Social Capital for Social Change: Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme, a Solution for Education (In)justice in South Africa?

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South Africa faces an education crisis that has significant implications for the freedom of citizens and development of the country. A context of government incapacity necessitates that other modes of improving the education system be explored. This paper examines the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme to gauge the potential of community-based efforts as a possible solution for education injustice in South Africa. Using social capital theory, the paper examines how this community engagement programme builds human capabilities. A brief analysis of the improvement in pass rates and reflection on the lessons from the intervention sheds light on the enormous strides made over five years. Despite some limitations to this approach, the paper provides a compelling narrative of the way in which mentoring programmes such as Nine Tenths nurture the necessary social capital to bring about social change, which in turn supports the development of human capabilities in local contexts.

Keywords: mentoring; social capital; human capabilities; education; injustice

Education is seen to be the foundation for the realisation of one's full participation in society. The recognition of education as a fundamental capability and development enhancing service is reflected in South Africa's constitution which enshrines the socio-economic right to quality basic education for all (Spreen & Vally, 2006, p. 352). This constitutional mandate has to some extent expanded access to education, as enrolment rates across the country have risen significantly since 1994 (Spreen & Vally, 2006, p. 355). However, the South African case illustrates that often the expansion of capabilities, in the form of education, is constrained by lack of state capacity to provide the required human and material resources. Many no-fee or state subsidised South African schools face material inequality, owing to decaying infrastructure and lack of access to basic resources like water, electricity, libraries and computers, as well as a shortage of qualified teachers (Spreen & Vally, 2006, p. 355). For these reasons, South Africa, as a middle income country, lags behind its peers in terms of educational attainment, undermining the country's developmental progress. In terms of quality educational attainment, South African schools remain highly unequal, where learners continue to face an education system that fails to favour the poor (Mthethwa, 2020). Therefore, South Africa's education system is in a crisis and any resolution requires substantial investment.

With government support often underwhelmingly low, civil society may in turn play a role in filling the gap to effect social change required to reach a more desired realisation of human capital and our professional and economic potential. Based on this premise, this paper argues that the social capital found in civil society and community organisations may provide the necessary support for the development of human capabilities in local contexts. Education interventions such as the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme taking place in Makhanda, South Africa hold enormous potential to shift a devastating status quo, where the majority of individuals who enrol in local schools will not be able to access the local higher learning institution, Rhodes University.

In this paper, the authors present Sen's capabilities approach and social capital theory as a framework for developing human capabilities in contexts where the state, as a resource provider, is constrained. In order to explore the potential of social capital networks embedded in community action, they reflect on a community engagement programme, the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a model that uses the social capital of university-school partnerships for the development of human capabilities. Based on this exploration, the authors conclude that, while Nine Tenths does have some limitations, this intervention significantly illustrates the power of social capital in catalysing social action geared towards strengthening human capabilities and development.

The first part of this paper highlights Sen's capabilities approach and social capital theory as a theoretical framework that underpins the Nine-Tenths Mentoring Programme. This is followed by a discussion of South Africa's education challenges; narrowing in to an overview and reflection of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a community engagement intervention. This reflection serves as an exposé of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme, in order to shed light on this model as a means of leveraging community resources in pursuit of educational change, and to facilitate more scholarly engagement around innovative solutions to educational crises coming out of civil society and community engagement networks.

Theoretical Framework

Education as Freedom: Sen's Capabilities Approach

On an individual level, education is important for socioeconomic mobility and is key to escaping poverty (United Nations, 2020). Education, in this sense, enables the development of human capabilities and agency, providing individuals with the freedom to enhance their own wellbeing (Walker, 2005, p. 106). Furthermore, at a community and nation-wide level, there is growing recognition that the development of human capital, or the skills and knowledge of a population, through education, can play a significant role in development (Evans, 2010, p. 37). Enhanced human capital allows for the accumulation of knowledge and innovation, which in turn can catalyse significant economic growth (David, 2001, p. 59). Thus, education is significant, both in terms of enhancing the freedom and choice of individuals and in terms of catalysing the development of communities and countries.

Amartya Sen's capabilities approach (1999 or earlier work with Nausbaum), which expands the definition of development beyond economic wellbeing, is relevant to any analysis of the liberatory potential of education (Ansari, Munir, & Gregg, 2012, p. 815). Sen claims that GDP and economic growth should not be the primary indicator of development, and instead states that development is better conceived of as *freedom* (Sen, 2017, p. 357). Freedom, according to Sen, can only be achieved through the extension of human capabilities, or the combinations of functionings that an individual can achieve (Sen, 2017, p. 357). This expansion of capabilities is not only the ends of development, enabling individuals the freedom to pursue what they find most valuable, but is also a means towards development as increasing capabilities brings about higher levels of human capital, or the skills, knowledge and experience that can drive growth (Engle, 2010, p. 18). Freedom is thus both instrumental and constitutive (Engle, 2010, p. 18). It is the enhancement of capabilities, rather than income, that enables people to improve their standard of living (Acharya, 2016, pp. 1162-1163).

Based on Sen's recognition that development is more than growth in income, international institutions' definitions have expanded to encompass the notion of development as freedom and capability building. For example, Sen's ideas led to the adoption of the Human Development Index (HDI), as an indicator of development, rather than just GDP growth (Acharya, 2016, p. 1163). The HDI is a summary measure assessing the progress of three dimensions of human development: healthy life, access to knowledge and standard of living (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). The first dimension is measured by life expectancy, while the second dimension is measured by mean years of schooling amongst the adult population (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). Lastly, standard of living is measured by per capita Gross National Income (GNI) (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 2). Similarly, Sen's expanded definition of development has spurred on other measures like the Human Capital Index (HCI) which measures the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to obtain by her 18th birthday (Kraay, 2018). Measured in units of productivity, the HCI ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 representing a benchmark of complete education and full health while 0 represents no human capital obtained at all (Kraay, 2018).

Thus, the expansion of human capabilities has been recognised as essential in bringing about individual human agency as well as greater developmental aims (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 2). In this case, schools in particular are important capability enhancing services, with the capacity to empower individuals and transform societies (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 2). Many 21st century development theorists therefore argue that the public provision of capability

enhancing services, in the form of investment into human capital (especially education) and social support, is important (Evans, 2010, p. 44).

For many developing countries, however, the potential of education as a capability enhancer and catalyst for development fails to be realised. Many governments face serious limitations, such as fiscal challenges, inadequate institutional capacity, corruption, and general collective action problems, which impact the quality of service delivery of education (Skidmore, 2001, p. 57)In this context, an under-provision of quality public education comes to erode the freedom of individuals as well as states' developmental potential.

Social Capital for Social Change: The Capability Enhancing Potential of Community Collective Action

Where states are constrained, civil society and community actors can be significant developmental forces. The power of civil society and community groups, which are based on networks engaged in service and participation, is built on social capital, which can bring about effective social outcomes (van Til, 2000, p. 4). Social capital refers to the organisational features of social and economic life, and the wealth-producing potential that comes from collective association (Skidmore, 2001, p. 57). Features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks of reciprocity, improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordination (Putnam, 2002, p. 8). It is based on these features that many theorists have indicated that community problems may be solved by strengthening networks of solidarity among citizens (Putnam, 2002, p. 4).

These social capital networks may take several forms. Bonding social capital refers to the trust and shared norms that allow for social cohesion within a group of generally homogenous individuals, or those with similar backgrounds in the same community (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). Bridging social capital refers to peripheral ties between different groups, or extensive intergroup relationships (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). Bridging social capital enables connections between diverse social groups: these groups often form in horizontal networks, based on relationships between groups with similar characteristics such as life experience and social standing (Terrion, 2006, p. 158). Lastly, linking social capital refers to vertical relationships where people develop "alliances with sympathetic individuals in positions of power [...] to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions" (Woolcock, as cited in Terrion, 2006, p. 158). Linking ties, in contexts of resource disparities between groups, may play a significant role in facilitating the sharing of resources in order to create a more equitable social landscape (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

These three forms of social capital are pivotal in bringing about collective action in the pursuit of social goals (Skidmore, 2001, p. 59). Social capital, or the trust and cohesiveness that comes from community, may in turn promote collective efficacy, or a group's shared belief based on social ties in its conjoint capabilities to organise and execute collective action, usually in the pursuit of social goals (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). Collective efficacy cannot come about in the absence of the sense of cohesiveness stemming from social capital. This statement is important and relevant in relation to community engagement and development. So, first trust and social cohesiveness need to be established within and between communities (the schools as a community and university as a community) because communities are not homogenous. The existence of trust and cohesiveness should not be assumed to be existing in a given community.

This collective efficacy cultivated by networks of social capital in turn promotes social action, and thus has huge change-making potential (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). Social capital in some instances may have to be established first to enable collective capability and engaged

citizenship (Migheli, 2011, p. 136). Therefore, just as the development of education enhances human capital, the strengthening of networks is also an important form of capability expansion. Social capital may strengthen community wellbeing and enable individuals to work together more effectively to pursue shared objectives (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

Researchers have established a positive connection between the development of social capital and the expansion of education or human capital (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). Empirical studies have demonstrated a positive link between social capital and student retention or throughput rates in American high schools (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). Similarly, other studies show that social capital in the form of exchanges of information and knowledge results in enhanced learning outcomes (Migheli, 2011, p. 137). In this scenario, the presence of social capital is important in fostering an enabling social context for the transfer of knowledge, which would not take place in the absence of established networks and trust (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 833). The presence of social capital in these instances serves to enlarge a population's set of capabilities (Migheli, 2011, p. 137).

These empirical findings point towards the possibility of social capital in inspiring collective action in contexts where public provisioning of services remains limited (Skidmore, 2001, p. 71). Civil society and community organisations hold potential in enhancing the capabilities of organisations, through improving the strength of networks as well as educational (and human capital) outcomes, transforming South Africa's education trajectory. In order to explore the potential of these networks, the following sections turn towards community action taking place in the city of Makhanda, South Africa.

The State of Education in South Africa and Makhanda

South Africa faces an education crisis of an enormous magnitude. The poor quality of education is reflected by South Africa's Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Capital Index (HCI). As of 2019, South Africa's HDI is 0.705, positioning it at 113 out of 189 countries (UNDP, 2019). When adjusted for inequality, this HDI drops to a value of 0.463, a loss of over 34 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the HDI dimension indices, causing the country to lag behind other developing countries in terms of human capital achievement (United Nations Development Programme, 2020, p. 5). South Africa's education underperformance is also reflected in its HCI value of 0.43 (World Bank, 2020). This HCI indicates that the average child born in South Africa will grow up to be only 43 percent productive, less than half as much as she would be if she completed her education and had full health (World Bank, 2020). Furthermore, the learning gap in South Africa is evident in statistics. Many schools struggle to retain learners, with a national throughput rate of around 60 percent, indicating that almost half of a cohort beginning Grade 1 will not sit for their final examinations 12 years later (Zero Dropout, 2019, p. 1). The average child starting school at four years old can expect to complete only 9.3 years of schooling by the age of 18 (World Bank, 2020). From these statistics, it is clear that South Africa faces an immense human capital shortage.

In terms of quality educational attainment, South African schools remain highly unequal, where learners continue to face an education system that fails to favour the poor (Mthethwa, 2020). Decaying infrastructure and lack of access to basic resources (e.g. water, electricity, libraries and computers) leaves many no-fee or state subsidised South African schools materially disadvantaged (Spreen & Vally, 2006, p. 355). Several of these schools also fail to ensure a sufficient number of quality teachers (Spreen & Vally, 2006, p. 355). The capability enhancing potential of education is therefore not being realised in many poor communities where individuals cannot afford to pay for quality education (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 815). An incapacitated state facing collective action

problems in terms of the provision of education means that the majority of families in South Africa who are unable to afford the fees of former Model-C (high quality previously racially segregated schools) and private school cannot access quality education.

