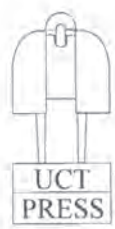
Implementing Education Policies

The South African Experience

Yusuf Sayed & Jonathan Jansen (Editors)

Implementing education policies: the South African experience

Jonathan D. Jansen & Yusuf Sayed (editors)



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Foreword

It is both a pleasure and a privilege to be invited to introduce this book. It represents one of the outcomes of a collaboration between the Centre for International Education, Institute of Education, University of Sussex and the Centre for Educational Research, Evaluation and Policy, University of Durban-Westville, which began in 1994 with a link funded by the British Council. This association has proved very productive for all those involved, and has enabled staff from both institutions to share ideas, contribute to the development of postgraduate courses and generate a series of research projects. A measure of the success of the original link is that since its inception it has expanded in different directions to include a wide constituency of individuals and organisations, and this diversity is reflected in the contributions to this volume.

The need for an analysis of policy implementation in South Africa after the initial period of democratisation is self-evident. Much was promised in the events leading up to the first elections, and in the immediate aftermath, which unleashed a plethora of initiatives to rewrite the educational map of South Africa. And much has been achieved. But many challenges remain, not least the growing realisation that policy, however well founded, must be translated into outcomes. Rhetoric is no substitute for addressing the realities that must accompany meaningful policy-making: the need to build consensus, share ownership, allocate resources, clarify accountability and evaluate progress. All the more so in the vibrant, exciting and sometimes contradictory climate of a nation reinventing itself. Unprecedented windows of opportunity exist to transform the inequitable and exclusionary practices of the past. With these opportunities come tensions between the urgency to act and the need to move forward at a pace which is sustainable, to think the unthinkable but also to learn from the experience of others – even when the messages are not entirely palatable – and to balance the aspirations of different stakeholders with different stakes in the common interest.

This collection is unique. It offers the first considered set of analyses of the policy-making process over the last decade. It juxtaposes the perspectives of politicians, government officials, academics and practitioners, and provides the basis for a rich understanding of how the policy dialogue has evolved. The discussions of the historical, legislative and financial context in the early chapters set the scene for theoretical reflections on the emerging concepts which have informed the policy discourse, and which have been the subject of contestation between proponents of different persuasions. Section 3 collates insights into policy on higher education, and is both timely and strategically apposite as structures are changing to reflect economic, financial and aspirational realities. In the latter sections of the book, the key questions that surround implementation, capacity-building and conditions for successful innovation are exposed to critique and reflection.

The editors and contributors all share a passion to develop an understanding of the new dynamics of educational policy change in post-apartheid South Africa. They interrogate the core concepts – equity, decentralisation, democratic process, redress, transition – that underpin the policy discourse and that are all too often glossed over as having self-evident and unambiguous meanings. The text developed is critical, constructive, perceptive and honest.

This book will be of seminal interest to those directly involved in educational reconstruction in South Africa, both at the theoretical and practical levels. It has more general relevance, though, and stands as a contribution to the international policy analysis

literature. Many of the themes and issues resonate across other educational systems. As several contributions make clear, educational policy is increasingly influenced by aspects of globalisation and by the international dimensions of the policy community. The book is therefore recommended to all involved and interested in educational policy change. It should be of considerable benefit to policy-makers, academics, government officials, politicians, practitioners, and ought to become essential reading for postgraduate students.

This book would not have seen the light of day without the energy, insight, persistence and critical intellect the editors have brought to bear on its creation. Both are well known within the policy community in South Africa, and more widely. Jonathan Jansen is an indefatigable, perceptive and controversial commentator well prepared to challenge comfortable accommodations that others might let pass. Yusuf Sayed has worked over many years to encourage the development of new perspectives on educational policy and management that reflect the aspirations and realities of the new South Africa, and new ways of conceptualising effective change.

For some who make policy, analytic books and reflective thought seem worlds away from the pressures and priorities of managing real systems and shaping their form and impact. Often, they have little time to read. They should read this book. I can do no better than to remind them of an observation made by John Maynard Keynes. It might just provoke more to read this book:

> Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back ... . There are not many who are influenced by new theories after they are twenty-five to thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, that are dangerous for good or evil.

My warmest congratulations to all the authors on a book well crafted.

Professor Keith M. Lewin
Centre for International Education
Institute of Education
University of Sussex

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This book has been made possible through the support and encouragement of many people, and especially the contributors. We offer them our sincerest thanks. We would also like to thank the Centre for International Education, Institute of Education, University of Sussex, and the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Education for their support and assistance in making possible this research project and book.

The book is one outcome of the link agreement between the University of Durban-Westville, where Professor Jansen was formerly Dean, and the University of Sussex Institute of Education. It represents the productive and mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the two institutions and, later, the support and involvement of the University of Pretoria. The book began while Yusuf Sayed was at the University of the Western Cape's Faculty of Education, whose support is also gratefully acknowledged.

We would like to thank the University of Cape Town Press for patience, support and encouragement in the production of this book. A particular thanks to Rose Meny-Gibbert and Glenda Younge, who supported us throughout the process with the highest quality of editorial counsel one could hope to enjoy in a multi-authored book project spanning two continents. Alfred LeMaitre provided meticulous and sustained editing and proofreading that greatly enhanced the quality of the final product.

Finally, but not least, as editors we would like to thank our respective families for their support and patience, and their shared commitment to improving education delivery for all our children.

Jonathan D. Jansen
University of Pretoria

Yusuf Sayed
University of Sussex

Contributors

Jonathan David Jansen

Professor Jonathan D. Jansen is Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. His research interests concern the politics of policy in education reforms. Recent writings on this theme include education reform studies in Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. He is co-editor with Pam Christie of *Changing Curriculum: Studies in Outcomes Based Education* (Juta), and is editor of the journal, *Perspectives in Education*. He currently teaches a class of 25 doctoral students, drawn mainly from government departments, on the theme of policy implementation.

Yusuf Sayed

Dr Yusuf Sayed is based at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex. His research and publications focus on the analysis of educational policy reform, examining the impact of educational policies from a governance perspective, with specific reference to issues of decentralisation, equity and participation. Recent writings focus on educational decentralisation and governance in South Africa and Ghana. He is currently jointly directing research projects on education inclusion and exclusion in South Africa and India and a comparative study of private education in South Africa and Malawi.

Chabanyi Manganyi

Professor Chabani Manganyi is currently Executive Director in the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria. He is a registered psychologist who has made a significant contribution in public life, most recently as the first Director-General of Education in the Mandela government. Formerly, Professor Manganyi was Executive Director of the Joint Education Trust and Vice Chancellor of the University of the North. He has studied and researched in the field of psychology at, among others, Yale University and the University of the Witwatersrand. He is the author of biographies of two prominent South Africans, the writer Eskia Mphahlele and the artist Gerald Sekoto.

Blade Nzimande

Dr Blade Nzimande is currently Secretary General of the South African Communist Party. He has a distinguished career of service and research in education, sociology and industrial psychology. Dr Nzimande was at one time Director of the Education Policy Unit at the University of Natal and Chairperson of both the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education and the ANC Education Study Group in the first democratic Parliament of South Africa. His many publications included important work on violence in schools during the political struggles of the 1970s and 1980s, during which he served as a prominent activist in the Natal Midlands.

Susan Mathieson

Susan Mathieson is taking a PhD in Higher Education Research at the University of Lancaster. Her current research interests are in curriculum restructuring and institutional change. She is based in Pietermaritzburg as a contract researcher in higher education. Before this, she was a researcher for the ANC Education Study Group in Parliament. She has an MA in Post-Colonial Literary Theory from the University of Natal.

Andrew Donaldson

Andrew Donaldson heads the Budget Office of the National Treasury. He formerly taught economics at Rhodes University and has published on the economics and financing of education, social sector planning and South African public finances. He convened the Planning, Systems and Structure research group of the National Education Policy Investigation and served on the Committee of Inquiry into a National Health Insurance System. He was a member of the drafting team of the government's 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy and has overseen subsequent reforms of the national budget process, including the introduction of medium-term expenditure planning and redesign of the national budget documentation.

Naledi Pandor

Naledi Pandor is Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) in the South African Parliament, a body consisting of representatives from provincial legislatures and local government. Ms Pandor obtained her higher qualifications from the University of Botswana and Swaziland, the University of London and, more recently, the University of Stellenbosch. Most of her life has been spent in teaching, including a position as senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town, before she entered the first democratic Parliament as Whip and then Deputy Chief Whip of the ANC. She served as convenor of the sub-committee on higher education in the Education Portfolio Committee, and her many educational commitments include leadership of the Cape Technikon Council.

Crain Soudien

Crain Soudien was born in Johannesburg. He moved to Cape Town in 1973 when he became a student at the University of Cape Town. He is a Professor in the School of Education, University of Cape Town, and teaches in the fields of sociology and history of education. His research interests include race, culture and identity, school and socialisation, youth, teacher identity, school effectiveness and urban history. He has published over fifty articles and book chapters in the areas of race, culture, educational policy, educational change, public history and popular culture. He is also the co-editor of two books on District Six, Cape Town. He is actively involved in a number of social and educational projects, including the Primary Open Learning Pathways Project which is concerned with child literacy, the District Six Museum – which he and colleagues established in 1989 – and the Independent Examinations Board. He was educated at the University of Cape Town, and holds a PhD from the State University of New York at Buffalo.

Ursula Hoadley

Ursula Hoadley completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, and her teacher's diploma and Master's degree at the University of Cape Town. She is currently a Spencer Foundation Fellow at the University of Cape Town. Her PhD research centres around teacher work identity and accountability. Other research interests include learner achievement, school choice and teachers' instructional practices in disadvantaged school settings.

Heather Jacklin

Heather Jacklin teaches in the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. Her research interests are the contribution of space/time and technology to the constitution of various facets of schooling, systemic and school change and issues relating to gender in education. Ms Jacklin played a key role in the development of education policies focused on rural and farm schools, especially during the days of the National Education Policy Investigation. She has published extensively on school provisioning in the homelands under apartheid.

Gatian Lungu

Professor Gatian Lungu died at the beginning of 2001. He was Professor in the School of Public Management and Administration at the University of Pretoria. He held a Professorial Chair at the University of the Western Cape. He also taught at the University of Cape Town and, until his death, was Professor at Africa University, Mutare, Zimbabwe. He obtained a BA in History and English from the University of Zambia; a Master of Education (EdM) in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University; a Master of Public Administration (MPA) in Public Policy and Management from the University of Massachusetts; and a Doctor of Education (EdD) in Administration, Planning and Social Policy from Harvard University. Professor Lungu taught at the University of Zambia between 1980 and 1988, and was Permanent Secretary (Director-General) of the Ministry of Local Government in Zambia between 1988 and 1992. He has published extensively on various themes in public management, development, public policy and educational management in international journals.

Nazir Carrim

Nazir Carrim teaches in the Department of Education of the University of the Witwatersrand. He has published widely on the subject of racism in schools, creating effective schools, education policy and practice, and issues of culture, identity and diversity in education.

Teboho Moja

Professor of Higher Education at New York University and co-director of the Higher Education Program, Teboho Moja has been involved for the last decade in research on higher education policy and was appointed as the Executive Director of the National Commission

on Higher Education as well as Commissioner. Prior to taking the position at New York University, she was the Special Advisor to the Minister of Education. She has served on the UNESCO Committee that transformed the Division of Statistics into a UNESCO Institute of Statistics and continues to serve on the Board of the IIEP of UNESCO. She has also served in executive positions on councils of universities and technikons.

Fred Hayward

Senior Associate at the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., Dr Hayward is a specialist on Africa with more than 25 years' experience as an educator, scholar and senior administrator. He holds a BA from the University of California and a PhD from Princeton University. He has taught at the University of Ghana, Fourah Bay College and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and has been a research associate at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire in Dakar, Senegal. Dr. Hayward has written extensively on both African development and higher education. Among his publications are *Internationalization of U.S. Higher Education: Preliminary Status Report 2000*, two chapters in Madeleine F. Green (ed.), *Transforming Higher Education: A Worldwide View*, and, with Teboho Moja, 'Higher education policy development in contemporary South Africa', in *Higher Education Policy* (4:2000). He has also written, with Dr Daniel J. Ncayiyana, *Effective Governance: A Guide for Council Members of Universities and Technikons* (1999).

Samuel Isaacs

Samuel Benjamin A. Isaacs is currently the Executive Officer of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a statutory body tasked with implementing the National Qualifications Framework. He served the electrical construction industry in various capacities and has wide experience of both formal training and workplace experience in the technikon sector. For seven years, he was the Director of the Centre for Continuing Education at Peninsula Technikon. His work for the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) goes back to 1990; he was the convenor of the Ministerial Committee for Development Work on the NQF and was appointed the first Chairperson of the South African Qualifications Authority in 1996. He relinquished the chairpersonship in 1997 to take up his current appointment. Samuel Isaacs is an ordained priest in the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (Anglican Church) and has served the church as a non-stipendiary (worker) priest since 1984.

Jairam Reddy

Jairam Reddy was formerly Vice Chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville and Chair of the National Commission on Higher Education of South Africa. He has held academic positions at the Universities of London, Temple and Washington and the Western Cape. He is the author of numerous refereed articles and has presented over fifty papers at various congresses. The Universities of the Western Cape, Birmingham and the Open University have recently conferred honorary doctorates on him. He is currently Chair of the Council of the United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan and works as a researcher and consultant in higher education.

John Welton

John Welton started teaching in primary and secondary schools before taking up posts in teacher education at the New University of Ulster and the London University Institute of Education, and Head of the School of Education at Oxford Brookes University. He has worked extensively on education development programmes in Southern Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South and East Asia, focusing mainly on the problems of implementing new education policy after major political change. His publications include books on curriculum planning, policy and provision for special education, the future of cultural minorities, managing teacher education and restructuring education.

Cliff Malcolm

Cliff Malcolm is Professor of Science Education at the University of Durban-Westville. His previous work included curriculum writing at the University of the Witwatersrand. Professor Malcolm's work as both a curriculum theorist and practitioner is expressed through his active work with teachers in South Africa and Australia (his country of origin) in applying outcomes-based education (OBE) in classroom contexts. He has written extensively on the subject of OBE.

Enver Motala

Enver Motala was trained as a lawyer but has spent much of his life in the alternative education sector. He was a key figure in the South African Council on Higher Education (SACHED) during the anti-apartheid days, and played a prominent role in the establishment of the Macro-Education Policy Unit (MEPU) at the University of Durban-Westville. After the election of the first democratic government in 1994, he worked in a senior capacity in the Gauteng Department of Education before continuing a range of consulting positions on education and training, including preparation of the so-called 'size and shape' document for the Task Team of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and ongoing consultations for the Department of Labour.

List of acronyms

ABET	adult basic education and training
AMU	Australian Metalworkers Union
CDE	Council for Development and Enterprise
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CHE	Council on Higher Education
COLTS	Culture of Learning and Teaching campaign
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
CTP	Committee of Technikon Principals
DET	Department of Education and Training
EFTSU	equivalent full-time student unit
EMD	Education Management Development
EPU	Education Policy Unit
ERS	Education Renewal Strategy
ESATI	Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions
ETQAs	Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies
FES	further education system
FET	further education and training
FOSATU	Federation of South African Trade Unions
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
GNU	Government of National Unity
HDI	historically disadvantaged institution
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEF	Higher Education Forum
HEI	higher education institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HES	higher education system
HETT	Higher Education Task Team
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IPET	Implementation Plan for Education and Training
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MEC	Member of the Executive Committee
Medunsa	Medical University of South Africa
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NECC	National Education Co-ordinating Committee
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NLRD	National Learners' Record Database
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSBs	National Standards Bodies
NTB	National Training Board

NUM	National Union of Mineworkers
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa
OBE	outcomes-based education
OBET	outcomes-based education and training
PTSA	parent, teacher, student associations
QPU	Quality Promotions Unit
RAU	Rand Afrikaans University
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RTI	Research Triangle Institute
SAARDHE	South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SACP	South African Communist Party
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASCO	South African Student Congress
SAUVCA	South African Vice Chancellors' Association
SERTEC	Certification Council for Technikon Education
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SRN	School Register of Needs
TEFSA	Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa
TTEMD	Task Team on Education Management Development
UDUSA	Union of Democratic Staff Associations
Unisa	University of South Africa
UNS	unified national system (Australia)

Introduction

Yusuf Sayed & Jonathan D. Jansen

In the months leading to the second national democratic elections after apartheid (June 1999), the African National Congress (ANC) rallied in townships and rural areas, in cities and slums, on a platform of 'delivery'. In the weeks leading up to the local government elections of December 2000, the heart of the ANC's election poster campaign called for 'speeding up change'. The Minister of Education, appointed after the decisive election victory of the ANC in mid-1999, understood clearly that his brief was to deliver:

> I was told by everyone I met that we have created a set of policies and laws in education and training that are at least equal to the best in the world ... [Yet] The public believes that we have a crisis on our hands ... The people of this country gave the national and provincial governments both a mandate and a responsibility to accelerate the delivery of basic services that will improve their quality of life. The people are entitled to a better education service, and they must have it.[1]

In the collective mind of constituencies of the largest party represented in the post-apartheid government, four or even six years of democracy had brought very few tangible changes in the lives of ordinary people. Nowhere was this simple fact more clearly visible than in education, where declining matriculation pass rates, violence in educational institutions, teacher disillusionment resulting from a failed redeployment scheme, and a steadily eroding infrastructure for public schooling had combined to create an urgency about *implementation*.

As acknowledged by the Minister, this dilemma of delivery was certainly not for want of adequate policies. In fact, South Africa had a most impressive compendium of education policies which were widely acclaimed throughout the world (see Cloete & Muller 1998; and Bengu 1998). The sheer weight of discussion documents, Green Papers, White Papers, and laws governing education in time completely displaced 'transitional legislation' in which remnants of apartheid policies coexisted with the steady introduction of new policies (see Chapter 2).[2] The political problem was that, for all the dazzle of post-apartheid education policies, there was considerable distance between policy (official statements of intent) and practice (experiences of teachers and learners in educational institutions). In South Africa-speak, little had changed 'on the ground'.

If this was a political problem for the ANC politicians during the election campaign, it remains an intellectual puzzle for students of education policy in South Africa. How is this gap between policy and practice to be explained? South Africa was by no means a poor country on the scale of, say, Mozambique or Namibia, where the desperate lack of public resources could easily explain away the lack of educational change after independence. Yet Namibia made remarkable, if not sustained, shifts in educational practice after 1990, as did Mozambique after the end of colonial rule in 1974. With respect to policy expertise, South Africa had an embarrassment of riches both within and outside the 20-odd universities, think-tanks and policy research units. Since the days of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), a cadre of policy thinkers had grown up during the 1990s, willing and available to contribute to the grand-scale changes promised in the expanding suite of policy documents. Furthermore, perhaps more than any other African country, South Africa was inundated with international aid in the years following the end of legal apartheid in April 1994, creating a significant

resource base for educational change outside of the dedicated national budget for education. And the ANC had won a decisive majority in both national elections (1994 and 1999), creating, at least on paper, a solid mandate to transform the education system.

Yet, despite the comparative abundance of resources, policy expertise, international aid and political mandate, South African education is awakening to the fact that policy ideals seldom match classroom realities. The most dramatic evidence of this realisation came in the wake of the report of the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee (31 May 2000), which created a potential political crisis for a government that had made major ideological investment in the new curriculum (see Jansen & Christie 1999). The response of the Minister of Education on receiving the report is insightful:

> It is our duty to review on an ongoing basis our programmes and their implementation so that we can establish whether these do take forward our policy intent, and whether they truly result in learning gains for our students and improvement in the teaching practices of our teachers.[3]

This book is in a sense a review of the relationship between policy and practice in South African education since 1994. It is, moreover, an attempt to understand *policy implementation* – its problems, politics and possibilities in the context of a state in transition. But what distinguishes this book from other texts is that it constructs the study as a dialogue between policy-makers and academics, between government officials and policy analysts, between politicians and practitioners. The combination of voices in this book is therefore an attempt to further our understanding of the dilemma of policy implementation from the respective worlds of politicians, policy-makers, policy analysts and practitioners.

The book will be of special interest to those concerned with educational policy in developing countries, given its attempt to understand change on the terms of South Africa's transition to democratic rule. The book furnishes much-needed critical commentary about educational policy change during the first six years of democratic rule (1994–99). In the frenzy of change, there remains a need to reflect critically on policy change initiatives and ask questions about the impact (practice) and meaning (theory) of such changes in the field of education. The contributors in this book pose such critical questions about educational transformation after apartheid. Jonathan Jansen, in his conclusion to this volume, points out that most policy texts 'completely ignore Third World transitions as a site for investigating the politics of education policy-making'. It is this under-exploration of the meaning of policy change that the present volume seeks to redress.

Section 1: Policy origins and evolution

The book first explores the origins and evolution of policy in South Africa. Jansen explores what he calls 'the race for policy' in the years leading up to the end of white minority rule. He outlines the historical antecedents that shaped policy before the election of 1994, and identifies seven players in 'the race', including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the ANC and the ruling National Party. He argues that COSATU won the race to establish what has become the regnant paradigm for policy-making in South Africa. But the questions posed throughout the book include: what kind of victory was won? And with what consequences?

The narrative review of South Africa's policy inheritance shifts to analyses of how policy is made within the bureaucracy. Dr Chabanyi Manganyi evaluates the ways in which policy

was made and contested during the 1994–99 period, reflecting on his involvement as then Director-General of National Education. This frank and rich analysis of policy change and contestation from within the Department of Education provides an unprecedented account of the politics of bureaucracy within the South African transition.

Dr Blade Nzimande provides a fascinating narrative about policy-making from within the cauldron of parliamentary politics in the immediate years after apartheid. This unique account tells us of the struggles and contestations in formulating policy as seen from Dr Nzimande's perspective as then Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education. The evidence is clear: in the parliamentary policy game, the winners were often the privileged sections of society operating in the relief of the politics of reconciliation. The broad democratic movement and ordinary black people in South Africa were not always the most effective policy participants, able to provide technically detailed and articulate responses to emerging policies. Dr Nzimande highlights the difficulties of overcoming the legacy of the apartheid system while simultaneously building a democratic policy environment in which all South Africans could participate, meaningfully. As he concludes, much of the work is 'unfinished'.

Staying with the focus on the politics of making education laws, Sue Mathieson provides an unusually 'thick' description of the role of the ANC's Education Study Group in shaping policy. As a parliamentary researcher, her detailed insights into these processes provide rich data for future analyses of lawmaking in education against the backdrop of transitional politics.

Nzimande and Mathieson raise important questions for understanding policy change in South Africa. To what extent was Parliament and its Education Portfolio Committee a role player in educational change? What support was provided to parliamentarians with respect to educational legislative change? In what ways, and to what extent, did parliamentarians mediate the processes of educational policy change? What was the relationship between the education bureaucracy and the legislature in 'carrying through' the policy ideals of the dominant party? These honest, insider accounts of policy-making by Manganyi, Nzimande and Mathieson allow unprecedented insights into the processes and politics of educational change under conditions of transition.

Section 2: Policy concepts, contests and criticism

This section elucidates the basic concepts, and their contested meaning, which shaped our understanding of education transformation through the medium of official policy. These concepts, the contributors show, are value-laden, historical and political – and had a defining influence on how practitioners (teachers, legislators, policy-makers) understood the possibilities and limitations of changing apartheid education.

Dr Gatian Lungu describes, in practical terms, the ideal processes involved in policy formulation. He highlights the stages of policy development from text to act, within the context of the parliamentary process. The analysis provides an indication of the ways in which civil society organisations can influence policy change. As Nzimande points out, the demobilisation of the mass democratic movement in policy change is not disconnected from the lack of understanding and resources required to influence the formal processes of policy enactment.

Carrim, Soudien and others evaluate two key concepts that have crucially shaped the policy process: equity and decentralisation. Their two chapters highlight the essentially contested nature of these concepts at the level of policy change and implementation. Soudien and his colleagues describe how the discourse of equity stands in contradiction to the notion of choice and marketisation. Like Sayed in the concluding section, they describe how policy choices are made – and the potentially unequal outcomes associated with such choices. Carrim provides an incisive critique of the concept of decentralisation in relation to the different notions of participation embedded in policy texts. He discusses four forms of participation, indicating the conceptual difficulties inherent in each. Carrim concludes that while decentralisation may, as claimed, extend democracy, it holds serious limitations in the South African context – a conclusion shared by Soudien and his colleagues.

These authors succeed in drawing critical attention to the more conflictual elements of policy change in South Africa. They highlight the shift from an open policy formulation process to a more formal system of policy enactment which, despite the good intentions of government, limits the space for civil society participation. Indeed, many (though not all) academics have withdrawn from the form of policy participation represented in the NEPI and have refashioned their policy involvement as consultants. A progressive politics of policy has been displaced by the financially driven imperatives of the policy consultant. This section also underlines the difficulties between policy principles and policy practice, and offers a telling reminder of the essentially contested nature of policy. As the NEPI process demonstrated, the diverse values that constitute educational policy change in South Africa are always in competition and tension, and produce differing actions and outcomes. The important questions that emerge are: how, by whom, and on what basis are decisions made about prioritisation of different value outcomes and action? To what extent, and under what conditions, can all these values be mutually satisfied? This assumes consensus about the meanings of these values. Perhaps, more importantly, it assumes agreement about the policy operationalisation of these values. The key policy conflicts in South Africa, therefore, lie between different meanings and approaches to concepts and values.

Section 3: Policy-making and implementation in higher education

This section focuses on higher education as a case in point with respect to the politics of policy implementation. The chapter by Teboho Moja and Fred Hayward follows the trajectory of policy development in higher education from the struggles of the early 1990s through the period following the 1994 elections. Their powerful account, as insiders to the process, demonstrates how political struggles, research capacity and inherited legacies together forge policy outcomes as expressed in a series of changing policy documents during the 1990s. It is, in their words, an account of 'struggling to meet political and public realities'.

Samuel Isaacs, Executive Director of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), provides another telling insider account of the processes underlying the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the challenges in implementing this framework. He calls for 'making the NQF work by walking reflectively, accountably and boldly'. This chapter offers vivid sketches of real challenges in implementing the NQF framework in higher education, including communication with higher education institutions, the different

interests of stakeholders and what Isaacs perceives as the lack of clarity with regards to SAQA requirements.

Dr Jairam Reddy served as Chairperson of the National Commission on Higher Education, and as Vice Chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville. These vantage points allow him to provide an authoritative account and critical assessment of various regional consortiums that were intended to foster co-operation, but also to alleviate inequalities, between privileged and disadvantaged institutions. Reddy offers an eloquent analysis of the tension between institutional self-interests and regional co-operation.

Jansen critiques the increasing managerialist and market discourses in higher education that produce crude accounts of the processes of globalisation. Throwing a sharp focus on the state, this chapter argues that the new changes in higher education will further disable historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs). Specifically, Jansen highlights the limited attention the state is giving to dealing with the historical legacy of privilege and inequity in South African higher education.

This section makes an important contribution to our understanding of how difficult it will be to change higher education. The radical proposals of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to rethink the 'size and shape' of higher education could benefit from these trenchant analyses of higher education politics (see CHE 2000).

Section 4: Policy capacity and implementation realities

This section analyses the constraints on education policy implementation. The authors question the extent to which the policies that have been formally enacted can be implemented and institutionalised at the school level. John Welton describes the severe capacity constraints for implementation and argues for a more focused approach to training. This chapter underlines the fact that human resource development is crucial for successful policy change.

Dr Yusuf Sayed critically reviews the work of National Task Team on Education Management Development and questions the extent to which it offers a relevant training strategy. He argues that this strategy falls short in its attempt to address the crucial aspect of capacity development at the institutional level. Dr Cliff Malcolm provides an insightful account of the implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE) in South Africa. His conclusion captures the reality of policy change at the institutional level: 'the vision is exciting, enthusiasm is generally high, the spirit of experimentation is widespread, and infrastructure and systems of support are coming into place. At the same time, there are shortcomings in the policy documents, shortages of people who can inspire teachers and model the kinds of teaching and management required, and problems of resources and infrastructure'.

Section 5: Explaining change and non-change in education after apartheid

The concluding chapters by the editors provide two different explanatory frameworks for understanding the dilemma of education policy implementation. Sayed outlines the important discursive influences that have shaped and continue to shape educational policy

development in South Africa, highlighting the tensions and contradictions that these forces generate. Such discursive tensions and contradictions result in policy consequences which militate against the broad values and principles outlines in the National Education Policy Act.

Jansen experiments with the notion of 'policy as political symbolism' in his attempt to explain non-reform in education since 1994. His conclusion is pessimistic: 'the continued reliance on political symbolism as the overarching framework for education policy-making effectively rules out any major transformation of education in South Africa's future. Policy strategy, however, will change with greater emphasis on reducing expenditure under cover of those all-consuming discourses of "efficiency" and "accountability". But schools will not change, and education quality will not improve.'

And this is the key policy question that needs to be asked of the future: can South Africa in fact move beyond symbolic policy and implementation constraints to craft the vision for education so eloquently portrayed in official policy?

Beyond the policy gap: a need for 'joined-up' policy analyses

We extend the analysis of the book by raising raise two key aspects of educational change in South Africa. The book considers the notion of the 'policy gap' – a theme that runs through all the chapters. The 'policy gap' reflects the mismatch between policy intentions, policy practice and policy effects. The 'policy gap' offers a persuasive and seductive line of critique. It highlights the difficulties the new government faced between 1994 and 1999 in matching intention with outcome, and rhetoric with practice. However, the critiques raise two points worth noting.

Firstly, what exactly is being critiqued about the policy gap? Educational policies in a democratic South Africa have a very recent history and consequently their implementation and institutionalisation is far from complete. In essence, what is often critiqued is policy intention. Perhaps policy evaluation in South African needs to distinguish analytically between conceptual critique and implementation critique, a process which requires time.

Secondly, from the perspective of the bureaucracy, educational policy change has been about setting frameworks for change. The implementation issue, if it has been ignored (or at least not foregrounded), has been about creating a unified functioning system and creating the frameworks of change (Sayed 1999). In other words, the immediate priority of the Ministry of Education after 1994 was to forge a unified and effectively functioning system to create the necessary conditions for institutional change. The policy gap cannot therefore be divorced from an understanding of the contextual realities the new Ministry found itself in after the elections of 1994.

Thirdly, an examination of the policy gap needs to understand the nature of the bureaucracy in educational change. Despite the powerful contribution of Dr Manganyi, the role of the bureaucracy has not received sufficient attention in contemporary policy analyses in South Africa. The new bureaucracy which assumed control over the education system in 1994 was an amalgam of the old 'technocrats' from the apartheid era and new senior-level appointments. The new cadres were skilled in the politics of opposition and policy debate, but were not sufficiently well-versed in relation to system management. Moreover, since 1994, South Africa adopted a policy approach which has been awesome in scope and coverage – as the chapters in this review indicate. However, less attention has been paid to the extent

to which the bureaucracy could cope with the rate and pace of change. Samoff (1996) suggests that what was lacking in South Africa was a prioritisation of change, and an over-emphasis on frameworks. The critical question that emerges in post-apartheid educational dialogue is the extent to which this bureaucracy limits, conditions or even facilitates change. This is an area of research that will shed much light on the role of bureaucracies in large-scale educational change. And the dialogue in this book between policy papers of government and quasi-government officials and those of university academics has certainly created bridges of understanding that can only enrich policy work and theorising in the future.

Fourthly, the notion of the policy gap raises sharply the question of policy borrowing. We need to consider what has been borrowed, from whom, why, and what has been modified and adapted in the process. In this, the focus of the policy borrowing from the North is of critical importance – something particularly evident in curriculum policy in South Africa. What is required, however, are rich and nuanced analyses that consider the mediating mechanisms, structures and agents involved in the borrowing, as well as the professional biographies of the 'technical overseas expert'.

As Jansen points out, the policy gap cannot be understood, without contextualising the discussion in terms of the different policy phases between 1994 and 1999. The immediate (post-1994) priority was what can be characterised as streamlining the functioning of the new system and simultaneously overcoming the inheritance of the apartheid system. The priority was thus to adjust to the new realities in respect of previous transitional agreements, ensuring that the new system was up and running in respect of basic infrastructural resources. The second phase was a flurry of policy fora, discussions and texts that attempted to lay out a vision for the new system. This phase was crucial in generating a hegemonic discourse for change which could bring about trust and binding policy behaviour. It was not out of keeping with the richly evocative metaphor of the 'Rainbow Nation', which strove for unity in a context of deep division, suspicion, fear and anxiety. Thus it may not have generated robust and implementable action, but it created the possibilities for such, and captured the euphoria associated with the dismantling of the apartheid education system.

The third, unfinished phase is concerned with the sobering realities of making change happen in practical terms in sites where it is most manifest and effective, such as schools. It is about paying attention to understanding more accurately the dynamic of implementing and institutionalising change. The contributions to the book all emphasise the lack of understanding of the process of making change work at the micro level.

Another unexplored dimension of policy change that requires more critical attention is the articulation (or non-articulation) between the education terrain and other spheres. While there has been some commentary on the relationship between educational policy and macroeconomic strategy (see Chisholm *et al* 1998), analyses of the policy continuity (and discontinuity) between education and other social service spheres, such as health and housing, have been somewhat lacking. What is needed in educational analysis is what the Labour government in the UK refers to as 'joined-up' policy. To use the term, what is required are 'joined-up policy analyses' which examine the mutual interaction and potentially contradictory articulation between different social service spheres.

To illustrate this point, we provide two policy examples which require joined-up analysis. Firstly, the moves toward greater community participation, control and ownership of schools can be usefully examined in relation to the promotion of the community clinics by the health

sector and the restructuring of local government. Second, the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic can best be understood by analyses that traverse traditional boundaries to integrate policy analysis in diverse areas. In other words, the issue of HIV/AIDS requires people from health, social services and education to work together to identify common problems and solutions. This is the lesson learnt by the North West province in its approach to dealing with the problem.

From symbols to practice

Tirisano is the call to action, the platform for educational restructuring in South Africa in the coming years. But it represents more than simply the need to mobilise people for change; it is also significantly a signal (or symbol) about the need to rethink, step back and reflect on the suite of educational policies that have been enacted.

It is no surprise that the Ministry has commissioned a number of educational policy reviews. The most prominent of these commissions are the review of Curriculum 2005 (led by Linda Chisholm), the review of values in the curriculum (led by Wilmot James) and the review of the institutional landscape of South African higher education with a view to the possibility of mergers, closure and rationalisation of institutions (led by Mamphele Ramphele). The Curriculum 2005 review has called for the phasing-out of a much-heralded symbolic policy. Collectively, these reviews suggest a sense of urgency on the part of government to seriously consider educational policy implementation and institutionalisation. They reflect a commitment to move from symbols to practice, which is the focus of this book. As such, the book contributes to voicing critical commentary on the nature of educational policy change in South Africa both from those in government and university-based academics. We enjoin others to join in the conversation as South Africa enters the second and crucial phase of educational reconstruction. Such dialogue among policy-makers, practitioners and policy analysts is long overdue.

Endnotes

1 Prof. Kader Asmal, 'Call to Action: Mobilising Citizens to Build a South African Education and Training System for the 21st Century', 27 July 1999.

2 The dilemma of coexisting legislation in the early transition is most clearly demonstrated in the so-called Grove Primary case, in which Grove and 100 other schools in the Western Cape took the Minister of Education to the Cape High Court on the terms of teacher redeployment and appointment – and won (see Jansen 1998).

3 Asmal 2000:1.

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Policy origins and evolution

This section vividly describes the political cauldron out of which competing educational policies emerged in the early 1990s, and assesses the impact of these ideas on policy development following the inauguration of the Government of National Unity in 1994. Three powerful 'insider' accounts analyse the processes of policy formulation and contestation in the government, bureaucracy and the national legislature. Throughout, the authors demonstrate the ongoing tensions that shape policy ideals, political realities and practitioner capacities.

CHAPTER 1

The race for education policy after apartheid[1]

Jonathan D. Jansen

Until 1990, the production of education policy in South Africa was a relatively simple matter. The state maintained control in ways that were bureaucratically centralised, racially exclusive and politically authoritarian. This pattern was firmly established with the consolidation of white political power in the wake of the electoral victory of the National Party in 1948 on its platform of apartheid. Despite occasional challenges to, and disruption of, state schooling during the 1970s and 1980s, there was only one policy player within South African education: the apartheid state. All of this changed on 2 February 1990, when President FW de Klerk announced the unbanning of the liberation organisations, the release of political prisoners and the acceleration of movement towards the first nonracial, democratic elections of April 1994.

Since 1990, a flurry of education policies was unveiled in anticipation of the formal and legal termination of apartheid: by the private sector, through the Private Sector Education Council (PRISEC) and then the early National Training Board (NTB); by the labour movement, through the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the later version of the NTB); by the broad democratic movement, through the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI); by the self-reforming apartheid state, through the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) – in two versions – and A New Curriculum Model for South Africa (CUMSA); by the international aid community, through multiple, self-funded sectoral reports; and by the non-governmental sector, through a range of different programme and policy positions and alignments. All these actors jostled for position at the starting line in 1990 as they prepared to develop signal policy positions for a 'democratic South Africa'.

The landscape of policy reviews

The second democratic elections (June 1999) generated, perhaps inevitably, evaluative studies on the social and education policies of the first post-apartheid government.[2] The edited volume of Kallaway and his colleagues at the University of the Western Cape was perhaps the first comprehensive review of education policy in the years leading up to and following the April 1994 elections.[3] Published posthumously, Hartshorne gave a rather different account of education policy during the 1990s, from his perspective as an education planner under apartheid and an independent consultant following his resignation as a government official.[4] Pendlebury and Enslin included a series of reviews on education policy in a special issue of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* (vol. 28, 3 1998), as does Crain Soudien in a similar edition of the *Journal of Negro Education* (vol. 66, 4 1999). Kahn produced what must surely count as one of the most incisive accounts of the policy process, through the medium of a case investigation on the fate of science education policy, in the

pages of the *International Journal of Educational Development*.[5] Jansen and Christie generated a focused assessment of education policy and politics, though limiting the focus to perhaps the single most important controversy in the history of South African education, namely outcomes-based education (OBE).[6] And the African National Congress and its allies organised a National Policy Review Conference in October 1998 in which mainly government officials, formerly aligned with the Mass Democratic Movement, produced their own accounts on the progress of education policy since the 1994 elections.[7]

A methodological note

This historical account concentrates on the personal dimensions of policy generation, ie the focus is on the personal contributions, struggles and experiences of a range of individuals (and their organisations) in the course of defining and contesting education policy in the 1990s. Structural accounts of policy abound. Less is known, however, about the importance and influence of individuals shaping the policy terrain on behalf of organisations. The personal is linked to the structural in this analysis, but with the former constituting 'the point of entry' into the review of education policy in South Africa. It is for this reason that extended interviews were conducted with past and present officials, trade unionists and politicians who played or continue to play key roles in defining and defending official knowledge.

Further, this account limits its focus to the school curriculum. This remains the most tangible and volatile symbolic arena within which the state projects and defends official values. The curriculum is, moreover, a stage upon which different actors fight to the death (in the history of curriculum, sometimes literally) in defense of particular symbols, eg language and religion. At the same time, curriculum policy is seldom the unmitigated view of the state; it is, especially in democratic states, a negotiated settlement. While the perspectives of the powerful undoubtedly hold sway, there is to a greater or lesser degree a 'giving of ground' to other interests and factions, whether in the statements of formal policy or in its implementation. Like national flags or monuments, the symbolic value of the curriculum is much more important that its content. Surely, the material cloth of the flag or the granite stone of the monument are coincidental to the portrayed political symbolism of those cultural artefacts?

The early 1990s and the race for policy position

Following the installation of the National Party government in 1948, the apartheid education laws, and in particular the Bantu Education Act of 1953, cemented racialised schooling for more than four decades. The De Lange Commission on Education of 1983, and the mildly reformist response of the state, did not in any way alter the fundamental tenets of apartheid schooling. As South Africa moved towards the 1990s, it *appeared* that the political and educational edifices of apartheid were unshakeable, even as its economic foundations showed signs of uncertainty.

In the context of such stability, it is difficult to pinpoint the public event that best defined the irreversible moment in the movement towards the termination of apartheid. It could be the Cuban withdrawal from southern Angola, Namibian independence in 1990 or FW de Klerk's announcement of 2 February 1990. What cannot be disputed, however, is that in the last few years of the 1980s it had become increasingly clear to South African activists and

political leaders, both at home and in exile, that the days of the apartheid regime were numbered. In the terminology of the times, the politics of resistance needed to give way at some point to the politics of reconstruction. From the University of Pittsburgh to the University of Essex to the University of the Western Cape, 'post-apartheid conferences' started to frame the political landscape at the turn of the decade. It was against this background that 1990 perhaps constituted the official start of the 'race' in policy development in anticipation of the inevitable change of government.

The trade union movement

The first major competitor in the race for policy position was the trade union movement. It is now known that, in the second half of the 1980s, informal negotiations with the apartheid state were already being initiated both from Mandela's prison cell and through senior ANC officials in exile. It was these developments that led Alec Erwin, then a trade unionist, to announce in 1987 to a group of union officials involved in training that negotiations had begun and that they needed to 'start thinking about policy'.[8]

But the origins of post-apartheid policy for education and training lie further back, in a popular labour studies course offered in the 1980s by prominent academics working with the trade union movements – academics like Duncan Innes and Eddie Webster at the University of the Witwatersrand. In May 1983, a young schoolteacher returning from the United Kingdom joined this course, which involved officials from the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU).[9] The teacher was Adrienne Bird, who was to become perhaps the single most important force in the redefinition of education and training in South Africa in the next decade. Bird worked as the then Transvaal Education Officer of the Metalworkers Union and, following the establishment of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) through a union merger in 1987, she became Regional Education Officer for the Wits region. Alec Erwin was National Secretary of the union at the time. It was Erwin who started the unions' Research and Development Groups (RDGs), and Bird became responsible for an RDG for Training. According to Professor Pam Christie, another graduate of the FOSATU labour studies course, 'Adrienne opened up the training agenda in NUMSA.'[10] It was at this point that Bird encountered the artisan training boards, then white and conservative with a narrow skills-training mandate.

The RDG (Training) offered workers training over a three-month period in blocks of three weeks at a time. It was in these training workshops that workers, through extensive and intensive consultations, provided inputs on the limitations of existing training and their aspirations for future development. These experiences were strong formative influences on Bird's thinking and orientation towards education and training. Workers wanted training, but could not progress unless they passed through the formal schooling route. And schooling was geared towards youth, with a rigid set of steps for achieving school qualifications. For Bird and her colleagues, a crude model of a future vision for resolving this problem started to emerge: it consisted of the two legs of a ladder, the one representing education and the other training. The rungs would connect education and training to enable workers to enjoy upward mobility without having to reenter the school system.

At this time another unionist, Bernie Fanaroff, introduced Bird and her colleagues to a publication of the Brisbane-based Australian Metalworkers Union (AMU) which, by

coincidence, had already developed a quite sophisticated version of the emerging 'ladder'. The impact of the AMU concept was immediate, striking and permanent. Bird recalls the sheer elation and excitement that followed their introduction to the work of the AMU. In 1990, the AMU sponsored a group, including Bird, to visit Australia, where she met people like Chris Lloyd and Alister Mackie, representing union workers and employers, for whom the compact between capital, labour and government was a striking feature of Australian politics at the time. Bird presented this exciting model at the NUMSA Congress in 1991. Bird informed Christie of the AMU's work, and Christie herself visited Australia to understand this model through meetings with the same people, but also including academics and educators. It was clear that the new model offered broad banding and multiskilling as a means for increasing productivity as part of a broader economic agenda. In other words, increased productivity was linked to improved training. Reports by influential people like Fynn, Mayer and Carmichael in Australia described this model in terms of 'young people's entry into work'. Moreover, these reports foregrounded the 'competency' debates for the training of workers.

Both Christie and Bird were aware at the time that the Australian debate on 'competencies' was really driven by labour, and that schooling did not appear as strongly in the conceptualisation of this model of education and training. The question remained: where does schooling fit in?

At about this time, debate emerged in Australia over the national curriculum. For many Australian academics, 'competency' was a fuzzy concept, implying the breaking-up of educational processes into small steps. Christie was then introduced to the concept of 'critical cross-field outcomes' – generic statements about performance rather than the task-based training suggested by 'competencies'. This was attractive to Bird and Christie, and comported with their own backgrounds in Freirean literacy. In other words, the generic outcomes softened the behaviourism implied in competencies.

As South Africa moved into the early 1990s, COSATU took up the NUMSA model of training (block training for workers) through the Participatory Research Projects (PRP) which also served as policy deliberation forums for education and training. After the 1991 congresses, Bird was invited to join the National Training Board (NTB). This was historic, in that this conservative, white, Afrikaner-dominated organisation had never before worked with the radical unions or black unionists. Unsurprisingly, the first years of engagement between the NTB and COSATU were 'war'. But by 1993, this channel of work had become the main stream of policy deliberation and political negotiation for the new education and training system that was to emerge in official education policy following the change of government in 1994.

This is a point worth emphasising. Following the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the shifts in geopolitical strategy – especially in southern Africa – and the negotiations between the National Party government, the ANC and others (eventually in CODESA), the most important policy and political vehicle for charting the future education and training system was the NTB. Among the competing policy initiatives under way in expectation of a change of government, it was the NTB's National Training Strategy Initiative (NTSI) which contained the nucleus of the idea of an 'integrated system of education and training'. The idea of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was born.

The negotiations with the NTB were intense, and the emergence of Brian Phillips of GENCOR (a mining house), representing employers, provided a bridge for resolution of

differences between what was characterised (perhaps too crudely) as conservative white employers and radical black unions. Phillips' background was crucial in these negotiations, as he had encountered the concept of the NQF in New Zealand where he had done his master's degree in education.

One question dogged the process: where does schooling fit in? The NTSI was set up in 1993 and established eight working groups. Working Group 2 dealt with the NQF, and reported on its work in April 1994. The ANC in the meantime was developing its own policies for education, first through the Education Desk in Johannesburg, headed by John Samuel, and then through the Centre for Education Policy Development in Braamfontein, which was headed by Trevor Coombe. The ANC's Cheryl Carolus and Trevor Coombe met with Bird and posed the question: how does this all fit together? Because COSATU could organise openly at the time, whereas the ANC could not, the ANC sent two delegates as COSATU representatives (including Enver Motala). At this time, on reviewing the COSATU model, certain leaders within the ANC were adamant that the organisation would not go down this route. This was the first sign of the divergence of education and training within the alliance between the ANC, COSATU and other organisations.

Adrienne Bird (representing COSATU) and Gail Elliot (representing the ANC) worked together unevenly in the months leading up to the first democratic elections. Nevertheless, the so-called Framework for Life-Long Learning emerged in 1993–94. It was clear at this time, however, that the education side was at a distinct disadvantage both conceptually and politically. The model had already been developed substantially by COSATU, and education, represented through the ANC, was a marginal participant. It came down to education inserting singular lines about schooling into an already elaborate policy on training. This is partly explained by the fact that, unlike education, 'framework thinking' was rooted in long-developed constituency deliberations of COSATU.

The influence of Michael Young on the education group led to the suggestion that 'pilot projects' could be the vehicle for testing the way that the new education and training system would work. The projects could, theoretically, open up opportunities for a more assertive input about schooling. At this time, the National Education Conference (NEC) was launched as a broad-based constituency of education stakeholders (such as the National Education Co-ordinating Committee) aligned with the ANC to take 'education issues' into negotiated forums like the National Education and Training Forum (NETF). It is clear, in retrospect, that the education leadership was simply outmanoeuvred in this process. Mary Metcalfe, the ANC's prominent PWV education organiser at the time, asked Sue Reece (a representative of the more conservative teacher union, NAPTOSA) to represent the NEC in the NETF! In other words, the ANC did not bring strong political representation into the NETF.

Another vehicle provided for educational representation was the Inter-Ministerial Working Group (1993–94), which was designed to bring education and labour into closer co-operation. Indeed, this group became the drafting committee of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995, which was explicitly designed to create, through the NQF, a single, co-ordinated system of education and training. And the two ministers in fact jointly developed the SAQA Act after 1994. A publication, *Ways of Seeing the NQF*, further reflected this attempt to bring together education and training. A major blow to integration, however, was the decision after 1994 to have two different ministries – one for education and another for labour – rather than the single entity envisaged by some architects

of the integrated system. So while on paper and in formal policy there was a commitment to integration, in reality the parting of the ways between education and training was a *fait accompli*. There are several possible reasons for this separation.

Firstly, one could argue that the ANC Education Group was simply outmanoeuvred politically within the negotiations towards the integrated system during the first half of the decade. Secondly, the ANC leadership did not uniformly share a strong commitment to the integrated system, in part because of their alienation from the important union history which informed this process. Thirdly, as the elections of 1994 approached, the public disarray in education was singularly unattractive to labour. Carrying education with all its traumas into a new ministry and department was certainly not attractive to politicians in labour. Fourthly, the CODESA processes made decisions on ministerial structures and departments in isolation from the groundwork accomplished in COSATU around the NQF. Fifthly, the ANC education leadership was preoccupied with managing the apartheid bureaucrats who remained in the department and lost serious engagement with the movement towards an integrated system as envisaged by the NQF.[11]

It is unclear as to whether the grand ambition of the NQF will ever be realised. While the first principles of access, mobility and flexibility are already being achieved at all levels, the creation of a single, integrated and co-ordinated system of education and training is increasingly in doubt. The separation in 1994 of the two ministries (and their implementing departments), the increasing bureaucratisation of the NQF in an obtuse language and confusing set of matrices, and the inertia and scepticism among many educational institutions about the NQF's grand ambition, are only some of the factors that may yet preclude the achievement of a fully integrated system.

Nevertheless, what COSATU had in fact achieved was to establish a broad framework within which all education policy leading to and flowing from the 1994 change of government was to operate. The roots of the framework, as described in this brief and personal historical account, explains both changes and continuities in education policy after 1994.

The ANC

The second important competitor in the race for policy position was the African National Congress, which quickly established an Education Desk in Johannesburg headed by John Samuel, the former director of SACHED. The desk coexisted with the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC),[12] a body which had its roots in the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee formed to deal with the education/political crisis in Soweto during the student protests of the 1980s. The NECC was a broad alliance of student, teacher and labour organisations (COSAS, SADTU, COSATU) and was to become the initial vehicle through which the ANC steered the development of education policy. The NECC commissioned the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) to develop what came to be known as 'policy options' for the broad democratic movement. With a board of trustees headed by prominent education and political leaders (including Blade Nzimande, Jakes Gerwel and Smangaliso Mkatshwa), and managed by the Education Development Trust (directed by Ivy Matsepe-Casaburri), the NEPI produced 12 main reports in 1993 outlining policy options for educare, adult education and training, curriculum, post-secondary education and governance. In retrospect, the main contributions of NEPI were the following:

- Establishing a values framework within which a post-apartheid education policy could be conceived, ie the pillars of nonracialism, nonsexism, equity, democracy and redress;
- Engaging academics from universities in policy development, thereby effectively displacing the earlier tradition of policy criticism which characterised progressive academic work in education;
- Signalling the parameters within which a more refined education policy could be developed in the future, eg the establishment of educare and adult basic education and training (ABET) as crucial areas within which to shape future policies;
- Creating a frame of reference within which oppositional or rival policies would invariably develop their own policy positions.

It cannot, however, be claimed that the NEPI actually developed what would become ANC education policy since 1994. A cursory review of what became established government policy (eg reviews of White Papers), compared to what appears in the substantive reports of the NEPI, will reveal more discontinuity than continuity. First, the NEPI could not anticipate the political terms of the South African transition from apartheid. The NEPI therefore issued ambitious and idealistic statements of 'what should be' rather than concrete analyses of 'what would actually happen' given CODESA and the politics of reconciliation. Second, NEPI researchers had limited access to the inner workings of the education bureaucracy (the then Department of National Education, or DNE) and the kinds of legislation and practice governing policy formulation on a day-to-day basis. Third, the NEPI worked in relative isolation from the main engine of education and training policy formation, ie the National Training Board. The influence and authority of the NTB, in its second wave of policy generation (and in particular the NTSI report), could not have been anticipated by NEPI at the time.

Nevertheless, the NEPI came under severe criticism from the more mainstream education think-tanks, such as the Education Policy and System Change Unit (EDUPOL) of the Urban Foundation, for being idealistic and naive. Here the voice of Peter Buckland[13] of EDUPOL, a former bureaucrat in the education department of the KaNgwane homeland, was influential: the NEPI needed to come to terms with the realities of education bureaucracies. In response, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), set up during the NEPI process by the ANC as its official education policy think-tank, developed what was called an Implementation Plan for Education and Training (IPET). This plan was an attempt to translate the NEPI's options into an action plan costed in such a way so as to provide more 'realistic' policies after apartheid. Again in retrospect, the IPET may have created awareness of educational planning (as opposed to education policy), but it was naive to pretend to develop close-to-realistic plans outside of the conditions of education departments such as would exist after political negotiations. For example, neither the NEPI nor IPET could anticipate the single most important factor that would undermine education delivery in the first four years after the installation of the new government, that is, the formation of nine provinces with political and legislative autonomy enshrined in the Interim Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Nor could these policies and plans have anticipated the signal lack of bureaucratic capacity to engage and implement national policy within each of the nine provinces.

The apartheid state

The third important competitor lining up in the policy race in 1990 was the apartheid government's Department of Education. The Department of National Education (DNE) was the de facto policy instrument for education under apartheid, with minor additions to the national 'norms and standards' allowed in the then four white provinces and the different black departments of education. While the ferocity of political oppression continued through official and 'third force' instruments of state power in the townships, the DNE provided a much more open and accessible forum for deliberating on reformist education policies. An important factor in this change of attitude within the DNE was the leadership of two of its most senior bureaucrats, Rolf Stumpf (later to become President of the HSRC) and Gustav Neibuhr. The two officials openly invited ANC-aligned academics into their policy deliberations, such as the early attempts to formulate a new teacher education policy for South Africa. Progressive academics at first steered clear of these invitations, but gradually became part of these policy forums in the shape of the Committee on Teacher Education Policy (COTEP).

The first salvo to be fired from Pretoria during the NEPI development years was the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) which appeared in two versions, the second following public criticism of the first publication. The notion of 'renewal' was clearly an attempt to position the apartheid government favourably in what was then an unprecedented set of reform proposals. But the ERS (I and II) was expressly criticised on the one hand for working within the apartheid paradigm, and on the other for not addressing 'fundamental' problems with the education system. For example, by emphasising vocational rather than academic education, the ERS was perhaps predictably being read as once again offering a dual-track system: vocational training for blacks, and academic education for whites. This was a racial theme established long before the apartheid education laws of the 1950s.

However, a more sophisticated proposal was to emerge post-ERS in the form of *A Curriculum Model for South Africa* (CUMSA). The CUMSA proposal was a direct result of the work of Stumpf and Niebuhr, who had travelled extensively overseas and observed trends in education reform in other countries. One of the important findings of these officials was the utility of 'competencies'[14] as constituting the framework for reforming apartheid education. The trend in much of Europe during the early 1990s was to reconstitute vocationalism within a progressive understanding of education and the labour market. In short, vocational training linked to employment in a changing labour market was couched in a discourse of relevance, progression and opportunity.

The new vocationalism advanced high-skill, high-employment training rather than the menial tasks associated with its earlier form. Against this background, these two government officials conducted a review of the more than 100 different school syllabuses with a view to reducing the emphasis on content that characterised the curriculum under apartheid. The results of the syllabus review and the proposal for a streamlined curriculum hinging on competencies was a much more sophisticated proposal than CUMSA. In the process, CUMSA took on the sacred cow of Christian National Education, including the reduction of time for religious education and the consolidation of syllabuses under one authority. There can be little question that Stumpf and Niebuhr came under heavy criticism from the apartheid political leadership at the time, and that Stumpf's departure was at least partially a consequence of the internal conflict that CUMSA generated within the National Party and its

schools. Niehbuhr, however, stayed on and ensured continuity between the official party line on education through the new and inexperienced government of Nelson Mandela.

The international aid community

The fourth important competitor in the policy race was the international foreign aid community. In terms of sheer influence and weight of funding, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was by far the best positioned of foreign governments with respect to education policy. The early influence of USAID was established through extensive funding of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), many (though by no means all) with well-established anti-apartheid credentials.

The influence of USAID on education policy came about through three kinds of interventions. First, USAID exercised influence through the commissioning of the standard 'sector assessments' associated with its operations in much of the world. The primary education sector assessment (PESA) provided critical information on the status of primary education in South Africa, eg enrolment and dropout rates, teacher experience and qualifications, state of physical infrastructure etc. The tertiary education sector assessment (TESA) fulfilled a similar function for higher education, providing information for policy and planning which was in short supply during the early part of the decade. In doing these studies of the education sector, USAID was able to bring in American expertise alongside South African participants. Unofficially, the real beneficiaries of these studies would be the ANC, which, in the calculations of the State Department, would form the centre of the next government of the Republic of South Africa.

Second, USAID exercised influence by bringing in cutting-edge technologies for recasting education policy thinking in the democratic movement. To this end, the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) was contracted to work with the Education Foundation, a local policy think-tank, to generate and apply policy modelling tools to project educational needs and finance in the future. The APEX model projected enrolment patterns in the future and different financing scenarios for different projections. These sophisticated computer technologies were presented to all key education and political stakeholders in education as a tool for planning provision after apartheid. It would be naive in the extreme to assume that these were simple tools for arming the disadvantaged; the APEX technologies, with their crude assumptions about the real world, were designed to extend American influence and expertise well beyond the life of these contracts. The selling points were rationality, discipline and control. The RTI continued to be the cover for external expertise in the financing of education late into the 1990s.

Third, USAID influence was extended through direct funding of ANC (and other) leaders, often through the United States Information Service (USIS), on study visits to the US to examine education policy and practice in American schools and universities. Examples included the studies of the American community college system, the provision of education for disadvantaged young children and science and mathematics education in high schools. The USAID-funded Tertiary Education Project (TEPS) in Braamfontein was perhaps the most important vehicle for facilitating such visits to the US by South African education and political leaders in the first half of the decade. TEPS was also the vehicle for buying in American expertise to conduct local training in new policy technologies, eg the RTI

modelling systems. While USAID clearly did not formulate post-apartheid education policy in the same way as other competitors, there can be no question that it played a crucial role in shaping the landscape within which education policy was developed after apartheid.

The business community

The fifth competitor in the policy race was the South African business community. Initially, the vehicle through which business influenced education thinking was the Urban Foundation (UF) in Johannesburg. The Urban Foundation and the Anglo American Chairman's Fund provided funding which supported the development of entrepreneurship in education, vocational training and infrastructure for school buildings. Their efforts were consolidated in policy terms when the UF established its Education Policy and System Change Unit (EDUPOL) in 1992. This body recruited two leading education personalities, namely Jane Hofmeyr and Peter Buckland, who exercised considerable influence on education policy in the years immediately preceding the change in government. Both were articulate, high-profile and aggressive communicators of a particular kind of vision for education. Their view of change was encapsulated in 'systems change' thinking which they applied to teacher education, governance and educational finance. Hofmeyr had just completed a doctorate on teacher education in South Africa, and Buckland, as mentioned earlier, came in on the basis of his experience in running a government education department. With the assistance of promising policy trainees, they launched an aggressive and persistent campaign to influence education policy thinking within and around the ANC. Both found themselves on key policy committees of the NEPI; they developed a media strategy for their policy positions; and they wrote and commissioned key policy papers around which public debate and discussion were organised. EDUPOL continued through the reorganisation of the UF into the National Business Initiative (NBI), which now generates substantial international funding for education development in South Africa.

In parallel to these efforts, the corporate world managed a desk called the Private Sector Education Council (PRISEC), which issued position papers on a regular basis as part of their attempt to influence national education policy thinking prior to 1994. Headed by Gerry Bezuidenhout of Toyota, the council's positions advocated technical and vocational education, decried the lack of competitiveness in the education system and called on education to be realigned with the needs of a modernising economy.

The business sector's most effective representation was conducted through the National Training Board (see earlier discussion), where Brian Phillips represented business in the development of the National Qualifications Framework (which addressed the training needs of labour rather than the educational needs of schools). The strategy of capital was multipronged, and it was also represented effectively through the formation of the Joint Education Trust (JET; 1992–93) in which, through alliance with unions and political parties, business could determine funding priorities for education. Not surprisingly, JET's major targets were to improve science and mathematics education, vocational education and training, and teacher effectiveness, and to enhance educational efficiencies. Effectively, the policy ambitions of the corporate sector found expression through the Joint Education Trust.

The NGO sector

The sixth competitor in the policy field of the early 1990s was the non-governmental sector in education. In the absence of a legitimate government, the provision of education in the 1980s peaked in the early 1990s on the back of education NGOs. In educare, the South African Council for Early Childhood Education (SACCE) was an establishment NGO serving mainly white children, but it gradually became a key policy player in this field alongside an amalgam of progressive NGOs such as Grassroots Educare Trust, the Border Early Learning Centre and the Educare Learning Resources Centre. In literacy, Project Literacy (PROLIT) and the more progressive National Literacy Project were major players in both delivery and emerging policy on literacy. In the provision and servicing of schools, the quasi-independent Independent Development Trust (IDT)[15] became quite influential in shaping education thinking through its CEO, Professor Merlyn Mehl. The IDT was not only a conduit for government funding to NGOs, it also shaped official thinking about education policy.

But the most influential NGO at the time was the ANC-aligned South African Council on Higher Education (SACHED), which provided alternative higher education, adult education and training, materials development and distance education. Headed first by John Samuel (later to become the head of the ANC Education Desk) and later by ANC education adviser, Trevor Abrahams, SACHED was a forum for both bringing together education thinkers and directly influencing education policy through active participation by its staff.

The Danish group INTERFUND and the Development Trust provided assistance to NGOs to examine alternative legal frameworks for their existence after apartheid, as well as expertise to consider a broader development paradigm for their work. It is safe to say, however, that education NGOs remained largely disorganised in the period leading to the change of government; only later would SANGOCO (the South African NGO Coalition) emerge as an NGO advocate. This relative disorganisation as a sector, the decision of key international government funders (like USAID) to channel funding directly to the new government in 1994 and the occasional reports on the mismanagement of international donor funding quickly decimated influential NGOs.

The NGOs specifically designed as policy research and development organisations include the university-based Education Policy Units (or EPUs), the Education Foundation and the EDUPOL group of the Urban Foundation. The EPUs, largely through core funding provided by the Swedish government, played a key role in staffing NEPI research groups and participated in ANC education policy forums of various kinds. Their research, particularly in higher education, played an important role in the eventual development of higher education policy after apartheid. But most of the EPUs saw themselves as extensions of ANC education policy thinking, and therefore played that role in ANC forums. The Wits EPU managed to play a key role after apartheid through research for the Gauteng Education Department.

The National Education and Training Forum (NETF)

The seventh important policy body in the immediate run-up to the change of government in 1994 was the National Education and Training Forum (NETF). This was one of several fora established as sectoral negotiating bodies ahead of the inauguration of the first post-apartheid state. The education policy forum was relatively late in getting off the ground, in part because of the severe disruption in township schooling around major city centres at the

time, as well as by the failure of earlier government/civil society 'forums' to address the education crisis. The first attempt was the Education Delegation established by Nelson Mandela following the disastrous 1990 matriculation examinations. The delegation approached the then National Party government about the crisis, and the Joint Education Working Group (JWG) was formed, including government officials and ANC. The JWG failed because of the intransigence of government and the lack of legal status of the group to intervene effectively in the education crisis. In part as a response to the failure of the JWG, a National Education Conference was convened in March 1992 as an 'education patriotic front conference' of political, teacher, student and education service organisations (Badat 1998). The conference aimed to develop:

- 'Broad principles, norms and values that should underpin a future education system;
- Joint strategies and campaigns to address the education crisis; and
- Mechanisms for constructing a new education system and for dealing with education in the transition period.'

According to Saleem Badat, an influential policy player at the time:

> [A] negotiating forum was aimed at bringing together the government and the members of the National Education Conference with the objectives of calling a halt to unilateral restructuring of education and promoting a negotiated restructuring of education during the transition. (Badat 1998:12)

Government refused to establish such a forum until the mass strikes of teachers around salaries and retrenchments in 1993 created grounds for the establishment of the National Education and Training Forum (NETF) on 7 August 1993. The mission of the NETF, apart from resolving education crises and prohibiting 'the unilateral restructuring of education', included a specific policy mandate:

> ... the formulation of policy frameworks for the long-term restructuring of the education and training system which are linked to the human, social and economic development needs of South Africa. (NETF Founding Agreement 1993:1)

The NETF had no legal status and would gradually find itself dismantled under the weight of conflicting and impossible demands on a body without the kinds of resources to effectively intervene in the scale of inequality and disruption which had come to characterise apartheid schooling. Negotiations went nowhere. Severe distrust was evident among the negotiating partners. There were several events competing for the attention of these many senior persons from different organisations. The political negotiations at CODESA were stalled while extreme violence was perpetrated in the PWV region (now part of Gauteng province) and KwaZulu-Natal. And there was little time to get any significant policy deliberations on track, given the upcoming elections. However, despite its problematic legal and political status, the NETF did, in its dying moments, come to define the first significant education policy action of the new government: the review and 'cleansing' of apartheid's school syllabuses in the latter half of 1994.

Endnotes

1 I am pleased to acknowledge that this chapter is a selection from a broader study funded and supported by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) during my tenure as Research Associate of this organisation. The original report is entitled *Framing Education Policy After Apartheid: On the Politics of Non-Reform in South African Education, 1990–2000.*

2 Among the many individual articles, the most impressive cross-sectoral review and assessment of government policy are contained in the sophisticated volume edited by Gitanjali Maharaj, (1999) *Between Unity and Diversity: Essays on Nation-Building in Post-Apartheid South Africa.* Cape Town: IDASA and David Philip.

3 Peter Kallaway *et al* (1998) *Education After Apartheid: South African Education in Transition.* Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press. This book follows Kallaway's well-cited compendium on *Apartheid Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984).

4 Kenneth Hartshorne. (1999) *The Making of Education Policy in South Africa.* Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

5 Michael J. Kahn. (1996) 'Five years gone: a case study of education policy implementation in the transition to democracy in South Africa.' *International Journal of Educational Development*, 16(3):281–9.

6 Jonathan D. Jansen and Pam Christie (eds). (1999) *Changing Curriculum: Studies of Outcomes-Based Education in South Africa.* Cape Town: Juta Academic Publishers.

7 The National Policy Review Conference, Johannesburg, October 1998. Published by the Centre for Education Policy Development and the Education Policy Unit (University of the Witwatersrand).

8 Interview with Adrienne Bird, Department of Labour, Pretoria, July 1999.

9 In 1995, following unity talks among trade unions, FOSATU became part of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

10 Interview with Pam Christie and Adrienne Bird, July 1999.

11 In October 1995, Bird moved into government and is now Chief Director of Employment and Skills Development Services. Christie recently served as Dean of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand and now works in Australia.

12 It is safe to say that during the early years of the formation of the Desk there was considerable tension between the NECC and the Desk, given the assumption of the former that it was the ANC's Education Department 'in waiting.'

13 Buckland's extensive experience in KaNgwane, however problematic his role as a civil servant in a homeland, was sold as indispensable to the political leaders and aspirant bureaucrats of the ANC. Unsurprisingly, the Gauteng Education Department effectively appointed Buckland as its 'Director-General' during the early years of the new government.

14 It could be argued that the earliest rendition of 'outcomes-based education' found its logic within this thinking of apartheid bureaucrats and their CUMSA proposal. The notion of 'competencies' is closely linked with the concept of 'outcomes' associated with the OBE of the new government.

15 I use the term 'quasi-independent' in part because the IDT was used as a somewhat more legitimate (and less complex) delivery agent for apartheid government funding for education. The IDT started with a R2 billion injection of apartheid government funding.

CHAPTER 2

Public policy and the transformation of education in South Africa

N.C. Manganyi

In June 1999, the Ministry of Education presented a report to the incoming Minister of Education following the second democratic general election of that year. The 'Status Report', as we called it, was a compact yet informative review of the transformation of education since the advent of democratic rule. For the purpose of this chapter, I will discuss three critical issues which are touched upon in the report. I refer to what we described as:

- 'Five years of change';
- 'The transformation of learning opportunities'; and
- The policies, Acts of Parliament and regulations which constitute the legacy of our country during the last decade of the last millennium.

These developments had their antecedents in two principal events. First, the 'struggle politics' which started in earnest during the 1970s and rose to unprecedented levels of mobilisation in the education agenda of the mass democratic movement during the late 1980s and 1990s. And second, in the ANC policy platform contained in what came to be known as the 'Yellow Book' on education policy development in South Africa.

When the Ministry of Education identified the years between 1994 and 1999 as 'the years of change', it was in recognition of certain undeniable achievements, which are outlined here.

The Mandela administration unleashed profound forces of democratisation which could not but leave a significant imprint on the country's education and training system. Most of the changes at work in our education system are irreversible. The main thrusts of these changes are outlined below.

In the first place, the complex disestablishment of nineteen apartheid education departments was initiated and completed. The pre-1994 education dispensation was replaced by a unitary, nonracial system of provincial education management and administration. Over time, the nine provincial departments, together with the national department, started the complex task of functioning as a single national system of education and training.

Without regard to race, class, religion or creed, South African children and university students were brought under 'one roof'. These changes in the school and higher education sectors were brought about in compliance with the provisions of the South African Schools Act of 1996, the Further Education and Training Act of 1998 and the Higher Education Act of 1997.

Some of the landmark developments associated with the South African Schools Act were the introduction of compulsory school attendance for all children between the ages of six and fifteen, as well as the establishment of elected and representative school governing bodies in public schools throughout the country.

What was achieved through this new policy and legislative environment was the national recognition of education as a fundamental human right. What was also demonstrated in practice was the democratisation on an unprecedented scale of public-policy-making and implementation.

One of the earliest tasks of the first democratic government was the building of a national platform for a system of education that integrated, in the most intimate of terms, both education and training. We achieved this through the early enactment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995. There is no coincidence or interplay of chance factors to account for the fact that the SAQA Act was the most significant virgin legislation to come out of the first democratic Ministry of Education. In writing about undeniable achievements and irreversible changes, I want to refer in passing to two other important developments.

The teaching profession in South Africa has always been characterised by divisions of race, gender and ethnicity, and was always steeped in inequality. By 1999, we were able to report that while a great deal remained to be done, much had been achieved in bringing all the teachers into one kraal, as it were, so that their professional and other interests could be governed by one Act of Parliament (Employment of Educators Act, 1998) and one professional council, namely the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

We did not go for the 'old wine in new bottles' solution. Instead, we introduced new approaches to learning and teaching, the real stuff of which education is made, by initiating what came to be known as Curriculum 2005 – thus seeking to break, once and for all, the stranglehold of the old Bantu Education and Christian National Education pedagogy of the not-too-distant past.

For current purposes, it should suffice to refer to the fact that the Status Report refers to many other matters of importance, such as the first South African School Register of Needs (SRN) which was completed in 1997: this is a comprehensive national database which became the primary platform for the country's education management information system (EMIS).

All in all, the first five years of change produced four groundbreaking education White Papers, six Acts of Parliament and nineteen associated government notices covering regulations of one description or another. Additionally, a number of statutory and non-statutory councils and bodies were established to facilitate the implementation of government policy. The most notable amongst these was the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Council on Higher Education (CHE).

To avoid being accused of an undignified form of breast-beating, I would like to quote (at some length) from the Ministry's own assessment of the difficulties which were encountered in the process of 'transformation of learning opportunities', particularly in as far as this involved 'the poorest of the poor' in our country, and questions concerning the quality of education. The Status Report summarised the challenges as follows:

- Inequality is still writ large in the education system, and too many families are on the receiving end of an unacceptably low standard of education delivery. The reasons for this state of affairs are not hard to find.
- Education organisation and management are integrally linked with larger state, legislative and social systems. Problems and stresses in the apparatus of the state, and malfunctions or pathologies in the society at large, all play out in the education system and interfere with delivery.

- The government is engaged in reconstruction and development and fiscal stabilisation at one and the same time. Choices and trade-offs are inevitable, and many targets have been deferred.
- It is impossible to exaggerate the degree of inequality in our education system, in terms of material conditions and professional capacity, and hence the gravity of the task we are engaged in.
- Education delivery has proceeded while the apparatus of the new educational administration and governance were under construction. Things have gone badly wrong in some provinces. In particular, suspensions or changes in top leadership and crucial delays in appointments of key managers have carried severe consequences.
- The creation of a new organisational, policy and legislative environment has run ahead of radical improvements in the material conditions of education and the quality of educational practice. International experience indicates that, even under favourable conditions, major pedagogical changes and improvements in a national system take a decade or more to become institutionalised.
- Nevertheless, the systematic changes brought about in the first five years are irrevocable, and they provide a progressive, durable basis for accelerated improvement.

The mainsprings of public policy

In considering what may be described as the mainsprings of public policy, it is helpful to begin by raising a series of questions. This will enable us to search for the most probable and meaningful answers.

The nature of public policy, its development and subsequent implementation in real time, is one of the most important features defining democratic societies and, more specifically, of those in transition. The significance of the social policy process arises from the fact that in many important spheres of national life policy is both destination and road map to other, yet undetermined, destinations. These are the so-called unintended consequences of policy.

To raise the question of why it is that policy plays such a crucial role in the governance of modern democracies is to invoke discussion about the social purposes and value of policy-making. My experience has taught me that doing policy work involves working with scenarios; it is doing futures work in the deepest sense of the word. Not surprisingly, both idealism and a streetwise practical-mindedness are essential qualities for policy-makers. Idealism is a necessary vehicle for projecting certain deeply held beliefs and values. Practical-mindedness, a practical intelligence as it were, is the vehicle for policy implementation.

It is not often that we think about values and morality when we debate government policy and legislative programmes. Yet in both policy- and law-making there are values and public mores which are either supported or undermined, often by default. The truth is: it is the values at the heart of policy-making and legislation which enhance the integrity of public policy and law.

There is a level at which both policy and law serve the same purposes. This should not surprise us once it is accepted that they arise from similar social impulses. Public policy sets out a government's intentions regarding certain matters that have a bearing on the common good and welfare of a people. I like to think about sound policy as the art of the long view, the view from the balcony: sculpting the present and the future.

