

Volume 16, Issue 1, 2010

SARE

Southern African Review of Education

**A Review of Comparative Education,
History of Education and Educational
Development**



SACHES

THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN COMPARATIVE AND HISTORY OF EDUCATION SOCIETY

Southern African Review of Education (SARE) is the journal of the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES). It was previously published together with **Education with Production (EWP)**, the journal of the Foundation for Education with Production.

Editor of SARE: Aslam Fataar, Stellenbosch University
[Fax 021 21 808 2283. Tel 021 808 2281. E-mail: afataar@sun.ac.za]

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Production editor and typesetting: Marion Boers [011 803 2681 words@boers.org.za]
Printing: LaserCom [011 699 8300]

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■ Editorial notes

The *Southern African Review of Education* (SARE) focuses on comparative debate about education and development in the Southern African region. We encourage a comparative rather than country-specific foci, which this edition attempts to strengthen.

This issue opens with an article by Crain Soudien, immediate past president of the World Council on Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) and long-standing member of the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES). Soudien considers the implications of Raewell Connell's seminal text, *Southern Theory*, for the field of Comparative Education, especially as it relates to pre-occupations with Education for All. Taking on board Connell's view that in refusing to recognise its ethno-sociological being metropolitan (northern) theory is characterised by failures of recognition that result in a major incompleteness, Soudien suggests that Connell's reading requires us to bring the local and global, northern and southern discourses into a complex cross-comparative educational dialogue. In the next article, Peter Kallaway's historical turn in his discussion of civic education in South Africa helps us along this path. He lays the table for a much needed debate about the role of civic and values education in specific political contexts.

The third article in this issue is by Carol-Anne Spreen and Salim Vally. They provide an analysis of the role of outcomes-based education (OBE) in the education crisis in South Africa. They caution against viewing OBE as the scapegoat for educational failure. They prefer an examination of OBE in the light of systemic shortcomings and ongoing inequalities in our school provision. They also caution against the potential harm that can be done to the social justice aims caused by the dismissal of some of the progressive ideals supported by Curriculum 2005.

Turning to a systemic focus, Andre Kraak presents an analysis of South Africa's two national human resources development strategies in the fourth article. His key conclusion is that policy failure on the country's HRD platform is a consequence of poor horizontal coordination and inter-departmental cooperation within the South African state. In the next article Anil Kanjee, Yusuf Sayed and Diana Rodriguez focus on curriculum reform in selected sub-Saharan African countries, with particular emphasis on quality. Their coverage include moves towards outcomes-based education, new areas of concentration in response to social changes, the balance between subject disciplinary and learning area-based approaches, the challenges of effective pedagogy, and assessment. They also discuss curricular interventions that impact on the centrality of teachers in improving learning. They argue that attempts must be made to open the under-examined 'black box' of pedagogy and to see what

actually happens inside classrooms. Prescient is their suggestion that without a well-prepared, well-resourced and motivated teaching force, attempts at curriculum reform cannot succeed.

The next article discusses initial teacher education in selected Southern and East African countries. Chiwimbiso Kwenda and Maureen Robinson locate teacher education in these countries within the key challenges identified in selected comparative reports. Their article illustrates how selected African countries are addressing the identified challenges in their particular contexts. They highlight how teacher training processes in the countries concerned are mediated by factors such as geographical and institutional location; language of instruction, and perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about teaching as a profession.

The final article by Chinedu Okeke discusses the interpersonal and institutional struggles involved in the preparation of doctoral proposals in a Nigerian university. In this personal account he reflects on his struggles with both supervisor and institutional discourses that according to him inform postgraduate supervision in Nigerian universities. The implications of these discourses for higher degree supervision are highlighted, while the roles of his personal experiences are a central feature of this account.

The issue concludes with three excellent book reviews and an obituary of Dr Mino Polelo, who died in an accident in February 2010. Mino was a member of SACHES and a lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Botswana. He wrote one of the reviews in this issue of *SARE*, incidentally of Connell's book *Southern Theory* that Soudien discusses in the first article.

Aslam Fataar

‘Southern Theory’ and its relevance for comparative education

Crain Soudien

University of Cape Town

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to assess the relevance of new theoretical approaches that are being made in the social sciences for the field of Comparative Education. It begins with a critical review of recent work by Australian social scientist Raewynn Connell, which seeks to explore the lineaments of sociological theory as it expresses itself in a range of places around the world and to understand the limits and possibilities of this alternative sociological imagination. The article will attempt to extract that which is new and different in this body of thinking and to look at how these bear on and come to provide new insights into the central preoccupations of contemporary Comparative Education such as Education for All.

Introduction

How to work with information from different social settings, whether social category, gender or nationality, has from the inception of Comparative Education been a central preoccupation of its scholars and practitioners. When Marc-Antoine Jullien de Paris published his pioneering study in 1817, his intention was largely to put together a database of educational information drawn from a range of different countries for the purpose of assessing what worked and what did not. The objective for Jullien de Paris was essentially to generate a universal set of principles for improving the quality of education (see De Vos & Brits 1987: 2). Since then, virtually every other comparativist, and now internationalist, scholar in education has been challenged by the same question – how to work between the particular and the universal in a way that is respectful of the local yet aware of how it could be brought into a conversation with a wider set of possibilities (see Evans & Robinson-Pant, 2007; Elliot & Grigorenko, 2007; Preece, with Modise & Mosweunyane, 2008; Sternberg, 2007 and Klees, 2008). In terms of this, the purpose of this paper is to ask how the work of Australian

social theorist Raewynn Connell, who has recently written an important book on the contributions of theorists from a range of countries around the world on the social condition, is relevant for the comparative education exercise.

The article moves in three stages. It begins with a statement of what the issues are, moves to a discussion of Connell's *Southern Theory* and in a final section considers the significance of her work for Comparative Education.

The issue of comparison

Methodologically, Jullien de Paris was a path-breaker. He explained in his *L'Esquisse et vues préliminaires d'un ouvrage sur l'éducation comparée* how comparison ought to be undertaken:

to build up, for this science, as has been done for other branches of knowledge, collections of facts and observations arranged in analytical tables so that they can be correlated and compared with a view to deducing therefrom firm principles and specific rules so that education may become virtually a positive science instead of being left to the whims of the narrow-minded, blinkered people in charge of it or diverted from the strait and narrow path by the prejudices of blind routine or by the spirit of system and innovation. (Gautherin 1993: 6)

Gautherin (1993: 6) explains that while Jullien de Paris' approach was 'essentially empirical and his purpose normative' it would be a mistake to view what he was doing as simply functionalist. 'In the *Esquisse*', she says, '... it is the criterion of value and not that of function which is used to assess and compare institutions and different modes of instruction and their effects' (Gautherin 1993: 7). What he meant by value, however, she continues, was unclear and lacked precision: 'This endeavour fizzled out: the questionnaire remained unfinished. ... By dint of close epistemological scrutiny it would no doubt be easy to hunt out the weaknesses of his approach ... *the ambiguities regarding the objects of study...*' (my emphasis)' (ibid.).

Strikingly, we, Jullien de Paris' inheritors in the 21st century, now almost 200 hundred years later, despite the warnings of important figures in the field of Comparative Education, such as Michael Sandler, remain dogged by the same ambiguities. What the objects of study across contexts ought to be and how we might interpret them continues to be fundamentally difficult to determine. What *value* we ought to place on the objects of our comparative analysis remains a major challenge for us. We either develop a level of abstraction and operate at a high level of generality, invariably informed by hegemonic notions of what constitutes the norm, or we project our analyses at the level of the specific in a way that does not admit the possibility that general forms of being and behaviour may exist. We are, as a result, conceptually if not paralysed then certainly handicapped as we attempt to manage this task of talking across difference.

These difficulties notwithstanding, we, as people from different countries, who operate in cross-national contexts, in international agencies, in scholarly societies and

most critically in governments that subsist on practices of policy-borrowing, continue to operate as if these issues have been resolved. We have, for example, in institutions such as UNESCO and in initiatives such as Education for All (EFA) evidence of an explicit belief that there exist 'authoritative reference(s) for comparing the experience of countries' (UNESCO 2007: 3). The language and discourse of much of this work is framed in that of certainty. Important as this EFA work is – particularly in so far as it helps us understand where the pressure points are in particular countries, and particularly, also, in broad terms – in providing us with a point of departure for a global dialogue, we remain hard-pressed to make real and meaningful comparative sense of the data we have in front of us. The work of the Global Monitoring Report for the EFA, for example, is data-strong. In the tradition of Jullien de Paris, one has the benefit of tables, comparative surveys, but little by way of explaining how one might extract from this data meaningful insights. One learns of the existence of particular issues in particular parts of the world, but how these amount to meaningful comparison is not clear. The problem was posed explicitly by Brian Holmes in the 1960s. He argued that descriptive and statistical studies, when used as a basis for accurate prediction, contain a number of pitfalls, as do comparisons of education legislation between one country and another and even historical methods (De Vos & Brits 1987).

I would like to use an example from my part of the world to show the nature of the problem in more detail.

Overleaf is an example of a table reflecting Grade 6 attainment in 14 countries in the Southern African region. The Southern African Consortium for the Monitoring of Education Quality (SACMEQ) is a UNESCO-supported quality monitoring agency that has done two waves of bench-marked tests in the region. This table carries data from the first wave, conducted in 2000.

Important for understanding the table first of all is that the scores were pegged against a Rasch-test-determined mean of 500 for the cohort. The other important point is that the quintiles stand for income-level, from poorest to wealthiest, with quintile 1 representing the former and quintile 5 the latter.

What does one make of this table? One can read it in a way which tells one that South African learners are performing woefully. They are incontrovertibly poor performers: they are being outperformed by eight of the countries in the region, all of which are considerably poorer than South Africa. Notable, for example, are Swaziland and Mozambique, which are, on the whole, doing significantly better than South Africa.

But if one looks closely at the table, aside from Namibia, which probably, with no disrespect to its understanding of its independence, is still very much in the penumbra of its apartheid legacy, none of the countries has the attainment profile of South Africa. The range differentials between the poorest and the wealthiest are relatively small. South Africa's range, by contrast, is the widest. There is, moreover, a distinct difference between all the learners who fall in income level quintiles 1 to 4 and those in

SACMEQ II scores for Grade 6 maths per poverty quintile, 2000

Quintile	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Botswana	491	499	510	508	557	513
Kenya	540	545	555	565	611	563
Lesotho	443	448	448	445	452	447
Malawi	422	435	435	433	447	433
Mauritius	519	564	587	620	640	584
Mozambique	526	525	531	530	538	530
Namibia	403	402	411	425	513	431
Seychelles	520	541	555	576	579	544
South Africa	442	445	454	491	597	486
Swaziland	506	511	511	513	541	517
Tanzania	484	511	529	528	560	522
Uganda	484	497	498	509	543	506
Zambia	414	425	436	434	466	435
Zanzibar	478	472	478	479	484	478
Mean	468	480	485	492	560	468

Source: Van der Berg and Louw, 2006

quintile 5. Quintile 4 learners who score a mean mark of 497 are closer in performance to quintile 1 learners at 442 than they are to quintile 5 learners scoring at 597. This 597, for the record, places these learners in the third highest spot in the region. Can one use this table, on its own terms, to make a comparison between South Africa and its neighbours?

There is a great deal to unpack in this table, but how does one get to a point where one can meaningfully make sense of the data in a comparative way? How might someone who has no detailed understanding of the region begin to recognise what is different and what is similar?

In the meanwhile, without a clarification of these issues, this kind of data is used in extremely superficial kinds of ways. In South African policy circles, right now, for example, economists are using this data to develop cost-benefit analyses, making the argument that the returns on the country's investment in education, which is indeed considerable, even by world standards, is effectively wasted. Treasury, which, as is to be expected, has formidable econometric capacity, has used the data to come to the conclusion that it cannot spend more on education than it does. While this decision may be correct, it is not correct *because* of the power of the data. The data is not intrinsically, on its own terms, informative and helpful.

But this is not only a South African problem. Bonal (2007) in a key article on the persistence of poverty in Latin America helps us see how statistics by themselves *fail*

to explain the full complexity of what is going on in particular parts of the world. Where in South Africa the statistics show *failure*, he presents statistics that show the opposite. In Latin America, he is able to show, there has been a remarkable increase in levels of education and attainment. This achievement notwithstanding, poverty levels remain unchanged. The more salient point for his argument is that there remains despite this data naïve beliefs in human capital theory (HCT). He says that HCT

assumes that investment will have positive effects on human skills and worker productivity, effects that will bring benefits both individually (higher income, the acquisition of status) and socially (economic growth, technological progress and collective well-being). The validity of this theory rests on the acceptance of its universality. (Bonal 2007: 88)

He carries on to say that HCT is based on the idea that any individual should be able to cash in their 'innate abilities and invest in themselves, in such a way that their social standing becomes solely a reflection of their talents, efforts and personal motivation.' The requirements are that each society has in place the basic conditions to make this 'cashing in' possible. More than 40 years on from its original conception, the rationale of HCT remains valid. What, however, are these basic conditions, he asks, because it seems to him that the 'the result of a failure to take advantage of the opportunities offered is, in most cases, a reflection of the fact that it is actually impossible to take advantage of these opportunities' (ibid.).

Critical for our discussion of Education for All and the general HCT within which it is set is the explosive idea, as Bonal (2007: 90) puts it, that '... although a great number of the poor may improve their educational level, this may be insufficient as an investment in human capital that is interchangeable on the labour market.' The impact of this has been catastrophic because '[t]here is no doubt that in the case of the most disadvantaged groups, access to lower quality educational systems has influenced their perceptions of the usefulness of attending school, and this compounds their financial difficulties ... and the different ways in which educational unease is manifested' (ibid.). The resultant social effects are dire. Tenti, quoted by Bonal (2007: 90) explains: '[t]he clearest and most widely seen symptoms are exclusion and failure at school, discomfort, conflict and disorder, violence and difficulties of integration in the institutions themselves, and above all an absence of any sense of the educational experience for significant numbers of young people and adolescents in Latin America.'

I am aware that I have taken rather extreme examples to make the argument.

Where does this leave us? I return to this question in the final part of the paper and now look at the work of Raewynn Connell.

'Southern Theory'

Raewynn Connell's (2007) work was not written, of course, for the field of Comparative Education, but as an intellectual project it speaks powerfully to comparison and particularly to the challenge of working between the particular and the universal.

The objective of *Southern Theory* is to develop a map of sociological theory both within and outside the metropole. Connell's purpose with respect to the heartland of the theory is to understand the limits and possibilities of its theoretical imagination. In doing so she seeks to bring to the surface the ontological assumptions of its dominant iterations. She quickly comes to ask the comparative question which underpins a great deal of our own intellectual grappling in education: can we talk of a comprehensive theory able to describe and analyse the nature of society which is not dependent on the epistemologies and indeed ontologies of modern Europe? Can we develop theories of social analysis which are not built on the classic foundations of Marx, Durkheim and Weber, the formative structural-functionalist traditions of Parsons, or the modern analyses of Giddens, Bourdieu and Castells? As a genealogical overview the work is an important drawing together of the history of theory-building.

With this as a framework she helps us come to understand the nature of and the consequences of using the particular empirical settings that were used in the social analysis of the great modern theorists, including Durkheim, Marx, Bourdieu and Giddens. The generalisations extrapolated from these settings come to assume universal significance: 'A general social theory shaped around the objectivism/subjectivism problem necessarily constructs a social world read through the metropole – not read through the metropole's action on the rest of the world' (Connell 2007: 45). A major consequence of this development, she insists, is that the intellectual contributions of those working on the margins is discredited, 'ripped off', relegated and disenfranchised – out of the process comes the 'grand erasure.' The problem, she explains, is the basis of our knowing and the foundational ways these forms of knowing – as they are constituted in dominance – present our experience as human beings in the image, as she puts it, of the ethno-centric experience of Europe in the last three hundred years. Much of our sociology, powerful as it is, is simply too presumptuous. She comments: 'Metropolitan sociology ... is a splendid ethno-sociology. It has profound insights, well honed methodologies and lots of skilled practitioners. ... But its theorising is vitiated whenever it refuses to recognise its ethno-sociological being.... The failures of recognition ... result ... in major incompleteness ...' (Connell 2007: 226).

The approach she takes is generative for us in Comparative Education for two reasons. Firstly, the contextualisation she provides of the origins and ontological capaciousness of the major theories with which we work is an important reminder of the challenges of our work. This contextualisation comes by way of a critical reading of the so-called canon, beginning with sociology's early imperial classification of humankind in the classic texts of Comte and Spencer, through to the rise of Parsonian structural functionalism and ending up with the process through which Marx, Weber and Durkheim are recovered and come to be 'foundational'. She shows how these foundations are extended differently in the work of a range of scholars, but invariably come to elide the complexity of global and local oppression. She looks at influential

scholars such as Coleman, who, as she says, 'ignores the whole historical explanation of empire and global domination' (Connell 2007: 33); Giddens, who attempts to reformulate social theory as a whole in his concepts of structuration and comes to develop a comprehensive analytic grip strengthened by psychoanalysis, cultural studies, history, but who 'downplays the significance of imperialism' (Connell 2007: 38); and Bourdieu, who, in his cogent explanation of the *habitus*, is unable to get at the debates amongst the colonised themselves. The thread running through her survey of this important body of theory is that it is exclusionary and given to a social blindness. Can we, therefore, she asks, 'have a social theory that does not claim universality for a metropolitan point of view, does not read from only one direction, does not exclude the experience and social thought of most of humanity, and is not constructed on *terra nullius*'? (Connell 2007: 47).

Towards answering this question, she says that the political economy of knowledge production in the academy is such that knowledge that is produced in different parts of the world is 'differently structured in practice' (Connell 2007: 106). That which comes from the metropole is presented as theory, while local knowledge is presented as data. In the process she demonstrates, secondly, why the approach she takes is generative for us in Comparative Education. She brings to our attention the important scholarly contributions of little-known, for the most part, intellectuals in a number of different non-metropolitan countries. She takes us through the work of scholars who, clearly, all of us ought not only to know about but also to have read. There are, for example, indigenous sociologists in west Africa such as Akinsola Akiwowo, Moses Makinde and Paulin Hountondji who 'command attention particularly for [their] diagnosis of social change in West Africa' (Connell 2007: 105). She describes the prescient work of Garcia Clancini in his deconstruction of tradition in Mexico, and then, in what is in some ways the climax of the text and yet in others the most frustrating, provides a movingly insightful view of the Indian subalternists. This latter discussion gracefully reads its way into the power of Gandhi's thought and then Gandhi as interpreted by Ashish Nandy and out of that an insightful appreciation of the capacity for this sociology to make sense of but also move on from the limits of modernity.

Connell's broad approach is by no means new. Many scholars have, in the last 50 years, regularly made the subject of Western intolerance of other forms of cognition, and of higher levels of intellectual engagement the object of their commentary (see Bernal, 1991; Diop, 1996). More pertinently, while Comparative Education has not quite engaged epistemology as robustly as have people such as Diop, it has forayed into these kinds of discussions (see Masemann 1988). Few, however, have surveyed the field of knowledge production as widely as she has. *Southern Theory* is as a result a grand project. It is written with a sense of respect and of a consciousness of the contribution of scholars across the world, even of those who come under her critique. The result is that she comes to situate sociology, as a field, as a much more generous terrain of knowledge production than it actually is in many parts of the world. She is

insistently aware of its inclination to generalise *for* the whole of humanity and so, instead, seeks to present it as a much more provisional practice. She is not, however – and this point is returned to below – unaware of the importance of talking *across* difference. It is not the sacralisation of the different and its uniqueness as ontological experience and the consequent ineffability of its description that she is emphasising. Aware of the differences that do animate human experience, and even appealing for a recognition of how those at the core of this difference interpret it, she simultaneously emphasises the singularity of the human race and the possibility of mutual recognition. She argues, therefore, *against* the notion that different knowledge systems might possess a fundamental incommensurability, and particularly so in the age of modernity where these very knowledge systems are no longer pristine or hermetically sealed off from one another. The implications of what she is saying, therefore, are that at some levels dialogue across difference – comparison for our purposes – *is* possible. We in Comparative Education can, therefore, translate this into an appeal for working with information from settings of difference with a great deal more sensitivity. In terms of this, I would therefore like to suggest that her relevance for the work we do is great. Having made this comment, how might we in Comparative Education use a text such as this?

Southern Theory and Comparative Education

What the Connell reading is requiring of us is to bring the local and the global into a much more complex dialogue. The focus of her work is to force us to understand the nature of the processes which determine social formation and the educational manifestations these processes take. There is work in Comparative Education taking us in this direction, such as that of Fataar (2007), who seeks to understand how educational reform based on universalist policies works in local settings. In explaining how this policy *actually* comes to work on the ground, he argues that '[s]chooling practices do not stem primarily from policy *per se*, but ... from the localised practices arising out of networked relationships ... that [are] constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across spatial scales, from the global scale, through to the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town or the settlement ...' (Fataar 2007: 600-601).

Understanding the specific texture of spatialised schooling practices requires a fine-grained reading of localising processes in such a way that the 'local' is thus given agency in the production of space and place. A similar point is made by Novelli & Cardozo (2008) in talking about the relationship between conflict and education in the 'Global South', where they argue that it is important to recognise (i) the multiscalar nature of social processes and (ii) how the 'local' can effect and is affected by processes that take place at different scales.

The significance of this line of argument is important for us in Comparative Education. Sternberg (2007: 8) suggests, and of course there are dangers in taking this

argument to extremes, that '[i]ndividuals in different cultures may think about concepts and problems in different ways. The result is that teachers of one culture teaching students of another culture may not understand how their students think about concepts and problems' and what appear to be differences in general intelligence may in fact be differences in cultural properties. Apart from making the observation that, actually, what constitutes a cultural property is extremely hard to define, he suggests, and this is important for the universalising EFA approach one might take, that '[c]hildren may have substantial practical skills that go unrecognised' (Sternberg 2007: 13). Tharp & Dalton (2007) make a similar point in an aptly titled paper called 'Orthodoxy, cultural compatibility, and universals in education' and Harkness et al. (2007: 133) suggest that Western educational theories of intelligence and education may be somewhat disconnected from actual ethnotheories and practices in the classroom, even in mainstream schools of the Western world. Unfortunately, the current political emphasis on developing cognitive skills may undermine teachers' efforts to help students learn other kinds of competence that may be just as important in the wider world.

In thinking through how these difficulties of working between the local and the universal might be handled, Connell makes two points that are helpful:

1. Intellectual indigeneity subsists, as she (Connell 2007: 234) recounts, drawing from the controversial but insightful work of Paulin Hountondji, the Dahomean scholar, in an engagement with the social conditions of the local and its empirical specificity, and
2. Autonomous social theory is epistemologically difficult in the age of modernity

Where does this take us? A starting point might be to reverse the order of the points that Connell is making. The import and significance of the first is about modernity and the nature of its grip on social life and the attendant ways at our disposal for describing and analysing it. At the core of her argument is that we now no longer have economically and culturally autonomous societies anywhere in the world. What modernity has done is to fundamentally reconfigure society to the point where the social processes that characterise it are evident in and active in all the social spaces of human interaction. As a consequence of this, autonomous social theory is epistemologically no longer possible. In conclusion, the first point to emphasise, therefore, is that we should not encourage the idea that there exists inside particular groups or communities, whether we are talking of the metropole or the periphery, the idea that 'insider' theory and this theory alone will explain the condition of the subset of any one part of the world that one might be looking at. The critique applies both to 'grand' theory and to theories from the margins. It is this that then leads us to her second point, which is that, the impossibility of autonomous theory notwithstanding, there remains a hierarchy of knowledge in the world and that this hierarchy needs to be challenged by recognising the need to engage with the specificity of the local. It is this that makes Connell deeply important for understanding the complexity of comparison.

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Notes on the author

Professor Crain Soudien was formerly the director of the School of Education and is currently a Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town. He has written over 120 articles, reviews, reports and book chapters in the areas of social difference, culture, educational policy, comparative education, educational change, public history and popular culture. He is also the co-editor of three books on District Six, Cape Town, and another on comparative education and the author of *The Making of Youth Identity in Contemporary South Africa: Race, Culture and Schooling* and the co-author of *Inclusion and Exclusion in South African and Indian Schools*. He is immediate Past-President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and was the Chair of a Ministerial Committee on Transformation in Higher Education.

Address for correspondence

Crain.Soudien@uct.ac.za

Civic education in the context of South Africa's history and political struggle

Peter Kallaway

University of the Western Cape and University of Cape Town

Abstract

While there is wide agreement that civic education is a good thing, there is little or no consensus on what it is or how it is to be achieved. In a world where secular values dominate public education, this is often the space selected by policy-makers for the inculcation of the ideals of the good life or the moral order to the next generation, yet the ambiguities of teaching values in a non-partisan democratic schools context have often been noted. It would seem that situations of political crisis often provoke calls for the development of curricula to meet these ends. International initiatives in this regard date from the time of the League of Nations and have been endorsed by UNESCO more recently. They have also been significantly stimulated by the post-9/11 situation in the USA. In South Africa there has been some activity with regard to Values Education in recent years in the context of rebuilding civic society, but there has been little in the way of an analysis of the history of civic education or the successes and failures of previous initiatives. This article seeks to initiate a debate in this neglected area in the interest of providing clarity for teachers on what it is that they are expected to do in this regard.

What is civic education?

President Jacob Zuma recently called for a focus on political education in South Africa in order to promote a deeper understanding of the democratic, non-racial tradition of the ANC and its significance for civic education (Davis 2009). Set together with the hosting of the CIVITAS World Congress on Civic Education in Cape Town in 2009, this seems to signal an appropriate moment for a reassessment of the meaning of civic education as an aspect of history of education in South Africa, and suggest the need for

research related to the promotion of this field in the context of contemporary struggles to promote an ethos of democracy in South African schools.

The CIVITAS international forum undertakes to promote political socialisation, advance the cause of democracy and promote education in knowledge, skills and values essential to democratic systems that respect human rights and cultural diversity. It is understood to promote the good person and the good citizen in terms of moral development. In more expanded terms it undertakes to shape positive values with regard to society and community. This entails encouraging attitudes of tolerance and acceptance for those who might be considered 'other' in the community, the nation or the global context (Civitas 2006: 1).

The public discussion of these issues in South Africa in 2009 is of some significance. From being an international beacon of hope for equity and democracy in the 1990s, something of the shine of the Mandela honeymoon period has rubbed off by this time, with the realisation that South Africa is in many ways just another Third World country battling with sets of intractable problems associated with neo-colonialism, poverty and equity. In that context of increasingly heated political controversy, the question of how to strengthen and support the democracy for current citizens won after such a protracted struggle and at such a high price demands to be assessed with care. The recent spate of xenophobic attacks, heightened racist polemic and community and labour disputes have all highlighted the problems of human rights, democratic governance and the powers of the judiciary. And these issues have thrown the spotlight on the role of the education system and educational institutions in promoting the constitution and a culture of democracy and human rights.

At the present time the defence of civic education is fundamental in addressing the decline in citizen commitment to democracy in established democracies as well as the disenchantment of the youth in Third World contexts. That youth disaffection has to do with political process, with governmental abuse of power in many democratic states, and the general lack of respect for politicians manifested worldwide. It has often been noted that the future of democracy is ironically more uncertain now than ever (European Union 2008). The challenge for civic education lies in the promotion of democracy by making young people informed about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship – whatever they might be in a contested world.

The roots of these questions can be traced back to the great philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle and the debate about the good citizen and the good state, to notions relating to eighteenth century concerns about the primary aim of education in the production of the rational citizen and the rational man. (Boyd & King 1975: 288) Amy Gutmann notes that civic education requires schools to support 'the intellectual and emotional preconditions for democratic deliberation among future generations of citizens' and 'the teaching of mutual respect is instrumental to assuring all children the freedom to choose in the future' (Crittenden 2007: 13-15) These assumptions,

which form the basis of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, entail the promotion of effective and active citizenship for a democratic society and the need to strengthen civil society.

Jack Crittenden gives an excellent summary of those debates relating to civic education, and provides an exploration of how such debates came to influence political and educational debate in the USA from the nineteenth century. He states the central dilemma of civic education concisely:

How far should the 'curriculum' go? Citizens are taught to obey the laws; should they also be taught to challenge the laws and customs of the (society)? ... Civic education in a democracy, though not in every kind of regime, must prepare citizens to participate in and thereby perpetuate the system, and at the same time prepare them to challenge what they see as inequities and injustices within that system. So democratic education is both conservative, as in conserving the stability and continuity of the system (of government), and radical, as in calling into question the roots or the foundations of that system. (Crittenden 2007 : 5)

Civic education is commonly considered to be concerned with the promotion of effective and active citizenship and the preparation of the youth of a country to carry out their roles as citizens. It encourages the youth to think and care about the welfare of the community or the common weal. Some would argue that the enterprise is fundamentally flawed and that it rests on the myth of the homogeneous 'citizen' or 'nation.' Mason (2007) argues that the civic education project would attempt to ignore or gloss over the fact that the nation is never a homogeneous unit. The notion of democratic citizenship would imply that all citizens are equal and that the state treats them all the same. But in a real world the nation state is 'an imagined community' constituted 'to make culture and polity congruent' and bring all participants 'under the same roof' by 'papering over the cracks' that divide the citizenry in terms of gender, race, class, culture, region and ideology. Once those issues are engaged with through real political debate and contest it is very difficult to find substantial common ground for a curriculum programme on 'citizenship' which is intellectually coherent and sustainable. (Mason 2007: 177)

This paper attempts to examine these issues in an international context and to explore the historical roots of civic education in South Africa with a view to clarifying its potential meaning at different historical periods and the usefulness of the notion for the study and practice of education in contemporary South Africa.

All education is value driven. We have to decide on priorities. As RS Peters used to put it, 'why do we teach this rather than that?' (Peters 1966). Public policy-makers in education must consider what they would regard as priorities and how they intend to achieve the goals set. In so doing, 'the values and preferences integral to policy reflect not only different goals, but also different means of achieving goals. The values re-

flected in civic education are in one sense embedded in educational policy-making' (Christie 2008: 117). It is not the consideration of values in education in that broad, embedded sense that is under consideration as a major focus of this paper, but rather how specific arrangements have been put in place over time in South Africa to deal with the promotion of citizenship education. The only area of the formal curriculum that will be referred to briefly as impacting on the field of civic education is history education.

What if the community concerned is not committed to democratic virtues? What if the primary ethos of the country promotes race, ethnic, class, religious, gender or other forms of intolerance? What if the educational system is designed to promote the advantage of a political clique? Or what if that community does not extend that notion of citizenship to all citizens, as seen in the case of Nazi Germany, the Southern States of the USA prior to the Civil Rights Movement and many colonial societies? I grew up in such a context in a village in the Eastern Cape during the fifties where white supremacy was a given and loyalty to the apartheid government was taken for granted at school. 'Civic Education', if we ever used the term, was understood to be about loyalty to the apartheid government!

It would be naïve to imagine that all so-called democratic societies have solved issues of division and conflict over resources and power. It is very clear then, as Pam Christie has pointed out, that these are highly complex educational issues. Civic Education is not simply a matter of teaching children 'good values' – for the simple reason that it is always difficult to arrive at an adequate social consensus regarding what values to prioritise. What is often neglected in debates of this kind is the question of *whose* values are to be taught and whose interest those values will serve.

A review of the programme of the CIVITAS conference in Cape Town reveals that the international initiative to promote civic education in the post-9/11 era seems to be dominated by a variety of American government and non-government organisations, but it is important to note that there has been a rich history of international engagement with the area in the 20th century that needs to be taken into consideration to get a full sense of the field. The South African experience and the specifically South African challenges in this regard at the present time need to be understood against that background.

Civic Education for Democracy: From the role of the League of Nations to the role of CIVITAS

The League of Nations, founded to promote democratic government after World War I, did not establish a specific institutional framework for dealing with educational issues, as they were deemed to be too sensitive to national differences. But it did promote a climate of cooperation and a central coordinating focus for civic education based on the templates established by various pre-War non-governmental or philan-

thropic or religious networks. Such thinking originated in the early attempts at coordinated debate regarding educational issues and had its origins in exhibitions at world fairs or educational conferences held since the late 19th century. These provided a foundation for established networks relating to the promotion of education that sought to establish the best methods of training the young generation to consider international cooperation and the best method of conducting world affairs (see Kallaway 2006 and Fuchs 2004).

Through the above arrangements the League became a central mediator of educational ideas, particularly for the ideas associated with democratic education, peace education or civic education, as it came to be called in later times. Most significantly, it made education a public international affair that involved governments and set up durable standards for the conduct of education that have prevailed in large part to the present day. As Fuchs points out, the key differences to the earlier period were that the transnational philanthropic and religious networks of the 19th century were replaced by professional actors and experts whose profession was education. There was transfer from informal to formal international networks, and the beginning of an attempt to act as 'the central and coordinating agency for education'. That institutional governmental initiative was linked to the emergent Progressive Education movement, which represented a framework for considering the school curriculum and its linkages to the world outside of the school. The emphasis on the significance of 'real-life experiences' for effective education and the need to provide opportunities for students to engage with the circumstances of life in the world outside of educational institutions implied, for Dewey and others, an engagement with issues relating to the relationship between education and work and between democracy and schools. (Dewey 1916; Crittenden 2007: 23-24). As part of that initiative, fragile though it was at times, curriculum reform was a key issue and it was relevant to the present case with particular reference to 'peace and moral education' and to textbook revision, with an emphasis on school history.

From the 1930s the focus of the League and the New Education Fellowship shifted abruptly from the earlier focus on the promotion of progressive pedagogy towards the need to provide a democratic response to fascism, communism and Nazism and the dangers of racial chauvinism, nationalism and totalitarianism. The influences reached South Africa with some force in 1934 at the Cape Town and Johannesburg conference of the New Education Fellowship organised by EG Malherbe and ID Rheinallt Jones, at time when the values of democratic governance formally accepted at Versailles were increasingly under threat internationally and in South Africa. This issue will be taken up below.

After World War II the establishment of the United Nations Organisation and UNESCO meant that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights provided a significant template for those who sought to promote the project of civic education for democracy internationally. This led to a slew of projects aimed at effective civic edu-

cation which were centrally driven by the educational initiatives of UNESCO.

In the context of the Cold War and the response to the educational 'revolutions' of the 1960s in Europe and the USA there was a review of the field. In the United Kingdom, Tapper and Salter (1978: 31-33) point out that there was a revival of the idea, both from the Left and the Right, that educational institutions could be better prepared in the field of civic education. Most of the debate was directed at the limited scope of established patterns of political education and their failure to supplement the successful building of national loyalty with the inculcation of participatory norms. Traditional political or civic education curricula were attacked for their avoidance of controversy and blandly optimistic content, which ended up endorsing participatory values in a manner that was little more than ritualistic. The argument was that these approaches often led to the avoidance of delicate issues like race relations, gender inequality, the nature of capitalist society and American imperialism and ensured that civic education lacked educational rigour. The counter-argument was often voiced by schools and teachers. If they did attempt to make the curriculum real and engage with current issues in the community at large, they were bound to cross the boundary into controversial ideological terrain and they would be accused of indoctrination or bias by parents who objected to the nature of the intervention. On the whole, British commentators remained much more cautious about their claims for civic education than colleagues in the USA. In the post-9/11 era in the USA there has been a resurgence of interest in the area, but this lies beyond the scope of this paper.

It was noted that civic education initiatives have often been located within the general educational curriculum of the school and not as conceived above as a separate enterprise. In such circumstances the most common form of intervention is to introduce civic education or citizenship education or political education into the history syllabus of the school, overtly or covertly. The issue of 'bias' in history teaching has attracted attention from educators over the years, though much of the work is descriptive and naïve about historiography and epistemology. The most significant accounts of the field were pioneered by UNESCO (1949 and 1963), Lauwerys (1953) and the Georg-Eckert-Institut. These initiatives had some impact on South African researchers in the field of civic education, with the interventions taking the form of investigating constitutional arrangements in different national contexts or vetting textbooks to ensure that they did not offend international ethics on race, ethnicity or nationality. In general, such intervention did not take up issues of gender or class representations. Cultural or religious conflicts *within* nations seldom provided the focus of such studies, as these were too sensitive to admit of outside intervention. Only in circumstances like South Africa under apartheid, with its political polecat status, was it possible for UNESCO to engage in a number of critiques of the manner in which history was purportedly *falsified* in schools in a state that gradually came to be seen to lie beyond the norms of civic virtue.

Although the new South Africa provided something of a model for democratic values and peaceful transformation, the recent Ministerial report by Crain Soudien and his team on *Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions* (Department of Education 2009) is just one of many examples indicating the persistence of racism and the lack of a transformational ethos. This has led to renewed calls for civic education or values education, last heard of in terms of a policy directive of 2001 when Kader Asmal was the Minister of Education in the form of the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*. More recently, (then) Deputy President Jacob Zuma was to lead the Moral Regeneration Movement, a national civic education campaign (Department of Education 2001a).

By 2010 it is therefore significant to pose questions about just what 'civic education' might mean in a society entangled in civil strife. The questions then arise regarding the changing nature of civic education over time in South Africa. What follows presents preliminary investigation of the nature and meaning of the term at different periods in history and the potential relevance (or irrelevance) of this notion to contemporary debates about educational policy and practice.

Civic education in the South African context: The periodisation of civic education

Schools, whether for slaves, indigenous peoples or burgers (white settlers) from earliest colonial times in South Africa had a primary emphasis on the dissemination of Protestant Christianity and its corollary of literacy as a function of the need to read the Bible. Such education placed a high priority on the inculcation of personal moral virtues in keeping with the Christian Protestant religion. Yet as early as 1804, during the governorship of JA De Mist, plans for the secular or 'liberal' control of education based on the lines sketched during the French Revolution came to exert an influence on policy-making. In keeping with the general political framework of the Batavian Republic, there was an emphasis on Rousseau's ideas of a 'social contract' and the 'fundamental moral category' of citizenship. There was therefore the beginning of a secular focus on civic education and citizenship training rather than the previous exclusive focus on religious criteria for education, which emphasised Man's relationship with God.

In preparing for the establishment of a Department of Public Education in the Cape in 1838, John Fairbairn, a former headmaster and at the time editor of the *Commercial Advertiser*, emphasised that the purpose of public education was 'to provide for the happiness of the people by making them wiser and better.' Public education was seen to entail the need to 'cultivate education as a branch of moral and political science' (cited in Malherbe 1924: 86-87). It is therefore notable that a strong element of civic education was introduced to dilute the sectarian religious influence of earlier times. Even missionary education increasingly came to be regulated by a secular state curriculum. It was assumed (if largely unarticulated) that such education would pro-

vide the 'civilising influence' necessary to ensure an adequate 'civic education' that would provide good citizens – whether they were Bantu, Boer or Briton.

'Civic education' was not taught overtly in the schools of the Cape Colony, yet the overall bond between the ideological orientation of the society and British imperialism was amply demonstrated in such aspects of the curriculum as religious and history teaching. Yet even here it was not possible to push these assumptions too far, for by the closing years of the century the Afrikaner Bond was an increasingly powerful and influential presence in the field of education and guarded the rights of Dutch language and Afrikaner identity with care.

When the South African Republic drew up a constitution in 1858, education was regarded as a national government function. There was a clear focus on notions of citizenship here. 'The people were the source of all authority; there was to be no equality between blacks and whites; the State began to take the initiative with regard to education.' The Draft Regulations stipulated that the curriculum should include 'history of the fatherland' (Malherbe 1924: 227-231).

In the Cape and the ZAR it is therefore possible to suggest that the strong ideological assumption with regard to the school curriculum in relation to loyalty to the state and the Empire or the nation was to a large extent embedded in the assumptions about curriculum choices and priorities in mainstream education. There is little sign of overt political or civic education for citizenship.

The South African War

A dramatic instance of civic education, or the attempt to ensure that education was used effectively in the political struggle for British control in Southern Africa, is an aspect of educational history that has been highlighted by Afrikaner nationalist historians. This is the history of education in the concentration camps of the South African War and the Boer response to that initiative in terms of Christian National Education (CNE). EB Sargent was brought to South Africa by Lord Milner as part of his team of experts, the *kindergarden*, to take control of education in the northern colonies (Denoon 1973). On the model of a school set up in the Green Point concentration camp in Cape Town, Sargent developed a plan for further education in the northern concentration camps for Boer women and children. All education was to be in English, barring religious education which was in Dutch. By May 1902 there were nearly 30,000 children in these schools. Emily Hobhouse, a fierce opponent of the war and of concentration camps, wrote that these schools 'were the single redeeming feature of camp life' (Bot 1936: 60). The overall intention of the schools was clearly to promote 'civic education' – Anglicisation and an acceptance of British rule. It is of course difficult to assess the effectiveness of such an exercise or to separate the educational issues from the wider political and humanitarian results of the concentration camps exercise. These circumstances gave rise to an extremely strong sense of

civic injustice, which was to fuel Afrikaner nationalism for a century.

The post-war era and reconstruction

Milner's plan for education after the War was for 'closer union on educational lines' and in this struggle for local control the language issue was to loom large. There is considerable evidence to demonstrate that Milner's policy was to use the power of the state to denationalise the people through the medium of the schools (Malherbe 1924: 306, 314-5). The reaction to the Camp Schools and to the general British Government School educational plan for Anglicisation after the war provides an excellent example of civic education and civic initiative to advance education of a particular kind. Only gradually were the goals of the CNE movement partially integrated into government policy. The gaining of those rights was of course part of the overall process of rebuilding a white democracy in South Africa and granting political rights to all white citizens. When Responsible Government was granted in 1907 as a result of a Liberal Party victory in Britain, Lord Selbourne took over from Milner and he relaxed the previous policy. With the granting of Responsible Government, the passing of the Smuts Education Act of 1907, and the advent of the new Director of Education, John Adamson (Director of Education in the Transvaal 1903-24), the issues of local control of white schools and language policy were agreed to in relation to government schools. To put it in Malherbe's words, 'the new educational principle was that the welfare of the country would depend chiefly on a mutual recognition of the rights of the two white races, instead of the dominance of the one race over the other' (Malherbe 1924: 324-325). This had significant implications for notions of civic virtue and civic education.

The place and nature of education for black South Africans was investigated at length by EB Sargent and within the brief of the British Government's extensive *South African Native Affairs Commission* (1903-1905) report. But in keeping with the political winds of the time these issues were to be neglected in the context of the political rights and the educational dispensation crafted in the Selbourne Memorandum (1907) and the Act of Union (1909), which set the preconditions for the new Union of South Africa. One set of civic rights had been gained but another had been lost. This would have fundamental consequences for civic education for the century to follow (Thompson 1960; BPP Cd. 2399 1905; EB Sargent 1904, 1908).

Civic Education from 1910 to the 1930s

There was a need for the establishment of a new civic order in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War and the state-building process that culminated in the Act of Union in 1910. The Union of the four provinces in 1910 placed a new complexion on issues of religion, language and vocationalism. In that context new loyalties and new meanings came to be given to notions of civic virtue and civic education. A new nationality – the

‘one-stream policy’ – was crafted by the South African Party under Generals L Botha and JC Smuts, forging a new citizenship between Afrikaner and English South Africans and putting in place a new allegiance to the British Empire and the free market economy. That broad civic identity was to remain hegemonic until 1948, but it was strongly contested throughout the intervening years by an alternative vision of national identity represented by Afrikaner nationalists who emphasised a ‘two-stream policy’ with regard to language and culture – and hence citizenship. This version of patriotism also challenged the close linkages to the British Empire and pursued a more vigorous policy of defending white, and particularly Afrikaner, interests. The more extreme factions of this group at times even challenged the legitimacy of the state founded in 1910 (the Afrikaner Rebellion in 1913 and the *Ossewabrandwag* movement of the 1930s). The emphasis of these groups was on democratic virtue, but those virtues were interpreted in narrow ways that confined their reach to the defence of the rights and interests of whites in general and white Afrikaners in particular (Moodie 1975). Those policies were to have particular implications for the politics of the industrial colour bar and were instrumental in shaping the nature of white politics throughout the century.

General JB Hertzog and the National Party, founded in 1913, pursued these goals within a constitutional framework, but those norms came at times to be challenged from within Afrikanerdom, particularly in the context of the Great Depression and the rise of the *Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party* led by DF Malan. Groups of extremists like the *Rapportryers* and the *Ossewabrandwag* demonstrated support for fascist ideology during the 1930s. The great commemoration of the Great Trek in 1938 and the building of the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria provided an opportunity to celebrate this vision of white South African histories and civic identity. This movement provided the civic mythology relating to the nature of Afrikaner (nationalist) identity that was to fuel the vision of the National Party in its campaign to gain political power in 1948, and was to be the bedrock of the conception of ‘citizenship’ for white South Africans for the next 40 years (Witz 2003; Grundling & Sapire 1989).

Civic Education and the New Education Fellowship conference: 1934

In contrast to the developments noted above, it is important to recognise that there were significant challenges to the notion of civic education associated with the emergent white racist politics. These views ranged from notions of civic identity that were associated with British Empire loyalists to constitutional liberals, African Nationalists and socialist/communist interpretations of civic education.

Perhaps most significant insight into the general debate of the time can be gained by a consideration of the proceedings of the international conference of the New Education Fellowship held in South Africa in 1934, where there was a strong emphasis on the role and duty of civic education in the defence of democracy in the context of an international situation threatened by depression, fascism and war. The Minister of

Education, JH Hofmeyr, who was significantly more liberal than most of his colleagues in the South African Party (Paton 1971), emphasised that the new era brought with it the need to address two issues: firstly, the 'training of producers who would have to compete in world markets' and 'the necessity of training men and women who will at once be quick with the realisation of their South African citizenship, and ready to meet the obligations which rest upon them as citizens of the world.' Jan Smuts, senior statesman and at this time deputy prime minister in the FUSION government, in his opening address at the Johannesburg leg of the conference, added to Hofmeyr's message, observing that in a world where the influence of dictators was on the increase, and where the traditional 'standardising influences of home and religion' were declining, 'the whole burden of preparing human being for the best type of society has fallen on the schools – an enormous burden for them to carry' (Malherbe 1937: 4).

Beatrice Ensor, the World President of the New Education Fellowship, in her opening address to the conference, confronted the question of *World Citizenship* and social reconstruction, noting that educators 'have set ourselves a gigantic task – to change the whole face of history by making cooperation and consent, instead of self-will and competitive force, the basis of behaviour. This means that we will have to create a new attitude of mind in mankind.' Her message to the conference was essentially about the duties of civic education:

The schools must give the child training in citizenship. Here, as at home, he will learn his first lessons in the great art of community living. The child must learn 'consent and cooperation'. He cannot learn these things by precept. He must learn them by practice. The New Education Fellowship insists that the school is a microcosm in which the child will learn how to live with his fellows. If he learns at school that might is right, that the small and the weak exist only for the convenience of the strong, he will not easily forget these lessons. If he learns at school to care for the greatest good of the greatest number, to work for the common good, the lesson too will 'stick' (Malherbe 1937: 6, 8-9).

Significantly she pushed the notion of civic education to include economic justice in the global context. She went on to stress that in South Africa it would 'not be sufficient to cope with the white population' in this regard, but that it was essential to evolve a far more general and carefully thought-out policy as regards the education of the non-European, one which would help him 'to develop into a self-respecting and self-supporting citizen, contributing his share to the community.' In that context no teacher was fit to be a teacher 'if he poisons the minds of the young by antagonisms, by racial barriers and all that leads to separateness' (Malherbe 1937: 10). These were lofty political ideals in the dangerous political atmosphere of the 1930s and they helped to reassure many teachers, but as was the case elsewhere in the world, there was only limited long-term commitment from many of the countries represented.

Civic education under apartheid

After 1948 the Afrikaner nationalist programme relating to civic education came to be

embodied in the apartheid education project. In 1964 Brian Bunting reviewed the aims and objectives of apartheid education. He argued that:

For the apartheid state to endure the Nationalists must exercise complete control over the minds of the young. The Afrikaner, the Englishman, the White man and the Black man – each must be brought up to understand the role which has been allocated to him by the State. There must be unquestioning acceptance, the White man of his superiority, by the Afrikaner of his right to leadership; by the non-White races of their duty to serve. (Bunting 1964: 244)

The Nationalist devoted systematic attention to crafting such a system on the basis of the proposals for Christian National Education that had first been released at the FAK conference on CNE held in Bloemfontein in 1939 as part of the celebrations for the Voortrekker centenary (Giliomee 2003; O'Meara 1996). As part of the programme of the Institute for Christian National Education (ICNO), Prof. van Rooy argued that in the 'cultural struggle, which is now also a school struggle ... we want no mixing of languages, no mixing of cultures, no mixing of religious, and no mixing of races' (Bunting 1964: 245). That project rested on an emphasis on Christian and Nationalist values, and stressed the role of religious teachings, mother-tongue instruction and the teaching of geography and history in such a way as to ensure that they promoted 'a love of the Fatherland'. In that scheme there were to be no *mixed schools* between either English and Afrikaans-speaking children or black and white children. 'Native Education was to be based on the principles of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; the aim of education would be to both inculcate the White man's view of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee' (Bunting 1964: 245-9; Behr & Macmillan 1966: 248-9.) But apartheid education was also paradoxically to promote the culture and language of the African people.

The most notorious aspect of the apartheid education enterprise was the advent of Bantu Education as the outcome of the Eiselen Commission Report on Native Education in 1953. African education was finally transferred from the Provincial Education Department to the Department of Native Affairs. A strong emphasis on religious conformity and mother-tongue education remained, but the state was to take over the management of black education, which had until this time been largely in the hands of missionary societies, as it had been elsewhere in colonial Africa. Most significantly, the goal was to reshape education for all people who were not white to ensure that it was more 'in keeping with African cultural traditions' and that 'the school must equip him to meet the demands which economic life in South Africa will impose on him,' on the assumption that those demands would be very different from those of whites (Bunting 1964: 260).

There was an emphasis on mass education, with priority being given to the expansion of primary education. Although the school curriculum was never radically changed to conform with the more extreme statements of Verwoerd and other apartheid ideologues during the period of high apartheid from 1955-65, the under-funding of the schools and the poor qualifications of most teachers in effect meant that few children

had access to quality education and few reached the higher standards until the 1980s, when the whole system began to be reformed in quite radical ways under the political and economic pressure of reform politics after 1976. The whole ethos of the school and the curriculum was infused with apartheid ideology, but the curriculum for subjects like history was not radically different in white and black schools, though there was more emphasis in some social studies textbooks on the apartheid homelands and ethnic citizenship as conceived of in the apartheid vision. Contrary to widely held assumptions, there was no distinct civic education component to the education offered to blacks.

The history curriculum as a component of civic education to 1994

Up to this point I have glossed over the major aspect of civic education in South Africa, namely the extent to which it was imbedded in the history syllabus. As far back as 1934 AE du Toit, principal of Voortrekker High School in Boksburg, made the observation at the NEF conference that many of the lofty ideals of civic education tended to evaporate in the classroom and he ventured some suggestions on how to stimulate interest in the teaching of civics at local level. He noted that the Transvaal school history curriculum emphasised South Africa's relationship to the world and its role as a mandatory power of the League of Nations and as an economic unit with international trading relationships. He noted that there was a decided lack of enthusiasm for these dry 'international aspects of the teaching of contemporary history and civics' (Malherbe 1937: 70-72), but it is clear from this evidence that even prior to apartheid times the inclusion of these topics had the political purpose of demonstrating South Africa's role in a wider world.

After 1948 school history textbooks came increasingly to emphasise Afrikaner nationalist historiography and interpretations of historical events and processes. The glorification of the fatherland was seen to be a major goal in history and geography teaching. Malherbe (1977: 148) pointed out the parallels between these developments and those of Nazi Germany in 1933. A key aspect of that reframing of history education, in terms of its emphasis on civic education, was the place given to constitutional history in the high school history syllabus. This emphasised the ontological nature of Afrikaner nationalists' portrayal of South African history as it recounted how 'the heroic nation' had risen from the ashes of defeat in 1902 to its hegemonic position at the present time: from independent Boer republic to conquest, to colonial status within the British Empire under General Hertzog, to Dominion status under the Statute of Westminster (1931), to the election of the NP in 1948, to Republican status after 1961. The naturalisation and normalisation of apartheid ideology was pursued in the history class with the evolution of the Bantustan policy represented as a normal part of that constitutional development, which was intended to grant citizenship and civil rights to black South African in their 'own' homelands. Key figures in the rewriting of that history, its inscription in the syllabus and the popu-

larising of this 'commonsense view' of politics are remembered by generations of students, black and white, who were subjected to the matriculation textbooks written by FA van Jaarsveld, Fowler and Smit, and CFJ Muller.

Although the high school history syllabus was not different in black and white schools, the response in black schools in urban areas like Soweto was often dramatic. By the 1970s history was one of the subjects that provided the focus of attention for anti-apartheid student activists. When I visited black high schools on the Witwatersrand during that time to supervise student teachers there was always a lively interest in a topics like the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. In the cauldron of opposition to apartheid during the United Democratic Front (UDF) political campaigns of the 1980s, the revisionist perspectives of African and Neo-Marxist historiography were constantly interrogated with special regard to 'Peoples' History' themes relating to human rights and democracy (Maree 1984). This was civic education with a real political edge!

Significant critiques of the teaching of history in school, which highlighted this kind of bias, were produced by Frantz Auerbach and others, as well as by UNESCO. They focused on inaccuracies in the content presented in school textbooks in keeping with the general guidelines developed by the League of Nations and UNESCO since the 1920s (Auerbach 1965; Dean et al. 1983; Kallaway 1984; Du Preez 1983; Nishino 2006). Surprisingly, they paid little direct attention to civic education or the implications of the 'historical falsification' for notions of citizenship under apartheid. They also failed to appreciate the relevance of the presentation of constitutional issues referred to above for the promotion of bias relating to civic education.

Only during the 1980s did the *History Alive* series and other alternative textbooks attempt to present an alternative view of South African history for school by applying the new revisionist historiography and the New History Teaching to school history, but these books were never allowed to be used as textbooks in African (DET) schools.

Youth preparedness

'YP' was an extra-curricula activity in white schools and was a specific initiative dedicated to civic education under apartheid. Taking its cue from the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides movements of an earlier age, or the *Voortrekker* movement among Afrikaans youth, it took the form of *veld* excursions for urban students and was a direct pro-apartheid propaganda exercise with paramilitary training aspects. Group leaders emphasised the *swart gevaar* or communist or terrorist threat. As Malherbe pointed out, instead of encouraging an outward-looking notion of civic life, YP (especially as practised in white Afrikaans-language schools) as late as the 1970s came to take on the negative character of 'warding off' the enemy and being on the defensive against the enemies of the *volk*/nation. It promoted a 'laager mentality' in terms of the goal of civic education (Malherbe 1977: 142-151; Behr 1973).

Civic education and the opposition to apartheid education

The emergent forms of apartheid-aligned civic education did not go unchallenged. The international conference on 'Education and Our Expanding Horizons' convened by Malherbe in Durban in 1960 was a notable landmark in that regard. Julian Huxley, the first UNESCO Director-General, spoke out against racism in politics and education and the need 'not for separateness, but contact and social intercourse in education and the urgency of closing the gap between privileged and underprivileged through education'. Addressing the key theme of civic education, Prof. C Washburne of Brooklyn College, New York, defined 'broad-mindedness' as the goal. He argued that the teachers must embody these attitudes and virtues. 'In the action of the teachers the children must see our common humanity; they must see the value of differences, and they must see our interdependence because it is what the teacher is, not what he says, that affects most of our children' (Macmillan et al. 1962: 9-23, 99-108). These principles reflected the ethos of many teachers who battled to maintain independence and integrity within the apartheid educational system.

Paulo Freire's ideas and pedagogy form part of the literature that arose out of the educational radicalism of the 1970s and the revival of anti-colonial literature. Freire followed Dewey in many ways in his insistence that civic education be used as a means to liberate people from their oppression – by others, by economic forces, by gender and ethnic stereotypes. The preferred form of educational pedagogy was 'problem-posing education'. To overcome their oppression, students must first liberate themselves by recognising the causes of their oppression.

A major cause of such oppression is identified as the nature of the traditional education received by the majority of the world's poor, which was held to turn the majority of students into 'receptacles' to be filled by the teacher. What Freire advocated was a *dialogical exchange* or praxis to help the learner clarify the issues that are central to her life and what action to take with regard to changing those circumstances. This is the methodology for civic educational initiatives primarily because it prioritises individual action and encourages learners not only to consider external mechanisms relating to their domination, but to look for the dual nature of consciousness, where individuals come to be dominated by their own fears and inadequacies. For Freire it is essential for students to be able to 'read the world' in theory or language and understand their own relationship to their background if they want to change the world. This methodology was most significant in the field of adult education and was remarkable for the manner in which it provided a pedagogic tool for revolutionary groups in Latin America and elsewhere. From the 1970s Freirian notions of civic education were a significant feature of political struggle in South Africa and these methodologies were propagated by significant leaders like Steve Biko and were associated with the Black Consciousness and trade union movements (Freire 1972; Nekhwevha 1984; Crittenden 2007: 25-7).

'People's Education' as part of the FOSATU/UDF/ANC political campaign of the 1980s

grew out of these beginnings. The 'Peoples' History Campaign' was aimed directly at politicising black youth and built on the foundation of trade union/worker education and community adult education programmes. Many of these community development initiatives from the 1970s were strongly influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, the 1968 'Paris Revolution' and the Anti-War Movement.

In the early 1990s in the context of redrawing the political map of South Africa, there were many planning and redesign initiatives relating to public policy. The sphere of education was no exception. The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), funded by Swedish aid, set the tone by drawing together large numbers of educators of all kinds in a broad consultative process. The promotion of effective citizenship and participation was seen to be central to that process in a context where the majority of the population had little experience of democratic governance. NEPI argued that 'the challenge of any democratic government is to find ways of restructuring the education system to meet those ends.' With those goals in mind, parents, teachers, students and other relevant parties would be encouraged to participate in the education system. 'Accountability would be ensured by structures, processes and mechanisms involving these constituencies.' It argued that 'a central question for teacher education policy in South Africa is how to prepare teachers for developing common civic virtues among pupils from different backgrounds' (NEPI 1993: 22, 36, 223, 238).

Civic education and values education in a democratic South Africa: What kind of civic education since 1994?

Surprisingly the new education system established since 1996 makes little direct provision for civic education. The nature of Curriculum 2000 and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was framed by notions of redress, inclusiveness, progressive pedagogy and local governance. It was imbued with the spirit of the constitution and committed to notions of access and redress. But the issue of civic education never emerged with any force, possibly owing to the sensitivities that would be raised. It was only with the advent of a Revised Curriculum Statement in 2002 that the issue was taken up, and then predominantly within the parameters of the school history curriculum. This initiative sought to promote the spirit of the constitution and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) through a programme of values education. Yet owing to the influence of constructionist notions of curriculum development there was a reluctance on the part of government to overtly prescribe what was to be taught in the early phases of these developments. Other aspects of the new curriculum that might be considered as part of civic education were areas like Life Orientation and Life Skills, which emphasised personal, family and health issues, but on the whole avoided a robust encounter with the nature of democratic citizenship and the importance of the promotion of a culture of human rights.

A key element of engagement with these issues was the Values in Education cam-

paign. In 2000-2001 the new South African government took its first initiative in the field of civic education by launching a programme on Values in Education in partnership with the South African Council of Educators (SACE), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and various NGOs. The formal publication accompanying the launch of the Network on Values in Education in 2000 by Education Minister Kader Asmal identified the objectives as follows:

- To facilitate collaboration across sectors in support of human rights and anti-racism initiatives in education
- To coordinate activities of the Values in Education Programme of Action
- To monitor the implementation of human rights and anti-racism programmes in education

The values identified in association with the programme were democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect and reconciliation (Department of Education 2002).

Although it is not possible to engage in a detailed review of the project or its outcomes here, the minutes of the SAAMTREK conference raise interesting, and often contradictory, issues about the nature of civic education and values education. There is a frank admission that the teaching of Values in Education work 'is both risky and important'. There was every sign of a strong desire to promote values in education through adherence to the constitution, but there are clear signs of a constructivist perception of values in the recognition that 'the Manifesto does not prescribe values but invites debate'. The minutes even pose the fundamental question about whether you *can* teach values in schools or what the preconditions are for teaching to be successful. There is a recognition of the risk of 'standing "against" rather than "for" something'. There was even a cautionary note – 'there is a danger of not creating sustainable programmes,' and perhaps in the light of this the need to consider how such programmes can be delivered through subjects like Life Orientation or History – a return to the strategies of previous years. The challenge was recognised of how to ensure that the values curriculum infused all subjects/learning areas and how to ensure that teachers were an embodiment of these values in order to 'infuse the classrooms with a culture of human rights' (Department of Education 2001b: 33-36). Mark Gevisser and Mike Morris, who apparently had an important role in drawing up the list of 'ten fundamental values of the constitution and their relevance to education', identified 'respect and dialogue' between teacher and learners and between teachers and parents/communities as the values most lacking in the current schooling system. The teaching of history and religious education in schools was seen to be a key aspect of that process, though precisely what the links are between values education and history is not explained (Asmal & James 2002: 190-219). It is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate how these strategies worked out in practice, but my sense is that they have not been particularly successful or implementable and have

as a result been quietly sidelined by most provincial education departments in the years since Asmal's departure from the Education portfolio for all the reasons associated with the problems of implementing civic education identified above. Further research will hopefully provide more definitive answers to these important problems.

Precisely what the effect of this agenda has been on the teaching of history in schools is also a question worth asking. The undeniable decline in the popularity of history in schools can in part be attributed to the overburdening of history with tasks that are way beyond its capacity to deliver on. Few professional history teachers see themselves as teaching morals or values in the classroom. History presents us with a much more complex set of issues and intellectual problem and if taught in an intellectually honest manner does not lend itself to teaching 'moral lessons' or promoting particular values beyond the parameters and integrity of the discipline. History does not teach 'lessons'.

The story of history education in South African schools as recounted above should provide warning enough about the danger of using history in schools as an overt form of nation-building or political indoctrination. There is no *true history* and, as the Values in Education Programme itself acknowledges, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the teaching of civic education in schools. The most that can be hoped for is the imparting of a set of values relating to democratic procedures and conduct, but precisely how that might be overtly connected to the teaching of history in schools is far from clear. The link made between the teaching of values and the teaching of history in school cannot therefore be taken for granted.

In 2004 the Moral Regeneration Movement was launched by the South African government. It has sought to buttress the values of the constitution and to strengthen civic society, but little has been heard of the initiative since it was led by then Vice-President Jacob Zuma, who became embroiled in a rape case and accused of involvement in the Arms Deal. The report on the MRM for 2005 by CEO Zandile Mahladhla stipulated goals for 'social re-engineering' and outlined strategies to network with youth structures and provincial, regional and municipal government. But it gives little in the way of detail about the activities of the MRM and little seems to have been reported since then.

Current projects that focus on this field

It has not been possible within the scope of this short review to assess the impact of the above policies. One example of the outcomes has been traced to the Western Cape Education Department, where there has been an energetic attempt to foreground some of the issues raised above. Gail Weldon, the Senior Curriculum Planner for History, has been a key mover in the establishment of a project called 'Facing The Past – Transforming Our Future', based on an American model. This seems to be something

of an attempt to outsource the problems to Shikaya, 'a non-profit organisation that supports teachers to use their subjects to develop young people who are responsible, caring and active democratic citizens. Shikaya has a vision of a South Africa in which every young person is inspired through enthusiastic, committed and professionally prepared teachers to become a responsible citizen in our democracy, valuing diversity, human rights and peace' (<http://facingthepast.org.za/>). Funding for the project was obtained from the Open Society Foundation and the DG Murray Trust to promote anti-racism seminars for teachers and to consider the issue of democracy in schools. All this appears to fit in with the ethos of Asmal's policy, but the scale of the operation and the fact that it is outsourced seems to imply that this is not a central concern of the policy at the present time. Only further research will reveal the full picture.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to highlight a field of research in education that has been much neglected in South Africa. The World Congress on Civic Education held in Cape Town in June 2009 provided an opportunity to reassess the field in order to consider what might be done to address many of the real concerns of educators in regard to rebuilding the moral economy of schooling. Is it possible to engage with meaningful civic education in the context of a society that is as divided as South Africa? Is it possible to teach values in education abstracted from the real political and ideological issues that divide the society? Is it possible for teachers in the context of ordinary classrooms to deal with complex and divisive political topics without transgressing the line of teacher neutrality? Will an assertive civic education policy that seems to tackle the issue in a robust manner simply lead to indoctrination as it did under apartheid? In what ways can civic education for democracy be taught in schools? The presentation of the bland constitutional rights to children is not pedagogically challenging – but any attempt to take up those issues in the very real context of everyday political struggles would inevitably expose the teachers to the charge of political bias and partisanship.

Most significantly, as this short tour of the field has attempted to demonstrate, overt civic education has seldom been a feature of South African educational practice in any of the eras under review above, as the raising of contentious political issues in the classroom was considered inappropriate to a positive educational atmosphere. For the Boer children of the post-South African War context, any attempt to introduce notion of good citizenship on the British model was resisted. In the apartheid context any overt attempt to teach about the merits of apartheid was resisted in black schools, and indeed in many white schools. When civics was introduced as an aspect of the history curriculum, it was nearly always considered to be an unacceptable addition by those students and parents who were opposed to apartheid. Attempts to force the political education of white children through such mechanisms as *veld school* and Youth Preparedness proved to be extremely crude and encountered constant resistance from

white parents, particularly in English-language communities.

The use of history in schools as a vehicle for civic education has been universally problematic. If history is well taught in schools it does not lend itself to ‘teaching lessons’ about civic education. History is a discipline and the purpose of teaching it in schools is to induct students into the procedures and practices of the discipline. To attempt to appropriate the subject to the purposes of civic education is to undermine the independent status of the subject and the discipline and leave the teacher open to the charge of bias.

The central challenge posed by the NEPI Report of 1993 of how ‘teacher education policy is to prepare teachers for developing civic virtues among pupils from different backgrounds’ remains. What is undeniable is that civic education is a real problem for the school curriculum. While we often choose to ignore it because of the difficult issues it poses, this does not mean that the problem disappears. The challenges seem to be clear and undeniable; the implementation proves to be one of the most intractable conundrums in the educational policy arena.

As Prof. Washburne noted at the Education Conference in Durban in 1960, it is not necessarily the content of civic education that is central to its success in promoting civic virtue amongst students. ‘In the action of the teachers, the children must see our common humanity ... and our interdependence, because it is what the teacher is, not what he says, that affects most of our children’ (Macmillan et al. 1962: 99, 108). Therein lies the major challenge for policy-makers and teacher educators in our times.

As stated earlier, civic education in a democracy must prepare citizens to participate in and thereby perpetuate the system; at the same time, it must prepare them to challenge what they see as inequities and injustices within that system. Yet a civic education that encourages students to challenge the nature and scope of our democracies runs the risk of turning them away from participation when they engage with hard-nosed realities of resource disparities and even official corruption. But if that civic education has offered more than simply critique and if it is to have a basis in critical thinking which involves developing tolerance, as well as a willingness and even eagerness for political action, then galvanised citizens can make our systems more robust. Greater demands on our citizens, like higher expectations of our students, often lead to stronger performances. As Mill reminds us in relation to the citizen: ‘If circumstances allow the amount of public duty assigned him to be considerable, it makes him an educated man’ (Crittenden 2007: 34-35). How can formal educational policy make an effective contribution to that process?

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Notes on the author

Professor Peter Kallaway is an Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of the Western Cape and a Research Associate at the School of Education, University of Cape Town. He is currently teaching at the *Historische Seminar* at the University of Basel. His research

interests are in the area of history of education, sociology of education and education policy development. This article is part of a wider research initiative that seeks to understand the nature of educational change in late colonial Africa and the impact of political, economic and social change on educational policy and practice in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

Address for correspondence

peter.kallaway@uct.ac.za

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Outcomes-based education and its (dis)contents: Learner-centred pedagogy and the education crisis in South Africa

Carol Anne Spreen and Salim Vally

University of Virginia and University of Johannesburg

Abstract

Since its inception outcomes-based education (OBE) has been controversial and confusing for South African educators and policymakers alike, let alone the general citizenry. The current clamour against OBE and the 'educational crisis' must be seen against the background of South Africa's desultory performance in comparative international benchmark trends in literacy and numeracy, as well as in numerous national evaluations and tests. Yet critiques of OBE notwithstanding, this article argues that OBE has often become the scapegoat for problems associated with educational failure. While OBE has become shorthand for many for expressing dissatisfaction with education in South Africa the social, political and economic context of education and its continued stratification along class, racial and regional lines has been left largely unexamined. This argument is based on two main hypotheses: Firstly, OBE has not in fact been implemented in the years since its inception in 1997 and many of the policies and recommendations associated with the review of Curriculum 2005 (C2005) have not been put in place – despite the thoughtful and engaged deliberations that preceded its recommendations. Second, the 'value' of OBE cannot be assessed or understood properly unless account is accorded to the day-to-day contextual realities of teaching and learning in South Africa, the continuing school inequalities, and issues related to the enormous 'poverty gap' across the schooling system. Finally, the article warns against the current trend of returning to a form of social conservatism and a 'back-to-basics' programme that ultimately could undermine the social justice agenda and ensure that quality education for the majority of the population remains elusive.

Introduction

This article begins by describing how the original goals of OBE have not been fulfilled and by examining the technician and bureaucratic approaches followed in policy changes. Egregious problems, such as the lack of textbooks and learning support materials, teacher-training inadequacies and poor teacher preparedness, are then discussed. The key points of contention and major deliberations around OBE and the subsequent national curriculum reviews and revisions made to C2005 are outlined. The article will show that despite the positive changes proposed as a result of the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* in 2000 many aspects of these critiques were not addressed at all and are only being rehashed once again in the latest round of ministerial reviews. Next, the focus will move to the role of the state in linking educational change to socio-economic development and economic growth concerns. The article will show how this link has led to discourses around national evaluations and tests often focusing solely on the poor levels of performance rather than highlighting the enormous disparities, inequalities and 'poverty gaps'. The 'post-apartheid challenges' are briefly discussed, as well as the external realities of educational transformation that gave rise to the adoption of OBE: first, the need to move away from the apartheid curriculum and address skills, knowledge and values for social justice, equality and development, and then OBE's supposed link to economic development and the shift towards accountability. Far from addressing the social inequalities that were the legacy of apartheid education, the bureaucratic mechanisms that were introduced to put in place a combination of the ascendancy of technical solutions (including the development of 'global skills, outcomes and competencies') and normative measures of performance mostly failed and, in fact, resulted in exacerbating rather than overcoming inequality.

Then, through insights from the authors' research and observations in a number of rural, township and informal settlement schools over the last decade (Spreen 2009), it is illustrated that, in fact, OBE was never implemented in the majority of schools. For a number of reasons, which will be elaborated upon, the practices and pedagogy associated with OBE, and particularly with 'learner-centred education', helped enhance teaching and improve learning in the most advantaged schools, but these practices have not been put in place where they were most needed. Research shows that the real problem for the education system lies instead in the failure of government to address the existing inequalities and basic shortcomings in the majority of schools. This includes addressing overcrowding in schools, establishing functioning libraries with appropriate books and trained teachers, early child development, distributing textbooks and learner support materials, providing support and teacher training for bilingual and special-needs learners and devising strategies that relate to the protracted poverty of many school communities. Hence, the bureaucracy associated with structuring and implementing OBE was more of a distraction that took away from other possible futures in education.

Finally, this article will assert that it is not the supposed learner-centred approach of the OBE policy that has ‘failed’, but rather the ways in which this emancipative goal has come tangled within a bureaucratic consumerist environment that centres on performance and achievement rather than learning and development. The article comments on the overall failure to change educational structures and systems and warns against the significant danger of the growing rise in social conservatism in education and of the increasing tendency towards the ‘back-to-basics movement’ in South Africa. There is tremendous risk in taking the country away from its social justice imperatives towards a prescriptive, monitoring and accountability regime. Public calls to ‘narrow the curriculum down to the 3 Rs’, reintroduce ‘discipline and values’ and to ‘make teachers accountable’ through testing harkens back to the apartheid-era authoritarianism characterised by its differentiated opportunities for learners (including the fundamental pedagogics of didactic and choral recitation, ‘talk-and-chalk’ rote learning and corporal punishment) and blaming teachers and learners (and not systemic inequality) for educational shortcomings. While discipline and accountability are essential, learner-centred practices need not undermine but could instead enhance respect and self-discipline in the classroom. The article concludes by emphasising that until we come to grips with these issues quality education for all will remain elusive, and for the majority of teachers and pupils education will remain in crisis mode.

Outcomes-based education as a technical solution

With the advent of the National Qualifications Framework and the adoption of the principle of outcomes-based education, C2005 was hailed as the centrepiece for the transformation of teaching and learning in South Africa. Launched amidst great fanfare in late March 1997, the C2005 framework was promoted in the mass media as ‘an end to apartheid education’, ‘liberation through a new kind of learning’, ‘teaching for the real world’, ‘education into the 21st century’ and so on. There were also exaggerated claims made for OBE, namely that it would provide a panacea for South Africa’s economic development.

Despite this exuberance, soon after its launch key educationists began to assert that OBE would not deliver on its promises (Jansen 1999). Not surprisingly, the roll-out of the curriculum over the first several years was tumultuous, characterised by an uneven distribution of learner support materials and a widely fragmented teacher-training system often delivered via a cascade approach that was controlled through the provincial departments and managed at the district level. This old-fashioned ‘toy telephone game’ approach to the implementation of the new curriculum left the recipients with pages of policy declarations, very little in the way of teacher or learner materials and few examples of concrete instructional changes for the classroom (Spreeen 2001, 2009; Spreeen & Marneweck 1998).

Overall, it was believed that a focus on learning outcomes would displace the apartheid-era emphasis on content and memorisation, placing learners at the centre. The ministry's Education Information Centre (EIC) contrasted OBE with the previous system as follows:

In the old education system only the content of the courses and what the teacher to textbook had to say was important. Learners received information from their teacher and did not play a very active role in the learning situation. Most of their learning was memory based. Learners were seldom given the opportunity to show what they learned and how to use their knowledge. It was important that learners remembered and repeated everything they learned, not whether they understood and were able to use what they learned in different ways. (EIC 1996: 12, quoted in Jansen 1999)

As educational achievement started to decline at the turn of the century and a new Minister of Education was appointed, a committee was convened to assess curriculum policy. The report of the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) in May 2000 found that C2005 was confounded by a skewed curriculum structure and design; a lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy; the inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers; learning support materials that were variable in quality, often unavailable and not sufficiently used in classrooms; and shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005. Importantly, the CRC recommended that the critical role of textbooks be affirmed, the requisite investment in these resources be made and there be special funding for readers and reading schemes in the primary schools. Interestingly, nearly a decade later in 2009 a new ministerial report again confirms the importance of textbooks, yet without referring to many of the issues or recommendations mentioned by the previous review committee (Department of Education 2009).

Other recommendations by the CRC included the following:

- The *National Curriculum Statement* should provide guidelines for publishers and it should be made available to them at least two years before textbook orders are placed
- Illustrative curriculum material and support material should be produced by dedicated units or institutes
- Macro-planning should be phased out and teachers should be trained in the evaluation, selection and use of textbooks
- A special project team in each province should manage the learner support materials and an appropriate budget should be ring-fenced for learner support material in every province (Department of Education 2000)

At the time, however, the Norms and Standards for School Funding required that a paltry R100 per learner be spent on learner support material. Other recommendations included pegging the stationery budget at 15% of the overall budget and separating this from the total budget for learner support material. Lastly, the availability, quality, use and evaluation of and tendering for learner support material for C2005 could best be described as messy and, as will be seen later, it left the door wide open for

new controversies. However, most of the important structural and design changes recommended by the CRC were accepted and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* was launched in 2001.

Many of the issues raised by the CRC are addressed elsewhere, but the focus here will be on textbooks. As stated above, in 2000 the CRC made very clear recommendations concerning all aspects of textbooks, including ensuring their quality through a timely tendering and review process. It is worth mentioning that prior to the review the lack of attention given to the importance of textbooks was in part due to the widespread perception among policymakers that teachers could dispense with textbooks and should instead produce their own programmes and learning materials despite (or perhaps because of) budgetary constraints.

Illustrating the government focus on curriculum structures and processes, important concerns raised by the CRC included an emphasis on the need for clearer guidelines on the content required for each grade, greater specification around core concepts and themes, and further recommendations that publishers needed to be given much more time to address content issues and be reviewed according to quality assurance standards. Instead, the recent tender for workbooks (worth R522 million) called for the development of 30 million full-colour literacy and numeracy workbooks in 11 languages for Grades 1 to 6. Not necessarily a problem per se, but the tender was gazetted on 13 November 2009 with a closing date 11 days later – hardly enough time to produce a proposal for ‘quality’ workbooks, much less adequately develop and review projects for quality and appropriateness before the start of the school year in January. This manoeuvre left the door wide open for profligacy in the tendering process and led to a public outcry to extend the tender process (Pretorius 2009).

While the new department’s intention is to produce workbooks in order to strengthen its Foundations for Learning Campaign (which is designed ultimately to improve the dismal literacy and numeracy rates described above) the expectation that this could be accomplished in eight weeks is severely flawed. The concern is that, in its eagerness to combat the latest ‘education crisis’ and address the country’s low literacy rates, the government’s continued reliance on short-term technical solutions while failing to learn from the past (or in this case, follow clear and specific recommendations that address literacy and the contextual realities of schools) will likely end up wasting more of the limited financial educational resources and repeating mistakes that were previously made (including those pointed out by its own review committees).

While textbooks on their own clearly are not the panacea for failing schools this example illustrates the limitation of a narrowly defined and technical policy prescription for educational challenges (and its obstacles for real change over time). Much like the over-emphasis on curriculum, the ‘textbook versus teacher’ debate throughout the continent set up a false dilemma for improving teaching and learning. Those (most notably the World Bank) who promoted the use of textbooks as a more

efficient and cost-effective measure to improve education had also previously recommended strategies that de-professionalised and stressed teachers, such as increasing class sizes and lowering teachers' salaries (Vally 1999: 6). Across the continent the education policies prioritised textbooks over substantive curriculum reform and/or teacher pre-service training or professional development. The development of a set number of national textbooks with a prescribed curriculum was promoted by the World Bank as an efficient shortcut and a cost-cutting measure, not only to improve education quality but also to replace high-cost experienced teachers with lower-paid less-experienced paraprofessionals. In her research on the World Bank's textbook policy Rosa Marie Torres (*ibid.*: 6) warned about the dangers of relying on teacher-proof textbooks as a substitute for poor teaching and learning:

This type of text, if highly esteemed and welcomed by the untrained and poorly qualified teacher, rather than alleviating the problem created by the continuous deterioration of teacher quality, contributes to strengthen it by further disempowering teachers and perpetuating the classic (and growing) dependency of the teacher on the textbook.

Torres argues that 'textbooks are educational tools, teachers are educational agents', suggesting that it is the textbook that should serve the teacher and not the other way around (*ibid.*: 7). Textbooks or workbooks should not be substituted for an implemented curriculum. Put another way, textbooks should be a tool for development rather than a straightjacket for teachers. The current trend in South Africa is leaning increasingly towards an emphasis on the creation of teacher-proof workbooks ostensibly to improve education quality, but this will not necessarily increase literacy skills nor develop a much-needed reading culture for children.

In September 2009 the new Minister of Basic Education unveiled a report that aimed to address challenges experienced in the current curriculum and assessment policies. In summary, the recommendations made in that report included requiring only one file for administrative purposes from teachers, reducing the number of projects required by learners, discontinuing the use of learner portfolios and, once again, emphasising the importance of textbooks in teaching and learning. These plans refer back to some of the recommendations made in 2000 by the CRC, but are less comprehensive and again do not address structural inequality.

The role of the state in linking economic development and educational outcomes

The resolute endeavour to compete in the global market place permeates most socio-economic initiatives undertaken by the South African state. Education policy documents are not immune to this desire and are replete with exhortations to mould learners and institutions into this instrumental role. The committee appointed to review C2005, in analysing the values and purposes of the curriculum, mentioned the dual challenges confronting curriculum designers. The first was the 'post-apartheid' challenge, which was to ensure the requisite knowledge, values and skills base that, in

turn, would 'provide the conditions for greater social justice, equity and development'. The second was the impetus to align the curriculum to the 'global competitive challenge', explained as providing the 'platform for developing knowledge, skills and competencies for innovation, social development and economic growth for the 21st century'. Earlier official documents on Curriculum 2005 were blunter. They unashamedly touted the curriculum as a panacea for South Africa's economic woes, in the same way the 2010 World Cup is currently being promoted as the solution to South Africa's unemployment crisis. The emphasis of OBE on the skill-oriented mastery of predetermined benchmarks did have wide appeal for the goals of integrating education and training in South Africa. OBE originated in debates about skills and training that were conducted within the labour movement in a corporatist way between labour, the government and industry (Spreen 2001). It is not argued that education and training do not have a role to play in economic development. Rather, the motivation for economic development via education should recognise the needs of human beings and their rights and values, not the narrow needs of the market. Skills, for instance, can be developed for cooperatives and socialised industry and not largely for profit-making industries.

The discourse on a skills shortage rarely refers to what arguably could be the *sine qua non* of foundational skill formation – literacy and numeracy. A blind spot obscuring the reality of an unconscionable situation where only 7% of schools have libraries (narrowly defined by the Department of Education as schools that have spaces that are stocked with books) and similar provision for laboratories (see National Education Report Card in Pendlebury, Lake & Smith 2009). Skills are important for our developmental needs and not for the fickleness of the international market economy alone. This should be abundantly clear given the current global economic and financial meltdown. In its headlong rush to become 'globally competitive' South Africa has forgotten the building blocks of its future and mortgaged its children's lives for a mirage.

In earlier critiques of OBE the point was well made that instrumental outcomes might be appropriate for technical subjects but not for more creative or affective learning. In many subjects the desired outcomes were inherent in the process of learning itself (Chisholm, Motala & Vally 2003: 377). By focusing on outcomes the more fundamental issue of the purpose of education is avoided. While most children in South Africa face a plethora of social problems, including hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS and violence, particularly those children who live in rural areas and urban townships, specific conditions pertinent to the South African reality – issues of racism, sexism, the challenges of transition, regional disparities and so on – were phrased in the curriculum in a bland and decontextualised manner. Official statistics show the extent of poverty: more than 12 million children (two-thirds of the total number of children) live in households with a per capita income of less than R350 and an estimated 20% of children have lost one or both parents (Meintjes & Hall 2009: 71-78). Criticism of schools that avoids examining these socio-economic issues ignores the fault lines. The

banal reality is that the single factor that determines a school's performance more than any other is its intake – the children who go there. Generally, a school that is based in a poor community will struggle while one that is based in a more affluent area will prosper.

Today, close to ten years after the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*, the quality of teaching, learning and educational performance shows overall poor learner performance and considerable variation between provinces, districts and schools, linked to material resources, social class and residence (Spreen & Fanscali 2005; Fleisch 2008; Department of Education 2003; Spreen & Vally 2006). During this time primary schools have increasingly been monitored and assessed through local and national exams and overall achievement has been dismal. At the end of 2001, in order to gauge what the then Minister called 'the national temperature', the ministry conducted a systemic evaluation of 51 000 Grade Three learners (comprising about 5% of the total enrolment and randomly selected) to complete a set of assessment tasks in mathematics and literacy. The results showed an average 30% score in numeracy tasks and, although learners obtained a 54% score on combined oral, reading and written domains, when broken down this equated to only a 39% score in the reading and writing domains (Department of Education 2003). These aspects of performance are linked directly to the level and type of literacy programmes, which will be elaborated upon in the next section.

Also in 2005 the Department of Education released the results of the Grade Six Systemic Evaluation and, based on an analysis of the academic performance of a sample of 34 000 learners, learners obtained mean scores of 35% for language, 27% for mathematics and 27% for natural sciences (Department of Education 2005). By further disaggregating achievement by province and by poverty quintile, additional studies have shown huge disparities across schools, suggesting the extreme scale of South Africa's primary achievement gap (Spreen & Fanscali 2005; Chisholm et al 2006; Fleisch 2008).

The authors wish to suggest that the inability to address these 'post-apartheid challenges' is not the fault of teachers, but of structural inequality and a policy that has not supported its social justice aims adequately. Jansen (1999: 214) captures the failure of the new curriculum to carry through South Africa's transformational goals around equity:

The content of OBE remained traditional and conservative with little explicit reference to those outcomes regarded as setting transformative goals. Teachers used materials familiar to past practice; and, even when new materials were introduced (such as newspapers), they were not related to any social consciousness or critical awareness with respect to inequality, democracy and transformation.

Separating social inequality and focusing on teachers and outcomes was an ideological choice. The focus on OBE, which was introduced as an incredibly complex and grandiose curricular approach, resulted in the neglect of all other education aims, and the

focus on outcomes helped create a climate where the only things that mattered were those you could measure. Some curriculum theorists have argued that a more precise technical and scientific approach to educational delivery was needed, specifically employing better time management and discipline in schools and the classrooms (Taylor et al 1999 and 2003), or, to put it more blandly, OBE required more time and a more accurate intervention. This article argues quite differently that the continuation of a more narrowed instrumental and technical approach ignores the main problem of the achievement gap, i.e. structural inequality and the impact of poverty on learners. A policy emphasising curriculum reform and its related normative outcomes either ignores or downplays the real conditions in classrooms (often violent, overcrowded and lacking in basic material resources) in which teachers work and students are expected to learn. While short-term technical remediation in the classroom is possible and might yield some immediate results many of the benefits of these interventions wane over time.

The predictions made by some of the early critics have come to fruition: ‘Whatever benefits the new curriculum would bring in its wake, they are more likely to be accrued by those who benefit from the existing system as well, and be denied to those who suffer from poor-quality education at present’ (Harley & Wedekind 2004). Rather than reducing disparities and inequalities the revised and streamlined curriculum had a greater chance of being implemented successfully in well-resourced schools, with more qualified teachers catering to better-prepared learners. There was a concerted view that teachers in poorer communities had to be creative in ‘mustering additional resources and inventing alternatives’, but without adequate training and resources to sustain their initiatives this was akin to providing teachers with ‘a lamp and three wishes’ (Chisholm et al 2003: 700).

However, even the new interventions proposed by the ministerial committee (supposedly to assist teachers in meeting learners’ needs) are still centred around technocratic and accountability-based solutions by scaling expectations up or down through normative and standardised assessments, and not on best educational practices. For example, teachers are still not being prepared adequately to assist all learners in being successful – including methods of differentiated instruction and/or training in and support for bilingual learners, or of aligning instructional and assessment policies and of conducting and tracking continuous assessment. In the authors’ view, these and other important interventions have not taken place, and OBE or learner-centred practices have not been implemented. Teachers still teach the way they were taught unless their embedded assumptions about education are challenged through practical experience. The government policy still shapes tacit assumptions about the transmission of knowledge and the teacher’s responsibility for learners measured by normative assessments despite continued structural inequalities. Facing a loss of control and increasing social deterioration, teachers still turn to authoritarian teaching and even to corporal punishment. Teacher training for the most part does not

yet confront the embedded assumptions in teachers, nor does it provide workable alternatives conducive to the classroom contexts facing teachers in the most challenging environments. Efforts at reform will have to find a new basis and space for respectful and strategic discussions between teachers, their unions and governmental authorities. The authors suggest that had the curriculum policy and subsequent measuring of outcomes been about equal provisioning (including fully trained and qualified teachers) in all schools first, and then about simultaneously building on these resources with solid teaching practices, things might have been very different.

OBE in practice: Learner-centred education confronting classroom realities

Early on much was written about the failure by teachers to implement OBE, their 'lack of capacity' or their outright resistance. The current rhetorical shift is now on the overall 'failure of OBE'. This section will explore teacher preparation, beliefs and motivation, the policy gap and, finally, whether OBE has been implemented. It will show how this new debate 'blaming OBE' displaces the real need for programmes and policies to address structural inequalities, material resources, teacher development and adequate support for teachers in their classrooms.

The progressive idea of moving to learner-centred practices and encouraging teachers to be critical, independent curriculum developers was central to the OBE and C2005 mission. Yet in South Africa where the vast majority of teachers were educated under apartheid, they had little experience with learner-centred education, constructing curriculum or being empowered to engage in their own intellectual work to develop alternatives. The dramatic changes brought on in education over the last decade – from the teacher-rationalisation process and the inability to resource schools with libraries and adequate learner materials, to the lack of support for bilingual instruction and assessment – have made teacher professionalism and the improvement of education difficult to achieve. OBE's false promise that schooling could overcome poverty without addressing the wider social and economic context left teachers, who were at the forefront of reform, increasingly demoralised. As they began to recognise their inability to alter social relations and bring about broad social changes in education, teachers experienced tremendous stress and a growing dissatisfaction with their profession. A comprehensive study by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2005 revealed that 54% of teachers wanted to leave the education profession (Peltzer et al 2005: xvi). At the same time, there is a crisis in the supply and training of teachers, with a projected shortfall of teachers of around 32 000-34 000 (ibid.: 91).

In discussing OBE implementation many scholars have mentioned the disjuncture or gap between policy and practice, most suggesting that the policies have been sound but that the problem lies with implementation. With OBE the common-sense generalisation rested on the claim that after the careful study and design of the curriculum,

the next period would rely seamlessly on teachers implementing it. Harley and Wedekind (2004) called this ‘policy meliorism’, describing how the rhetoric and the mere fact that policy texts existed without being implemented was treated as a substitute for actual change. The authors believe that is precisely what occurred with OBE: there was a stated policy, an implementation plan and a decade-long national roll-out. Many policymakers assumed OBE was being implemented, but in many cases this was done poorly or without adequate monitoring. Importantly, these rational assumptions about the policy process precluded subjecting OBE policy to any real scrutiny and reduced concerns to ‘implementation issues’ that were simply blamed on teachers. As education quality continued to deteriorate over the last decade there was a rise in attacks against teachers, suggesting they ‘lacked capacity’, were ‘lazy’ and ‘incompetent’ or downright resistant to change; and with the introduction of each new ministry the idea of OBE came under closer scrutiny (as each new minister wished to distance him- or herself from a failing system). This article expands upon Harley and Wedekind’s ‘policy meliorism’ by arguing that the consequences of rhetorically supporting OBE initially (without examining whether it was being put in place) resulted in first blaming teachers and then ultimately scapegoating OBE for the country’s educational woes, all the while ignoring significant problems – structural inequality, poverty and the lack of sufficient support resources in the majority of schools.

The international literature is replete with lessons on the gap between policy and practice and the effect of teachers’ beliefs on their practice (see Johnson & Golombek 2002; Valli 1992). The following are some of the major problems around teacher beliefs and practice explored in urban township and the rural South African context:

- Pedagogical conservatism is a safety net for teachers who feel insecure about change
- Teaching is viewed instrumentally in the sense that tangible acts (assessment) assume greater importance than pedagogical relationships
- Practice appears as ‘trial and error’, routinised or intuitive and curriculum is widely perceived as the textbook
- Teachers do not have a language of theorising or thinking about their practice
- Policies do not reach schools or even speak in the same language as teachers (Jessop 1997)

The authors’ analysis of teacher perceptions of OBE and C2005 concurs with others who suggest that OBE was understood as a technology to be managed (Jansen & Christie 1999) and often operated as ‘group work’ rather than an instrument of social transformation. The early critics of the OBE discourse took issue with the fact that the jargon, complexity and structures proposed created a ‘maze’ that only experts could find their way through (see Jansen 1997; Chisholm et al 2003). More recently, others have described how this confusion has only been compounded by the various new iterations and changes in the curriculum over time. A review of the 2009 report

commissioned by the new Minister of Basic Education describes how the 'wide-ranging policy confusion and inadequate support of teachers by the education authorities have bedevilled the implementation of the revised [OBE] school curriculum' (Gower, 2009). As one bewildered teacher wearily confirmed, 'I've never even seen the revised curriculum statement [from 2000] and now I'm supposed to be teaching an altogether new curriculum. I have no idea what I'm supposed to be teaching so I just do what I've always done and whatever seems to work.' (Teacher interview, Limpopo, 2008) Many of the recent changes are an attempt to limit the time teachers spend on administration so they can spend more time in class, teaching. From 2010 teachers were to have only one file for administration purposes. 'They are cutting out the things that don't work. In a way you could call it a slimming of OBE', said Ezra Ramasehla, president of the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (Serrao 2009). Unfortunately, today's public dismissal of OBE is often coupled with an attack on progressive education, the rights framework and learner-centred practices, and met with calls to return to the basics, often by employing prescriptive and remedial techniques. The authors strongly caution against the current glib tendency to dismiss many of the earlier transformational goals of a critical social orientation that have been fought so hard for by pre-1994 education social movements and progressive academics in South Africa's liberation struggle.

Coming in the wake of teacher rationalisation it was unsurprising to many that OBE would place an additional administrative burden on already overburdened teachers. Today there is a growing recognition of this burden on teachers and the most recent revisions have been designed to reduce some of these administrative tasks (e.g. reducing the number of assessment reports and learner portfolios to one). However, there is also a new emphasis on monitoring 'teacher time on task', requiring teachers to be in the classroom for at least seven hours a day (in the name of protecting 'instructional time'). For the past ten years teachers have been criticised for the 'loss of instructional time', their 'bad work ethic' and 'serial absenteeism' and this perception has been reinforced by the media, as well as politicians. Other writers have commented on the corrosive effect of surveillance on teachers. 'It deeply affects teachers' motivation and relationships with learners, and produces lasting damage to schools as caring communities' (Wrigley 2006: 28). Teaching days lost as a result of the dominant teachers' union's political campaigning cannot be excused, but one also should consider teaching days lost as result of late starts and early closings (for instance, for the World Cup games), marking, exam preparation and the increased administrative burden due to 'continuous assessment'. The authors also suggest along with others that district and school management's lack of diligence and a number of contextual and power-related issues be investigated (Taylor et al 2003). 'Accountability is, after all, not the same thing as responsibility, still less duty. It is a pistol loaded with blame to be fired at the heads of those who cannot answer charges' (Inglis 2000). Worth mentioning here is the disappointing failure of the main teachers' union to take the lead in promoting teacher professionalism. So while learner-centred education may

have been the rationale for C2005, for a range of reasons it never came to fruition. As this article will show, researchers studying the implementation of OBE over the last several years overwhelmingly found similar results.

Another problem was that, through OBE, C2005 focused on ‘outputs’ and regarded the social context of the school as an inconsequential background factor. A report on rural education conducted by the Nelson Mandela Institute suggests that authoritarian teacher-centeredness is still practised in most rural classrooms and there is ‘widespread use of traditional methods that do not enhance learning autonomy or critical thinking’ (Nelson Mandela Institute 2005: 91). In the authors’ own classroom observations rote-learning, recitation and lack of understanding of basic vocabulary, definitions and concepts were observed in most of the under-resourced schools (quintiles 1-3) throughout the country. Mirroring the reflections of researchers who also regularly visit and study schools (see Kunene 2009) the authors observed teachers using ‘group work’ without attention to form and function of the group or purpose of the activity. True learner-centred instruction is based on identifying the range of learners’ needs and tailoring group instruction (by differentiating tasks) to support and enhance different learning styles. In ten years of observations and interviews the authors seldom encounter teachers discussing how they are varying pedagogic strategies or using ‘group work’ to address different learner needs.

Elsewhere the authors have suggested that learner-centred education has been ‘imported’ without attention to structural factors (e.g. classroom space and resources, pervasive poverty, etc.) and local contextual factors (teacher familiarity with OBE, work pressure, parental involvement, language instruction support, school collegiality, collaborative practices for innovation) (Spreeen 2001 and 2009; Spreeen & Vally 2006). Many teachers have suggested that OBE and learner-centred education is too time-consuming and requires too many resources and teaching experiences that they simply do not have. Others complain that learner-centred schooling undermines teacher authority and gives too many rights to learners. We have the dangerous situation where failure by the state to implement its policies such as C2005 (or learner-centred education) has resulted in many incorrectly blaming what they consider an all too powerful human rights culture for undermining discipline and respect for authority as they understand it. This often involves, for example, the calls for a return to corporal punishment because of the erroneous perception that children have too many rights.

School-based researchers document a range of barriers to practising learner-centred education in rural South African schools – including class size, shortage of teachers, lack of teaching and learning materials, poor infrastructure and lack of parental involvement (see Nelson Mandela Institute 2006, Kunene 2009, Spreeen 2009 and Ramadiro 2005). From the outset OBE had many critics, but its false promises overshadowed most of them – it was the ‘silver bullet’ that would destroy the old and usher in economic and social transformation. Instead of addressing the local context of

schooling and important infrastructural issues like building and resourcing libraries and creating reading and literacy programmes, the focus of educational reform was on large-scale technocratic approaches to teaching and learning. One cannot learn how to read effectively without access to libraries with a range of literature and books to read for pleasure. For the great number of schools in South Africa, there are no libraries, no books *in the classroom*, no books suitable to the bilingual challenge in schools and no books or educational resources that make reading and writing fun. The exorbitantly high price of books in South Africa compared to other countries also prevents a reading culture. In one six-week site observation at a rural school in Limpopo we did not see any learners ever read independently or write a self-selected composition or creative writing assignment. Even when books were available they were often locked away in boxes or storerooms, or were not used because educators did not know how to integrate the books with their lessons or they feared ‘the books would just disappear’. In one school the books did disappear, but not because of children taking them – rather because termites destroyed the ‘library’ that had not been maintained or used by learners for months. In another school in Mpumalanga that had a library a quick perusal of the shelves revealed that most of the books had been donated from overseas and many of them were inappropriate or irrelevant for primary school learners (e.g. there were a number of self-help guides for middle-aged North American women!).

Most children come from communities where an active culture of reading is absent and they struggle to gain confidence in writing. The need for stronger literacy programmes that engage learners in purposeful activities that build connections to communities and develop a love of learning should be emphasised and, where they already exist, supported. Yet based on our observations even the professional development for teachers on building literacy skills still centres on reading as phonics and recitation. At a literacy workshop last year in Mpumalanga we observed a literacy specialist discussing (for more than 10 minutes) the importance of using an object to point to each letter of the word while emphasising its phonetic pronunciation. During the full-day workshop, session after session modelled choral recitation between facilitator and participants (Facilitator: ‘Are you with me?’ Group in unison: ‘Yes, we are with you.’). Many of the important literacy cues, especially for bilingual learners, were never addressed. For example, the meaning, content, purpose and storyline were never discussed and, although the presentation relied on a ‘big book’ designed with elaborate pictures on large pages for readers to take cues from the illustrations, participants were never asked to intuit the context or discuss and predict the story. As this workshop was designed to foster a culture of literacy through ‘a love of reading’, we asked participants whether they had libraries or any literature for independent reading available to them in their schools. The clear indication was that books were not available.

Literacy and numeracy must be developed through methods that engage and inspire learners to read and especially methods that help bilingual learners to do so. It is not

surprising that a rigidly defined literacy strategy based on workbooks and reinforced by cascade-type training and monitoring will not produce literate or skilled readers. Even when teachers are encouraged to use exploratory discussion it is undermined by the number of learning objectives they have to cover. The emphasis on outcomes and items of knowledge reinforces didactic teaching, where children's responses are tightly constrained. South Africa's failure to produce critical readers cannot be blamed solely on OBE. Without libraries and creative outlets for authentic literacy and creative written expression, the government's new plan of generating two workbooks per learner will not build critical literacy skills or create a love of learning to read.

OBE and the failure to change

Finally, scant attention has been paid to what should be considered a central issue in understanding the past fifteen years of education policy-making – the effect of poverty and inequality on the implementation and outcome of education reforms in post-apartheid South Africa. Although prolific in quantity and rich in their theoretical and analytical contributions, many volumes of educational analyses leave a major gap in understanding policy in practice. Few policy research studies cited have examined life in classrooms or changes in teaching and learning based on teacher perceptions, and even fewer research studies have provided learners' perspectives on these important policy shifts. In order for policy aims to effect change, policy design and implementation has to reflect the needs, understandings and social realities of its primary constituencies – not powerful stakeholders, protected interest groups or articulate policy crafters. 'Good policy' should be measured by its relevance and applicability (Spren & Vally 2006). Goals and aims need to be constructed at the grass-roots level, embedded in the ideas, dreams and visions that school communities and learners themselves are empowered to articulate.

Poverty undermines education and in South Africa the majority of children live in conditions of protracted poverty. By obscuring this simple reality the public discourse on the school system, including calls to dismantle the curriculum (OBE), misses the point. This is not to deny that there are good and bad approaches to teaching or that schooling can make a difference. As early as 2000 the CRC correctly argued that more and better education can create the conditions for enhanced social and personal development and act as a lever for social change. However, a clearer and explicit indication that economic problems can best be understood by analysing the economic and political choices made by the state is required. While curriculum change, innovations in schools and certainly better-trained teachers and better-resourced schools is vital the precondition for ultimate success in these endeavours is changing the socio-economic status of learners by reducing the physical poverty, social isolation and disempowerment of extreme poverty (Porteus et al 2000) through child support grants (Case et al 2005; Edmonds & Duflo 2003) and the removal of school fees and the hidden costs of education (Spren & Vally 2006). The vast majority of South African

learners live in poverty, a situation that, if not ameliorated sufficiently, will reduce the effectiveness of education reform, however enlightened. The physical, emotional and social damage inflicted on children is abundantly documented (Barbarin & Richter 2001; Anderson 2000).

The main critique of post-apartheid education policy, which has been discussed elsewhere (Spreeen & Vally 2006), is that policy should be understood by the iterative interplay between declaration and actions, as well as the mediations resulting from competing internal and external interests. The policy process is inherently political and dynamic, involving contestation and compromise. The authors have argued that policies must be judged from the vantage point of practices and realities on the ground, in everyday life, rather than glossy political rhetoric, ideal-type statements of intention, blueprints or 'magic silver bullets'. The main challenge for OBE delivery was in the misplaced assumption that curriculum could be implemented equally everywhere – with the balance that needed to be struck between providing guidelines (learning outcomes) and giving autonomy to teachers to produce their own delivery systems. Hence, this vision of OBE required a highly qualified, theoretically sophisticated and creative body of teachers – a condition that hardly exists in the majority of South African schools. Rather than being offered teacher training, which itself does not model learner-centred practice, teachers need opportunities to work in local communities of practice where they can reflect actively on their teaching and develop ways of learning in practice that help them evaluate and innovate their teaching. The purpose of this article is not to engage OBE as a pedagogical process, but instead to challenge the discourses calling for the dismantling of the current curriculum (particularly learner-centred education) and show how this obscures the fundamental challenge the education system now faces, namely that the majority of learners live under conditions of extreme and protracted poverty in South Africa and that, if educational policy interventions and innovative approaches are to be 'meaningful', this situation (and its implications for educational development) has to be addressed urgently.

South African schools are not yet disabled-friendly and remain places where orphans and learners and teachers who have HIV/AIDS, immigrant children and other vulnerable groups are not treated with humanity. Schools must become sustainable community institutions that can be mobilised as hosts caring for vulnerable children. This is only possible if overburdened teachers are given support by health, psychology and social service professionals. This is not happening at present in most schools. Quality education is not only about the curriculum; poverty should be a consideration as well. Many learners do not do well at school because of specific learning barriers that cannot be blamed on OBE or on teachers (Liddel, Barrett & Henzi 2003; Hunter & May 2003). The authors argue that the current normative discourses in the public and policy domains work to reinforce and buttress schooling inequalities and determine particular redistributive patterns within society. While schools are not systematically

testing learners for visual, hearing and speech disabilities or identifying and intervening effectively around issues such as emotional difficulties, child abuse, sexual abuse and alcohol/drug abuse they continue to monitor and measure their competencies on these types of normative scales.

Increasingly, some researchers trying to grapple with the seemingly intractable nature of the education crisis believe that educational reforms in South Africa have floundered because they have not always attended to issues in which the social class context of schooling helps determine redistributive patterns in society. Moreover, the focus of many of these reforms has been on individual disadvantage abstracted from its broader social context. The importance of community engagement, participation and social mobilisation through resurgent social challenge and public protest in moving towards achieving equitable outcomes needs once again to be revisited. Community-based organisations (CBOs), NGOs, trade unions, social movements, worker and community colleges have always been extremely important educational agents with a vast array of foci, be it health, environment, agriculture, basic human rights issues or simply education for leisure. The tremendous contributions of these organisations and movements to social change and development are well known (Vally, Motala & Ramadiro 2009), especially in communities experiencing great difficulties particularly when the state withdraws financial support. The demise of the CBOs and NGOs is of serious concern as vital civil society organs involved with community education and development are lost. There is a need to resuscitate these organisations and to support those that have managed to survive so that they can continue their invaluable contributions to building democracy and critical citizenship. We need greater public awareness and community engagement, not the turning back of the tide in favour of socially conservative and reductive approaches to schooling. In a participatory democracy, education has an obligation to contribute to a sense of citizenship worthy of its name. Public activity will produce the energy necessary to revive the ideas, strategies and passions that informed the struggles against apartheid education and reinvent spaces for teaching and learning that support social change.

Concluding remarks

While not endorsing OBE or critiquing it as a pedagogical process the authors suggest instead that the 'problem' of educational failure for most learners in the majority of schools in South Africa has been due to a lack of fundamental change – in terms of adequately addressing contextual issues, as well as inequality in school infrastructure, significantly changing teaching and learning approaches, or in providing sufficient support and guidance for doing so. This article queried whether, in fact, OBE had been implemented at all. Secondly, the article re-examined some of the earlier criticisms and warnings around C2005 and its subsequent revisions to illustrate how, despite thoughtful and engaged deliberations on how to improve schooling,

many of the policies and recommendations were never put in place. It was then argued that OBE's 'failure' must be qualified, as there are some schools, particularly those situated in richer communities, that have enhanced their curriculum and performed increasingly well, while the vast majority of schools have not improved (or have even declined). It was suggested instead that OBE cannot be examined without understanding the day-to-day contextual realities of teaching and learning, continuing schooling inequalities and issues of the 'poverty gap' across the South African school system. Lastly, the article warned of the potential harm that could be done to social justice aims by the current dismissal of some of the progressive ideas supported by C2005 if the pendulum swings, returning South Africa back to a more conservative, prescriptive and authoritarian educational agenda without achieving the anticipative improvement in the quality of education. It is suggested that, in order to advance human rights, address poverty and inequality and provide access to quality schools for all South Africans, an entirely different set of mechanisms and structures for 'participation' must be established. By ensuring voice in policy-related research, policymakers can take local challenges into account and better deliver on what is needed.

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Notes on the authors

Carol Anne Spreen is a professor in the Leadership, Foundation and Policy Department of the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia and a visiting professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg. Her research centres on political and sociocultural studies of education change, particularly the influences of globalisation on teaching and learning.

Salim Vally is a senior researcher at the Centre for Education Rights and Transformation, Faculty of Education, University of Johannesburg. He has an abiding interest in linking academic scholarship with societal concerns and community participation.

Address for correspondence

Salim Vally
Centre for Education Rights and Transformation
Faculty of Education
Research Village
Cottage 8
Bunting Road Campus
Auckland Park

E-mail:

Salim Vally – svally@uj.ac.za

Carol Anne Spreen – cas9wt@virginia.edu

A critique of South Africa's National Human Resources Development Strategies

Dr Andre Kraak

Human Sciences Research Council

Abstract

This article provides a critique of South Africa's two National Human Resources Development Strategies (NHRDS). It does so through the construction and utilisation of a three-fold definition of HRD. South Africa's HRD strategies fall short when measured against each of these three components. This has to do with the failure to view HRD as a cross-sectoral phenomenon characterised by several interdependent relationships spanning the education, training, industry, science, technology and labour market policy domains. The NHRDS have focused primarily on educational objectives whilst neglecting the above interdependencies. Policy failure is also a consequence of poor horizontal coordination and interdepartmental cooperation within the South African state. Finally, failure has to do with inadequate management information systems and the poor exchange of strategic intelligence between key actors across the demand-and-supply divide, and between key government departments supposedly involved in the horizontal coordination of HRD.

Key words: Human Resources Development, education and training, interdepartmental coordination, horizontal coordination

Introduction

This article provides a critique of South Africa's two National Human Resources Development Strategies (NHRDS). The development of the argument traverses a number of distinct theoretical areas, the first and perhaps most important being the contribution of the new field of 'evolutionary economics' to our understanding of HRD. With this new insight in hand, particularly the emphasis within evolutionary

economics on 'learning', which takes place both within institutions on the supply side (education institutions) and institutions on the demand side (firms), the discussion then shifts to the high levels of cooperation and coordination needed if these two levels of 'learning' – within supply-side (education) institutions and within firms – are to be interconnected and maximised. This necessitates a look at 'horizontal coordination' – the extent of cooperation and coordination between government departments at a national (horizontal) level and between government and industry. The argument put forward is that, in the absence of these learning and informational linkages, private actors will be reluctant to cooperate with government or with one another around new economic or training activities. This is because they do not know what the reciprocal action of their market counterparts or government will be. Access to information about economic conditions along the supply chain is critical particularly if such actors are to trust one another and begin to cooperate around joint initiatives – including HRD. The acquisition of such 'strategic intelligence', therefore, is a critical precondition for moving up the value chain in key sectors of the economy. High levels of horizontal coordination within government and between government and industry assist in the acquisition of this strategic intelligence.

The analysis then proposes a three-fold definition of HRD based on the preceding theoretical excursion. The first component speaks to the acquisition of education and training through qualifications on the supply side. The second component speaks to the development of productive and organisational capabilities in specific institutional contexts on the demand side; for example, in a firm or a cluster of firms, in a state department, a school, a civic organisation or a business association. The third element, a relational component, speaks to enabling new HRD practices and new economic activities through strategic information exchange between government and private institutions on the demand and supply sides.

Finally, this three-fold definition of HRD is then used to provide a substantive critique of South Africa's two NHRDS. The analysis concludes by suggesting that all is not bleak. A new political context since May 2009 has opened up conditions that may allow for a more appropriate pursuit of an HRD strategy based on the three components of HRD as defined above.

HRD and 'evolutionary economics'

There is now a significant international literature that specifies the relationships between the emerging new global economy, the knowledge and skills it requires and the changed roles expected from education and training. Most influential in this regard is the literature on new forms of work organisation, the 'National System of Innovation' and the field of 'evolutionary economics', which has grown rapidly in the past two decades to challenge the conservative orthodoxies of neoliberal economics and the 'Washington Consensus' (see Lundvall & Borras 1999; Fagerberg, Mowery &

Nelson 2005; Nelson 2006). This new literature has become very influential in many of the world's multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Union. Indeed, a recent and excellent study of South Africa's innovation system completed by the OECD has adopted this analytical lens to examine South Africa's science and technology base (OECD 2007).

Four criticisms of neoliberal orthodoxy dominate this new literature. Firstly, the success of the newly industrialised economies of the Pacific Rim over the past three decades did not arise because of the policy prescriptions of neoclassical economics. These economies succeeded because of strong state intervention in the economy, primarily through the establishment of effective non-market institutions, which through appropriate industrial, technology and human resources development strategies acted to steer these Pacific Rim market economies along very successful growth trajectories. This growth did not occur because of unregulated market economics.

The second criticism has to do with the idea in neoclassical economics that the economy is always at rest (equilibrium) or is undergoing well-anticipated changes. Key decision makers can calculate in a rational manner 'what is going on based on what they know securely' (Nelson 2006). These conditions simply do not hold in the real world. The new evolutionary theory argues that the economy is always in the process of change, with 'economic activity almost always proceeding in a context that is not completely familiar to the actors, or perfectly understood by them' (ibid.). The heightened state of flux which characterises most market transactions requires a more 'behavioural' and 'social' theory of firm-level activity – hence the rise of 'evolutionary' economics.

Thirdly, neoclassical economics postulates an extremely 'thin' institutional environment. The neoclassicist view is that if the market mechanism is allowed to work unrestrained by government, fewer institutional 'props' will be needed to ensure progress and growth. Nelson (2006) maintains that this overly spare institutional picture fails to recognise the complexity of market relations, in particular 'their embedding in broader social and institutional structures and the elements of co-operation and trust required if markets are to work well'.

Lastly, neoclassicism's treatment of 'technology' is by far the most flawed. It is seen as an exogenous variable (external to the firm), as 'manna from heaven' freely available for everyone to use 'off the shelf' (Lall 2004: 95). Firms optimise by choosing from this shelf according to their factor and product prices. The selected technology is 'absorbed costlessly and risklessly by the enterprise and used at efficient (best practice) levels' (Lall 2004: 95). Yet in the real world we know that technological capabilities are largely firm-specific and societally determined. For example, the effective use of technology is largely dependent on, firstly, the tacit knowledge capabilities embedded in firms and, secondly, the way in which the firm is internally structured. Neo-

classicism cannot address these questions. It has fallen to an emergent new economic discourse, 'evolutionary economics', to put the social back into economic analysis.

It is significant that the primary focus of evolutionary economics is the study of 'the firm' as a social as well as economic organisation and, in particular, the role played by 'learning' within the firm in the new global economy. This is because the greatest value-add in production is increasingly generated by the dynamic capabilities of firms and their ability to absorb new technologies and work-organisational techniques, introduce new processes and products and operate in newly diversified fields of the economy. Competitiveness is also directly related to the need to compete on the basis of 'quality' and not purely in terms of the cost of production inputs.

All these developments have important ramifications for HRD. Skills development in this new context is not derived only on the supply side in terms of increasing the stock of working people with new or upgraded qualifications. More importantly, it is derived on the demand side in terms of the way in which human capability, once achieved through education and training, is utilised in the workplace. The tacit knowledge of production workers and the strategic design, engineering and management skills of middle to senior employees deployed at the enterprise level are the key determinants of economic success in today's knowledge-driven economy. The next section will explain why this is the case.

The shift to knowledge intensity

An important tendency in the economic innovation process globally is the shift towards greater knowledge intensity in production – where the basis for new economic rents is not so much found in the material production sphere as it is in value-adding activities such as design, branding and marketing. Tangible resources such as land, technology and capital have become increasingly widespread. Because of this, the new competitive advantage lies with firms' intangible resources. This development has had an effect across the globe in a highly uneven way, with intangible activities such as design, R&D, branding, marketing, logistics and financial services being concentrated in the industrially developed countries and tangible activities (actual production) being contracted out to a large band of middle-income developing countries such as China, India, Mexico, South Korea and Singapore – countries with low wages and highly developed process-manufacturing competencies (Kaplinsky & Morris 2001: 101).

Tacit knowledge

Tacit knowledge is the primary intangible asset of firms. This is the practical, experiential knowledge acquired by all employees in work contexts – including managers, R&D specialists and shop-floor production workers. It is the opposite of

codified knowledge, which is formal and procedural knowledge, organised in a range of academically-based disciplines and publicly available through academic study and research.

Tacit knowledge is privately held expertise. It cannot be bought 'off the shelf'. It is not a tradable commodity and cannot be transacted through market exchanges (Lundvall & Borrás 1999: 48). Tacit knowledge is not only invested in individuals but, more importantly, is also embedded in firms themselves, through specific managerial strategies and workplace routines, norms of behaviour, professional and institutional cultures and codes of information employed in the design, production and marketing stages of firm activity (ibid.: 46).

Networks are also repositories of tacit knowledge. In fact, they have become the principal means by which firms strengthen their new information sets. Networks open up possibilities of new ways of doing things – through the sharing, transfer and diffusion of internally acquired tacit competences across the network.

A firm's ability to access these repositories of tacit knowledge has been termed its 'dynamic capabilities' (Teece & Pisano 1998: 193). The winners in the global marketplace have been those firms that can demonstrate timely responsiveness and rapid and flexible product innovation, coupled most importantly with the 'management capability to effectively coordinate and redeploy internal and external competences' (ibid.: 193). This twofold concept refers both to the rapidly changing economic environment and also to the 'key role of strategic management in appropriately adapting, integrating, and re-configuring internal and external organisational skills, resources, and functional competences toward the changing environment' (ibid.: 194). These capabilities are distinctive and are difficult to replicate.

Design, engineering, entrepreneurial and managerial capabilities

In a recent review of South Africa's innovation system the OECD introduced a cognate concept to that of 'tacit knowledge' and firm-level 'dynamic capability' in a more useful and pragmatic language. The review introduced the concept of a firm's 'design, engineering, technical and managerial capabilities'. The report argued that South Africa should give greater recognition in practical terms to the importance of these non-R&D capabilities – those concerned with engineering, design and related management and technical functions. The OECD saw these activities as 'innovation-generators in their own right and as the seed-beds in enterprises from which more formally organised R&D emerges' (OECD 2007: 12). In short, what the OECD is saying is that the education system is not the only producer of human capability and valuable knowledge. Firms achieve these outcomes as well. Indeed, the report goes as far as saying that the success of the entire innovation strategy will depend largely on the 'depth and diversity of innovation capabilities that are accumulated by, and deployed in business enterprises' (ibid.: 88).

The report creates the useful acronym DEEM (design, engineering, entrepreneurial and managerial) for these non-R&D, firm-based capabilities that every enterprise deploys in divergent ways. DEEM capabilities provide the basis for continuous streams of process improvement that have a major impact on productivity and costs. This requires ‘in-house capabilities that are deeply embedded in the details of the specific markets and technologies of individual firms’ (OECD 2007: 101).

Implications for HRD

The preceding discussion has two significant implications for our understanding of HRD. Firstly, it is clear that HRD comprises the development of human capability in all its forms (a supply-side activity). Secondly, HRD also entails the deployment and utilisation of human capability in a variety of social and economic contexts (a demand-side activity).

The latter component requires elaboration. The effective ‘deployment’ and ‘utilisation’ of HRD on the demand side will include implementing enterprise training and technological and work-organisational strategies that value, retain and enhance workers’ tacit knowledge and resources, particularly those that build up a firm’s DEEM capabilities. Firms will need to acquire access to the ‘situated knowledge’ that will shape their entrepreneurial strategies and relationships with other players, including lead firms in supply chain arrangements and those government departments who operate in the sector. All of this will require a high degree of inter-industry cooperation and the participation of several players, including firms and government, who usually do not trust each other nor work together easily.

Government often has difficulty in meeting these relational requirements because of the mono-functional way in which most government departments are organised. The solution most commonly proposed is improved ‘horizontal coordination’.

Horizontal coordination

The literature on the need for horizontal coordination is expansive, having grown rapidly over the past two decades because of government attempts the world over to resolve increasingly complex social problems through improved coordination (for a more detailed review of this literature, see Kraak 2010). The new emphasis on horizontal coordination is largely an Anglo-Saxon phenomenon, although the key mechanisms have been well established in Scandinavian societies such as Finland (Dahlman, Routti & Anttila 2006). In the United Kingdom Blair’s 1997 administration began speaking of the need for ‘joined-up’ government (Kavanagh and Richards 2001). In Canada, Australia and New Zealand the chosen term has been ‘whole-of-government’ initiatives (Bakvis and Juillet 2004; Peters 1998). All of these governments look to improved horizontal coordination as a means to resolve ‘wicked prob-

lems' – complex social problems that resist easy resolution and which straddle the boundaries of several public sector organisations (Christensen and Laegreid 2007: 10). HRD has been considered one such 'wicked issue', particularly in the Anglo-Saxon societies mentioned above.

The need to manage these wicked problems poses serious difficulties for the traditional conceptualisation of government departments. Williams (2002: 105) writes of the need for governmental action to move from a 'pre-occupation with intra-organisational imperatives to a commitment to the building of inter-organisational capacity'. This requires governance capabilities that emphasise relationships, interconnections, interdependencies and holistic thinking. These capabilities contrast sharply with the 'prevailing discourse of classical organisations that are underpinned by notions of rationality, linear thinking, task differentiation and functionalism' (ibid.). Traditional departments are based on hierarchical structures and on accumulated 'wisdom', which is often resistant to change from outside. Often departments pursue agendas that are permissible in terms of departmental jurisdictions and specific departmental interests, but which do not benefit government as a whole, leading to policy duplication and contradiction (Kavanagh and Richards 2001: 1; Peters 1998: 4).

These problems have been recognised by the South African government. For example, in a document discussing the need for improved joint interdepartmental programmes released in 2005 the government acknowledges the poor management of cross-cutting work, which is 'partly attributable to the prevalent culture in the public service that is characterised by silo- and hierarchy-based work conventions, which make it difficult for project and programme managers in any one department to collaborate across institutions' (Department of Public Administration and Services 2005: 6). The document proposes the need for greater programme 'integration' in cross-departmental situations where a number of departments are responsible for partial aspects of a particular socio-economic programme, but where none are responsible for the success of the entire initiative (ibid.: 5).

The Mbeki government instituted the cluster system of government to resolve some of these problems in 2001. These clusters continue in adapted form under the Zuma administration. There are currently five cabinet clusters operating: Infrastructure Development, Economic Sectors and Employment, Human Development, Social Protection and Community Development, and Governance and Administration. Cognate departments in key areas, such as social and economic policy, are grouped together at the level of ministers and directors-general, who are required to plan short- to medium-term strategies for achieving presidential priorities such as job creation, poverty alleviation and human resources development. These plans are interrogated, adapted and finally approved by the President and Cabinet at six-monthly *lekgotlas*, which take place in January and July of each year. In almost all cases acute social problems are seen as arising cross-sectorally (as 'wicked problems'), their reform

requiring joined-up government action.

No review of the effectiveness of this cluster system has been published. However, in the build-up to the election of April 2009 many African National Congress leaders were very outspoken about the failure of the cluster system to promote greater cooperation and coordination between competing departments. For example, Jeremy Cronin, now Deputy Minister of Transport, was quoted in the media in October 2008 as saying that, by all accounts, the cluster system had not functioned effectively:

There is no hierarchy of ministers within clusters. As a result, cluster plans tend to consist merely in the agglomeration of separate-line department plans. There have also been problems of deadlock, in which ministers disagree and there is no strategic override. (Cronin 2008)

In similar vein the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande, told an audience at the Wits School of Public and Development Management in July 2009 that his new department was seeking to establish the integration of ‘education’ and ‘training’ – something which had eluded the two lead departments in this crucial area of cross-sectoral policy for over 15 years:

... institutional interests and the tendency of government departments to think rather narrowly about their own responsibilities militated against a close cooperation and the relationship between the two departments was often characterised by tensions and disagreements which slowed cooperation. (Nzimande 2009)

It is clear that South Africa has not been very successful with efforts at improved horizontal coordination. Later sections of this article will show that this shortcoming has had major repercussions for HRD policy formulation and implementation,

Interactions between demand and supply

The discussion now shifts to a second implication of our definition of HRD. This comprises a ‘relational’ element – the need for the demand side of HRD to speak to and inform the supply side. This is necessitated not only because of the need for alignment between education and industrial policies but also because of the rise of the knowledge economy as discussed earlier. Learning activities now occur on both sides of the demand-supply equation in both education and firm-level institutions. The HRD challenge, then, is to relate learning processes on the supply side to learning that is occurring or needs to occur on the demand side in ways which are mutually reinforcing. How is this done?

This relational requirement is attained through two types of information collection and stakeholder interaction:

- Firstly, through observable standardised bureaucratic information. Culpepper, an economist who analyses the education and training system from an evolutionary perspective, maintains that the government ‘bureaucratic tools of information gathering are very adept at summarising aggregate features of the labour market’

(2003: 58). This is most often done through Central Statistics Services and through the collection of administrative data in lead HRD departments.

- Secondly, through relational information obtained from private actors through dialogic means – ‘embedded policymaking’ – whereby the state seeks to change societal patterns of coordination by persuading wavering private actors to change their economic behaviour (ibid.).

In the absence of relational information private actors are reluctant to cooperate with government or with one another. They are reluctant to act in certain ways because they do not know what the reciprocal action of their market counterparts or government will be. Apprenticeship training is the classic example. Investing in such training is risky because trained workers can be poached by other companies who ‘free-ride’. The possibility of poaching limits the willingness of the company to train unless it knows that many other companies would make the same investment to the benefit of all (Culpepper 2003: 5).

The evolutionary economic perspective, according to Culpepper, is that strategic information exchange between key actors in the economic arena needs to occur. Each key economic sector has an array of government departments, parastatal agencies, lead conglomerates and supplier firms who all interact to some extent along the supply chain in pursuance of sector initiatives and government programmes. Access to information about economic conditions along the supply chain is critical, particularly if such actors are to trust one another and begin to cooperate around joint initiatives. The acquisition of such ‘strategic intelligence’, therefore, is a critical precondition for moving up the value chain in key sectors of the economy. It requires government officials in state departments negotiating with business representatives, both with expert ‘situated knowledge’ of the conditions defining their economic sector (and/or technological platform, as in the case of information technology or biotechnology). In government speak this would require that significant management information systems (MIS) are constructed in all major social and economic sectors to inform interventions in these sectors.

However, in many economic sectors the precise education and labour market conditions that prevail are not known in detail ahead of interventions. In this context it can be said that ‘policy holes’ exist. Burt (2003) defines a ‘policy hole’ as a blockage in the information flow required to produce informed policy. Policy holes occur when key actors in the policy process do not interact outside of their own group or professional community, resulting in a constriction of knowledge flow crucial to the policymaking and implementation process. Alternatively, actors who forge strong ties with groupings outside of their own communities in domains such as state departments, employer associations, firms, sectors, regions, colleges or universities play a crucial brokerage role in overcoming holes in the process of knowledge circulation (Burt 2003: 3). Burt argues that brokers are critical to learning and creativity. People whose net-

works span structural holes have 'early access to diverse, often contradictory information and interpretations which gives them a competitive advantage in delivering good ideas' and being able to provide solutions to problems bedeviling the interfaces between groups (Burt 2003: 5). Government policy actors often fail to play this brokerage role because of the silo effect and their disinclination to engage the complex interdependencies that bind seemingly discrete policy elements together. As such, these government actors fail to produce policy sensitised to the complex interdependencies 'on the ground'.

Public policies are often thwarted and blocked by private actor inertia or opposition. These policies attempt to induce change through incentives and sanctions, but these often backfire. If the majority of private actors are not persuaded that the new policies and the new institutions will work the sanctions then apply to everybody, not a minority, and in so doing 'sanctions lose their reputational sting. When everyone defects, it is very hard to mete out sanctions to the whole population' (Culpepper 2003: 8). This may be the status acquired by South Africa's 1% training levy, which is viewed pejoratively by many employers who ignore its incentives to train, treating it as a burdensome additional tax.

Culpepper's views on the efficacy of public policy are not all doom and gloom. As an evolutionary economist he believes that the state can intervene constructively through industry, technology, education, training and small business development policies to facilitate firm-level adjustments to the new conditions of competition. He argues that local information is private information that is asymmetrically held. Policymakers hoping to secure cooperation must acquire this 'situated knowledge' – intimate, deeply proprietary knowledge. As local actors cooperate and learn from one another their interaction and experimentation creates a base of useful knowledge, which helps to resolve uncertainty and information asymmetry. Collective knowledge generation such as this also creates the conditions for new economic activities to ensue.

Culpepper believes that through participation the benefits of cooperation will eventually become evident. These benefits include joint training, regional export support, small firm development subsidies and joint R&D initiatives (Culpepper 2003: 57). These deliberative associations help actors to develop solutions collectively that they might not get to on their own.

A three-fold definition of HRD

It is now possible to add this third 'relational' dynamic to the two-fold definition of HRD established earlier. To summarise, the first component of our definition of HRD speaks to the acquisition of education and training through qualifications; the second speaks to the development of productive and organisational capabilities in specific institutional contexts, for example, in a firm or a cluster of firms, in a state depart-

ment, a school, a civic organisation or a business association. The third element, added here, speaks to enabling new HRD practices and new economic activities through strategic information exchange between government and private institutions on the demand and supply sides. This requires both detailed MIS in key areas such education, labour market and sector output data and 'relational information' as described earlier – which is generated through iterative rounds of cooperation between the state, industry and education providers. Table 1 summarises this three-fold definition:

Table 1: HRD's three-fold definition

Three-fold component:	a) HRD entails the effective development of human capability in all its forms through formal education and training and the acquisition of qualifications	b) It also entails the effective utilisation of developed human capability in a variety of contexts – including employment in organisations in the private sector, the public sector and civil society	c) And finally, it also entails a relational element based on the exchange of strategic intelligence between institutions on the demand and supply sides, which enables optimal decisions to be made regarding all economic activities, including HRD. Information exchange is maximised in cooperative interactions between the state, industry and education officials who have 'situated knowledge' and expertise of the exact conditions under which their economic sector functions
Function:	This is a supply-side function	This is a demand-side activity	This is a relational dynamic which links demand to supply in the successful acquisition of HRD
Policy implications:	A solid educational foundation is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for effective HRD	A cross-sectoral and interdepartmental policy perspective is essential within government to implement this component of HRD	Widespread management information systems in government are a critical pre-requisite for effective HRD policies

The discussion, equipped with this three-fold definition of HRD, is now ready to interrogate South Africa's two National HRD Strategies, the first published in 2001, the second in 2009.

South Africa's First National HRD Strategy, 2001-2006

South Africa's first national HRD strategy was adopted at the January 2001 Cabinet

lekgotla and publicly launched on 23 April that year. It had five major objectives:

- Improving the foundations for human development
- Improving the supply of high-quality skills (particularly scarce skills), which are more responsive to societal and economic needs
- Increasing employer participation in lifelong learning
- Supporting employment growth through appropriate industrial policies, innovation, research and development
- Ensuring that the four pillars of the HRD strategy, as listed above, were properly integrated (Departments of Education and Labour 2001)

Although impressive in its attempt to span supply and demand dynamics, the strategy was never implemented. At best it remained a policy text with ambitious goals. At worst it was a non-event, having failed to become an effective instrument for improved coordination in the arena of education and training. The next section will raise two substantive flaws arising out of our three-fold definition of HRD, which account for this poor performance.

The first and probably most severe problem which beset the first NHRDS¹ was poor interdepartmental cooperation and coordination, with relations of animosity generally characterising dynamics between the Departments of Education and Labour during this period. The first NHRDS was structured through a cross-departmental committee, which was not accorded a high political priority by government and was severely weakened by the poor attendance of senior officials from participating departments. ‘Silo’ politics also had the effect of reducing the possibilities of cross-sectoral interventions. All in all the NHRDS was an ineffective instrument of government that set up poorly defined goals that it failed to pursue. Soobrayan and Marock (2007) confirm this negative assessment in a review of the NHRDS commissioned by government. In their report they argue:

- An ongoing tug of war existed between the lead departments over control of key institutions such as higher education and the further education and training (FET) colleges, which weakened coordination efforts
- National governance arrangements to drive the HRD strategic agenda were lacking
- HRD was not given priority status in the strategic conversations of many departments. The NHRDS was not taken into account during the planning processes of its key subsystems – the participating departments
- Plans were not aligned. Planning was reactive and short-term. There were no mechanisms for longer-term planning that could anticipate future needs (Soobrayan & Marock 2007)

1 The two HRD strategies will be assigned the acronym NHRDS for convenience purposes although their exact titles differ, as is evident in the bibliography.

The second problem with the NHRDS was the existence of several policy holes and far too many performance targets and indicators, which in the absence of good bureaucratic and relational data were impossible to measure, thereby setting government up for failure. A total of 21 performance indicators were set up across the five objectives of the first NHRDS as listed above. Some of these related to placement rates of new trainees in full-time employment; labour migration; participation rates in higher education; enrolments in science and engineering fields; changing labour market structure; new skills requirements; unemployment; and science-industry partnerships (Departments of Education and Labour 2001).

This push for 'targets' created an obsession with outputs at the expense of the quality of inputs (Young 2001: 82). In so doing the capacities of institutions to carry out the work demanded by the indicators was not taken into account. This had the effect of distorting outcomes with many unintended consequences for policy. Soobrayan and Marock note that there were far too many indicators with very poor specification. Although it was explicitly indicated that the formulation of targets was to take place after the adoption of the strategy, this never really happened (Soobrayan & Marock 2007: 86).

Three 'policy holes' characterised the national economic policy context in which the first NHRDS sought to intervene:

1. A policy hole around industrial sectors: micro-economic or industrial policies for specific economic sectors were not defined officially by government policy until the launch of the *National Industrial Policy Framework* in July 2007. This meant that for the entire duration of the first NHRDS (2001-2005) HRD planning in FET colleges and higher education institutions had to proceed without the critical strategic intelligence needed to make informed policy decisions regarding economic-sector skill needs. In the absence of sectoral policy, officials within the Department of Trade and Industry failed to achieve what Culpepper has termed 'decentralised cooperation' amongst the private players in each of the key sectors of the South African economy. In failing in this process of relationship-building within key sectors and with education and training institutions government failed to facilitate the shift to more knowledge-intensive and higher-value-adding activities. Few officials in either the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Education have acquired the expert knowledge needed to play this role.
2. A policy hole around training policy: The Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) can be viewed as classic intermediary bodies expected to attain decentralised cooperation between government and industry players. Their tasks have been to encourage skills development activities in the economic sectors they operate in. However, the vast majority of SETA staff come from an education or adult education background and few have acquired high levels of sectoral expertise. They are unable to speak the language of firms operating in the sector

and are unable to convince the waverers (who do not see the value of extensive training) to change their behaviour.

3. A policy hole around education: Much of the new higher education policy refers to the need to develop a system that will 'meet national development needs including the high-skilled employment needs presented by a growing economy operating in a global environment' (Department of Education 2001: 9). Policy also speaks to the importance of planning and the need for three-year plans submitted by institutions that respond to 'regional and national need' (Department of Education 2001: 22). Additionally, the *National Plan on Higher Education* set a target to shift the percentage balance in enrolments between (i) humanities, (ii) business and commerce and (iii) science, engineering and technology from 49:26:25 in 2001 to 40:30:30 by the end of the decade (Department of Education 2001: 27). Yet the Department of Education has never been able to concretise these policy objectives through detailed correspondences between participating academic programmes, the specific needs of the modernising economy and the spatial location of these needs. This is not because of the commonly cited disinclination to use manpower-planning techniques, but rather because brokerage activity has not taken place between education and industry officials since the enactment of policy; nor has any research been commissioned to shed light on these economic sectoral matters.

The pervasiveness of these policy holes across the education and training landscape during the early 2000s has meant that education and industry stakeholders have been unable to relate demand to supply in any meaningful way in terms of making HRD decisions. The absence of such strategic intelligence made the attempts by the first NHRDS to meet several performance indicators and targets rather futile, allowing government to set itself up for failure.

The second national HRD strategy

Apart from its public launch in April 2001 and the widespread dissemination of the strategy booklet, very little else occurred in the five years of the strategy (2001-2005). Participating departments continued to report on line-function achievements through the interdepartmental HRD coordinating committee and from there into the President's annual *lekgotlas* and the cluster system. The achievements reported, however, were not collective, interdepartmental HRD gains but the outcomes of departments operating in isolation from one another.

It is against this background of 'policy failure' that the Department of Education, which had taken over the guardianship of the strategy from the Department of Labour in 2006, proposed a review of the first NHRDS with an eye to redrafting and formulating a new, second NHRDS. This review took place between November 2007 and March 2009, when a new strategy document was released for public comment (Department of Education 2009). Although comments have been received from

interested parties, a final version of the strategy has not yet been released by government.

The second NHRDS seeks significant transformation in society and the economy in both the short term, through yearly plans, and the medium to long term, through five-year and twenty-year plans. At the core of the second NHRDS are eight HRD 'Commitments' drafted for the period April 2010 to March 2015. Each of these Commitments has a set of Strategic Priorities (SPs). For example, Commitment One focuses on resolving the shortages in the supply of priority skills and has three SPs. Commitment Two, which focuses on aligning supply-side provisioning to scarce skill areas, has four SPs. Each of the eight sets of SPs is listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2: The eight sets of strategic priorities of the revised NHRDS

Commitment 1: Priority skill areas	
SP 1.1	Increase the training output of engineers and artisans in FET colleges and HE institutions
SP 1.2	Increase persons with priority skills through targeted net immigration
SP 1.3	Meet the skill needs of ten priority economic sectors derived from Asgisa and the National Industrial Policy Framework (ICT, metals, auto, chemicals, wood paper and pulp, business process outsourcing, tourism, biofuels, agro-processing and film)
Commitment 2: Alignment of supply side with scarce skill areas	
SP 2.1	Obtain information on enrolment and graduation planning in FET colleges and HE institutions and aligning these with the National Scarce Skills List
SP 2.2	Obtain substantive inputs from employers into skills development planning
SP 2.3	Improve employment outcomes of post-school education and training through industry-education partnerships with FET colleges and HE institutions
SP 2.4	Improve graduation and participation rates in FET colleges and HE institutions
Commitment 3: Access to basic education and schooling up to Grade 12	
SP 3.1	Achieve equity in inputs and outcomes
SP 3.2	Improve learner performance in Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12; improve internal efficiency through grade progression
SP 3.3	Expand ECD
SP 3.4	Improve matric pass rates in Maths and Science
SP 3.5	Provide access to health-promoting interventions
Commitment 4: Skills development aimed at overcoming poverty and unemployment	
SP 4.1	Train unemployed adults
SP 4.2	Roll out ABET campaign
SP 4.3	Give learners from poor areas access to FET colleges and HE institutions

Commitment 5: Access of young people to ET, enhancing their chances of success in further and higher education	
SP 5.1	Train the youth
SP 5.2	Offer internships
SP 5.3	Provide vocational guidance and labour market information
Commitment 6: Improve technological and innovation capabilities	
SP 6.1	Increase the supply of skilled personnel in SET
SP 6.2	Improve the performance of the research and innovation system in high-level science, engineering and technology areas – at honours, masters and doctoral levels
Commitment 7: Ensure the public sector can meet the needs of the development state	
SP 7.1	Improve training in the public sector HRD decisions in the public sector made on the basis of systematic and relevant evidence. Such evidence to be maintained in appropriate management information systems Credible supply and demand projection models required for key occupational categories in the public service (for example, doctors, nurses, teachers and engineers)
SP 7.2	Leverage the SETAs to contribute to the development of the public sector
Commitment 8: Establish effective and efficient planning capabilities in relevant departments	
SP 8.1	Labour market supply-and-demand forecasting model Regular surveys of employment outcomes of new graduates (tracer studies; graduate destination surveys) Improve the planning capacities of the skills development institutions

Source: Department of Education 2009: 20-22

ET = education and training

SET = science, engineering and technology

Critique of the second national HRD strategy

The second NHRDS has not freed itself from the baggage of the first strategy, and can be criticised on similar grounds. In particular, two major problems stand out. First, the structural features of the new model rely too strongly on the Mbeki-era system of interdepartmental coordination and, in particular, the cluster system. In so doing, the revised strategy ignores the relative success of the JIPSA initiative (discussed below), which was based on a limited number of projects, limited basic information collection and exchange between the participating actors and strong partnerships between the state, business and labour. In sharp contrast the second NHRDS has been designed by government alone. This weakens the chances of a social compact being forged around its implementation. Secondly, the new NHRDS does not resolve the problems of poor interdepartmental cooperation and coordination. The strategy remains the additive aggregation of its subsystems, which report separately.

Ignoring the JIPSA model

The Joint Initiative in Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) provides an interesting counterpoint to the second NHRDS. JIPSA arose out of wider shifts occurring within government's overall macro-policy framework. The most significant was government's recognition of the importance of micro-economic reform and, in particular, the significance of key inputs in production such as the cost and quality of economic infrastructure (energy, telecommunications, transport and logistics) and skills. This new approach was best articulated through the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (Asgisa) that operated under the leadership of the country's then deputy president, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, from July 2005 until her exit from politics in September 2008 with the demise of the Mbeki faction in government. The main purpose of Asgisa as an economic and industrial policy campaign was to identify the major bottlenecks to attaining a 6% growth rate by 2010. Crumbling public infrastructure and skill shortages were identified as the two most severe constraints on growth. JIPSA, at its launch in March 2006, became the 'human capital' policy leg of the Asgisa campaign.

JIPSA comprised a joint task team made up of key ministers, including the Ministers of Labour, Education, Science and Technology and Trade and Industry, as well as prominent business and union leaders and a technical working group of education and training experts from government, business, labour and academia.

JIPSA's modus operandi was very different to that of the first NHRDS. It adopted a problem-solving approach as opposed to a targets- and indicators-based approach. It did so by bringing key stakeholders together and, through processes of arbitrage and consensus-building, sought to build solutions that would not ordinarily have arisen if left to individual stakeholders to resolve.

JIPSA adopted a 'skills pipeline' metaphor in guiding its work. It identified many of the features of the skills crisis as arising not so much from a numeric shortfall as from a system malfunction characterised by bottlenecks and logjams that slowed the production of the required amounts of skilled personnel needed in the skills pipeline from education and training into the labour market. In addition to this malfunctioning 'systems' approach JIPSA chose to make a number of short-term, decisive interventions, which were defined at the interfaces between several government departments and which required a collective set of government and private sector inputs to attain success. JIPSA focused on a small number of limited interventions, the most important of them being the following:

1. Assisting unemployed graduates in finding work placements and ultimately securing employment
2. Improving the supply-side provision of engineers, technologists and technicians by an additional output of 1 000 per annum by 2011
3. Increasing the number of graduating artisans from an average of about 4 247 per

annum to 12 500 per annum, or 50 000 between 2007 and 2011 (see JIPSA 2006a, b and c)

JIPSA claimed that its success in these limited interventions was based on the ‘voluntary self-binding of autonomous project owners’ (JIPSA 2008: 5). JIPSA recognised the distinctive roles of project owners and provided an effective interface and coordination of efforts to achieve the set targets. Its approach was practical and problem-solving, entailing the quantifying of skill needs, identifying the constraints on skills acquisition and then identifying the relevant project owners and role players and securing their buy-in and support. JIPSA’s main role was to coordinate and support this collective process.

The relative success of JIPSA in these limited instances of horizontal coordination between otherwise reluctant players is noteworthy. That the revised, second NHRDS chose not to reflect on the basis of JIPSA’s success in any substantial way is a major shortcoming.

Absence of a cross-sectoral definition of HRD

The second NHRDS replicates the main flaw of the first, i.e. that the strategy is constructed around the additive linking of the separate line-function activities of the constituent parts. Part of the problem with this listing of activities is that they are not activities that require a collectivity of government departments to resolve, but rather line-function activities of discrete departments – items that are already inserted into dedicated strategies within the relevant home departments.

A further criticism of the second NHRDS is its failure to adequately integrate the demands which the Asgisa and *National Industrial Policy Framework* initiatives make on the education and training system. It fails to recognise the crucial cross-sectoral interdependencies between these policy interventions, each requiring significant inputs from education and training for their ultimate success. In large part, this is a function of the absence of strategic intelligence in the industrial policy realm. For example, the specific content of the second NHRDS Strategic Priority 1.3 – which deals with the skill needs of Asgisa’s priority sectors – is completely absent. This is because the entire community of education and training and key industrial policy actors do not have sufficient strategic intelligence about these sectors with regard to skill needs. Such needs have not yet been well articulated by sector bodies such as employer associations and the SETAs, nor by the Department of Trade and Industry. The supply-side institutions are not well positioned to know how to support many of these key economic sectors.

No prior consultation with stakeholders

The report is silent on the key definitional question of the differences between an HRD

strategy that is collectively defined, forged jointly via a multipartite compact between government, capital, labour and civil society bodies and a strategy that is defined by government alone. The problem here is not simply whether business and labour will buy into the deal after government has already done the groundwork. It is also about the construction of a comprehensive approach to HRD itself. It is well known that the co-determinist socio-economic compacts and long-term plans of central Europe, Scandinavia and some of the Asian giants work precisely because everybody – particularly business, but also other agencies such as universities and networks between firms and R&D agencies – were all implicated in the process of forging a long-term societal strategy. In the age of the network society it is these cooperative relations and ventures between the state, firms, clusters of industries, value chains, R&D labs, universities and professional bodies that determine the capacity of a society to move up the value chain and grow the economy (Lundvall & Borrás 1999). Unfortunately, the second NHRDS does not assist in the building of such social compacts.

Too many indicators

The eight commitments of the second NHRDS have become devices against which large sets of activities can be listed – eight commitments multiplied by approximately three Strategic Priorities, each with several activities, constitutes 101 tasks that have to be accomplished. The previous HRD strategy was rejected as being nothing but a long shopping list of activities to be ticked off. By the end of the five-year strategy minimal progress has been attained. The same fate lies ahead for the revised strategy. Success across 101 activities is simply unachievable. Pursuing several targets and indicators in a context where government departments are weak in terms of delivery raises several problems, not least that government is set up to fail. However, the issue of unintended and perverse outcomes is also a big issue and the country requires greater reflection before another strategy consisting of several performance indicators is cast in stone.

New context

The current picture is not entirely bleak. Since the ascent to power by the Zuma administration in May 2009 three important developments have taken place that may positively affect the way in which HRD is pursued and implemented. Firstly, there has been a refreshing openness within the Zuma government regarding the failures of the Mbeki era in terms of horizontal coordination – an openness that political journalist Richard Calland (2009) termed 'glasnost'. This openness provides an important new beginning in the pursuit of more effective intergovernmental planning and co-ordination than that which was achieved previously. A number of new initiatives have been outlined by the new political administration since its inauguration in May 2009.

The first relates to government's far more intensive commitment to the idea of achieving a developmental state 'with the capacity to intervene in the economy to coordinate and drive transformation' (Cronin 2008). A key feature of such a developmental state would be the ability, over 'the medium and longer term, to coordinate its own efforts while mobilising the widest range of national energies' (Cronin 2008). With these goals in mind, the ANC national executive set up a task group in 2008 to develop proposals around planning and coordination. In its deliberations the task team cited liberal economist James K Galbraith, who argues:

The great fallacy of the market myth lies simply in the belief, for which no foundation in economics exists, that markets can think ahead. A country that does not have a public planning system simply turns that function over to a network of private enterprise – domestic or foreign – which then becomes the true seat of economic power (Galbraith quoted in Cronin 2008).

A key requirement of the ANC task team in 2008 was to identify the institutional centre for government-wide economic planning. With the support of its alliance partners the ANC proposed setting up a high-powered National Planning Commission located in the Presidency. Cronin argued that this body would need to develop medium- to long-term strategic planning. 'It would need to ask challenging, cross-cutting questions that often drop between the cracks' of discrete departments (Cronin 2008). The Zuma administration has now set up such a commission, with Trevor Manuel at its helm as Planning Minister and chair of the Commission, which consists of 25 expert members. HRD matters will be amongst those that are given priority attention by the members of the commission, which is tasked with designing 'South Africa Vision 2025' – a long-term plan that seeks to integrate high-level socio-economic objectives across the macro-economic, micro-economic, industrial, education and training and science and technology policy domains.

A new Department of Higher Education and Training

The second development that has taken place under the new political administration is the formation of a new Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which administers the 23 higher education institutions, 50 FET colleges and 23 SETAs. Previously, national coordination of these key supply-side education and training subsystems was difficult to achieve because administrative control was spread unevenly across two national departments (education and labour) and nine provincial departments of education. Under the new arrangement the administration of all three subsystems of post-school education is achieved nationally in one department. This new mega-department faces considerable work pressure, but the reforms also create new opportunities for the improved coordination of the entire system, improved articulation between subsystems and improved progression for learners from one subsystem to the next. All of these opportunities – coordination, articulation and progression – were key objectives of ANC education policy in the

run-up to the first democratic elections of 1994, objectives that have not yet been fulfilled.

Joined-up policy and horizontal coordination

The third development in the new political administration is the renewed commitment to industrial policy reflected in the determination to implement the National Industrial Policy Framework as discussed earlier. This new commitment to a proactive industrial policy is reinforced through the establishment of the Department of Economic Development, a new entity aimed at ensuring the formulation of economic policies that benefit the poor through the promotion of labour-intensive industries, small and micro enterprises and rural development. This new 'integrated' approach to socio-economic alignment is reflected in recent ministerial statements in the DHET:

The agenda we have now set out includes a co-coordinated skills development strategy, informed by an overarching industrial strategy, based on clear sectoral industrial strategies, placing particular emphasis on scarce skills. This will require refocusing and possibly restructuring of the SETAs to be guided by this overarching objective, rather than the other way round. (Nzimande 2009)

Conclusion

Notwithstanding these potential gains for HRD, the second NHRDS faces considerable problems. The strategy still falls far short when measured through the lens of the three-part definition of HRD described earlier in this article. Firstly, supply-side output of educated and qualified personnel ready to work in the wider economy and society is sub-optimal. Matric pass rates and graduation throughput rates in most educational institutions are unacceptably low. Skill shortages in key occupational categories abound. South Africa is not achieving the rapid improvement in its educational foundations that underpinned the remarkable economic growth of Asian developmental states such as South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, nor those of the late economic bloomers in Europe such as Ireland and Finland (Kraak 2008).

Secondly, the effective deployment of South Africa's trained personnel remains a problem. Employers are primarily concerned with the cheapness of labour, not their human capabilities, nor are many concerned with developing their firm's design, engineering, technical and managerial capabilities ('DEEM', a key concept discussed earlier in this article). Employers should give greater recognition to these non-R&D capabilities – they are the potential seed-beds for innovation in firms. Employers need to promote learning and innovation within their firms through the better utilisation of their trained personnel. In so doing, more frequent sectoral opportunities for moving up the value chain will prevail.

Thirdly, relational mechanisms to promote 'strategic intelligence' – or 'situated knowledge' – are not advanced or clearly understood in the South African economy and

society. The policy holes that exist because of this – especially at the interface between HRD and industrial policy – will persist until higher levels of interaction occur amongst government departments themselves and between government and industry. HRD policies are not being synchronised sufficiently with the wider pool of industrial, science and technology and micro-economic policies that will promote economic growth in specific sectoral locales. These demand-side contexts are not evident yet; hence, the portfolio of skills needed is not known either. The setting up of the National Planning Commission and an integrated Department of Higher Education and Training are encouraging developments in terms of improving government's horizontal coordination capabilities, but far greater levels of inter-governmental cooperation and government-industry coordination are going to be required to fill the policy holes that exist and to equip the NHRDS to make a meaningful contribution to economic growth and national socio-economic development.

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Notes on the author

Dr Andre Kraak is currently a director in the Research Programme on Education and Skills Development at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). His primary role at the HSRC is to lead the Building Strategic Intelligence Project for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

Address for correspondence

Dr Andre Kraak

Chief Director: Research

Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA)

9 Kenmore Road, Tamboerskloof, Cape Town

South Africa, 8001

E-mail: andrekraak@vodamail.co.za

Curriculum planning and reform in sub-Saharan Africa

Anil Kanjee, Yusuf Sayed and Diana Rodriguez

Tshwane University of Technology, University of Sussex, and Ministry of Education, Colombia

Abstract

Using exemplars from selected countries in sub-Saharan Africa, this article considers trends in curriculum reform and the related policy challenges. Particular attention is paid to aspects of the curriculum that affect quality. These include aims and objectives, moves towards outcomes-based education, new areas of concentration in response to social changes, the balance between subject-disciplinary- and learning-area-based approaches, the challenges of effective pedagogy, the move towards assessment for learning, curricular interventions that affect inclusion and equity positively, and the centrality of teachers in improving learning.

Introduction

This article relates debates on the curriculum, learning and educational quality to current realities in sub-Saharan African educational systems. How can quality education be assured in stringent African conditions? In particular, how can basic education, which extends mass education beyond primary level, be made a worthwhile experience in conditions of economic austerity and skills shortage? Of what should the school curriculum be composed in such circumstances? How should discipline-based subjects and learning areas relate to one other? How can new areas of knowledge be integrated without overloading and unbalancing the curriculum and perhaps menacing fundamental requirements for literacy and numeracy? How can assessment at different levels be used formatively as well as summatively? These questions all point to the issue of pedagogy and teachers and the article concludes by arguing for a focus on teachers as the lynchpin of any educational system.

Curriculum, learning and educational quality

Good quality is arguably the most important aspect of any education system. However, with its meaning being relative to educational aims, defining good quality education is difficult. Alexander (2008) points to the need to clarify the confusion around the meaning of 'quality'. He distinguishes between the usage of the term as a noun and as an adjective and argues that certain discourses on quality focus on it being prescriptive (a desirable level of quality) rather than descriptive (what constitutes quality). In the descriptive sense, quality implies characteristics or attributes. The question, however, is which characteristics or qualities? Sayed (2008) reviews different discourses of quality, including the human capital, the right and the social justice approaches.

Given the various debates about quality, this article uses the definition agreed upon at the World Education Forum (WEF) in Dakar in 2000: that quality in education refers to excellence in teaching and learning so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills (Dakar Framework for Action 2000). The notion of quality education, therefore, requires an understanding of learning, which is the fundamental aim of any effort towards educational reform. Learning is an active process in which self-monitoring and self-regulation are central; prior learning can help or hinder new learning and the context in which it takes place is important. It is both an individual and a social process and is assisted, or hindered, by others, notably peers and teachers. In this context, formative feedback, defined as information communicated to the student that is intended to modify the student's thinking or behaviour for the purpose of improving learning, is important in enabling students to improve their work, motivation and sense of self (Schute 2007).

Building on the WEF definition of quality, this paper identifies three important conditions for quality education. The first is that physical access to education for all should be promoted and enhanced. Not only is this a human right and a matter of equity, but from an instrumental perspective society requires the development of the broadest possible pool of talent. Physical access does not guarantee quality education, but it is a precondition for it. Secondly, physical access must extend beyond primary to secondary and higher education. Thirdly, physical access to education must be accompanied by improvement in the quality of the learning experience. In addition to these three conditions, equity should also be a consideration.

Curriculum, in the context of this article, is not limited to textbooks alone. It includes what people are expected to learn, how and how much they learn, how learning is measured, what students bring to learning, how the school day is organised, what occurs between lessons and during breaks, and what takes place outside the school.

As UNESCO's 2005 Global Monitoring Report (GMR), *The Quality Imperative*, shows, the starting point for good quality is to place students at the centre of the educational process. The reality is that many students leave formal schooling without basic

minimum skills. In South Africa, for example, according to international assessment tests, approximately 65% of school leavers are functionally illiterate. According to the TIMSS 2003 study (quoted in Hanushek & Wößmann 2007), only 29% of South African Grade 8 students were able to answer a basic subtraction question correctly; random guessing would have yielded 25% correct answers. The quality of education is critical to the skills with which people leave school and what they are able to do when they enter the formal or informal labour market. For the poor, quality matters even more than the number of years of schooling. The relatively wealthy have access to social and cultural capital, which gives them advantages and can compensate for poor quality schooling.

Improving quality involves six interrelated factors:

1. Creating inclusive and responsive learning environments so that schools are safe and healthy learning spaces free from discrimination
2. Ensuring effective teaching and learning. This includes ensuring instruction in the home language and the teaching of 'values', a critical curriculum component which provides a broad-based understanding of living and working as critical and active citizens (Sayed 2008). However, it is important to ask whose values are being affirmed and whose voices are being heard and whose not.
3. Effective learning resources. These are vital to quality learning. However, for many students in developing countries the reality is an acute shortage of good quality textbooks, adequate classrooms and other resources.
4. Qualified, motivated and committed teachers. As the GMR (UNESCO 2005) shows, research consistently points to teachers as the most important determinant of effective learning. However, the characteristics of good teachers and the incentives needed for them to perform effectively are less clear.
5. Robust systems to monitor and assess student performance. Such systems deepen understanding of which policies work and which do not, and of where change is most needed.
6. Improving institutional capacity. This includes accountability. The more schools are held accountable, the more effective they can be. The degree of support for schools and the types of incentive needed to ensure that they focus on and promote effective learning are also crucial. Incentives focusing on learning are generally the most effective.

In the context of this broad agenda on quality, we now turn to some specific issues of curriculum reform in sub-Saharan Africa.

Trends in curriculum reform

In this section, we relate the critical issues of quality in education, identified above, to policy and practice in various parts of Africa.

Extended primary education: Towards basic education

There is a trend in a number of countries towards locating lower secondary schooling

in the basic educational cycle. Kenya, for example, has a basic eight-year education cycle followed by a four-year secondary cycle, while in South Africa and Zambia a nine-year basic cycle is followed by three years of secondary schooling, referred to as further education. In Zambia the basic education cycle is divided into lower basic (Grades 1 to 4), middle basic (Grades 5 to 7) and upper basic (Grades 8 to 9).

Modifying the duration of the basic education cycle brings with it a number of challenges. Firstly, policymakers and other education stakeholders must choose between expanding existing learning areas for an additional two years or implementing subject disciplines at primary level. They must also decide which subjects are to stay in terms of the new curriculum aims. Secondly, the state must evaluate its capacity to provide new entrants with good quality infrastructure and updated learning materials, including textbooks and teachers' classroom materials. Thirdly, if two additional years are added to the basic education cycle, teachers will have to be (re)trained to teach subject areas or disciplines and, where necessary, relocated to make the system efficient and sustainable. Finally, change will have an effect on the timing of national assessments.

Core and optional subjects

What is to be taught in this expanding educational world? Choosing core subjects or areas that will constitute the curriculum poses a number of challenges: coherence with goals previously set; balancing the development of cognition, skills and values; realism about material constraints to implementation; and responding to the human and economic needs of local and national communities.

In order to select core curriculum subjects or areas, a distinction between 'what is basic and absolutely necessary and what is basic and desirable' (International Bureau of Education 2006: 2) must be made. What is 'absolutely necessary' involves core learning 'essential to fostering the personal and social development of the student allowing them to carry out their life projects and facilitating social inclusion' (ibid.: 2). The GMR defines core subjects as those directly contributing to literacy and numeracy (UNESCO 2005).

In Zambia core subjects and areas vary across levels in the country's current basic education cycle, with mathematics, English, environmental science and Zambian languages remaining central until upper primary level. In contrast with Zambia's language policy, in Ghana indigenous languages are not used in the curriculum and English, mathematics, citizenship education and natural science are the core subjects (Ministry of Education, Science and Sports 2007).

These instances indicate that there is no single blueprint for deciding which subjects or areas should be core or optional. However, in shaping well-rounded citizens and promoting good quality education, curricula must guarantee all students solid skills

and content in mathematics, language, environmental sciences, social sciences and life skills. Within such broad objectives defining the curriculum and with attention to the principles of relevance, accessibility and equity, educational reformers in Africa, as elsewhere, must set their own priorities.

From subjects to learning areas

A further question is how subjects should be configured within the classroom. The tension between disciplines and areas of learning is a key issue in curricular change. A discipline generally focuses on long-established bodies of knowledge such as history, chemistry or geography, whereas areas such as social studies or natural sciences break the boundaries between disciplines to explain particular phenomena. Accordingly, South Africa's new curriculum defined a learning area as a 'field of knowledge, skills and values which has unique features as well as connections with others fields of knowledge' (Department of Education 2002: 15). Eight learning areas were identified: languages, mathematics, natural sciences, technology, social sciences, arts and culture, life orientation and economic and management sciences (Department of Education 2005: 7). In Namibia six areas were defined: language, mathematics, social and natural environment, arts, games and sports, religion and values (National Institute for Education Development, Namibia, (nd); in Botswana, five: creative and performing arts, environmental sciences, cultural studies, Setswana and English (Ministry of Education and Skills Development, Republic of Botswana 2010). In all of these countries, the aim was to cross traditional limits and emphasise human rights, a healthy environment, social inclusion and social justice. Ghana's curriculum aims to integrate 'environment, governance, politics and stability and social and economic development' into social studies (Barrett et al 2007: 29), and topics such as health, agriculture and industry into integrated science in junior high school. Tanzania and Senegal are also 'moving towards an integrated and balanced approach to the science curriculum' (ibid.).

New areas of concentration

Given that the school day is finite, a further question is how to incorporate pressing new issues that seem to force themselves on the attention of educationists. Globally, there is increasing awareness of the relevance to quality education of topics such as human rights, HIV/AIDS, civics and citizenship, sustainable development, peace education and information and communications technology (ICT). However, in working towards an excellent system new areas must not overload the curriculum.

Uganda represents good practice in developing HIV/AIDS prevention programmes. In 1986 Uganda's Ministry of Education introduced such a programme as a part of a broader national policy, starting with a public campaign and the design of new cur-

ricula for primary and secondary schools to create awareness about the risks of HIV/AIDS. The programme included seminars, newsletters aimed at primary and secondary students, education programmes for teachers and information by means of radio programmes and plays (Demebele & Ndoye 2003: 148). The success of the programme rested on concurrently mobilising mass media, classes, seminars and plays towards combating the pandemic.

Designing a subject area that only addresses HIV/AIDS, environmental development, peace education or intercultural issues may be less efficient, however, than grouping these topics. Civics and citizenship education can include a wide range of topics that can contribute to consolidating the required attitudes, skills and content and can result in benefits such as helping to prevent conflict through political, peace, environmental and gender education and through addressing national identity and the pluricultural and multilingual character of many contemporary countries (Nkamba & Kanyika 1998; Barrett et al 2007).

According to the GMR, environmental education and education for sustainable development incorporate 'concerns over population and food supplies, depletion of natural resources and the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and possible solutions for such environmental concerns' (UNESCO 2005: 150). These issues are vital for countries where natural resources are envisaged as the means to achieve economic growth. Zambia, for instance, '[w]ith its abundant natural resources in the form of minerals, land, forestry, natural attractions and water ... stands a better chance of achieving her vision with proper investments in human capital development' (Ministry of Education 2008: 4).

Kenya's Programme for Training and Information for the Environment (PFIE) is an example of how environmental education can be implemented. This programme took a holistic approach,

through the official introduction of Environmental Education into school programmes, the training of teachers, production of pedagogical material for teachers and pupils, the implementation of Environmental Action Projects designed by the pedagogical teams, and the organisation of pedagogical days; a communication approach aimed at raising awareness of parents, local authorities, teachers, etc. concerning environmental issues and obtaining their participation through environmental protection initiatives; and a partnership approach by developing the links between the school, technical departments, projects and other players committed to actions to fight desertification. (Demebele 2003: 118)

According to Demebele the project led to the internalisation of an environmental approach by students and to teamwork between head and subordinate teachers. The success of the programme rested on its capacity to establish links between the classroom and external bodies.

However, including a programme devoted only to environmental education in the school timetable involves substantial costs and may marginalise other topics of equal

relevance. A module within civics and citizenship education could address this major need. In 2003 Zambia's Ministry of Education, with Irish Aid support, introduced civics and citizenship education in high schools. The programme was designed to encourage, among other things, human rights awareness, democratic capacity, employment orientation, personal health, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender equity and development of leadership (ZAMCIVIC 2008). According to ZAMCIVIC, an organisation involved in the programme from the beginning, civics and citizenship education is popular among students because it combines the personal, the local and the national. Teaching is context-based, with learning mostly 'action-oriented' and founded on students' life experiences (ZAMCIVIC 2008). Civics and citizenship education can help address and reinforce the attitudes, skills and content that countries like Zambia need, balancing economic growth goals with human development. It can also prevent the development of an overloaded curriculum. However, though countries like Costa Rica, Northern Ireland and Morocco have integrated this learning area into their national curricula, final results may not necessarily justify the expense involved in such programmes (Barrett et al 2007: 8). Table 1 lists a number of new curriculum areas in different countries.

Table 1: New areas of curricular concentration

Areas of concentration	Kenya	Botswana	South Africa	Namibia	Rwanda	Malawi
Life skills and HIV/AIDS	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peace education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Environmental education	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Citizenship and human rights education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
ICT	✓	✗	✗	✓	Under development	Secondary schools

Sources: Barret et al: 2007; MoE (Kenya) www.education.go.ke/Downloads.php (accessed 21/05/09); Farrel 2007 Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: Rwanda Country Report: www.infodev.org/en/Publication.423.html (accessed 21/05/09); Fountain 1999 *Rwanda: Peace Education* in UNICEF Working Paper: www.unicef.org/girlseducation/files/PeaceEducation.pdf (accessed 21/05/09); MoE (Botswana) 2004 Environmental Education: www.moe.gov.bw/environmental_edu/entry.html (accessed 21/05/09); OHCHR National Action Plans/Strategies for Human Rights Education: www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/education/training/national-actions-plans.htm (accessed 21/05/09); Isaacs 2007 Survey of ICT and Education in Africa: Malawi Country Report: www.infodev.org/en/Document.414.pdf (accessed 21/05/09); MESTSR-Rwanda 2003 School Curriculum Revision Plan 2003 to 2008: <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Rwanda/Rwanda%20Curriculum%20Reform%20Plan%20March%202003.pdf> (accessed 21/05/09)

ICT deals with computer literacy, an increasingly relevant issue in the modern world. Ideally, it should be integrated as far as possible with other subjects or areas of the curriculum. However, it is imperative to analyse the state's capacity to provide computers and well-trained teachers to all its students, as well as the required infra-

structure, and in many African countries this is currently not possible. ICT must enable equity, not prevent a country from achieving it.

There is also the difficult question of the relationship of vocational education to the curriculum. Vocational education can make the curriculum more relevant and prepare young people to enter the labour market and in some instances become entrepreneurs. This should reduce levels of unemployment and promote inclusion and sustainable development. However, before deciding on the vocational educational model, a number of key questions have to be considered: at what point should vocational training begin; how integrated should it be with the overall secondary curriculum; and does general secondary education have a role beyond preparing students for tertiary education (World Bank 2008: 15). Depending on the answers to these questions, policymakers must decide if secondary education is to be academic, vocational or a combination of these.

Whatever model is chosen, there is a need for well-trained teachers and sufficient materials. Experience from Ghana shows how poor equipment and inadequate resources prevented students from acquiring the practical skills required in the world of work and distracted them 'from valuable study-time that should have been devoted to the basic requirements of literacy, numeracy and writing' (Atchoarena & Delluc 2002: 230).

Pedagogies for learning

The potential for more years in school, more learning time, new configurations of learning material and new study areas to enhance good quality education depends critically on what happens inside the classroom. The 'black box' of pedagogy needs to be opened in order to understand how quality can be promoted.

There are two pedagogical approaches: the teacher-centred approach, with students in a passive role, and the child-centred approach, with students as the core of the class. Child-centred pedagogy involves active participation and interaction by students, cooperative learning and open-ended instruction (UNESCO 2005). A balanced and structured pedagogy, a 'combination of direct instruction, guided practice and independent learning', which avoids extremes, is widely considered a good method for learning 'reading, mathematics, grammar, mother tongue, sciences, history and, to some extent, foreign languages' (UNESCO 2005: 153).

Insofar as 'pedagogical renewal and teacher development are two sides of the same coin' (Dembele & Lefoka 2007: 531), adopting this model of structured pedagogy implies teacher education and training programmes and the need to align teacher trainers and instructional materials with the new pedagogy. It also demands 'changes in the practices of people, who run, supervise and support schools, namely school heads, pedagogical advisors and school inspectors' (Dembele & Lefoka 2007: 534).

Because it requires more teacher attention to individual students, it calls for smaller class sizes, relevant and sufficient teaching and learning materials and physically adequate classrooms ready for all activities appropriate to this pedagogy. Additional issues that risk the success of such pedagogical reform are the fact that education stakeholders are likely to interpret structured pedagogy in different ways and the wide gap between theory and practice in teachers' pedagogical preferences and practices (Dembele & Lefoka 2007).

The GMR (UNESCO 2005) recommends structured pedagogy as a good option in contexts where lack of resources, high student-teacher ratios and underqualified teachers prevent schools from implementing alternative methods of teaching and learning. Success rests on the capacity of the implementing authorities to establish system coherence between all education stakeholders. For instance, in order to achieve access, equity, quality and democratic participation, in 1990 Namibia shifted from a content-based to a student-centred approach. As the *National Report on the Development of Education in Namibia* states, it was realised that teacher education, and the recognition of teachers as active agents of change, would have to play a central role in the reform (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture 2004). This approach obliged Namibia to begin a staff development programme for teacher educators, administrators and support teachers. This case indicates that in adopting any pedagogical approach a clear link between schools and the teacher-training curriculum is important.

The question of language of instruction is vital to pedagogy. Today, there is consensus that 'children learn better in the medium of their mother tongue' (McNab & Stoye 1999: 143; see annexure 1). Mother-tongue instruction during the first years of primary school gives all children the same opportunity to build knowledge. In 1993 a comparison of reading levels in Malawi and Zambia showed that pupils in Malawi, where Chichewa was the language of instruction from Grades 1 to 4, obtained higher results than Zambian children in the same grades taught in English (Linehan 2004: 3). In order to improve reading and writing skills, in 1999 Zambia implemented the Primary Reading Programme, with external assistance from the British Department for International Development (DFID). This programme uses the seven major Zambian indigenous languages as languages of instruction in Grade 1 and introduces literacy in English in the second primary year, using the *Step into English* programme. The pedagogical strategy is to transfer literacy skills from the seven languages to English (Linehan 2004: 7).

However, from a planning point of view it has to be recognised that if mother tongue is given priority in the early grades 'the arrangements for teacher training and teacher appointment/transfer, educational materials development, and the production of educational materials are likely to be more complex and expensive' (McNab & Stoye 1999: 143).

National, regional and international moves towards assessment for learning

Unless measurement of some kind occurs, it is impossible to know whether teaching has been successful and whether the curriculum is achieving its aims. Assessment is fundamental to teaching and learning. In the context of this paper it has two dimensions. Firstly, it is a means to diagnose, monitor and guarantee the quality of education delivered and, secondly, it is an instrument leading to reforms within the educational system (Marsh 2009). Assessment can be defined as an instrument 'to describe the activities undertaken by a teacher to obtain information about the knowledge, skills and attitudes of students' (Marsh 2009: 71) in relation to curriculum goals. Assuming that sooner or later formative assessment is summative (Taras 2005; Marsh 2009), it can be described as a means of monitoring students' performance against objectives, as an instrument to inform the next steps in teaching, and as a tool for giving feedback to students about their learning (Marsh 2009). Good assessment must take into account, value and respect the differences between students and understand how these affect education results (Akyeampong & Murphy 1997).

Three issues surrounding national assessments are significant: how the assessment system is aligned to the national curriculum and standards; when and how often it should take place; and how data is used to support improvements in the education system. National assessment must assess student learning against national standards. According to the GMR, between 2000 and 2006 around half of the world's countries conducted this type of assessment (UNESCO 2009: 17). Botswana, the Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Seychelles, South Africa and Zambia conduct assessments of student learning 'against nationally defined standards in selected school subjects' (UNESCO 2006: 7). The use of national assessments is gaining in importance in sub-Saharan Africa both as a means of measuring, monitoring and evaluating education quality, and as providing criteria for access to higher education (Barrett et al 2007: 30).

Countries can assess at different stages: at the micro-level in classrooms, at national level and at regional and international levels, with the last three normally being used to inform policymaking and to compare results between countries (see Table 2). For instance, Kenya used the regional assessment results of the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) to set standards for minimum classroom facilities (UNESCO 2009: 17). In Senegal data from the *Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN* (PASEC) assessment proved that grade repetition did not lead to major student learning benefits, resulting in the prohibition of repetition for some primary grades (UNESCO 2009: 17).

Implementing sustainable, effective national education assessment systems requires significant resources, as well as relevant high-level technical expertise. Many countries in Africa, as well as other developing areas, struggle to obtain valid and reliable data on a regular basis. This issue can be addressed through participation in regional

and international studies. The greater challenge, however, is the effective use of information emanating from national, regional and international studies. To this end a number of countries have begun the process of reviewing and restructuring their national education assessment systems. For example, with the support of the World Bank, the Zambian Examinations Council has recently embarked on a process to enhance capacity and skills within the country as well as to improve current systems and structures with the aim of (i) improving the national examinations system, (ii) developing national standards aligned to the national curriculum against which to measure and report on student performance, and (iii) improving the technical capacity of staff to analyse and report assessment data to support decision-making within the Ministry of Education (World Bank 2010). Similar efforts have been undertaken in Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique and South Africa.

Table 2: Range of assessments conducted within selected countries

Country	Continuous assessment	National assessment	Regional assessment	International assessment
Botswana	✓	✓	✓ (SACMEQ)	✓ (TIMSS)
Ghana	✓	✓	✓ (WAEC)	✓ (TIMSS)
Kenya	?	✓	✓ (SACMEQ)	✗
Malawi	✓	✓	✓ (SACMEQ)	✗
Nigeria	✓	✓	✓ (WAEC)	✗
South Africa	✓	✓	✓ (SACMEQ)	✓ (PIRLS)

Sources: Botswana Curriculum Development and Evaluation: www.moe.gov.bw/cde/curriculum_programmes/curriculum_framework.html (accessed 20/05/09); UNESCO (2008) EFA Global Monitoring Report *Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; DoE: RSA National Policy on Assessment and Qualification for Schools in the General Education and Training Band; National Report of Malawi by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, October 2008, www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/malawi_NR08.pdf (accessed 20/05/09); Abiodun Faleye, B. (2003) Continuous Assessment Practices in Osun State (Nigeria) Secondary Schools: From Policy to Practice. Proceedings of the Twelfth International Conference on Learning in the Faculty of Education, 11-14 July 2005, Granada, Spain: <http://105.cgpublisher.com/proposals/651/index.html> (accessed 20/05/09); TIMSS 2007 Countries Participating: <http://timss.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/countries.html> (accessed 20/05/09); West African Examinations Council 2009: www.cedol.org/cgi-bin/items.cgi?_item=static&_article=200611201747123301 (accessed 20/05/09); PIRLS 2009: <http://timss.bc.edu/pirls2006/countries.html> (accessed 20/05/09)

Role of teachers

The lynchpins of any educational system are its teachers, and none of the curricular or pedagogical initiatives and proposals discussed here can proceed without them. Without a sufficient number of well-trained and motivated teachers, reform cannot be implemented effectively. Williams (2008) reports that in the United States a student with a high-performing teacher starting in the 50th percentile of achievement at age 8 will end up in the 90th three years later. With a low-performing teacher for three consecutive years he or she will end up in the 37th percentile. This suggests that

over only three years there is a 53-point difference between outcomes for students taught by the most and least effective teachers. Evidence suggests that this is more the case for some students than others. Hammer and Pehansen (cited in Williams 2009) examined student progress in relation to teacher skills, and found that if the teacher was able to provide high levels of instructional support then no achievement gaps arose. If the teacher was average at providing such support, there still was no achievement gap. However, if the teacher was below average in providing instructional support, significant achievement gaps appeared. In short, this suggests that teacher quality makes a critical difference. This is why teacher professional development is central to education reform.

In sub-Saharan Africa the challenges of teacher quality and numbers are particularly significant. In 2006 the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) reported that sub-Saharan countries needed to increase teacher output several-fold, yet at current rates of delivery none of them produces enough teachers to meet projected demand. It is estimated that to achieve education for all (EFA) by 2015, 3.8 million additional teachers would be required, although obviously the need will differ between and within countries (UNESCO 2009). Clearly, the supply challenge has to be addressed by training and supporting teachers and it is encouraging to note that in recent years some countries have increased teacher trainee enrolments.

Conclusion

Drawing on educational literature and experience from various parts of Africa this article has argued for the centrality of educational quality to educational policy-making and practice. Curriculum reform must be measured against its contribution to the development of educational quality. These are not theoretical issues, but relate closely to other pressing matters, such as health and social cohesion.

The article has examined a number of instances of curriculum reform. The extension of the number of years of education in many African countries presents its own challenges, persistently raising the question of what is to be taught and how this is to be done. The attempt must be made to open the under-examined 'black box' of pedagogy and to see what actually happens inside. Assessment plays an important role in this and, crucially, without a well-prepared, well-resourced and motivated teaching force, attempts at curriculum reform cannot succeed.

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Notes on the authors

Anil Kanjee is a Professor of Educational Studies and the co-director of the Graduate Programme for Improving Education Quality at Tshwane University of Technology. He also heads the Education Quality and Access for Learning Network (EQUAL Network), which was established to support national ministries in implementing sustainable systems and developing relevant capacity at the different levels of the education system to improve learning. Previously, Kanjee was head of the Centre for Education Quality Improvement at the Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa.

Yusuf Sayed is a Reader in International Education at the University of Sussex. Yusuf is an education policy specialist with a career in international education and development research. He was previously senior policy analyst for the EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO), team leader for Education and Skills (Department for International Development UK) and head of the Department of Comparative Education at the University of the Western Cape. His research focuses on education policy formulation and implementation as it relates to concerns of equity, social justice and transformation, and he is currently investigating the effects of fee charging in education and education quality as it relates to issues of equity, rights and justice.

Diana Rodríguez is advisor to the Early Childhood Department at the National Ministry of Education in Colombia. She works with a team that focuses on developing good-quality protection, nutrition and education programmes for children under the age of five from marginalised and vulnerable populations. Diana has done research on violence and racism in classroom settings. She is currently working on the impact of armed conflict on refugee populations.

Address for correspondence

kanjeea@tut.ac.za

Initial teacher education in selected Southern and East African countries: Common issues and ongoing challenges

Chiwimbiso Kwenda and Maureen Robinson

Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Abstract

This article begins by outlining the common issues raised in a number of research reports on initial teacher education in developing countries. Two overarching themes are identified, namely (i) attracting high quality recruits to the profession and retaining them and (ii) implementing supportive policies and practices for ongoing teacher learning. A comparative description is then provided of initial teacher education in four selected Southern and East African countries, namely Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya and South Africa. A number of the issues emanating from these country descriptions are outlined and discussed, namely entry requirements and duration of primary-school teacher education, status of the teaching profession, community and identity, language of instruction in teacher education and complexity of the educational policy framework. The article concludes by calling for an identification of strategic pressure points to improve the link between increasing the number of teachers and enhancing the quality of teaching.

Keywords: quality education, teacher education, context, comparative education, primary schooling

Introduction

Interest in the contemporary state of education in general and teacher education in particular within the developing world has characterised the reports of global organisations such as UNESCO (see UNESCO 2004; Education for All (EFA) 2005; EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 and 2008). Since the 1990s the EFA movement has spearheaded the global mobilisation of various stakeholders to advance demands for

Kwenda, C and Robinson, M. (2010) Initial teacher education in selected Southern and East African countries: Common issues and ongoing challenges. *Southern African Review of Education*, 16(1): 97-113.

increased provision of schooling, especially in poor countries (Unterhalter 2007). These efforts have seen the rapid expansion of access to primary schooling in most of the sub-Saharan African countries, with a concomitant concern for the provision of teacher education in the region.

Eight developmental goals, aimed at combating extreme poverty across the world by 2015, were framed within the Millennium Declaration issued in 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Summit in New York (Colclough 2008). In response to this, many countries in sub-Saharan Africa committed themselves to achieving universal primary education by 2015 (Department for International Development 2008). This commitment called for a rethink of how the provision of primary education could be rapidly expanded while improving its quality at the same time. In this scenario the spotlight fell on teacher education and how it could cater for this increased demand for both quantity and quality in primary education (Lewin & Stuart 2003).

The concern for the quality of teacher provision has not been confined only to African countries. Moon (2008), in a report on the supply, retention, preparation and career-long professional development of teachers in E-9 countries, argued that teachers are the driving force behind all forms of educational provision and are central to the challenge of achieving 'Education for All' and ensuring high standards of pupil achievement. In respect of sub-Saharan Africa, Moon pointed out that the 2005 Commission of Africa report indicated that the push to achieve 'Education for All' would not succeed without substantial investment in teachers.

Drawing on this global interest in teacher education as a strategy for national development, this article begins with a summary of the key challenges for initial teacher education as identified in comparative reports on education in developing countries. This is followed by brief profiles of four Southern and East African countries (Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa), including their systems of teacher education. The article locates teacher education in these countries within the key challenges identified in the comparative reports, thereby illustrating how selected African countries are addressing the identified challenges in their particular contexts.

Key challenges for teacher education

The challenges for initial teacher education have been identified in various research studies of developing countries. Three such reports are cited here: the Multi-Site Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER) published in 2003, a UNESCO Working Paper prepared in 2007 (Moon 2007), and a series of reports by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for the Monitoring of Educational Quality (SACMEQ) study, based on research conducted between 1999 and 2002. Each of these is briefly explained and the issues facing teacher education are summarised.

The MUSTER study

The MUSTER study was an investigation into initial teacher education practice,

performance and policy in five countries. Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi and South Africa were the four participating African countries. Trinidad and Tobago was the fifth country.

The MUSTER synthesis report (Lewin & Stuart 2003) drew attention to the following challenges confronting teacher education in the participating countries:

- The demand for teachers is increasing at a time when teacher recruitment is falling
- Teacher education policy is fragmented or non-existent
- There are inconsistencies and inadequacies in dealing with teacher deployment, teacher supply and demand, and teacher quality
- Teacher education institutions need to collaborate more with schools in initial and continuing teacher education
- Colleges are losing touch with their graduate 'newly qualified teachers' (NQTs) because the institutions are not involved in their posting or deployment
- The status of teaching as a profession is declining, making it difficult to attract good quality students

The UNESCO Working Paper

In 2006 UNESCO's Section for Teacher Education commissioned research into policies and practices aimed at attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers. Issues of supply and retention, teacher education reform and innovations in pre-service and continuing professional development were outlined for countries across the globe, including those in sub-Saharan Africa (Moon 2007).

The report identified the following concerns pertaining to initial teacher education, many of which overlap with those raised in the MUSTER report:

- The loss of status and dignity of contemporary teachers in developing countries
- Poor career prospects, low salaries and inconvenient or unfair deployment practices
- Increasing reliance on para-professionals, which further erodes the integrity and the attractiveness of teaching as a profession
- Increasing public disquiet about teacher quality, particularly in rural areas
- The paradox of the declining quality and status of teachers on the one hand and the rising expectations of the community for quality education on the other
- Increasing teacher migration to the developed world, which results in the loss of many good teachers
- The absence of teachers' voice in the decisions affecting them as professionals and citizens

The SACMEQ reports

The SACMEQ reports originated with the Jomtien Declaration of 1990, which advo-

cated 'Education for All'. The subsequent Dakar Conference in 2000 reaffirmed this vision and expanded it to include a focus on the *quality* of this universal education. Fifteen Southern and East African countries participated in a major research project, focusing on the quality of education in the subregion, which was conducted in two phases between 1995 and 2004 (Murimba 2005). The research explored why young people in the southern African subregion appeared not to be learning basic skills at school in general, and why they seemed to achieve low levels of literacy and numeracy in particular. On completion of the project the ministries of education in each of the 15 countries prepared a country report which gave an extensive account of the state of pupils, teachers, school conditions and the quality of learning and teaching within classrooms in each country. Various indicators were used to measure educational quality, including the testing of mathematics and English.

The following issues were identified in the synthesis of the policy recommendations (Murimba 2005):

- The poor remuneration of teachers in the region lowered teacher morale and caused them to put in little effort during official teaching and learning time so that they could entice pupils to attend private tuition, for which the teacher was paid
- There was inadequate interaction and collaboration between schools and communities and clarification was lacking on the respective and complementary roles of the parents and teachers. The need for massive campaigns of community social mobilisation was emphasised
- Community incentives to motivate teachers and to retain good teachers in schools were recommended in order to raise the status of teachers
- There was a need to create forums for the sharing and promotion of good practices among professionals at different levels of the education system
- There was a need to review and reform flawed and deficient educational policies
- There was a need to review the procedures used for the allocation and deployment of material and human resources to schools
- All teachers needed to attain certain minimum qualifications and attend a given minimum number of continuous in-service education and training (INSET), as the existing training did not appear to be addressing teachers' professional growth needs
- The scarcity of teachers with the right qualifications, of both sexes and of the right mix of ages needed to be addressed

The issues from these reports indicate a number of common challenges for initial teacher education in developing countries. If one clusters these challenges, two overarching themes can be identified, namely (i) attracting high quality recruits to the profession and retaining them and (ii) supportive policies and practices for ongoing teacher learning. These themes will be considered again later in the discussion in relation to selected countries.

Selected country descriptions

This section of the article provides a closer focus on teacher education in four countries in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Botswana, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The first three countries are former British colonies or protectorates (so they have similar educational histories and legacies), are low to medium income and have similar economic environments and challenges. These countries were selected for this study because it was found that pupils in Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania had performed better in the mathematics and English tests administered by the SACMEQ between 1999 and 2002 than their South African counterparts, despite the more limited economic and educational resources of these countries. While all four countries participated in the SACMEQ research, only South Africa was part of the MUSTER project.

Botswana profile

A British protectorate from 1885, Bechuanaland, as the territory was then called, became an independent republic in 1966, changing its name to Botswana. Setswana is the national language and English the official language, although the country has 28 local languages (Gordon 2005). Botswana is an upper-middle-income country (UNESCO 2004) with a GDP in 2000 of US \$3 225 per capita and a population of 1,64 million (Botswana Central Statistics Office 2001). The population density is 2,2 persons per square kilometre, with most people living in the eastern and south-eastern regions. The country has a school life expectancy rate of 12 years and an illiteracy rate of 22,8% (UNESCO 2004; Botswana official website). The overall philosophy of education is enshrined in the concept of *kagisamo* (social harmony), which is based on the national principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity (UNESCO 2004). The Revised National Policy on Education (1994) states that the new goal for education is to prepare Botswana for the transition from a traditionally agro-based economy to a modern industrial one that can compete globally (UNESCO 2004). Among the main objectives for education is the achievement of efficiency in providing and developing education. The training and education of effective and professional primary school cadres is seen to be a central feature in the process of attaining this goal. Great emphasis is therefore placed on improving the standard of pre-service and in-service teacher training, the working conditions of teachers, curriculum methods and the delivery of the curriculum. In other words, a learner-centred approach using active learning methodologies, continuous evaluation and continuous assessment has been adopted (UNESCO 2004).

Teacher education: There are four primary-teacher training colleges across the country. The college system can be described as a largely one-phased concurrent model of teacher education, in which less than half of the training period is spent in schools.

However, the system has been moving closer to becoming an integrated one, as the period spent in schools has gradually been increasing after the findings of the 1993 Commission on Education (Nleya 1999), which indicated that there was a need to redefine and increase the role of schools in the process of teacher education.

Minimum entry requirements for primary teaching are the five-year Botswana general Certificate of Secondary Education (third-class or grade D pass) or the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate (Ordinary Level) (UNESCO 2004). However, in 2002 there were still many teachers with entry qualifications below this minimum (8,2% of all primary teachers had primary education, 47,4% had junior secondary education, 30,1% had senior secondary credentials, 8,4% had an A level and 5,8% had a tertiary academic qualification) (Keitheile & Mokubung 2005). There is also a three-year diploma programme catering for teachers who still hold the old Primary Teacher Certificate, which offered only 45 school days of teaching practice and was obtained by passing Teaching Practice, each foundation subject and an average of the curriculum studies (Nleya 1999).

More emphasis is now being placed on school-based teacher training, in terms of both longer periods of teaching practice during pre-service training and more comprehensive and organised professional development and mentoring schemes in the schools for qualified teachers. Several of the departments and divisions making up Botswana's Ministry of Education (the Department of Primary Education, the Department of Teacher Training and Development, the Department of Teaching Service Management and the Examination, Research and Testing Division) collaborate in the professional development of pre-service and in-service teachers. In 2002 there were twelve strategically located education resource centres for assisting teachers with professional, managerial and pedagogical issues (Keitheile & Mokubung 2005).

Kenya profile

Kenya is classified as a low-income country (UNESCO 2004) with a GDP in 2002 of US \$342 per capita. It had an illiteracy rate of 17,6% in 2002. School retention rate is low and of those beginning primary schooling only 42% proceed to secondary schools, where the attendance rate averages only 12% (UNICEF 2004). The population in 1999 was 33.9 million (Kenya Bureau of Statistics 1999), with 75% of the population living in a belt extending from Nairobi to the north-west, towards the Ugandan border. This belt makes up only 10% of Kenya's total land area, but the northern regions of the country are arid and so sparsely populated. About three million people resided in Nairobi in 2001. Over half of the population of Kenya live below the poverty line (Kenya Bureau of Statistics 1999).

As in Botswana, the overall philosophy of education focuses on national unity, political equality, human dignity, social justice, freedom and equal opportunity. Education is also seen as being the vehicle for promoting and preserving the cultural heritage of

Kenya (UNESCO 2004). Kenya has adopted a largely functionalist approach to education that emphasises individual and national development through learning outcomes. Among the major goals of Kenyan education is reducing the number of untrained teachers, improving relevance and quality, strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, developing efficient school management and conducting research and development in the educational sector (UNESCO 2004).

Teacher education: In 2000 98,3 % of Kenya's primary school teachers had been trained (Onsumu, Nzomo & Obiero 2005) and by 2003 all teachers had been trained according to national standards (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007). The minimum entry requirement for college is the Certificate of Secondary Education with a grade-C pass. Training takes two years and is largely college-based, making the model a one-phased concurrent one. Students receive training in all 13 primary school subjects. In 2002 there were 22 public colleges and 10 private colleges. Curriculum and examinations are centrally produced (Galabawa 2003). Sixteen colleges are located in the Rift Valley Province. The Eastern Province has five colleges, while the Nyanza Province along the Lake Victoria coast, the Central and the Coast (east coast) Provinces have three each. There is one college each in the Western and North-Eastern Provinces.

As is the case with Botswana, there is a shift from college-based training towards school-based training. The role of teacher training colleges in school-based teacher education remains limited to occasional teaching practice supervisions. Despite this, there are close links and collaboration between the colleges and the schools, as Galabawa (2003: 2) has noted:

The teacher training system seems to be in harmony with the primary school system. This is meant to create national unity. The selection of entrants into teacher training schools is nationally co-ordinated to ensure both gender and regional equity and access profiles. The placement of teachers is also done under pressure to place teachers on the basis of the regions of origin of the placed teachers.

Teacher education in Kenya was reorganised after the 1996-1997 policy framework, a response to strong criticisms that had been levelled against primary education, one of which was the charge that the curriculum was elitist and irrelevant and promoted rote learning (UNESCO 2004). Primary teacher education now focuses more on child-centred pedagogies and on the integration of theory and practice, an approach advocated by many modern educational researchers (see George, Worrell & Rampersad 2002; Dladla & Moon 2002; Samuel 2002; Stuart 2002; Stuart & Lewin 2002a).

There was, in 2002, no official policy on the in-service training requirements for teachers. However, the In-service Teacher Training Unit (INSET) within the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology facilitates and coordinates in-service training and teacher professional development.

Tanzania profile

As in Kenya, Kiswahili is the national language in Tanzania, while English is the official language. There are, however, 127 local languages (Gordon 2005; Kiango 2005). Politically, the country has had a more complicated past than Kenya, with the mainland having been a German protectorate from 1891, during which time the island of Zanzibar was a British protectorate. In 1920 the League of Nations placed the north-west part of mainland German East Africa under British control and it became known as Tanganyika. Tanganyika gained independence in 1961 and Zanzibar two years later. The two territories later united in 1964 to form the new state of Tanzania (Tanzania official website nd). Tanzania is a low-income country with a school life expectancy of only five years and an illiteracy rate of 25% (UNESCO 2004). The primary school net enrolment/attendance rate averaged 73% between 2000 and 2004 (UNICEF 2004). The country's GDP in 2002 was US \$210 per capita. The population is about 34.4 million. Most people live in the Lake Victoria region but the urban areas also have dense populations (Tanzania Central Statistical Office 2002).

The basic philosophy of education is that it aims to promote the total development and personality enhancement of all Tanzanians. One of the main objectives of the educational system is to promote self-confidence and an inquiring mind, understanding and respect for human dignity and human rights, and willingness to work hard for self-advancement and educational improvement (UNESCO 2004).

Teacher education: Teacher training in Tanzania takes place in 34 public colleges and 14 private colleges. Eleven are found in the central regions of the country. The northern and north-eastern regions share ten colleges between them, while the eastern and south-eastern regions together have nine colleges. The east coast region has seven. The north-western region boasts three colleges, as do the western and south-western regions, and there are two colleges in the southern region.

In 1994 the primary education sector was condemned for being retrogressive and unable to meet the needs of a modern society (UNESCO 2004). Improving teacher education was adopted as being the best way to enhance quality in the system. In order to build a quality teaching force all primary-teacher training colleges adopted the 2.5.2 model, in which students spend the first two terms in college, the next five in schools, and the last two terms in college again. This gave the programme an integrated element with an emphasis on teaching field experience and on-the-job training. Tanzania relied mostly on distance-education programmes for teachers in the 1990s (Chale 1993), after which these programmes largely gave way to a residential, two-year, less-integrated model. However, the philosophy behind teacher education in Tanzania still emphasises good teacher character, competent teaching practice and a balance between academic and pedagogic achievement. Continuous assessment for teaching aptitude, commitment by student teachers to their schools

and active social involvement in the activities of their villages are all-important elements of the Tanzanian pre-service teacher education programme.

Another important element of the system is the institutionalised involvement of local communities in the selection, recruitment and assessment of trainees through village councils, experienced schoolteachers, local tutors in teacher centres, and district and regional education officers. The District-Based Support to Education (DBSP) runs the teacher centres, which are supplemented by the Ward-Based Education Management (WABEM) initiative's education cluster centres (ECCs). These institutions are part of the teacher-training structure (Mrutu, Ponera & Nkumbi 2005). Teachers in Tanzania are arguably more integrated into the communities in which they live, have a better sense of ownership of their practice and enjoy more community respect than their counterparts in other African countries.

The minimum entry requirements for primary teaching are five passes in the national Form 4 examination. However, in 2002 there were still many teachers with diverse qualifications. Teacher centres and cluster centres were initiated largely for the in-service training of those holding qualifications below the minimum. As in Kenya, by 2003 all teachers had been trained according to national standards (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007).

South Africa profile

South Africa has a population of nearly 48 million, of which just more than 50% is urbanised and about 42% are under 19 years of age (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2008). Between 1948 and the early 1990s the apartheid system entrenched racially-based inequalities with regard to educational provision, resourcing, access and quality (Taylor, Fleisch & Schindler 2008). In 1994 the first democratic government was elected and a Constitution that upheld the dignity of all the people of the country was adopted. Since then, education reform has been high on the country's agenda. Access to education has grown substantially and the country has virtually achieved universal primary education. Adult literacy grew from 64% in 1996 to almost 74% in 2007 (Taylor et al 2008). A new outcomes-based school curriculum was introduced, with new subject areas being offered and learner-centred teaching and critical thinking being encouraged.

Despite these interventions, social inequalities have proven difficult to eradicate and poverty and unemployment remain high, particularly on urban fringes and in rural areas. The country also continues to perform poorly on international tests of educational achievement compared to many of its poorer neighbours and very poorly compared to other developing countries (Taylor et al 2008).

Teacher education: Prior to the 1990s there were 105 colleges training primary-school

teachers (Sayed 2002). These were racially based and scattered throughout the country, with many of them in the former 'homelands', serving a predominantly rural Black population. There were wide variations from institution to institution in terms of programmes offered, structure of courses, college culture and ethos and the general organisation of teacher preparation. Colleges were characterised by a bias towards social sciences and the humanities, at the expense of the science, mathematics and English disciplines (Sayed 2002; Samuel 2002).

The landscape of teacher education has changed fundamentally since the pre-1994 era. Besides the breakdown of racial barriers, there have been changes to institutional location, the qualifications framework and curriculum requirements (Robinson & Christie 2008). Prior to 2002 primary-school teachers received three years of college-based training, but all prospective teachers now study a four-year degree at a university. These are largely located in urban areas, with 13 of the 23 universities offering teacher education for the first phase of primary schooling. Entry to universities is after five years of high school, and requires a university entrance pass. No national curriculum for teacher education exists and universities are free to design their own curricula within a broad set of policy guidelines. All teacher preparation programmes include a teaching practice component; the structure and duration varies across institutions.

While the move to educate primary-school teachers in universities has helped to unify and rationalise the teacher education programmes offered within the country (Johnson, Hodges & Monk 2000; Moon & Buckler 2006) and to raise the academic standard of teacher preparation there are those who argue that this has diminished the collaboration that characterises the relationships between colleges and schools in countries such as Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania (Mulkeen et al 2007; Sayed 2002; Stuart & Lewin 2002b).

Since about 2003, amidst concerns about falling numbers of recruits into teaching and the impact of teacher migration, the country has been paying particular attention to the recruitment and retention of a high-quality teaching workforce. Generous study bursaries have aimed to attract academically strong school leavers to teaching and campaigns have been launched to enhance teacher status. In an attempt to improve the working conditions and the retention of good teachers, a new career structure is being explored, as well as a national system to encourage ongoing professional learning.

Discussion of themes

The review of key challenges for teacher education in developing countries identified two overarching and interlinking themes with regard to enhancing the quantity and quality of teachers. This section illustrates and discusses ways in which the four countries in this study are addressing these themes in their particular contexts.

Attracting high-quality recruits to the profession and retaining them

Entry requirements and duration of primary teacher education: Table 1 summarises the official minimum entry college requirements in the four countries for primary teachers in 2002.

Table 1: Official minimum primary teachers' college entry requirements (2002)

Country	Official primary teachers' college entry requirement
Botswana	Senior five-year Secondary School Certificate with third-class or grade D pass
Kenya	Four-year Secondary School Certificate with grade C pass
Tanzania	Passing five subjects in the national Form 4 examination
South Africa	Five-year secondary school matriculation certificate, usually with university exemption

Source: Compiled from Onsumu et al (2005), Moloi & Strauss (2005), Mrutu et al (2005) and Keitheile & Mokubung (2005)

South Africa's current requirement of a university entrance matriculation certificate is generally higher than the four years of secondary education required in Kenya and Tanzania. So too is Botswana's requirement of a five-year senior secondary school qualification, which is awarded after completion of three years of junior secondary and two years of senior secondary education (Botswana Ministry of Education). This raises the question of whether entry qualifications directly influence the quality of teacher preparation. It is important, however, to point out that these requirements have not always been met. For example, in Botswana 47,4% of the practising teachers in 2002 had entered training with only a junior secondary school qualification (Keitheile & Mokubung 2005). As the MUSTER, UNESCO and SACMEQ reports have all indicated it is becoming increasingly difficult for countries in the region to attract young people with good school-leaving grades. The variations in the actual academic qualifications of serving and trainee teachers in these countries are reflected in variations in the models of teacher training, since trainees with lower entry academic levels may be required to undergo longer periods of training, e.g. in Tanzania, as Table 2 overleaf shows.

The average duration of teacher training in the SACMEQ study was 2,2 years in Botswana, 2,1 years in Kenya, 2,2 years in Tanzania and 3,2 years in South Africa. These figures reveal that the average training period for teachers is longer in South Africa than in the other case-study countries. This raises the question of why pupils in South Africa did not do well in the SACMEQ tests, given that they were taught by teachers who had received a longer period of preparation. Initial teacher preparation, given this scenario, cannot be considered in isolation from the broader context of in-service training and continuing teacher professional support.

Table 2: Duration of teacher education

Country	Duration of initial teacher education
Botswana	Three years' college-based training
Kenya	Two years' college-based training
Tanzania	Two years' college-based training for O-level holders Four years' college-based training for primary school qualification holders
South Africa	Previously, a three-year college diploma for primary teachers Since 2002, a four-year university degree or degree/diploma combination

Sources: Mrutu et al (2005), Chale (1993), Keitheile & Mokubung (2005), Onsumu et al (2005)

Status of the teaching profession: The lack of respect shown to teachers by the community and the pupils has been found to be a significant reason for teacher attrition (Mulkeen et al 2007). Although materially less well-endowed than their South African counterparts, Tanzanian teachers in particular, but also Kenyan and Botswana teachers, appear to be more integrated into the communities they serve. As was indicated in an earlier section, one of the SACMEQ policy recommendations is for powerful collaborative forums to be established, linking communities and schools more meaningfully and productively, in order to foster better understandings between schools and their communities. The idea of community incentives to raise the morale and the dignity and status of teachers is also suggested in the MUSTER and UNESCO reports, both of which emphasise the importance of finding ways of raising teachers' standing at work and in society, other than increasing their salaries, which has proved to be difficult in situations of limited resources.

Community and identity: Coupled with the localised location of teacher training colleges, in Kenya and Tanzania it is official policy to deploy newly qualified teachers, as far as possible, to their home regions where they speak the local language, share in the local culture and identify with the local community. This way, the teachers enjoy more support and respect from the community than in systems in which teachers apply directly to schools of their choice, as in South Africa.

A report on education in South African rural communities notes that many communities experience a deep rift between teachers and the guardians of children in their care. According to this report, criticisms of teachers encompass issues relating to their lack of qualifications, subject knowledge, commitment and sense of vocation (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2004). In contrast, in Tanzania the local communities are involved in the teacher-training process, as was discussed earlier in this article.

This sense of 'community' suggests the existence of a teacher education rhetoric grounded in local realities, contexts and needs (Croft 2002), something which is evident in Tanzania particularly. Mulkeen et al (2007) note the benefits of decentral-

ising the teacher-hiring process to local level, in that teachers are more likely to be in touch with the needs of schools. On the other hand, however, they caution that local systems may also be susceptible to undue local influence and that people from rural backgrounds may in fact become teachers so that they can move away from their roots.

Supportive policies and practices for ongoing teacher learning

Language of instruction in teacher education: The issue of medium of instruction is a very complex one in post-colonial Africa with its multitude of indigenous languages. In Botswana, according to policy, Setswana is supposed to be used as a language of instruction in initial teacher preparation. However, as Molosiwa (2005) observes, this is not happening in any meaningful way on the ground. South Africa has eleven official languages but universities mostly teach through the medium of English or Afrikaans. Local indigenous languages are seldom, if ever, used as a language of instruction in teacher education programmes (Makalela 2005). In Kenya and Tanzania Kiswahili is recognised and employed as an instructional language in the initial preparation of teachers, with English as a co-instructional language (Brock-Utne 2005). It would certainly be worth exploring whether this explains the generally good acquisition of mathematical and English concepts and skills by the primary pupils in these countries.

Complexity versus simplicity in the educational policy framework: An examination of the systems of teacher education and continuing professional development in Botswana, Kenya and Tanzania reveals one similarity: all three systems are streamlined, with centralised policymaking and national teacher education curricula. Policy implementation is managed by a clear hierarchy of related institutions whose roles are complementary and not contradictory or duplicated. The policy frameworks for teacher education in each of these countries provide for not more than five implementing institutions or departments in the areas of teacher education, teacher professional practice and conduct, teacher recruitment and deployment, and teacher conditions of service (UNESCO 2004).