The town of Makhanda is a microcosm of this inequality of opportunity embedded in South Africa's education system. The province of the Eastern Cape, in which Makhanda is situated, is one of the poorest in the country, and is the worst performing province in terms of its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (StatsSA, 2021), despite it being the third most populous province in the country (StatsSA, 2016). The per capita GDP in the Eastern Cape is therefore well below average, and many in the province experience poverty. The material poverty in the province manifests in Eastern Cape public schools, which attract few and often under-qualified teachers, face decaying infrastructure, and have some of the lowest pass rates in the country (Lemon, 2004, p. 275). It is with this understanding that the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme as a model that uses the social capital of university-school partnerships for the development of human capabilities is of relevance.

Makhanda is not only the location of the prominent Rhodes University campus, but also houses some of the most prestigious private schools in the country, boasting excellent facilities, education resources, and a 100 percent pass rate norm (Lemon, 2004, p. 280). The town also houses several former Model-C schools that similarly achieve excellent pass rates (Lemon, 2004, p. 282).

In the greater Makhanda setting, however, these schools are "islands of privilege in a poor community" to which the majority of residents do not have access (Lemon, 2004, p. 281). Rather, many children rely on no-fee or state subsidised schools, often with lacking human and material resources and dismal examination results (Lemon, 2004, p. 285). The poor performance of these schools is illustrated by the final school results achieved in 2013, two years prior to the initiation of the Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme intervention. The Makhanda (then Grahamstown) final year pass rate was 61.3 percent, lagging over 15 percentage points behind the national average of 78.2 percent (Westaway A. , 2014). The town also formed part of the 10th worst performing district nationwide (Westaway A., 2014). A more comprehensive breakdown of these results shows that, while former Model-C schools performed well, it was the inadequate performance of no-fee schools, or the most vulnerable schools in the district, reflected in the overall abysmal pass rate (Westaway A. , 2014). One of the most sought after no-fee schools in Makhanda, achieved a pass rate of only 40 percent (Westaway A. , 2014). Local pass rates of non-fee paying schools before and after 2013 depict a similar, bleak picture.

These results illustrate education inequalities, in Makhanda and South Africa as a whole. For the majority of those residing in Makhanda, the Rhodes University campus did not symbolise the next step in young people's lives but instead became an unreachable ivory tower, as lack of access and opportunity prevented attempts at continuing education. Combatting this injustice - and ensuring Rhodes University's relevance in the setting of Makhanda - requires action on the part of the university and other community stakeholders to change the education trajectory of the district. Without a fundamentally transformed education system, the future of Rhodes University and Makhanda as a whole is jeopardised. In this case, alternative approaches to changing South Africa's education trajectory are important. Civil society and community structures may hold potential in improving this access.

The Potential of Communities to Change South Africa's Education Trajectory: The Nine Tenths Mentoring Programme

Overview

In 2015, the beginnings of this collective action to change Makhanda's education trajectory emerged. In February, Dr. Sizwe Mabizela was inaugurated as the Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University (RU). During his inaugural address, he re-positioned Rhodes University, such that "our University is not just in Grahamstown [now Makhanda] but is also *of* and *for* Grahamstown [Makhanda]" (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 3). This statement reflects a repositioning of the university by Mabizela as one that needs to become more relevant to the Makhanda community (Westaway, 2019). Honing in on the education sector, he asserted that RU, as a higher education institution, has a particular responsibility to confront the unequal and inadequate basic education sector in our city. And thus, the Vice Chancellor's Reviving Schools Initiative (herein referred to as the VC Initiative) came into being.

One of the core programmes within the VC Initiative education pathway is the Nine Tenths Matric Mentoring Programme (herein referred to as Nine Tenths). House in the Rhodes University Community Engagement (RUCE) Division, the programme is runs in four of the six township schools in the city. As the name suggests, final year, or "matric" learners from local, historically disadvantaged, and predominantly no-fee schools are paired with Rhodes University community engagement student volunteers in mentorship relationships. Learners are given one-on-one support from a trained Rhodes University student volunteer through nine guided and structured contact sessions throughout the year (Talbot, 2020). The mentoring programme is geared towards equipping matric learners in selected local schools to cope with their final year of school and to pass to their full potential. In 2020, the programme was implemented for the fifth year.

Phases and Assertions

The programme designers' experiences pointed towards three assertions (Rhodes University, 2019) which now form the foundation of Nine Tenths:

Firstly, positive role models, in this case Rhodes University volunteers, encourage better academic performance. Secondly, the development of a future orientation (i.e. aspirations, goals, plans, ambitions) is useful as motivation to study. Finally, establishing and learning good study methods improves one's results (Talbot, 2020). The implementation of Nine Tenths is based on these three assertions. Nine Tenths is segmented into three phases. Each phase takes place during critical times of the high school learners' final year. The programme is visibly "top heavy", as six out of nine sessions happen prior to the learners' mid-year exams. A significant challenge of the programme is aligning the chronology between university and school calendars.

The first phase of the programme is based on setting goals. Traditionally, this goal setting takes place in sessions one and two. In 2020, it was decided one session was adequate for this phase, provided the learners completed their personal plan, which sets out their current academic standing, goals and future plans, well in advance of the session with their mentors. The personal plan is significant as it is designed to capture the academic background and commitments of the learner and mentor in the mentoring relationship. It is used as an accountability and motivational tool going forward.

In the second phase, the learners are supported to develop effective, personalised study skills. These skills are developed through the production of summaries of their selected final year

subjects. During sessions two to six, learners analyse the quality and quantity with their mentors. It is not essential that mentors are familiar with the subject content of the summary, although this is a benefit.

The third phase takes place after mid-year exams but prior to preliminary exams. This phase is geared towards career guidance. Mentors and learners collectively assess the performance of the mentee in mid-year examinations against the goals in their personal plan. These offer a benchmark to begin seeking post-school opportunities such as tertiary education. Summary writing and feedback is encouraged throughout this phase.

Nine Tenths Programme Management

Nine Tenths employs a multi-stakeholder approach to decision making that is inclusive of schools, learners, mentors and programme coordinators. Nine Tenths is housed in the Rhodes University Community Engagement Division (RUCE). However, the success of the programme has depended on the co-management model between RUCE and GADRA Education (GADRA). These two entities form the overarching management body. GADRA is a local NGO that brings a wealth of experience in the basic education sector along with close relationships with local schools. GADRA is the liaison between schools (learners and teachers) and Nine Tenths. RUCE provides the critical mass of student volunteers and the coordination thereof and expertise in community development. All management decisions are jointly planned, acted upon and reflected on between these stakeholders. Therefore, each stakeholder has a specific role to play. According to the VC Initiative Plan, these roles are "complementary and synergistic and therefore clear and regular communication and coordination is vital" (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34).

As the programme is centred on the interaction between learners and mentors, the quality of every interaction between mentors and learners is crucial for the success of the initiative (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34). Pairs of student leaders guide groups of fourteen mentors, providing "motivation, technical guidance and assistance, and activity monitoring" (Rhodes University, 2019, p. 34). Team leaders also participate in quarterly evaluation meetings, providing insight into the perspectives of mentors. As beneficiaries (in the broadest sense of the word), teachers, principals learner representatives, from each school (usually from the Representative Council of Learners) provide an important perspective for the management of Nine Tenths. Their thoughts are given due weight in considerations made for the programme.

All the above stakeholders form the management team who meet regularly in school analysis meetings to determine the learning outcomes for learners and discuss how the programme is and should be progressing, with actionable commitments. The success that Nine Tenths has experienced is founded on this highly structured programme and the multi-stakeholder management model that utilises the social capital of all involved parties. The following section explores these successes, from the perspectives of various stakeholders in the programme.

Reflections on the Impact of Nine Tenths in Select Makhanda Schools

RUCE's overarching objective is to work towards community development. Nine Tenths as a top-end intervention of an initiative to revive the city's full education pathway is a good example of how focused interventions achieve change. In five years, Nine Tenths has played an influential role in the improvement of Makhanda's Grade 12 pass rate. The following is a collaborative reflection of this impact, representative of key stakeholders of the programme, namely a student volunteer, community partner and programme coordinator, which draws from the monitoring and

evaluation conducted since the inception of the programme (which appears in the public domain) as well as personal experience. This reflection is structured around the three forms of social capital, namely bonding, bridging and linking, which guides a discussion around the extent to which Nine Tenths has been successful in building human capabilities in targeted schools.

Bonding Social Capital

Bonding social capital refers to the trust and shared norms that allow for social cohesion within a group of generally homogenous individuals, or those with similar backgrounds in the same community (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821). In this section, the authors describe how this form of social capital is nurtured in the partner schools and Rhodes University as the 'family bodies' of the programme. Partner schools are selected on the basis of committed management teams, and willingness to co-manage the programme which has been found to make them receptive to such focussed interventions to improve educational outcomes (Rhodes University, 2019). As described above Nine Tenths' unique multi stakeholder approach to the management of the programme leaves space for several human development opportunities; teacher development chief among them.

In 2017 the introduction of mandatory Teachers In Charge (TIC) proved useful in the integration and ownership of the programme in schools. These teachers, who are usually the Grade 12 Head of Department (HOD), play a critical role in communication and compliance from the mentees, promotion of the programme in the school (e.g. ensuring teachers know to protect the time for Nine Tenths sessions) and logistical support to mentors (e.g. booking classrooms for sessions, ensuring children don't leave school without attending their session etc.). With the support of senior school management (e.g. the principal and HOD) they ensure the implementation of sessions is seamless. This elevates the teacher's confidence and position in the school and progresses their professional growth as a teacher leader.

Alongside this, prior to each phase, and the sessions with their mentors thereof, the learners are provided with an information session by the programme managers to lay out the expectations for each phase of the programme. These sessions are provided to *all* the final year learners at each school regardless of their inclusion in the programme or not. This, in some senses, is a form of teacher modelling and engagement; building capabilities from within, as well as a means of encouraging solidarity and in-group trust amongst the learners themselves.

Moving away from the schools and towards Rhodes University students, it is no doubt that student volunteers are the lifeblood of the programme. Without them the programme will not be able to reach as many learners. Small mentor groups of Rhodes volunteers, led by pairs of student leaders, fosters a sense of bonding social capital, and the pursuit of common goals. These groups also undergo mandatory training together throughout the year. In developing the human capabilities of student volunteers in Nine Tenths, a short course has been designed so that they are adequately prepared to assist learners. The course aims to help students understand and appreciate the political and moral need for transformation interventions such as this and assist mentees to make strategically sound decisions about their academic and personal progress. To date, approximately 450 students have been accredited.

Bridging Social Capital

Essential to Nine Tenths is the horizontal leverage of social capital in the relationships between mentors and learners and the consequent impact on academic achievement. This is the most

significant measure of the impact in the Nine Tenths Mentoring programme as it provides access to further capability enhancing services such as higher education. We also discuss the positive effect of the mentor-learner relationship on mentor personal and academic development, pointing towards a mutually beneficial engagement.

The most significant quantitative impact of the relationship between mentors and mentees is registered at the top-end of the performance spectrum. The highest overall level of National Senior Certificate (final school year) pass is termed "Bachelor level", since attaining this level is the minimum requirement for applying for Bachelor Degree study at a South Africa University. One of the measures that the project uses to gauge its effectiveness at the top-end is to compare the number of Bachelor level performances that the intervention begins with at the beginning of any year (based on final Grade 11 results) with the number of Bachelor level certificates produced at year-end. This comparison is tabulated in Table 1, for the years 2017 – 2019. The respective annual increases are presented in brackets behind the totals produced in the final examinations.

A cursory glance at the table is all that is required in order to conclude that the programme contributes towards increasing the total numbers of Bachelor level passes by consistently more than 30, each year. The significance of this contribution can be assessed when considering this number in relation to the total number of Bachelor passes produced by the six no-fee schools over the period 2014 – 2019. From 2014 – 2016, the number hovered in the 50s (51, 57, 51). It should be recalled here that Nine Tenths was implemented for the first time in 2016. In 2017 the six no-fee schools produced 62 Bachelor passes; at the time, that was an all-time high. Then in 2018 and 2019, the previous record was smashed. 102 Bachelor passes were produced in 2018 and 86 in 2019.

Table 1
Number of Bachelor Passes Per Year

	2017	2018	2019
Starting Point	16	52	43
End Point	52 (+36)	83 (+31)	76 (+33)

Based on these numbers, there are two claims that can be made about the impact of the programme on top-end performance in local no-fee schools. First, the numbers indicate that the impact is indeed significant. Programme participants generally deliver at least 80% of all Bachelor passes produced by the six schools. In other words, participation in the programme enhances one's prospects of achieving a Bachelor pass. Second, the programme initially (pre-2018) played a role in maintaining the number of Bachelor passes, despite the long, gradual decline in the general state of public schooling and in 2018 and in 2019 it contributed directly to enabling a statistically-significant spike in the overall number of local Bachelors produced (at no-fee schools).

From this analysis, the impact of Nine Tenths on the academic performance of learner participants is clearly quantifiable. At present it is unfortunately not possible to present comparable quantifiable evidence that supports the claim that the programme also boosts the academic performance of mentor students at Rhodes. However, it is worth noting that a common theme that has featured prominently in the testimonies of mentors is that their advocacy of the prioritisation

of study and take-up of effective study methods has rubbed off on their own inclinations and practices.

Based on student testimonies, it does appear that bridging social capital positively enhances the human capabilities of not only mentees but also mentors. An article by the local newspaper, *Grocott's Mail,* explores the reciprocity embedded in this form of social capital (Munemo, 2019). In this article, two interviewed learner participants recalled how their mentor actively assisted them in developing the tools for effective studying, enabling both of them to reach their goal of attending university (Munemo, 2019). Their mentor, in turn, described how the agency and resilience she witnessed in her mentees inspired her to push herself to study a triple major in her final university year, expanding her own human capital (Munemo, 2019). The network of solidarity embraced in these personal relationships enables the growth of individual agency. Social capital therefore acts as a significant capability enhancer, as the personal ties between participants expands the capabilities of both parties.

These relationships are also long-standing, as the network of social capital becomes utilised beyond the year-long programme. Many mentors and learner participants continue to grow their relationship for years after the Nine Tenths programme, often as they come to attend the same university space (Munemo, 2019). The bridging social capital developed in the first year of mentoring often evolves into a kind of bonding capital as the mentors and mentees end up as fellow students and classmates, coming to be part of the same physical spaces and communities.

Linking Social Capital

Bridging social capital therefore is important in supporting individual agency and developing capabilities. Another important aspect of social capital is linking social capital, or the ability to leverage vertical relationships, address power dynamics within partnerships (unique multi stakeholder management model) and provide access-facilitating opportunities for Nine Tenths learners. The established networks of linking social capital also, in turn, promote collective as well as individual agency. The partnerships between various stakeholders and benefits thereof provide an illustration of the way in which social capital can lead to social change. The social capital based on the networks between these organisations comes to promote collective efficacy, or a group's shared belief based on social ties in its conjoint capabilities to organise and execute collective action, in the pursuit of education goals (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428). This collective efficacy in turn promotes social action, and thus has huge change-making potential (Aguilar & Sen, 2009, p. 428).

The cultivated networks enabled by Nine Tenths provide a means of coordinating various stakeholders and developing collective action in order to transform Makhanda's education trajectory. Nine Tenths is therefore a powerful example of how communities can partner with universities and higher institutions to promote more enabling learning environments (Munemo, 2019). Rhodes University, arguably the most powerful actor in the Nine Tenths partnership, has spent a significant time positioning the university for the public good (IDP). The vertical relationship between Rhodes University and other stakeholders enables the leveraging of resources, ideas and information (Woolcock, as cited in Terrion, 2006, p. 158). This linking tie plays a significant role in facilitating the sharing of resources in order to create a more equitable social landscape (Ansari, et al., 2012, p. 821).

This vertical relationship has played an important role in enabling a significant number of local Bachelor candidates to access Rhodes University. Table 2 below reflects the numbers of first year registrations (full-time) from the six local no-fee schools from 2012 – 2020. Note that there

is obviously a 1 year lag between school completion and university registration; it can be assumed, for example, that the bulk of students registering in 2020 write their NSC examinations at the end of 2019.

