) If not, is there any other mechanism or body for co-ordination?
   (c) In what ways do the activities of this body affect provision of literacy training?

10. Is there any advisory body – with research capacity – responsible for policy advice on provision of literacy training programmes in Swaziland?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation!
Appendix C.3: Interview guide for representatives of other organisations

1. How would you describe your involvement in literacy policy formulation/planning in Swaziland?

2. How would you relate the provision of literacy training to labour market needs/requirements in Swaziland?

3. Could you explain how economic and political factors and/or structures influence the provision of literacy education and training?

4. Is there a government body responsible for co-ordinating the provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

5. If not, is there any other mechanism or body for co-ordination?

6. In what ways do the activities of this body affect provision of literacy training in Swaziland?

7. Is there any independent advisory body – with research capacity – responsible for policy advice on provision of literacy training programmes in Swaziland?

8. Are literacy programmes offered by NGOs different from those offered by Sebenta National Institute or industry? If so, how are they different?

9. How would you explain the general outcomes of the literacy programmes in terms of the stated policy objectives?

10. What strategies would you suggest for improving the provision of literacy education and training in Swaziland?

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation!