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In keeping with the Foundation's stated policy of seeking to offer a platform for both seasoned commentators and new and marginalised voices, we present this edition of *Focus on Learning and Teaching*.

The Foundation works from the premise that education is not only an important developmental issue, but is also a human rights issue. Beyond the central concern of personal growth, our social development and, crucially, our long-term economic development is dependent on the acquisition and availability of suitable and appropriate skills. Arguably the major constraint confronting South Africa's growth trajectory has always been its poor human capital base. In this regard our history of segregationist and apartheid educational policies has resulted in a legacy which we continue to grapple with today. More recent policy interventions, however well intentioned, have not succeeded in creating a new and realisable vision of universal education.

But, as Gillian Godsell, our commissioning editor, points out, it is tempting to be drawn into negative accounts of the public educational system. She goes on to warn about this negativity becoming something of a national pastime. This warning should be taken seriously if we are to move away from a destructive despair which itself may prevent us from having the sort of productive conversations necessary for improving the education system.

"Getting the basics right" is always a good place to begin and nowhere is this more obvious than with the issue of "mother tongue" education. In this regard the Foundation is particularly pleased to offer the thoughts and arguments of Alexander, Matentjie, Owen-Smith and Henning.

Education continues to be a central concern of the Foundation, and forthcoming editions of *Focus* will deal with Further Education and Training and Higher Education.

This edition of *Focus* offers an innovation in the form of a Narrative. In all the theoretical debates and policy discussions it is useful to be reminded of one man's educational journey and what that may entail. If education is not also about realising individual hopes and aspirations, then it is manifestly circumscribed.

We continue with another innovation introduced in the last edition of *Focus*, namely of providing a Review Forum wherein various reviewers comment on a recently published work. This innovation was widely appreciated and is in line with the Foundation's policy of providing a forum for discussion and debate.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Gillian Godsell and her accomplished team of writers for preparing this important edition of *Focus*.