Table 2
Number of Full-Time, Undergraduate Enrollments at Rhodes University (2012-2020)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Khutliso Daniels	0	0	1	2	0	1	0	3	1
Mary Waters	2	4	7	5	7	8	10	13	17
Nathaniel Nyaluza	2	1	4	0	0	4	4	1	4
Nombulelo	4	7	9	7	10	5	12	20	22
Ntsika	1	0	3	5	7	17	10	23	17
TEM Mrwetyana	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
Total	**9**	**12**	**25**	**19**	**26**	**35**	**36**	**60**	**61**

In other words, the number of local students finding a pathway to Rhodes increased sixfold from 2012 – 2020. Nine Tenths with its explicit emphasis on facilitating performance-based applications, played a key part in this local triumph.

The significant increases in access to post-school trajectories of Nine Tenths Mentees should be qualified with an acknowledgement that additional support initiatives have been introduced in the post-2017 period. Specifically, mention should be made of an initiative called 'the Bridging Programme'. This was birthed thanks to the leadership of the Vice Chancellor, Mabizela. He invited GADRA Education to devise a project that would enable the extension of students at its Matric School through access to Rhodes University. The Bridging Programme allows students who have already obtained Bachelor passes to register for and attain a university credit whilst simultaneously upgrading a limited number of school subjects. Essentially, this programme allows the Nine Tenths facilitators and mentors to incentivise good performance in the final examinations. Similarly, the introduction of application and fee waiver commitments from the university were made by university authorities for all academically deserving local learners. In this way, linking social capital has enabled a sharing of resources, helping to narrow the gap in a context of resource disparity.

All three forms of social capital have been leveraged to bring about collective action and the expansion of human capabilities in Makhanda. The power of community groups and civil

society based on networks of trust and reciprocity, has therefore been utilised to bring about significant change in Makhanda's education trajectory.

Is the Nine Tenths a Solution for Education Injustice in South Africa? A Reflection on Potentialities and Pitfalls

The quantitative and qualitative gains of Nine Tenths proves its valuable role in Makhanda's education system. Bonding, bridging and linking social capital have been leveraged to enhance human capabilities as well as increase access to educational resources. However, it seems unlikely that programmes like Nine Tenths operating in isolation will be enough to shift the needle on education in Makhanda and nationally. The issue of education provision is fundamentally political: therefore, one must be wary of technical solutions to political problems and the issue of resource distribution has become depoliticised, diminishing the accountability of the state (Campbell, 2012, p. 140). Furthermore, in the absence of state coordination and funding, the scalability of the Nine Tenths programme remains limited.

Issues around Nine Tenths' reach can also be found within implementation of the programme at selected schools. Nine Tenths top-end intervention programme, whose benefits are most meaningfully experienced by school students at the high end of the performance spectrum. These form a minority of the students at the targeted schools, which continue to have high failure and dropout rates. Successful intervention strategies require more than this one programme, as they need to address educational challenges at all levels of learning to meaningfully change the city's education trajectory. The need for a multifaceted education intervention is recognised by the VC initiative of which Nine Tenths is a part, as one strategy amongst several intervention programmes, ranging from ECD programmes to homework clubs to mobile science labs.

Faced with scalability limitations, Nine Tenths cannot be conceived of as an education solution in isolation or the panacea to South Africa's education maladies. However, though limited in scope, the Nine Tenths approach, which cultivates a sense of collective responsibility and serves as a bridge between different stakeholders in Makhanda's schools, remains valuable as a framework for the ways in which community-university partnership can impact educational outcomes. In this context, further research can aid the implementation and impact of Nine Tenths. Necessary future research includes formal quantitative investigations of the programme's impact, comparative analyses of the improvement of Nine Tenths schools in relation to other schools in the district, and the significance of the social capital ties and mentorship relationships for former Nine Tenths mentees now beginning to navigate the terrain of higher education.

Further collaboration between different groups is likely to strengthen the programme's impact and scale. The programme provides a way forward in compromised circumstances, and has in this role positively impacted the lives of many young people. In this role, Nine Tenths provides a pathway towards leveraging community resources in a constrained system, and collective action by communities ultimately brings about locally significant change. Therefore, the programme provides a testimony of the ways in which social capital, and a sense of community responsibility, can bring about meaningful social outcomes.

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Footnotes

[1] In other words, the programme seeks to boost the performance of the stronger learners in the cohort.