In established democracies, policy is developed and implemented for purposes of reform in the social services arena. It enables the ruling elite, the party in power, to place its distinctive political identity on the national agenda. In transitional societies, and especially in societies embracing democratic rule after decades of oppressive authoritarianism, the conditions and strategic policy direction are less well defined but, of necessity, more radical in intent. In established democracies, it is often sufficient to add value to established ways of running the national agenda. In societies in transition (here we can use our country as an example), the undiluted purpose is to uproot old practices, beliefs and values about the social order and to replace them with new ways of conducting national business. Our experience in South Africa is beginning to show that there are complex political, attitudinal, economic and even psychological forces at work in societies in transition. It is the interplay of such forces which determines the depth, scale and sustainability of changes on the sociopolitical landscape.

On a 'nuts and bolts' level, it is possible to think of policy as a precursor to legislation. By this account, good policy should facilitate the enactment of sound legislation. Both policy and laws arise out of perceived social and other needs in society at large. In important respects, both policy and legislation are the creators of norms and standards. This regulatory function enables us to understand more precisely why it is that policy is more often than not the incubator of new social institutions.

I have theorised the policy process up to this point based largely on our experience in South Africa during the first five years of democratic rule after the historic liberation of our people in April 1994. Our country has turned out to be a shining example of what I would like to describe as a developmental paradox. I deal with this idea very briefly. Compared with other countries that have made the transition from authoritarianism to democratic rule, our country has been singularly privileged. I say this because there was no scarcity of policy ideas about education when the ANC-led government came to power in 1994. The fact is – and this is the important point – there was a rich store of policy ideas about the education system as a whole. Combined with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, this bounty of policy ideas may have helped to shape the policy horizons of the first five years of democratic rule.

The paradox arises from this state of venturesome over-preparedness (in itself a virtue) within the context of a government and society in the making. In other words, there is a real danger that policy-making during the first five years was motivated largely by an impulse to obliterate a painful past in the face of some ignorance about the fibre and texture of the state and society in the making.

Agency and the accountability chain

To talk about agency in the development and implementation of public policy is to search for what one may describe as mediating forces, social structures, and so on. On the face of it, it may appear as if government is always the main and undisputed originator of public policy. This is only partially true. The proverbial 'spanner in the works' is the fact that even the most established democracies are characterised by considerable differences in their patterns of social organisation. Allow me to illustrate the complexity in social organisation and its possible impact on agency in policy-making through a brief reference to the emerging situation in our country.

Since 1994, the right to vote has become universal on attainment of an appropriate age. Men and women who are of voting age are free to join and vote for the political party of their choice. Another essential feature of our society is equality before the law, particularly the supreme law, which is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

This much is true, and yet during the past few years there has been ample demonstration of the fact that our society remains deeply fractured and divided. We have ethnic, racial and class differences and these have affected the ways in which we relate to each other as members of different social strata, different racial and ethnic groups, as well as different communities. What is more, these differences, specifically the assumed racial differences, have influenced people's life chances to such an extent that at the beginning of the new millennium the majority of Africans in our country remain victims of social exclusion and poverty. They constitute the bulk of our country's substantial underclass. What has this got to do with policy and the implementation of government policy?

It has a great deal to do with the question of agency, because the ability of individuals to exercise their democratic rights, to participate fully in the social, economic, cultural and political life of a nation, is closely related to literacy and numeracy levels. What is at stake here is the kind of voice which people have to make their interests count. In a situation of rampant and entrenched inequality, such as we have to live with in South Africa, the development of an elite is almost inescapable. Such elites as have arisen in our country, represented most visibly by single-issue interest groups, have often taken it upon themselves to determine what the country's policy agenda has to look like. And therefore, one of the most daunting challenges in recent years has been the search for the manner in which the silent majority could be given a voice on major policy developments.

The question about how to deal with policy development in situations in which majority opinion is muted has raised profound ethical dilemmas when complex matters such as abortion, the death penalty and gay rights were considered and legislated. Low levels of functional literacy and numeracy combine with cultural beliefs and practices to marginalise the participation, will and voice of the vast majority of the people.

Without doubt, this is a matter of profound importance, since government policy is largely prescriptive in the sense of telling people what to do, how certain things are to be handled in the public domain, the circumstances under which certain practices are unacceptable, and so on.

We can extend this reference to 'the voice of the people' by considering, however briefly, the related matter of how the difficulties we have just considered may be dealt with through a structured process of policy-making. Any democratisation of policy-making is dependent upon the overarching rights culture of a country. In other words, there is a necessary harmonisation of constitutional provisions, the workings of state departments as instruments of the executive, as well as the scrutiny mandate of the legislature through its portfolio committees. Anyone who is familiar with the situation in South Africa will know that a framework and, indeed, a tradition of public participation in policy development are well established and have, in the case of education, been alive for several years now. The policy accountability chain is established and maintained by these formal arrangements. The important point to make in this regard is that all the education laws and policies of the first democratic government were developed through structured public participation opportunities which involved members of the public, the Cabinet, education experts, teacher

organisations as well as the Education Portfolio Committee of the two chambers of our national Parliament. There is, however, an important principle which needs to be highlighted at this point.

The government and the legislature are guided by what I would like to describe as the accountability imperative: the anticipation of all possible consequences. In practice, this means that questions of sustainability, affordability, impact on the viability of institutions as well as intergovernmental relations need to be considered. One of the most important questions which needed to be asked was: how much will it cost? We discovered as we went along that the policy development process needed to be placed within the context of the government's expenditure frameworks and macroeconomic policies. I return to this issue within the context of the discussion of policy implementation, which follows later.

Education and intergovernmental relations

After the completion of the work on the Education White Paper 1 early in 1995, it became very clear to the Ministry of Education that institutionalisation of the policy-making process had become an urgent necessity. It became clear to us that communities in our country remained deeply divided along racial lines and that the right and power to make and declare national education policy was being actively contested. During the early days of the Government of National Unity (GNU), the National Party under FW de Klerk mobilised stakeholders such as school governing bodies to adopt certain politically preferred positions on many important education matters. Indeed, the education authorities in the non-ANC-controlled provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape believed they had a right to hold on to as much of the policy-making power as they could lay their hands on. We also found at the time that certain civil society organisations appeared uncertain about the right of the government to govern!

At the heart of the sometimes acrimonious debates of the time was a subterranean struggle for power, ie the power to make policy and thereby eradicate the racial inequalities of the past.

We had witnessed the scramble in 1994 and early 1995 to leave a permanent imprint on the first White Paper which set the horizons of the democratic government's intentions with regard to the country's future education system. By the second half of 1995, the struggle for the soul of South African education had intensified considerably. Why did this come about?

The democratic government's transformation agenda for education was set out in the first White Paper. It was clear in 1995 that the country was crying out for a unitary, nonracial, nonsexist and equitable education of sustainable quality. We also knew that all this could only be brought about if the Minister of Education was able to fulfil his national policy-making role in respect of the education system as a whole. We learned from experience that a legal framework for policy-making was necessary in order to settle the contest around the right and power to make policy, while in the process ensuring the democratisation of policy-making. Understandably, at that time we asked ourselves many questions about public policy.

We interpreted the Interim Constitution in ways that anticipated what was yet to come in the final Constitution of 1996. We examined our experience of intergovernmental relations, the relationship between the national Ministry and the provincial administrations, in search

of both areas of co-operation and separation of powers. To the extent it was possible, both ends and means had to anticipated.

At the end of much soul-searching, we struck upon the idea of a national education policy bill that would provide the regulatory platform for policy development and implementation in an extremely divisive political and social environment. I believe that the National Education Policy Act (NEPA), which became law in 1996, was, in the final analysis, an augmentative piece of legislation. It confirmed certain constitutional provisions while adding to the law through interpretive amplification.

As pointed out earlier, we intended to make the NEPA a vehicle for the creation of public participation opportunities in the policy-making process. The new law ensured that the concept of co-operative governance between national and provincial tiers of government was placed on a firm legal basis. Through the NEPA, three statutory bodies were to be established, namely: the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), the Heads of Education Committee (HEDCOM) and the National Education and Training Council. After the NEPA had become law, it was mandatory for all education policy affecting the school and college sector at the time to be considered by these statutory bodies before further examination by the national Cabinet, the public at large and the legislature. In this way, education policy became the Minister's policy which had been democratically determined to the greatest measure possible.

Through this legislation, the Ministry of Education had set out the accountability chain for the fulfillment of national objectives by indicating the procedural steps which could be taken by the Minister and Parliament should a gross violation of national policy occur at the provincial level.

The Ministry's intentions were very clear to those who were willing to examine the legislation without undue prejudice. We experienced a rude shock when the Bill went through a stormy passage on the floors of both chambers of the legislature. Opposition to the NEPA was spearheaded by the National Party and supported by the Inkatha Freedom Party and the Democratic Party. These parties formed the opposition which petitioned the Constitutional Court on provisions in the NEPA in Johannesburg in November 1995.

It was clear even at the time that the petitioners could not find a common basis to present the Constitutional Court with a unified legal challenge. It was for this reason that each of the senior lawyers who appeared for the various parties had to find some basis in law for what were, after all is said and done, political grievances. As always, what was at stake was how to protect the gains of the past under the guise of the promotion of a sound constitutional democracy. It was pathetic to see the extent to which people could go – ostensibly on the basis of honourable motives. As for the National Party, their strategy had been a combination of filibustering and intimidation. At the Ministry, we were certain that the Constitutional Court would vindicate our position. After the matter had come before a full bench of the Constitutional Court in March 1996, Justice Arthur Chaskalson, President of the Court, made the order that the National Education Policy Bill 'is not unconstitutional on any of the grounds advanced on behalf of the petitioners'.

The reader might wonder why I am devoting so much attention to this particular law and not to the others referred to at the beginning of this chapter. Consider the following: in the early history of the transformation of the South African education system, the NEPA will stand out as having been one of the most divisive policy initiatives both inside and outside

Parliament. It also stands out as the only comprehensive legal framework outside the Constitution which outlines the directive principles for intergovernmental relations between the central government and provincial government departments. Finally, it serves the dual purposes of being a template for the regulation of policy development while being, in equal measure, an instrument for the implementation of education policy.

Implementation of education policy during the transition

I think it is important to state at the outset that policy failures often arise out of a variety of factors. This means that there are both intrinsic and extrinsic sources of policy failure. Implementation may be unsuccessful largely on account of the fact that the policy in question was poorly conceived and developed. An absence of resources to support implementation of policy represents the operation of extrinsic factors. It stands to reason that during the transition to democracy in South Africa both types of factors were at play in determining the chances for successful implementation of government education policy.

Let me also state something that we often take for granted. I refer to the fact that one of the most visible outcomes of government policy in any society is the existence of a variety of social institutions. In our case, the exuberant optimism and idealism of the post-liberation era led to the creation of a number of social institutions, both statutory and non-statutory. Institutions play a mediating role between government and the delivery of goods and services to the people. The expectation is always that their public activities will add both capacity and value to policy outcomes of one kind or another. In a constitutional state such as our own, where the separation of powers is an important legitimating and guiding principle, statutory institutions such as the Council for Higher Education and the South African Qualifications Authority enjoy a high degree of operational autonomy.

Although these and similar institutions are financed through parliamentary appropriations, they are expected to conduct themselves independently from any direct interference from the executive.

Experience during the recent past has taught us that institutions may remain relatively ineffectual in the practical realisation of policy objectives, largely as a result of under-resourcing both in human resource and budgetary terms. On the other hand, a regulatory body such as the SAQA can create policy overload within the education system through the creation of a qualifications environment which is well beyond what could have been anticipated by both the executive and the legislature. The important lesson in all this is that when statutory bodies fail in the execution of their mandates, delivery of goods and services is compromised.

A second instrument for the translation of policy into delivery of services is the public service. In certain defined instances, the ability of the public service to act on policy may be compromised in a variety of ways. In our country, we have a complicated set of intergovernmental arrangements within a three-tier system of government: national, provincial and local.

In terms of education, the Constitution is delicately poised in differentiating between policy-making for national purposes and executive functions between the Minister of Education and his provincial counterparts. The full effect of our constitutional arrangements is that the national minister has executive accountability for higher education and all national

policy in respect of the school system, while the provincial members of the executive council have executive responsibilities for the schools under their jurisdiction.