The streamlined organisation of the teacher education sectors in the three countries mentioned above contrasts with the South African system, which is characterised by contradictions in teacher education policy and is complex and bureaucratic (Sayed 2002). This complexity extends all the way down to the level of individual teachers in the form of the variety of roles they are expected to fulfil, including those of offering pastoral care and being scholars and researchers. The problem with this complexity might be that it expects too much of the system and of the teacher. In its review of South African national policies, the OECD comments that the many initiatives to improve education in the country tend to be somewhat compartmentalised. It recom-

mends a more joined-up integrated policy approach with greater synergy between different initiatives (OECD 2008).

Conclusion

This article has described the characteristics of teacher education for primary schools in four selected countries in Southern and East Africa and has highlighted some pertinent factors pertaining to expanding the quality and quantity of teacher education preparation. Mulkeen et al (2007) recommend that research move beyond descriptions of problems to formulating and testing alternative solutions and that evidence be collected on the effectiveness of various approaches. Accordingly, this article concludes by suggesting some areas for further consideration.

The overview of the countries discussed here has indicated that the process of teacher training in these countries is mediated by factors such as geographical and institutional location; language of instruction; perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals; how these attitudes, perceptions and beliefs shape the identities of teachers; and how the whole system is framed and organised. While 'technical' factors like entry requirements are important to monitor, there are a range of qualitative features that are also central to future debates. These features include teachers' sense of community and identity and the status of teachers, as well as the matter of simplicity in the educational policy framework.

An area of research that merits further attention is that of the curriculum of teacher training, including its pedagogic and didactic dimensions. A particular area of debate is the extent to which teacher education is school-based and the relationships that are built up between schools and training institutions. Mulkeen et al (2007) argue that one of the core tools in developing the quality of teaching is teacher engagement in structured teaching practice and school-based studies. School-based studies, they argue, should be integrated with coursework over the entire period of pre-service teacher preparation so that student teachers can experience the reality of the classroom as soon and as frequently as possible.

A further issue is that of the relative merits of a longer or shorter period of training. Moon (2008) cites reports that argue that teachers graduating from shorter programmes are as effective as those graduating from longer ones. In South Africa the three-year model followed by a year of induction was proposed by the Ministerial Committee on Teacher Education (Department of Education 2005), but was eventually rejected in favour of maintaining the four-year preparation with integrated periods of school-based training.

The social context of the school has been singled out as being a key dimension in enhancing teacher incentives and boosting learning outcomes (EFA 2005). The problem with many educational systems in sub-Saharan Africa, as the UNESCO working

paper (Moon 2007) has indicated, is that they largely objectify teachers as a statistical resource, not as subjects who construct a professional identity that interacts, in complex ways, with their self and social identities, as well as with their contexts. Until research into teacher performance goes beyond statistics and outcomes, to interrogate the more qualitative aspects of teachers' understandings of their professional and social roles, our understanding of why teachers in the region largely fail to meet the expectations of society will remain partial and incomplete.

It is suggested, in conclusion, that the ongoing debate about the best forms of teacher education in East and Southern Africa should be framed within what Croft (2002) has termed a locally driven educational discourse. Such a discourse should be able to determine what strategic pressure points should be considered for enhancing the link between the need for more teachers and the improvement of teacher quality, bearing in mind that this link is not easy to establish or to sustain, given the many local, national and international challenges of providing quality education to all.

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Notes on the authors

Prof Maureen Robinson is the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She has published nationally and internationally in the field of educational change in South Africa, particularly as this relates to teacher education and teacher development. She serves on the editorial board of three journals, is a member of the Umalusi Research Forum, a board member of the International Council of Education for Teachers and the chair of the Kenton Education Association.

Dr Chiwimbiso Kwenda is a lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. He teaches Education and Research Methods. His research interests lie in the areas of 'good practices in teacher education' and 'teacher identities'. He is currently working with part-time Advanced Certificate of Education (ACE) students on a project focusing on how the current new demands on teacher performance affect teachers' self-identities as well as their professional identities.

Address for correspondence

kwendac@cput.ac.za
robinsonm@cput.ac.za

An encounter with supervisors' and institutional discourses: A personal reflective account

Chinedu Okeke

University of Swaziland

Abstract

This article focuses on the interpersonal and institutional struggles involved in the preparation of the early stages of a PhD proposal in a Nigerian university. It is a personal account in which I discuss my struggles with both the supervisor ('trad-supervision') and institutional ('techno-scientific') discourses that appear to inform postgraduate supervision in Nigerian universities. The implications of these discourses for higher degree supervision are highlighted in this article, while the roles of my subjectivities are a central feature of this account. The uniqueness of the challenges and experiences faced by Nigerian postgraduate students is presented against the backdrop of the plethora of literature on the similitude of problems encountered by postgraduate students the world over. The PhD programme within a Nigerian university presents an experience so personalised and a student so isolated, the implications of which are highlighted in this article. Contingent upon this narration is the fact that, although I currently function as a postgraduate supervisor, these reflections are a conscious attempt on my part to share some of the ideas that not only may impinge upon the quality of postgraduate theses, but also, by implication, upon the quality of postgraduates and newer researchers produced by these universities. Suggestions for research are also made in this article.

Introduction

This is an account of my personal experiences as a doctoral student in a first-generation Nigerian university. Central to this reflective account is my current role as a postgraduate supervisor, which enables me to reflect continuously on the nature of my own journey. My position as a postgraduate supervisor empowers me to argue in this article that academics are inescapably influenced by the nature of the supervisory relationships they themselves encountered as students. Lee (2007a: 691) argues that 'the conceptions of research supervision that supervisors hold affect the way the research student operates – then the continuing professional development activity

that follows becomes obvious'. Obviously, for one to begin to think like an academic and so like a supervisor one must first begin to think like a student-researcher. Sometimes the impact of this influence on supervisory relationships can be negative. To my mind, academics represent pedagogical processes, including the supervisory process, in their own image and it would seem the implications of this representation partly explain current discussions on the nature of postgraduate supervisory relationships.

The importance of the supervisory relationship to the success and/or failure of the postgraduate student are well documented in the literature on postgraduate supervision (Mouton 2001; Edwards 2002; Fataar 2005). Growing evidence points to the considerable influence of the quality and nature of supervision on the successful completion of the postgraduate programme (Schulze & Lessing 2003; Grant 2005; Abiddin 2007; Lee 2007b; Rau 2008). Perhaps that explains why Lee (2007b: 334) argues that 'the quality of a relationship which is voluntarily entered into and where there is already a positive regard on both sides can provide a profound learning experience for both sides'. Generally, the reviewed literature regarding postgraduate supervision appears to fall into the following categories: epistemology of practice, candidates' evaluation of supervision, examination of candidates' experiences (Grant 2005; Calma 2007; Lee 2007a), and the framework for supervision (Schulze & Lessing 2003; Fataar 2005; Calma 2007; Rau 2008).

In spite of this growing recognition of the importance of the supervisory relationship to the successful completion (or otherwise) of postgraduate research, little if any attention has been paid to understanding the postgraduate and supervision experiences of students in Nigerian universities. As growing concern continues to mount the world over about the way postgraduate supervision is handled, it behoves all higher institutions of learning that have hitherto neglected the value-laden and informative usefulness of the experiences of postgraduate students to begin to embrace this knowledge and to encourage research in that direction. Knowledge of areas such as the lived supervisory experiences of Nigerian postgraduates is vital; this information could go a long way in enriching international literature on the comparative experiences of postgraduate students. In light of the above, this article aims to contribute to the literature, based on my being both a member of the academic community and a postgraduate supervisor. I also draw from my personal experiences in order to accentuate the role of my subjectivities noting, as Fataar (2005: 40) suggests, that the 'doctoral ... process involves a complex negotiation of the psychological and affective dimension of the student's personality make up'.

Current conceptual models in higher degree research supervision

The construction of particular forms of the supervision model and the effect these have on supervisory relationships can be understood from two strands of recent well-developed research. One is by Grant (2005: 340), who notes that 'the four most power-

ful discourses competing for loyal subjects in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences supervision are the Psychological, the Traditional-Academic, the Techno-Scientific and the Neo-Liberal'. The other strand is that identified by Lee (2008), who noted that postgraduate supervision practices revolve around five different models, i.e. functional, enculturation, critical thinking, emancipation and relationship development. Of course, there are many other attempts at explaining the ideological understanding of postgraduate supervision (see, for example, Koko 1998; Frischer & Larsson 2000; Acker 1999; Burns, Lamm & Lewis 1999; Edwards 2002).

Other studies include that of Mouton (2001), for example, who distinguishes between four dimensions of postgraduate supervision: advisory, quality control, supporting relationship nurtured by the supervisor and the guidance of the student by the supervisor. Armstrong (2004) notes that supervisors operate from either the intuitive or the analytic models of supervision and Abiddin's (2007) study categorises four different supervisory styles (the level of direction, scientific competence, approachability and friendliness, and the ability to be a creative and flexible thinker). Rau (2008) emphasises the importance of the humanistic discourse as a more dynamic, student-oriented and evolving approach to good postgraduate supervision. According to Rau what distinguishes the humanistic discourse is 'the honouring and empathetic acceptance of the person as a unique and valuable individual' (2008: 2). Although these studies have made important contributions to our understanding of effective postgraduate supervision practices, it is Grant's postgraduate supervision discourses (2005) which I explore as lenses for locating my personal experiences as a PhD student. In so doing, I want to see if Grant's discourses could offer some explanation on the supervisory relationships within the Nigerian postgraduate research supervision as I experienced it between the years 2001 and 2003. In other words, might there be a fit between Grant's four discourses of supervision and the postgraduate supervision relationships within the Nigerian research universities?

Within the frame of the 'psychological' discourse, Grant (2005) constructs the supervisor as a caring, expert professional whose supervisory commitments are guided by his/her perceived values in the support and motivation of the developing researcher. The 'psy-supervisor' places much emphasis on the personality and emotions of the student while making him/herself a resource-therapist. What constitutes a proper 'psy-supervision' relationship is 'the process by which, through a supportive interpersonal relationship, the expert sensitively and flexibly guides the (self-confessed) novice along a developmental trajectory; much of the guidance takes the form of motivation and encouragement' (Grant 2005: 341). However, experience has shown that this discourse appears not to be popular within Nigeria postgraduate supervision and may possibly be unknown to some of the academics involved in postgraduate supervision. What is more, the revelation here may prove to be a fertile area for investigation.

Second, Grant (2005) notes that the 'traditional-academic' discourse reflects a super-

visory relationship that is deeply conservative, reminiscent of twentieth-century academic culture. She argues within this discourse that proper supervision orientation is marked by formality and distance, in which the 'trad-supervisor' portrays him/herself as 'a proven scholar and master of the discipline, his/her key quality is a shining intellect' (ibid.: 341); the power relation mobilised by 'trad-supervision' is likened to the guru/disciple relationship. This discourse appears to be very popular in the Nigeria postgraduate supervision relationships. Third, Grant (ibid.: 342) explains the 'techno-scientific' supervision style as that which portrays the research process as consisting of 'a predictable and orderly process of research skills training; the 'techno-student's progress is subject to improvement and control by devices such as skills training or introducing incentives for swift completion'. The power relation within techno-scientific supervision is distinguished by the expert scientist and an inexperienced trainee. However, because of its alignment with logical positivism with emphasis on objectivity, reliability, replicability, hypothesis testing, controls and statistical analyses (Bishop 1997), the techno-scientific discourse appears to be very popular within Nigerian postgraduate research orientation.

Although Grant's 'neoliberal' discourse does not have direct import on this article, its implications within the organisation of long-distance education and on the proliferation of satellite campuses in Nigeria warrants that the discourse be given some attention. For instance, the discourse upholds that the supervisory relationship is mediated through the understanding of education as a commodity and the universities as commercial enterprises. Grant (2005: 343) argues that in 'reconfiguring education as a commodity and educational institutions as commercial enterprises, it constitutes the Com-student as an "autonomous chooser", a consumer of services, and the Com-supervisor as the provider of those services'. The power relation within this discourse, which is of a quasi-legal nature, is not of concern here. However, with particular reference to the Nigerian situation, the notion of commodity-enterprise permeates the organisation of the academic activities of the universities in more ways than one.

With regard to the long-distance education arrangements within the country, the satellite campuses in particular, it would seem some students and individuals have the dangerous impression that what counts is no longer effort plus ability, but cash plus the willingness to disburse it. Contemporary businessmen within the country have exploited the situation as a zero-sum game, where only the fittest – nay richest – can survive, a view expressed by both Obioha (2006) and Okebukola (2008). Within this relationship the 'com-supervisor', having impressed upon the 'com-student' the idea of autonomous chooser and that of grievance procedures, positions him/herself as one whose 'very scarce' commodity can only be obtained with cash and any other forms of gratification. Hence, the neoliberal discourse appears to be equally popular within Nigerian research supervision practices. Moreover, this appears to explain why the Nigerian government had to introduce legislation banning all satellite campuses – 'the

government has repeatedly expressed concern about the ... decay inflicted on university education by some of the ubiquitous study centres. It is also realised that the Satellite campus system has long been hijacked by charlatans whose motives are mainly pecuniary' (Ogunsola 2004: 26).

So what is a discourse and how does it influence relationships within postgraduate supervisions? A discourse is referred to as a set of systematic statements that are linked to a particular type of social practice and are often associated with the exercise of power. Discourse according to Rau (2008: 2) is 'the knowledge, attitudes, and practices that are produced through inter-relationships between people's worldviews, values, languages and contexts'. The influence of a particular kind of discourse on postgraduate supervision relationships resonates in the type of meanings that those engaged in it are able to construct out of these relationships. This is because at the level of functionality discourse offers some sort of meaning to the way people understand themselves and their behaviour. Moreover, discourse produces the very object of our knowledge – and the nature of this knowledge (or relationship) is necessarily dependent upon the discourse frame that informs our actions. That is why Grant (2005: 345) argues that 'we are ensnared by discourses that structure our sense of self, our pleasures and desires. The discourses that hail us as their subjects offer us subjectivities, which feel right, which satisfy and please us'.

The effect of my previous postgraduate experiences

It would seem unnecessary to revisit some of the events in my journey towards the doctorate. However, by recreating my personal experiences in this article, I wish to show the ways in which my personal identities informed the approaches and decisions I took during the course of my doctoral study. Comber (1999: 132) argues that such history is very important, in that 'researching and writing a thesis does not take place in an historical vacuum'. By re-narrativising my doctoral experiences, therefore, I wish to argue following Fataar (2005: 40) that 'having to reconcile the personal, the political and the analytical, and having to engage with (the) construction of self ... is a crucial part of proposal writing'. This is particularly the case when thesis writing is aimed at performing an emancipatory and/or critical role (Lee 2007a) within a given academic boundary or even beyond.

Prior to September 2001 when I began my doctoral studies in Nigeria, I had a well-established idea about what good postgraduate supervision meant from two separate but related educational contexts. The first was in 1998 during the writing of my Master's dissertation at a university in London and the second was in 1999 when I enrolled for a PhD with another London-based university. During both experiences, I had the opportunity to work with senior academics who were not only humane and friendly, but also highly dedicated and supportive. What was unique about my 1999 experience was that, on the submission of my application for the doctorate, I was

invited to talk through the submitted proposal with specific staff in the Faculty of Education at the university. After the discussion, a senior male academic (from the pre-admission interview team) was appointed head of a three-member supervisory team. A relationship developed between him and I that was academically supportive mutually and sincerely fatherly from his side. He understood the student he was to share prolonged academic intimacy with and also offered me the same opportunity to understand him. His 'role was predominantly nurturing' (Snyder 1999: 142) but he was also sympathetic, wise and a very good listener. He was a true 'psy-supervisor'. However, my contact with him was short-lived because lack of funds forced me to terminate the programme and return to Nigeria.

It is important to state that both experiences had fundamental implications for my resolve to pursue a doctorate. It was during my Master's programme particularly that I first encountered the qualitative research paradigm as a method of researching the empirical social world. Prior to this, my experience of research was informed by a predominantly one-sidedly positivistic (quantitative) research tradition. Following this paradigmatic shift I had to 'move from a politicised analytical logic to an analysis of ... social reconfiguration, from an "acting-upon-society" logic to an analysis of the intersubjective world of ordinary people' (Fataar 2005: 41). This shift was central to the frame of the research proposal that I submitted to a university in Nigeria in 2002. Thus, the key determinants of my perception of doctoral studies and the nature of the accompanying supervisory relationship are the knowledge I had already gained from two previous academic experiences at postgraduate levels, my previous supervisory relationships, which were based on popular and scholarly supervisory discourses, and my resolve to begin a process aimed at popularising the qualitative research methods within the Nigerian higher degree research tradition.

By 2001 I was sure about what I wanted to study and knew that I was going into an area that was to touch on the very heart of conservatism, which appears to characterise research in most first-generation universities in Nigeria; the problem being that conservatism as an educational ideology does not encourage new ideas. I was interested in doing original work and in a very different way. Whether it was to be the best, I did not know but I was sure of its novelty. I was equally aware of the implications it might have. In a recent study Lee (2007a: 687) argues that 'original research can be dangerous in that it can undermine previously dearly held beliefs and careers'. My PhD thesis was a challenge to the status quo and I was aware of the dangers. Nevertheless, my first impression about a PhD programme was that it would be needless in a state of academic perfection; it is the zenith of academic excellence established to rediscover missing gaps. If a PhD does not intend to do this, it is not worth pursuing. I knew why I wanted a PhD and 'what I needed as a learner and ... valued in my (would-be) teachers' (Comber 1999: 134). Finally, I knew what forms an effective postgraduate supervision should take; my knowledge of those forms is central to the way I currently conduct myself as a postgraduate supervisor.

Procedural framework of PhD research in Nigeria and students' challenges therein

There are four steps to be completed by a doctoral candidate in a Nigerian university before a thesis is produced. First, the proposal approval, where the student only works with his/her supervisor; second, the proposal presentation to the departmental proposal committee; third, the presentation of the emerging thesis to the faculty seminar committee; finally, the oral examination, conducted by an external examiner usually recommended by the supervisor and approved accordingly by the appropriate offices. I had noted that one of the neglected preliminary requirements of PhD admission in most Nigerian universities is the pre-admission interviews with prospective students. In addition, unlike in the United Kingdom for instance, where prospective PhD candidates can enrol at any time of the year thereby allowing them to choose the period of the academic year that suits them most, PhD admission in Nigerian universities takes place during a specific period in the academic calendar. Although this article does not intend to compare the academic practices of the developed countries of Europe with that of the emerging African economies, Mokadi (2004: 1) suggests that African universities 'need to share good practice and practical examples of what has worked'.

Upon admission students are expected to meet with their pre-assigned supervisor, who then directs them on the submission of at least three different topics, of which one will be approved. This is the first step in the doctoral programme and it can take several months before an agreement on a topic is reached between the supervisor and student. What this implies is that prospective candidates of the doctoral programmes in Nigerian universities are simply not part of the most important preliminary stage of the process in a somewhat life-changing programme. Calma (2007: 97) notes that the 'search for a suitable supervisor and submission of a research proposal are the requisites for entry into university so that appropriate resources can be planned for allocation'. In the case of Nigeria, students are not part of the process at all; they only come to know who their supervisors are on entry into the programme. Not consulting with students before allocating supervisors to them could have several implications: it could lead to a mismatch between the supervisor's interest (and expertise) and the student's interest and need for a doctorate. Students may end up in the charge of a supervisor whose ideas might be at opposite ends to theirs. Moreover, the haphazard manner in which candidates are matched with supervisors account for why so much time is spent by the supervisor and the student in trying to have a topic approved.

Commenting on her correspondence with Allan Luke as she searched for a supervisor, Comber notes: 'his letter of response recognised what I could already do as a writer ... encouraged my desire to do empirical research in school ... I told him what I needed and wanted from the PhD and from him as a supervisor' (1999: 132). One wonders what it is that makes it difficult for popular approaches and good practice, as suggested by Mokadi (2004), to be followed in Nigeria with regard to PhD supervision.

Nevertheless, upon approval of the research topic the candidate is expected, after an extensive literature search, to submit a thesis proposal for authorisation by the approved supervisor. This is the second and arguably most sensitive step in the doctoral programme because during this stage the supervisor, consciously or unconsciously, could hinder the student's opportunity to becoming a competent and independent researcher. For instance, it has been suggested by Fataar (2005) that there must be a link between the supervisor's research and academic interest and the student's research proposal for supervision to proceed successfully. To my mind, problems will arise if a student is assigned a supervisor who has stopped researching, and therefore has stopped knowing, but who holds tenaciously to previously held (and often outdated) beliefs. Given the fact that a PhD needs to break new grounds, it can often be very difficult to find a supervisor who has full knowledge and expertise in the precise area of the student's research.

Nonetheless, upon satisfactory presentation of the emerging proposal in the privacy of the supervisor's office, the candidate then presents to a departmental proposal committee, which reserves the right to approve or disqualify the proposal. A good proposal may stand to be disqualified, especially if it fails to connect with the institutional discourse, and sometimes 'they are likely to be subjected to overt or covert penalties devised to correct and reduce deviation' (Rau 2008: 5). If a proposal aims to deconstruct institutionally held discourse, 'addressing such questions as what is the underlying conceptual framework, what are the arguments for and against, what has been considered and what has been left out' (Lee 2007a: 688) may generate acrimonious behaviour towards the student. This approach evidently could hinder, if not terminate, the student's progress. Moreover, when the proposal committee comprises academics who are diametrically opposed to one another's ideas, including those of the student's supervisor, a situation may arise where instead of the proposal exercise being an opportunity to collectively improve upon the ongoing study, the proposal presentation venue simply turns into an arena for political struggle. However, this scenario could be averted if candidates were involved; this would also ensure that only those interested in the ongoing study and therefore in the student's progress could be appointed as members of the committee. Hernandez (1996) tells how she took a qualitative research posture while choosing members of her dissertation committee, enabling her to avoid academics whose research orientations were not aligned with the qualitative research paradigm. Could this be a good lesson for any institution still in the practice of excluding students in the selection of the proposal committee?

Another practice at the departmental proposal committee, faculty seminar committee and oral examination stages of PhD supervision in Nigeria, which I found highly disturbing, is the expectation that the presenting student should provide refreshments and entertainment for members of the committees during presentations. I shall resist the temptation of commenting on the implications of this practice on the quality

of some of the doctoral theses that emerge. Nevertheless, Bibby (1999: 180) had earlier warned academics of the cost of developing competence in cheating when she noted, 'once people become cheats, they then tend to reach for deceit wherever it might be useful. As increasing numbers of people "play the game" ... standards in education research will decrease, and ... universities will gain a poor reputation with their former students.' In a letter to the chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, the director of the Academic Planning and Research unit of the National Universities Commission wrote that the purpose of the letter was 'to bring to your attention the fact that serious lapses exist in the supervision of doctoral theses across the university systems' (Bako 2005: 18). Noting the numerous difficulties that already face the PhD student in Nigeria, this practice can only bring additional financial burden to the student whose personal budget may have been stretched already.

Experience has shown that PhD candidates in Nigeria's universities face a number of problems while struggling to achieve their postgraduate ambitions (see Obi & Agbu 2002; Bako 2005; Olakulehin & Ojo 2008; Oredein 2008; Wagner & Okeke 2009). To summarise, difficulties include inadequate financial and material support for the effective and rigorous research expected at that level; inadequate and often erratic internet services; 'many students lack access to computers, the international exposure that can shape them for the current debates and discourses in their disciplines' (Oredein 2008: 321); paucity of discipline-specific supervisors; supervisors and committees members with outdated ideas; academic rigidity towards philosophies and theories that no longer explain current situations; supervisors who impose viewpoints, methodologies or theories notwithstanding the academic realities against such reasoning; unnecessary acrimonious supervisor/student relationships, which can also cause delays (see Obi & Agbu 2002; Bako 2005); and the supervisor/demigod culture. These challenges provide good research agendas for researchers within the Nigerian research tradition and elsewhere.

Locating the institutional discourse

A predominantly positivistic research tradition was uncovered through the survey of selected Nigerian universities with particular reference to the faculties of education. This predominance is partly influenced by the research epistemologies that marked the period when most first-generation universities in Nigeria were established. Wagner and Okeke (2009) argue that those entering the research fields ought to acquaint themselves with this ontological and epistemological history, as failure to do so appears partly to explain the ongoing argument bordering on value claims among researchers within the Nigerian research tradition (Okeke 2009). Most of the first-generation universities in Nigeria retained from positivism the idea that science is the only true source of legitimate knowledge (Hammersley 1989); researchers guided by such philosophical orientation rely on the controlled and systematic observation of

subject matter, as well as on the systematic collection and analysis of data (Okolocha, Nwanunobi & Igbo 1999). It is this type of orientation that currently informs the conduct of postgraduate research in Nigeria.

Grant (2005) notes that the techno-scientific discourse is rooted in the perception of social sciences in the positivist epistemology and, within this discourse, research consists of well-ordered activities culminating in the production of a thesis. Emphasis within this discourse is the proper training of the student in the university-wide approved method of doing research; by implication, a deviation from the approved approach is often met with total rejection from a handful of selected committee members. The 'techno-supervisor' is then empowered (Rau 2008) by the techno-committee/institution to closely monitor the PhD candidate's strict adherence to the norms as a surety for progression. To complete a thesis successfully, therefore, the candidate must demonstrate his/her ability and readiness to play by the rules. The power relation within the techno-scientific discourse is marked by extreme intimidatory ploys by the supposedly 'expert scientist' supervisor against a supposedly 'inexperienced' student. Wagner and Okeke (2009) note that the choice of research methodology and method is partly epistemological and partly pragmatic. Therefore, students and other developing researchers should be equipped and encouraged to make their own decisions and choices, not just methodologically but also epistemologically and pragmatically.

Moreover, post-colonial theory reminds us of the dialectical relationship between colonialism and contemporary African curricula (Okeke 2008). It calls for the 'need to examine and understand the complex ways in which the colonial powers brought the colonised under their imperial system ... because the impact lingers on despite the fact that many nations have attained independence' (Mfum-Mensah 2005: 74). Also, Serpell (2007: 230) notes that 'African universities have inherited from the West a number of institutionalised arrangements for learning that tends to de-contextualise the learning process by extracting learners from everyday life'. Therefore, within the Nigerian institutions and societies the British colonial authorities' paradigmatic learning concept de-socialised the Nigerian people. According to Bako (2005: 8) 'paradigmatic learning concept and activity in Nigerian universities ... was not total. It was ... mainly for the production of high-skilled manpower that could facilitate the transition from colonialism to neocolonialism'. Thus, as individualistic rather than collaborative learning became the norm, 'African identity, to all intents and purposes, became an inverted mirror of Western Eurocentric identity' (Higgs 2003: 6). Consequently, the situation persists whereby, because 'African colonial and postcolonial experience has had enduring effects on the mentality developed by many Africans' (Waghid 2004: 132), the PhD candidate is socialised within a somewhat 'master-servant' relationship that is individualistic rather than collaborative and communal.

Common operational supervisory discourse: How I pulled through

Given the fact that prospective candidates are not part of the selection and matching processes during the admissions into the doctoral programme in Nigerian universities, most often they are matched with supervisors whose research orientations are always in dissonance with their own (see Obi & Agbu 2002; Bako 2005; Oredein 2008). The implications of this lack of congruence for Nigerian postgraduate students are many. First, some candidates are coerced into spending their period of doctoral study furnishing their supervisors with data mainly directed to supporting the supervisors' personal research. Candidates who succumb to this type of pressure do so out of fear because 'thesis candidates, with their dependence on the goodwill of the supervisor, are not in a good position to refuse what they are asked to do' (Bibby 1999: 177). Olakulehin and Ojo (2008) found that 53,3% of the respondents in their study were not sure whether their supervisors were interested in their research topics. More so, Oredein (2008) found great disparity between the students' and supervisors' ratings of supervision within their institutions. Oredein (327) reveals that 38% of the students 'were at cross purposes with their supervisors and it is reflecting on their work and even the period for their work'.

Second, some very desperate candidates faced by this lack of congruence typify their supervisors as very difficult and consequently resort to other forms of compromise, which sometimes metamorphoses into relationships. This can affect quality, as discovered by Oredein (2008). A third and final implication of this lack of congruence is expressed in other literature. For example, Fataar (2005: 48) notes the efforts made to convince his candidates 'that the type of study [he] would be willing to supervise had to connect with [his] academic interests and current scholarly and methodological approaches'. Fataar's approach probably worked because his candidates were aware that contemporary literature favours his methodological approach. However, problems may arise where candidates by virtue of their previous education and research activities are assigned supervisors whose research orientations are no longer in tune with 'current scholarly and methodological approaches'. What is more, formal education is a colonial legacy and, by implication, when those who introduced it are changing their approaches to research and we fail or refuse to follow emerging theses may have to contend with problems of global acceptance.

However, a PhD degree appears to have implications that are far more global; institutional capacities are demonstrated by holders of these degrees wherever they may be. Doing a PhD is not about a particular university or a supervisor, it has a global feel; its culture is a very dynamic one and its holder represents a mobile institution. That is why it is imperative for institutions offering PhD degrees to be constantly in tune with current changes; individual academics involved in its supervisory processes must also demonstrate their familiarity with these changes. Doing a PhD degree, for me, is about change – for if all is well within the academic empire, there may be no need for another PhD. It is the height of academic pursuit at which individuals

critically attempt to right academic wrongs. Research supervisors must be current and this is simply demonstrated through their academic track records, including current publications in a broad context, record of attendance at local and international conferences, membership of appropriate professional academic bodies and, above all, the readiness to make their publications and other academic materials available on demand.

Professor James (pseudonym) belonged to the generation of academics trained in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when positivism still had enormous influence on conducting research. The received notion amongst most of these academics is that university education held greater meaning during their time, and this is fundamental to their readiness for change. Only candidates who are willing and ready to abide by a well-ordered step-by-step research commandment can make progress easily. Professor James was a highly conservative academic; though trained in one of the world's most famous universities he had an eccentric and intimidating character, which appeared to discourage students and colleagues. Personal experience has shown that students engaged in postgraduate research desire to work with supervisors who are humane and approachable, who have collegiate experience and who would be supportive of their work. Moreover, by virtue of the PhD's quest for originality, it warrants that students 'must be accorded space within an environment of academic freedom to pursue learning without restrictions and endowed with adequate resources for the task' (Pityana 2006: 7). My advice to all candidates wanting to pursue a PhD is to know why they want to do it, to have an idea of how to go about it, to be prepared to work independently and to work hard; to make personal sacrifices, separating academic from domestic demands; to avoid gossip; and, above all, to be prepared to take risks.

My first meeting with Professor James was supposed to assume the format already discussed in this article: 'Can I see the topic you want to work on?' I told Professor James that I did not have a topic yet; rather, that I was interested in visiting universities across the country to ascertain the methodological research trends within the faculties of education, as I wanted to do a qualitative study (which was, and still is, very unpopular in academic policy in Nigerian universities). Professor James told me the kind of study he would be prepared to supervise should be quantitatively oriented, in line with the status quo. I argued instead for the urgent need for issues to be considered from the other side of the coin. The kind of data that would likely emerge from the proposed study might not be susceptible to quantification; doing that would mean doing a different study, which I was not willing to accept. Therefore, between 4 December 2001 and 7 January 2002, I undertook a survey of the methodological research trends in the faculties of education of five selected Nigerian universities and reviewed 25 completed theses, five from each university.

Subsequently, I conducted an opinion survey using a questionnaire to sample the opinions of the 75 fellow PhD-students resident in the university at that time. The survey sought to establish postgraduate students' opinions on quantitative and

qualitative research methods, the predominance of statistical instruments in the analysis of research data and their overall impression on the content of the post-graduate research course on offer. The findings of the opinion survey have been summarised in Wagner & Okeke (2009), but it is important to note here that students who took part in that survey were unanimous in their comments regarding the monomethod approach to research but also concerned about the flagrant denial of academic freedom on the part of the authorities. But this revelation raises important questions about the epistemological choices made by Nigerian research students when they carry out research for their theses.

In spite of these two efforts, which laid the foundation for the emerging proposal, Professor James was not sure whether I was truly ready for a PhD. When the reports of the two surveys were handed to James he noted that they contained new information and asked whether the reports were my proposal. I told him that the reports were not a proposal but that I intended sending them out as review articles; one of the products of these pre-proposal surveys was published by a leading qualitative journal in the United States and another as a book chapter in the UK.

In May 2002 I prepared my proposal, 'The gendered perception of schooling amongst senior secondary school students: A qualitative approach'. This was an ethnography of the lived experiences of 50 boys and girls in a co-educational setting. Data was obtained through 62 days of participant observation, unstructured interviews with the participants, focus group discussions, which were influenced by issues emerging from the observation and the interviews, and from the participants' diaries. These methods of data collection were my reason for refusing to do a quantitative study. It was this type of methodology that I had proposed in 2002 and adopted in the study, which culminated in the awarding of a PhD in 2003.

Professor James and I disagreed once again, about the validation of my instruments. I decided to approach one of the supervisors I had met in London and another senior academic based at a university in the United States; both were willing to assist me. By 20 April 2002 both qualitative research experts were sent my thesis proposal via e-mail and I received their reports on 23 April. Their comments helped in so many ways in reshaping aspects of the proposal, and I had no scruples about asking the two experts for assistance in terms of guidance, direction, materials and peer-reviewing of chapters. What this meant, therefore, was that I had a visibly present supervisor who was officially assigned to me, but I also enjoyed the privilege of having two other non-present supervisors whose readiness to offer what I desperately needed as a postgraduate student was simply informed by the seriousness I demonstrated in my relentless and unceasing emails across the Atlantic.

Professor James, in the language of Grant (2005), was a traditional-academic supervisor whose conservative approach to supervision and learning accords little room for innovation. His interest lay in coaching his candidates using his self-acclaimed

doctrines, causing the students' sense of self to vanish completely. Grant (2005: 341) calls this 'trial by fire from which only the fittest emerge'. However, these supervisors should be prepared to learn from their students and should be courageous in supporting their candidates' views and knowledge, even if this may challenge their beliefs. The postgraduate candidate, by virtue of his/her work experience and as an adult learner, 'comes with a richer variety of experience than the child learner and thus within any group of adults the richest resource they have is themselves' (Lee 2007b: 334). What the supervisor-student relationship requires is collegial learning from which both the supervisor and the candidate benefit. This is important because, given the fact that a PhD thesis is supposed to make an original contribution to the general body of knowledge, the appointed supervisor may lack the necessary expertise in the content area of the candidate's research. In such a situation the supervisor becomes a co-learner whose main task would be simply that of providing 'advice and direction, counsel and encouragement' (Beamish 1999: 164).

Experience has taught me that a supervisor who prides him/herself in being 'master of the discipline' as Professor or Doctor so-and-so, one who has an unreflective mind, diminishes any chances for the advancement of new knowledge. The academic and intellectual horizon of the resulting product of such a system would be narrow and fixed; thereby limiting knowledge and, what is more, denying access to intellectual breakthroughs. That is why the assumption that one can supervise a PhD simply because one has obtained a higher degree or is a professor is increasingly being examined within some academic traditions (Edwards 2002). More so, this is amplified by the realisation that 'the criterion of a good supervisor should be more important than that of a good university, because the field of study may be so narrow and advanced that there is no suitable professor in a good university' (Pang 1999: 157).

Conclusion

PhD candidature and supervision are two processes of mutual engagement; those involved in such processes must possess skills and attributes that would enable successful completion. The supervision skills are as important as the skills and attributes required from the candidate and this partly explains why Lessing and Schulze (2003) argue for the mandatory training of supervisors in all aspects of the research process that define good supervision. Likewise, practising academics are required to keep abreast of the changes taking place within their domain of research and supervision. It is very easy for academics to use workload as an excuse for not keeping up with the changes that have taken place over time. Of course it is difficult to imagine, given the tight schedules under which most academics work, how they can fulfil their day-to-day internal academic and administrative commitments and still keep abreast of changes through established academic networks. However, an ideal, active and pragmatic academic should be able to do more than one thing at a time; academics should be able to maximise available time and other resources to enable

them to fulfil both their obligatory responsibilities at the workplace and their professional research needs for growth.

If a PhD is aimed at making unique and original contributions to the society of knowledge, as would seem to be the case, the process through which this could be achieved would appear to be transformative. The transformative process of a PhD begins with the two (or more) individuals involved and the institution where the doctorate is conducted; the entire society is consequently transformed. This is the tacit function of the PhD and some products of the doctoral process are known to have achieved that. Consequently, candidates who engage in this transformative process may not be inexperienced. On the other hand, a supervisor who approaches the transformative supervisory relationship as an open-minded co-learner accepts the candidate as a partner in progress because 'if learning to think like a researcher requires the nurture of a supervisor with the skills of an educator, so too does learning to think like a supervisor' (Orton 1999: 156). What is required in this regard is a collaborative approach enabling the candidate to achieve the full academic potential necessary for him/her to compete within an increasingly competitive academic society.

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Acknowledgement

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the postgraduate conference organised by the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, from 27 to 30 April 2009. I would like to use this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to all whose constructive criticisms and comments have helped to improve the quality of this paper. I would equally like to thank all those who assisted me with materials during the writing of this paper; to all of you, I remain greatly indebted.

Notes on the author

Dr CIO Okeke is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations and Management at the University of Swaziland.

Address for correspondence

okekechinedu@yahoo.com

Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science

Raewyn Connell. 2007. Sydney, Australia: Allen & Unwin. 271 pp; references, index. ISBN 978 1 74175 357 8 (pbk).

Reviewed by M Mino Polelo

Raewyn Connell holds a University Chair at the University of Sydney in Australia. Her book *Southern Theory* is a landmark in her distinguished career in the social sciences. The book examines theories that have been largely marginalised in and by the European and North American canon of social science, and makes the case for a globally inclusive social science.

A key thesis of *Southern Theory* is that social science as we know it is imperial(ist) and metropolitan in its orientation. The book is, however, not pessimistic, as it offers new possibilities for a break with this kind of social science. Connell advances a strong case for a more democratised and globally grounded social science. Put differently, she offers a critique of modern social science and provides a conceptual framework for the reconstruction of theory in the South. The book challenges the canon created by modern social sciences – a canon in which the modalities of knowledge generation and circulation have produced metropolitan dominance and marginalised the majority world. It challenges the elision of other locations of knowledge generation. At the same time, it is a book for a social science that is inclusive, a social science on a genuinely world scale. In this way the book supports a liberated social science.

Connell traces the different threads of social science across the globe. In this critical geography of theory, she surveys key and representative texts of metropolitan Northern social science: James Coleman's *Foundations of Social Theory*, Anthony Giddens' *The Constitution of Society*, Pierre Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice*, globalisation theory and postmodernism. Northern theory is then connected to the genesis of sociology in Australia. In the Southern part of this geography of social science is indigenous knowledge and the African renaissance, embracing African philosophy and post-colonial sociology, theory in the Islamic world, dependency and development theory in Latin America, Subaltern studies in the East, Southern feminist thought and a theory that connects with the land ('Aboriginal studies'), as well as the writer's own work.

Comprising ten chapters, the book is in three parts, with *Northern Theory* as the first part, followed by *Looking South*, which connects the genesis and construction of Australian sociology with the North, and *Southern Theory*, focusing on theories in the periphery. The last part, *Antipodean Reflections*, is both reflective and polemical.

Connell begins with an examination of the imperial foundations of social science, showing how the idea of global difference, of civilisation *versus* primitiveness, is embedded in classical sociology. Here she shows how the location of the creation of sociology is connected to imperialism. It reflects the social relations of imperialism and pays little or no attention to gender and sexuality.

In Chapter 2 Connell challenges the pretensions to universality in the discourse of Northern theory, characterised by the 'othering' of periphery theory. Having established the boundaries of a metropolitan social science in the first chapter, she provides a robust critique of Coleman's *Foundations of Social Theory* and its location in a paradigm of primitive versus modern. Modern social science typically presents a fluid society in which historical context matters little, and in which 'the social experience of the majority world' (p. 33) is misrepresented. Reading Giddens' *The Constitution of Society*, she suggests that one could be forgiven for thinking that colonialism never existed. Here the paradigm of primitive versus modern is still central. As imperialism is not explicitly considered, so colonisation is not theorised in Giddens' social theory. The core argument of this chapter is that such theory is a-historicised. Turning to Bourdieu's *Logic of Practice*, Connell points out that his theory ignores colonial voices and subjects, and the struggles of the oppressed. It is also metropolitan in orientation. In Bourdieu, we also see the cultural homogeneity of theory, as social order is presented as culturally homogenous.

In this way the pretensions of Northern theory to universality contribute to the 'othering' of periphery theories. The latter are thus given the labels 'African philosophy' or 'Latin American dependency theory'. Modes of knowledge production and distribution mean that theorists in the South are not easily able to universalise knowledge generated in their local sites. Associated with these processes is the 'erasure of the experience of the majority of human kind from the foundation of social thought' (p. 46). In this grand erasure, social science is constructed on *terra nullius*, 'land belonging to nobody' – where there are no sites, only blank spaces. But this 'universality' is thoroughly metropolitan in its point of view. It is here that Connell poses questions about the possibility of a globally grounded social science, but does not deny the enormity of the task of transcending the epistemological trajectory set by a social science constructed on *terra nullius*, where social theory speaks from the North. But does the 'where' matter?

Chapter 3 focuses on theories of globalisation. Here the author examines some key sociological texts and how they construct 'the global society'. Sociological theories of globalisation suffer similar weaknesses to the 'old' and 'new' sociology: reification, abstract linkages, metropolitanisation, the elision of imperialism, the exclusion of other viewpoints, and the erasure of the experiences of the colonised. Societies of the South serve only as data mines for theorising about the metropole. Connell suggests that an opportunity to reinvent a social theory that is inclusive was lost in the World Systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein.

In Chapter 4 Connell maps the path taken by Australian sociology. She traces its origins, continuing to advance the thesis that, like developments in social science elsewhere, Australian sociology imported ideas, principles and methods from the metropole to generate a 'hybrid structure of knowledge ... where Australian sociologists combined metropolitan theory and methodology with local data and audiences' (p. 82). Connell contends that although there are possibilities of breaking with metropolitan sociology, Australian sociology is still embedded in that of the North.

A key moment in *Southern Theory* is Connell's treatment of 'African sociology', where she focuses on its conceptual structure and limitations. Chapter 5 provides a critical account of attempts that have been made to develop indigenous social theory in Africa, from Yoruba social poetry to Thabo Mbeki's African Renaissance. This chapter devotes substantial space to debates about attempts to nurture a sociology of knowledge and philosophy from an African perspective. One focus is on Akinsola Akiwowo's sociology of knowledge project and the debate it generated among his former Nigerian colleagues. The works of Placide Tempels, Valentine Mudimbe, John Mbiti, Paulin Houtondji, Alexis Kagamé and others on African philosophy are also considered. Solomon Plaatje's *Native Life in South Africa* is credited by the author as one of the classical texts of world sociology.

But there are limits to this sociology. Positive developments in alternative social thought, pioneered by thinkers like Mudimbe (1988), have not been carried forward. Even the rhetoric of an African Renaissance has not produced a degree of intellectual ferment sufficient to develop new epistemological paths in African social science. Initiatives undertaken to support African social science have been more pragmatic and less concerned with theory generation. Thus the 'global economy and metropolitan cultural hegemony' (p. 109) remain the conditioning factors that impose limits on African intellectuals.

Chapter 6, where the focus shifts to the Middle East, arises from the author's encounter with Iranian writers. Here, Connell explores the work of al-Afghani, Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Ali Shariati as representative of social scholarship that has opened new possibilities for a grounded Middle Eastern social theory. Sadly, the work of Ali Mazrui is not considered here.

Following this, the author shifts her attention to Latin America. The theme here is that Latin American social science, like Australian and African, has metropolitan linkages. It imports concepts, and the local becomes simply a data mine for social theory. Europe serves as a reference point. Raul Prebisch's classic essay, *The Economic Development of Latin America and its Principal Problems*, is the starting point, linked by the author to Cardoso and Falletto's (1979) historical sociology of 'dependency and development'. These authors are recognised for their pioneering work on the concept of globalisation. Connell argues that in Latin America, the death of revolutionary praxis,

under the weight of the military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, and the triumph of neoliberalism, were twinned with a crisis of social science in that region. This fact notwithstanding, other important developments here include Latin American feminist sociology, and García Canclini's work on popular cultures.

Chapter Eight turns to Subaltern Studies in the Indian context. The author suggests that scholars associated with these studies veered towards an embrace of postmodern social theory, abandoning a project of social theory previously informed by structuralism and original conceptualisations of power.

In Chapter 9, Connell's themes include the land, space and social science. It is here that *Southern Theory* is elaborated against concepts such as *terra nullius*. The context is one of indigenous minorities dispossessed of their land. Connell argues that the idea of dispossession is under-theorised in social science and proposes a new grounded theory that neither rejects generalisations nor divorces itself from 'landscapes' and historical contexts. Social science needs accordingly to set aside pure general theory in favour of 'dirty theory', or 'theorising that is mixed up with specific situations' (p. 207), which multiplies the local sources of our rationalisation or thinking. This chapter is at its strongest when the author connects space with the globalisation of capital, or 'the materiality of globalisation processes' (p. 209).

The book closes with the establishment of the scaffolding for a social science on a world scale. Building such a science begins with recognising patterns of inequality between the metropole and the periphery, recognising the dynamism of the periphery and dealing with the 'erasure of its experience' in social science. This requires looking critically at the centres of the production of knowledge and the ways in which peripheral social scientists connect with the metropole. Connell also pays attention to the monopolisation of knowledge circulation through publishing. It is this process of knowledge production and circulation that contributes to the marginalisation of the periphery in social science. There is thus a need to re-examine relations between dominant knowledge systems and local knowledges. Here, the author is essentially making a case for *Southern theory*, defined by 'principles of unification', a 'willingness to challenge the metropolitan formulations', an ability to judge when to discard a given theoretical position, and an 'autonomous capacity to make diagnoses of a certain social conjuncture' (p. 223-224). In short, its core is mutual learning. This is an argument for a social science in which there is 'permanent revolution'. But there is a caution here that generalisation, though critical in social science, does not apply to all situations and should not apply to all situations.

Connell aligns herself with a social theory that recognises a plurality of voices. Social science should be viewed as an uncertain aggregation of world views, procedures and conclusions, 'an unconnected set of intellectual projects that proceed from varied social starting points into an unpredictable future' (p. 228). It would be a social science in which circuits of knowledge would be reshaped through networks of cooperation, one

starting point of which might be CODESRIA, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa. *Southern theory* is essentially a democratic enterprise. It is a platform of knowledge production and circulation that has to contend with, *inter alia*, the misrepresentations of the corporate-funded think-tanks that constitute the ‘ruthless spin’ of neoliberalism.

In her conclusion, Connell warns against an ‘academic tourism’ where Southern scholars travel to the North to acquire qualifications and become steeped in the ideas, methods, procedures and processes of metropolitan social science. This is a rich text, an ambitious and bold undertaking that seeks to break new paths for social science. It is a must-read for social scientists and educationists everywhere, and not only those in the majority world.

Notes on the author

See the obituary for Dr Polelo on page 144.

Multilingualism in Education and Communities in Southern Africa

G Kamwendo, D Jankie and A Chebanne (eds). 2009. Botswana: UBTromso Collaborative Programme for San Research and Capacity Building. 206 pages. ISBN 9-78991208626

Reviewed by Dorcas B Molefe

Multilingualism in Education and Communities in Southern Africa is an informative discussion of the use of the mother tongue in education. Some of the contributions are about general issues: local versus global languages; language rights as human rights; multiple and varied definitions of mother tongue; the need for linguistic rights; the call for and relationship between linguistic justice and democracy; language and equity; indigenous and sign languages for inclusive education; language and employment and/or for economic development; indigenous languages and the question of their possible use in technology as well as their suitability for use in higher education; and the role of the languages for unity, equity and social justice.

The issue of mother tongue and indigenous languages is discussed in the specific contexts of the Southern African countries of Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and South Africa, with a comparative discussion from elsewhere. The book is largely based on the papers that were presented at a regional conference on multilingualism in Southern Africa in 2005. It is the work of academics, non-government organisations such as the Kuru Family of Organisations, Support Programme for Education in Remote Areas and Minority Education Project, and other stakeholders concerned with indigenous languages.

It is a collection of 21 chapters divided into seven sections according to sub-themes: 1) Introducing the debates; 2) Mother tongue education; 3) Adult literacy; 4) Sign language in education; 5) Basarwa (San) as linguistic minorities; 6) Development of educational materials/resources; and 7) Conclusion.

In Section 1, Kamwendo comments on the highlights of each section, reminding readers of Article 12 of the SADC Protocol on Culture, Information and Sport as a point of departure for the debates that follow. In the next section, Lekoko argues that there is much rhetoric in Botswana but little practice regarding mother tongue education. This is echoed by Monaka. Lekoko notes the official position on language in education articulated in official documents such as the Revised National Policy on Education (1994) and National Development Plan 9 (2003), and rephrases Vision 2016, which states: 'There will be no disadvantage suffered by any Motswana in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country's two official languages.' She comments that initiatives to develop languages are slow, uncoordi-

nated and left largely to non-governmental organisations.

Chapter 3 is by Jacob Nkate, then Minister of Education. His official opening speech reiterates the government's position and efforts in relation to the possibility of some indigenous languages being taught in schools. He further asks whether mother tongue education should be given priority over other issues that the ministry faces. He poses a question relating to economies of scale: with linguistic populations being so small, would the benefits be worth the investment? Furthermore, he is optimistic that the conference will result in important lessons for Botswana.

Mooko responds to the Minister of Education's speech, noting the history of battles of languages, the pre-independence phenomenon of the exclusion of other languages from education, and the problem of Botswana's language-in-education policy. Like Lekoko and Monaka, he echoes the Botswana government's position in the official documents. His contribution goes beyond the specifics of the minister's speech and languages in education, and includes a discussion on the politics of languages in education. He notes that there is a great silence in the debates on local languages about the role that recognition and use of other local languages could play in achieving national unity. He decries Botswana's language policy as missing the point of mother-tongue education, arguing that it is just about learning a national language.

In a keynote address at the conference, Prah notes, 'The debate about mother tongue education in Africa is ... an issue affecting neo-colonial countries' (p. 33). Prah adopts a very strong position in favour of the use of African mother tongue languages, saying they are essential for development, production and reproduction of knowledge and a *sine qua non* for an African renaissance. Batibo differs with the definition of mother tongue given by Prah, preferring that used by UNESCO.

Section 2 begins with Matiki looking at Malawi's transitional bilingual education system and noting that since the Ministry of Education is not implementing it, the people of Malawi have a negative attitude towards indigenous languages and place a higher value on English.

In Chapter 8, Bagwasi calls for linguistic justice in Botswana, and language policy reform that involves teaching local languages and increasing their role and importance in other areas such as employment. Adopting a more pragmatic approach, Gatsha suggests the use of pastoral care management as a short-term measure towards the introduction of mother tongue education in schools.

Section 3 begins with a contribution by Maruatona in which he argues that 'states have to be assisted not to strive for cultural homogeneity but instead endorse cultural diversity' (p. 88), noting that there are numerous benefits. In line with other scholars, he advocates revisiting Botswana's language policy in order to include the use of the mother tongue. Visser's presentation on 'The practice of literacy: Naro experiences' gives a general discussion on literacy but falls short of discussing Naro experiences.

Mukhopadhyay and Sison discuss a different kind of language: sign language, a non-verbal gestural form of communication. They start by redefining Terralingua and Schirmer's definition of mother tongue, and state, 'Home-sign or self-styled system of communication among children who are deaf, who do not have either a spoken or conventional sign language, can be considered as mother tongue' (p. 101). Their study of children at the Ramotswa Centre for Deaf Education found that children go to the centre using a home sign language and are taught a formal sign language.

In another chapter, Lekoko and Mukhopadhyay look at problems and practices with the language of instruction of deaf students in mainstream secondary schools. They observe that sign language is not considered for use in the schools. This results in deaf learners facing more problems than successes, because language is a critical factor in learning. They find this happening despite Vision 2016 stating that no Motswana citizen should be disadvantaged in the education system 'due to circumstances of their birth' (p. 109).

Section 5 starts with a chapter by Monyatsi in which he indicates (like Qubi) that San ethnic groups have lower levels of education than other ethnic groups and this he attributes to, among a plethora of reasons, the absence of the opportunity to attend schools that use their mother tongue. He adopts Marxist theories and draws parallels between the alienation of San children in schools and that of workers in working environments in relation to the means of production.

Chebanne and Monaka's contribution is on the !Xóó, a distinct San language only spoken in Northern Kgalagadi in Botswana. They are of the view that mother tongue is a human right and that absence of other languages in education negates equity. On the other hand, Qubi's presentation notes that Botswana's language policy, while intended for a good cause – national unity, has disadvantaged, marginalised and led to the underdevelopment of other languages and cultures. The paper highlights the work of Bokamoso, a programme with the aim of 'fostering quality education and also culture and identity of the people it serves and thereby reduce the high rate of school drop-outs' (p. 141).

In their contribution, Mafela and Bolaane adopt an unusual position by taking the debate on mother tongue education for Basarwa/San in a different direction. They acknowledge the position of many scholars that Botswana's language policy, which advocates for English and Setswana, has disadvantages for some groups. On the other hand, they point out that Basarwa have actually used Setswana as their 'second mother tongue' and are deriving economic gains from it (such as employment) and are able to participate in decision-making forums (such as *kgotla* meetings).

Section 6 begins with Schott's discussion of the experience of six formerly disadvantaged small Namibian African languages, which under the AfriLa Project were to produce textbooks and teaching and learning materials that were learner-centred and culturally relevant to mother tongue education. The chapter gives an

account of the process of development, from project planning to completion.

Rodewald describes the phenomenon of 'word division' in the languages of Shiyeyi (in Botswana) and Ikalanga (in Botswana and Zimbabwe). The influence of languages taught in schools are manifest, for example Setswana inclines speakers of Shiyeyi and Ikalanga towards writing 'disjunctively', while Shona and Ndebele causes Ikalanga-speakers to writing 'conjunctively'.

In the conclusion, Jankie regards the book as a significant contribution towards the development of Southern African languages and a major milestone in an effort for the societies to attain equity, social justice and unity, through the inclusion and recognition of all local languages in schools and other spheres of their societies.

The book's strengths include the fact that it focuses on a very special theme that is of relevance and is posing a difficulty for many countries worldwide. It focuses on the power battles of languages and myths about local and global languages, among other things. With specific reference to Botswana, the country's language policy in education is questioned, especially with regard to exclusivity and the underdevelopment of other local languages. The common Botswana problem of a gap between rhetoric and practice is manifest even in this area. There is a general outcry for diversity as opposed to homogeneity. This is an important read for education policy-makers, education planners and practitioners. Beyond this, other stakeholders, such as teacher educators, should offer workable suggestions in their curricula and indicate what teachers can do in order to address the challenges faced by the education system.

Notes on the author

Dorcas Molefe is a senior lecturer in the Department of Foundations of Education at Tonota College of Education in Botswana.

Address for correspondence

molefed@excite.com

Confronting the Shadow Education System. What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?

Mark Bray. 2009. Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). 130 pages. ISBN 978-92-803-1333-8. €20. Electronic copy free of charge from www.iiep.unesco.org.

Reviewed by Godfrey Kleinhans

Mark Bray, a trained economist who elected to make education his permanent base, does not easily part with a research topic. His latest publication on private tutoring follows a number of articles on the same subject. In *Confronting the Shadow Education System: What Government Policies for What Private Tutoring?*, Bray reports on private tutoring over 107 pages in five chapters. He has gathered a considerable amount of research data, and the publication includes a reference list of no fewer than 18 pages. Private tutoring is clinically diagnosed and discussed, the importance of policy formulation recorded and a number of recommendations made on monitoring and evaluation.

Private tutoring takes on different faces. The common understanding is that it is an education activity by which mainstream education activity is supplemented. It normally involves four actors: on the demand side, parents and learners; and on the supply side, teachers and tutoring agencies. The objective of private tutoring is to supplement, not to replace. It runs parallel to the mainstream system, in some countries directed by policy, and in other countries in a policy vacuum. Valued and admired by some, it is viewed with scepticism and suspicion by others.

Bray argues that private tutoring can be defined only in relation to the mainstream system. It owes its existence to the mainstream system. Changes in the mainstream will therefore not go unnoticed in the 'shadow' system. This metaphor is therefore very appropriate. He shows that the 'shadow' will be there as long as inequalities in the mainstream persist, and as long as quality is lacking. The flip side of the coin, as illustrated in the case studies, is also true: private tutoring is capable of exacerbating inequalities, and can highlight the lack of quality in the mainstream.

Studies on phenomena such as private tutoring have little meaning without data. Data not only reveal the spread and intensity of scale, but also serve as indicators of policy. Bray, despite the paucity of research in the field and the difficulties data capturers are confronted with, has managed to track down a number of studies and meaningful data sets. Partly to increase the data availability, he organised an International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) Policy Forum. The multi-

national data uncovered by the author covers countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North and South America.

Private tutoring covers all school grades (pre-school to grade 12) and reaches into tertiary education. It varies from one-on-one lessons to the use of electronic media. Demand is driven mostly by parents who desire better school grades for their children. The motives of suppliers range from the altruistic to the ignoble and corrupt. Teachers can also drive demand by abusing their positions in the mainstream to offer private tutoring to their own students outside the mainstream. Corruption can be found in settings where the remuneration of teachers is out of balance with that of other professions and/or not consistent with their training and work volumes.

Policy-makers should note the impact of private tutoring. Bray has recorded the financial size of the sector in wealthy and less wealthy nations. The attention of policy-makers and education economists is generally directed towards the contribution to a country's economy that this activity generates. However, there is also a downside: private tutoring is, especially where driven by market forces, available mostly to parents with financial means. It could therefore increase inequalities and disparities. In addition, parents who employ private tutors have in most cases little access to tax relief, and tutors are seldom taxed on the income.

The social inequalities recorded in the studies cited by Bray are glaring. Private tutoring is available to those who can pay, attracts more male than female learners, and is more available in urban than rural settings. It also seems that more male than female teachers are involved in private tutoring. Government-sponsored programmes, such as 'No Child Left Behind' in the USA, 'Making Good Progress' in England and the 'Voucher Scheme' in Australia, were designed to combat such deficiencies and to ensure that slow learners and those from minorities do not fall (and remain) behind.

Bray's departure regarding the educational impact of supplementary tutoring is to highlight the difference between government-sponsored programmes and those driven by market forces. Tax-payers' money is used to assist low achievers and disadvantaged minorities in the first instance, while the latter focus on the achievement of improved grades and ensuring university entrance in exchange for payment. Policy-makers should take the time to inform themselves about both systems. They should of course also address deficiencies in the mainstream, which are exploited by tutors in the 'shadow' system. Policies meant for both systems could close these gaps. Bray's list of the negative and positive impacts that the 'shadow' has on the mainstream system should go a long way in assisting policy-makers in this regard.

Chapter 2 concludes with informative case studies of Korea, Mauritius and France. Private tutoring in Korea and Mauritius is strongly driven by market forces. It has developed in each country huge business enterprises eating up exorbitant portions of household income. The responses by state authorities did not have the desired effect. The message is clear: policy-makers should address root causes and stop skirting

around the fringes when introducing policies for improvement. As already mentioned, private tutoring owes its existence in part to imperfections in mainstream schooling. Responding appropriately to flaws and shortcomings in the mainstream should have an effect in reducing the 'shadow'.

There is also much to learn from the direction taken in France. There, education authorities refrained from strategies to reduce private tutoring: rather, they acknowledged the imperfections of mainstream schooling and that the latter could benefit from private tutoring, and opted for a more inclusive approach. Tax relief strategies were adopted for parents whose children participate in private tutoring, and the government actively encouraged private tutoring systems.

Researchers and writers are still struggling to provide policy with an appropriate label. One that seems fitting is that policy is or portrays a 'desired state of affairs'. Policy in this regard should be seen as an instrument that will, on the one hand, reduce the negative impact of private tutoring and, on the other, help to harness its potential. Chapter 3 offers a guide to assist policy-makers to avoid the pitfalls referred to in Chapter 2. Policy design, Bray suggests, should not commence without an analysis for policy (in the case of new policy) or an analysis of policy (in the case of existing policy). Studies in the USA, Australia, France, Mauritius and Korea, as well as in other East European and African countries, have shown that ignoring the dynamics of income, culture, old customs, location, gender and ethnicity is a recipe for disaster. Other factors include the financial burden that parents will have to shoulder, in which grades or school phases private tutoring is really needed, and how much time to spend on it. Policy-makers should find the tables on the classification of and the distinctions between types of private tutoring very useful.

Private tutoring tends to flourish when the mainstream system does not respond favourably to improvement policies or strategies. The demand for and supply of private tutoring will persist as long as deficiencies in the mainstream persist. The objective, as suggested by Bray, should not be to deter or negate private tutoring, but to address demand and supply in a manner that will strengthen and support mainstream schooling. The case studies already referred to, and those in subsequent chapters, should serve policy-makers well. Bray holds that the influence and size of the 'shadow' could be held in check through, for example, effecting changes to examination and transition practices. Increasing the confidence of parents and the general public could also keep a lid on the demand for private tutoring. In a compact monograph such as this, Bray does not say much about education systems that are plagued by bad macro-, meso- and micro-management, inappropriate curricula and inadequate funding. These factors serve as open invitations to parents to seek the assistance of private tutors.

Bray also alerts policy makers and education planners to the potential evils associated with the supply of private tutoring. Teachers and tutoring companies frequently

initiate and expand their markets through corruption and monopolies. Teachers sometimes exert pressure on learners through focusing on their (lack of) performance in certain areas of the school curriculum and on the financial capacity of their parents. Tutoring companies may make strong use of the advertising media. Bray offers policy-makers the models used in the 'Making Good Progress' scheme in England, and also models of legal frameworks in European, Asian and some African countries. Regulations in these countries cover aspects such as definitions of private tutoring and private tutors, subject areas, tutor premises, prohibitions, remuneration and taxation, academic requirements, official permission required by tutors, and criminal records. Collectively these frameworks seem impressive, but policy-making and enforcement in individual countries seldom match these efforts. Most countries also lack the necessary mechanisms to apply policy.

The focus of Chapter 4 is monitoring and evaluation. Bray maintains that although capturing data and information is not easy, it can be done. Research shows that tutors, tutor agencies, parents and learners are valuable sources of information. Instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and household surveys (postal, door-to-door, telephone) could all be used to monitor private tutoring. Bray presents an excellent evaluation methodology used by the administrators of the 'Making Good Progress' pilot programme in England. Attainment at the beginning and end of the tutoring period could be used for evaluation. Performance of learners in private tutor programmes could also be compared with that of non-participating learners. Governments, though they need the data for policy-making, do not always have the capacity for these tasks. The advice in such circumstances is to turn to universities, national and international research institutions, and individual researchers, including post-graduate students, for assistance. International bodies such as the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ), the Open Society Institute (OSI) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) also capture valuable (though limited) data on private tutoring.

Bray's remarks in the concluding chapter are as valuable as his discussions in the previous chapters. He reiterates that the 'shadow' should be confronted by policy-makers and education planners with appropriate responses.

Notes on the author

Godfrey Kleinhans is a retired Chief Education Planner of the Karas Region of Education, Namibia

Address for correspondence

Godfrey Kleinhans, Box 1608, Keetmanshoop, Namibia

Tel: +264 63 223620

E-mail: godfrey.kleinhans@gmail.com

■ Dr Mompoti Mino Polelo

Written by Dr Elmon M Tafa

Dr Mompoti Mino Polelo is no more. He died in a horrific road accident on Sunday 28 February 2010. He was born on 3 March 1965. Dr Polelo was a lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, University of Botswana. He obtained a BA plus PGDE from the University of Botswana and an MA from the University of London. Dr Polelo was awarded a doctoral degree by the University of Melbourne, Australia, two years ago. His research interests were sociology of education, education and social history, critical educational policy and higher education, educational inequalities and indigenous minorities.

Dr Polelo was an active and committed member of the Department of Educational Foundations. He was also a member of the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES). In his doctoral studies he pioneered the virgin territory of educational policy-making in tertiary education. He was the only expert in that area and produced some incisive analysis of the impact of neo-liberalism in education. His head of department had just assigned him the role of coordinator of his section – History, Philosophy and Sociology of Education. Dr Polelo was also the coordinator of the PGDE programme.

As a scholar he had set his sights high and was making tremendous progress. He was clearly destined for greater achievements. Despite the fact that he only acquired his PhD two years ago, he already had several publications under his belt and had even applied for a senior lectureship. He passed away before the outcome of his application was announced. Among other things, he had published six articles in refereed journals in the UK, Nigeria and Botswana and had delivered up to 14 conference papers. His PhD thesis was published as a book titled *The Small State and Educational Policy: 'Consultative' Education in Botswana*. Dr Polelo could never be faulted on matters of professionalism. Indeed he was the quintessential professional – just the kind of person the university wanted.

Dr Polelo had fully embraced the importance of team work and an interdisciplinary approach in research, and at the time of his death he was working on several projects with various colleagues in the Department. He was working on a joint article with the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Professor Richard Tabulawa, titled *The State, Markets and Tertiary Education Reform in Botswana*. On the initiative of Professor Tabulawa, Dr Polelo and I were planning to set up an educational policy analysis team in the university. Professor Bagele Chilisa was working on a joint research project with Dr Polelo and Professor Martin Carnoy. I also had a joint book-publishing project with him, which he had initiated. His view was that since we had both amassed a large

amount of data on corporal punishment, we should try to publish a book. We had already persuaded Professor Clive Harber of the University of Birmingham to edit the book. Among his unpublished works is a review of Martin Carnoy's book *Cuba's Academic Advantage: Why Students in Cuba Do Better at School*.

Having served as the treasurer of the Botswana Education Research Association, on Saturday 27 February 2010 he was elected President of the association, just a day before he died.

As part of his community outreach, Dr Polelo was a trade unionist and political activist. He worked closely with the Trainers and Allied Workers Union (TAWU) in order to help them define the direction of tertiary education in Botswana. TAWU was drawing on his expertise in the area of tertiary education policy. He was invited to address the union recently and was working closely with them to try and help them set up a Research and Publications Unit. TAWU had already decided to make him the coordinator of the proposed unit. He died before taking up the challenge. Furthermore, he was collaborating with TAWU and the University of Botswana staff association with a view to setting up a single federation of tertiary workers' organisations.

Clearly, Dr Polelo's passing has robbed the University of Botswana of a young and very promising scholar, but it has also robbed the nation and the workers in particular of a trade unionist and political activist who espoused a working class ideology. Our hearts go out to the bereaved Polelo family at this difficult time. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Notes on the author

Dr Elmon M Tafa is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Botswana.

Address for correspondence

TAFAM@mopipi.ub.bw

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Notes to Contributors

Southern African Review of Education (SARE) is the journal of the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society (SACHES). It was previously published together with **Education with Production (EWP)**, the journal of the Foundation for Education with Production.

SARE will appear at least once a year. Contributors are welcome to submit articles on educational issues with specific reference to educational policy, comparative education, sociology of education, history of education and education with production.

Beginning with Volume 5 in 1999, articles submitted will be anonymously refereed. Articles are accepted on the understanding that they have **not** been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Articles or review essays should not be longer than 8 000 words and may include maps, figures and tables. Reports on research, book reviews and critical comments should be limited to 2 000 words.

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Notes

Footnotes are *not required* ('If it is worth saying, say it in the text, or not at all'). Please cite material in the text as follows: (Hirson 1979: 9) or (Kahn 1997: 202) or (Swartz 1993: 181) or (Brock 1974: 186; Bray & Steward 1998: 66).

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All correspondence should be directed to the SARE Editor, Aslam Fataar, at afataar@sun.ac.za.

ISSN 1563-4418

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