More visible to the public, however, was the problem of limited administrative and management experience in education and the public sector as a whole. It is important to remember that in the short period of its existence, the new public service had no collective (institutional) memory in its ranks regarding such important matters as the rule of law, love of one's country, public accountability and service. Complicating the situation in some provincial administrations was widespread role confusion between politicians and senior public servants. In a number of cases, this resulted in conflict which contributed to an unacceptably high turnover of senior education officials.

There is, therefore, a sense in which both the scale and complexity of the education changes envisaged were well beyond the human and material resources available at the time. That this was indeed the case was recognised by the national government as early as 1997. By this time, the government was active on two fronts. Following a countrywide audit of provincial administrations, the Cabinet directed that there should be a more hands-on, supportive and interventionist approach in national-provincial relations. Within the education sector, the Cabinet's directive was somewhat belated but nevertheless welcome. It had been possible for us at national level to work very closely with the provincial education departments. The support which was provided over the years and at various times took the form of capacity-building and joint national-provincial oversight over important administrative and operational matters. All the work referred to was undertaken strictly in accordance with the spirit and letter of the provisions of the National Education Policy Act of 1996. It should also be remembered that all work covering both national policy development and implementation, as well as education labour relations and the everyday running of the school system, were managed administratively by HEDCOM and politically by the Committee of Education Ministers.

Within the context of the NEPA, we were able to establish standing and ad hoc committees of HEDCOM to work jointly on matters such as examinations, the procurement of learning materials, education labour relations matters and provincial education budgets. Workshops were arranged for provincial officials on an ongoing basis to enhance understanding of emerging education policy and the modalities of implementation. On two occasions, the national department found it desirable to establish specialised project teams, in the office of the Director-General of Education, to deal with special policy implementation difficulties in the provinces. The first of these special projects was what we called the Provincialisation Unit, established in late 1994. Its task was a mammoth one: the disestablishment of 19 apartheid-era education departments and the establishment of a single system provided us with a refreshing perspective on personnel costs in the education system and the expenditure patterns and deficits in the provinces.

There were significant questions to be tackled regarding the allocative efficiencies of our nine new provincial departments of education. This task was complex in scale, in law and in terms of the logistics of management of thousands of teachers, schools, property and records. The second unit was established at the beginning of 1998, and we called it the Education Support Unit. This is a small, rapid-reaction unit available on demand to assist the provincial authorities with routine and other system maintenance issues. The nerve centre for the

initiation, coordination and maintenance of these activities was, and still is, the national Department of Education in Pretoria.

The work that I have just described, and much else that was done to transform the education system, was assisted in no small measure by an ongoing dialogue between the national Department of Education and officials from the Ministry of Finance. In the beginning, the conversation was difficult. The difficulties were largely associated with two factors. Officials in both state departments took some time to reach common ground with respect to the overall thrust of education policy and its expenditure requirements. The impact of the separation between policy-making by the national Minister on the one hand and implementation of policy and budgetary control by provincial education ministers on the other, was not fully appreciated. What complicated the matter even further was the fact that during the first national budget cycles, the Ministry of Finance was busy with its own transformation of the country's budget system. Significant expenditure overruns by some of the provinces brought home the need for closer working relationships between the departments of Education and Finance.

It is no exaggeration to say that the education expenditure review process, which developed over time around the government's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), had a profound impact on our understanding of the education system as a whole. The framework and its review processes made it possible for the Ministry of Education to examine its policy priorities. We asked questions about the main expenditure drivers in the system. Fortunately for us, by this time the exhaustive School Register of Needs had been completed. For the first time in our history we knew where all the schools were located, what the teacher-pupil ratios were, what the class-pupil ratios were, whether schools had access to clean water, sewerage systems, electricity, transport and telephones. The country had come face to face with the bitter truth about the shameful neglect, over time, of the infrastructure needs of the vast majority of the country's black population.

Knowing this much provided us with a refreshing perspective on personnel costs in the education system and the expenditure patterns and deficits in the provinces. There were significant questions to be tackled regarding the allocative efficiencies of our funding system. We found, for example, that billions of education rands were being spent annually on children who were too young to be at school and others who were overstaying their welcome at school. On the basis of an informed understanding of expenditure drivers in the system, what became very clear for the first time was the existence of inefficiencies in the education system which had to be tackled even before significant new investment could be considered. Following the outcomes of two sector review initiatives, a series of policy measures were considered for implementation by the Ministry of Education.

These included (to put the matter as briefly as possible) the progressive reduction over time of provincial personnel budgets from the 90% range to about 85%. We provided guidance about acceptable provincial teacher-pupil ratios. The problems associated with underage and overage children were tackled through the development of new national policy on admissions and progression through the school system. Even more importantly, we finalised the school funding policy to ensure that the poorest schools in the system became the primary beneficiaries of provincial budgetary provision.

Recall that the first formal pronouncement by the new democratic government on the question of education financing and budget reform was made in the Education White Paper 1

in 1995. Undoubtedly, this was a matter of great public interest for both the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' in our society. Many white South Africans were fearful because they expected a loss of the privileged position which they had enjoyed for decades, while the black majority faced unrealisable expectations about an education windfall. It must be remembered also that during 1995 and 1996, the Minister of Education retained responsibility for the entire education budget in the country. In practice, this meant that he retained accountability for financial allocative efficiency over provincial budgets, and he did in fact shift resources to the country's poorest provinces. Those were the days of what were known as function committees, which worked on a single budget vote. These committees were replaced in 1997 by the MTEF process. By the beginning of 1999 the following features were prominent: there were three-year forward estimates of departmental expenditures; a new focus on expenditure outputs and outcomes; a national-provincial co-operative approach to planning and expenditure analysis; the provision of more detailed budget information as well as political ownership of budget priorities and spending strategies.

From 1997 onwards, the Education Sector Review Team undertook detailed analysis of provincial education spending patterns and policy priorities. This represented the government's first formal and comprehensive attempt to reconcile emerging policy imperatives with rigorous budget analysis and planning.

Extraordinary circumstances demanded extraordinary measures. In the final analysis, the transformation of the education system in South Africa must contend, and eventually come to terms, with the profound evil of apartheid. As we developed new policy and laws for the transformation of education we were acutely aware of history, of Verwoerdian notions about education and race. Prejudice and mindsets had sunk deep and settled firmly in the South African psyche. We knew that for the majority of parents education remains something which is best left to the school and, at worst, to the government to take care of. Over the years, a profound alienation had asserted itself among pupils, teachers and parents in the black communities. This was an extraordinary situation which the Education Ministry was forced to come to terms with. Progress on this front was essential before the country could reap the rewards of the new education system.

The government's strategic response to the endemic breakdown of learning and teaching in the African sector of the school system was to dramatise in language and through an appropriate medium the fact that the breakdown of effective teaching and learning had gone beyond being a simple educational problem. What was required was a strategy that would reach as large a proportion of the adult and school population as possible. We wanted the country as a whole to understand the new uses of school governing bodies and participative school governance. We wanted parents (black parents in particular) to return to the schools as domains in which they have a supreme interest. Together with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, we commissioned a 13-part television series which was called *Yizo Yizo*.

The story line of the series, executed by a superb young African director with an assembly of choice actors, was a product of extensive and painstaking research into conditions then prevalent in township schools in the country. The producers of the series and those of us in government were determined to stay as close to the bone as possible; to tell the whole unpleasant truth and nothing but the truth. *Yizo Yizo* took the country by storm. What people saw, or were afraid to see, on their television screens were realistic images of violence,

lack of discipline among teachers and pupils, extensive abuse of drugs and female students as well as remarkable indifference on the part of the parent community.

At the time, public responses ranged from cries of indignation in the media to positive engagement with the issues at schools and in homes throughout the country.

As pointed out earlier, the series helped viewers in general, and parents, teachers and students in particular, to understand the new ways in which the government was thinking about schools and the education process. *Yizo Yizo* was an audiovisual interpretation of emerging education policy in a democratic South Africa. Some people may want to know why the Ministry of Education and SABC Education chose such a harsh and at times unpalatable instrument.

The ministry had made the assessment that the situation in township schools had assumed grave proportions. It was clear that there was not going to be a magic wand to reverse decades of indiscipline and antisocial behaviour. Remember that *Yizo Yizo* was bedded in the framework and strategies of the government's Culture of Learning and Teaching Campaign (COLTS) which had been launched in a Soweto high school by President Mandela. The COLTS campaign was standing on many legs and *Yizo Yizo* was one those legs. It was an excellent example of policy mobilisation and advocacy in action.

Truth and reality are not made up of smooth edges. Dramatists and novelists have known this for many centuries and in different cultures and civilisations. They tell it like it is. The value of cathartic experiences has been recognised through the ages. The government was not afraid of the truth. We stood firmly behind the series even at a time when some members of the SABC board were beginning to be weak-kneed.

To put the matter in the simplest terms, we have to acknowledge that in dysfunctional schools the participants have an attitude problem. The teachers had forgotten what it means to be members of one of the most esteemed professions in the world. As for the parents, they had forgotten that the education of children is a twenty-four-hour job of their own, a responsibility which cannot be relegated to teachers and government officials. Here, as in many realms of life, there are mutual rewards and obligations. The pupils had catapulted themselves into a premature adulthood of sex, drugs and violent crime.

Psychologists have accepted that working with the internal world of individuals, with habits and mindsets, is one of the most demanding tasks which one can undertake. The task is even more difficult when attempted on a large social scale. To be decisive means knowing when the extraordinary event has come one's way and to recognise there and then that extraordinary measures are required.

The detractors of *Yizo Yizo* revealed a profound reluctance to accept that there was a war out there in the township schools. Those of us who wanted to wage war were the objects of sarcasm and ridicule. No responsible government nor its people can get away with studied indifference in the face of a national dilemma of the kind described above. You have to consider the following to appreciate the depth of the crisis.

Consider the consequences of a school system in which a significant number of teachers are underprepared and rarely teach; where pupils do not learn when they are supposed to apply their minds to school work; and where the parent community displays no sustained interest in school matters and the physical and social wellbeing of their children. Among other effects, such a situation leads to diminished life chances for the children involved. In the final analysis, the loss is even greater as far as the country's human development capacity

is concerned. In today's post-industrial world, the social, economic and even political consequences of this underdevelopment of human resources are far-reaching indeed. Put simply, the continued development of a large, uneducated underclass will continue to pose an immense danger to the development of a viable democratic society. For it is within the kind of circumstances suggested here that some of the answers to questions relating to large-scale unemployment, social exclusion, rampant crime and general lawlessness must be sought. Such social dislocation is what South Africans witness in everyday life – rape, murder, corruption and an endemic disrespect for the laws of our land. It is for these reasons that policy-making and implementation are crucial education commitments of our new democracy.

CHAPTER 3

Inside Parliament: making laws and contesting policy in South African education

Blade Nzimande

I should begin by declaring that the role of Parliament in education policy-making is a changing, evolving one.[1] We inherited a system of policy-making that was completely closed. The previous work of portfolio committees was not open to public scrutiny and debate. So, what was the role of Parliament in policy-making? It is important to recognise that we tried to change the inherited system through the establishment of new rules and procedures. There is still debate within Parliament and among ANC members about the appropriate present and future role of Parliament with respect to policy-making in education. There is no model, only a process of trying to understand better ways of making laws and policies for education. With this background and caveat, I now wish to describe and explain how I saw the role of Parliament since 1994 with respect to the education policy process.

I joined Parliament after the historic victory of the African National Congress in South Africa's first democratic elections in April 1994. Between 1994 and 1999 I served as Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education as well as the Chair of the ANC Study Group on Education. It is important to understand the roles of these two groups.

The Portfolio Committee

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee is a multiparty body constituted on a proportional basis, ie political parties are represented in proportion to the size of their electoral gains within Parliament. So, for example, the ANC had approximately 66% of the membership of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee. According to the rules, each portfolio committee has policy oversight responsibilities for the relevant government department, in this case the Department of Education. The Portfolio Committee has significant powers; for example, it can summon any government official to give evidence. But we did not really use these powers as given, since we wanted to create a more positive role for people to participate in the policy processes. But it was never clear exactly what the scope of authority of the portfolio committees really was; for example, how far do you go in your understanding of 'policy oversight'? There was a disadvantage, though, in using the Portfolio Committee for extensive consultation; while we wanted to take along all members of Parliament, this was not always possible for reasons of time. To carry out our full mandate as a portfolio committee, it is clear that we needed more resources than were available to us. We nevertheless played a very important role in the policy-making process, despite this being a new experience with new rules and limited resources.

One of the major roles of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee is to put policy into legislative effect. Here, it is important to understand two processes. Firstly, the Department of Education would prepare a policy document on which they would brief the Parliamentary

Portfolio Committee. This document could then appear as a Green Paper, which is really a discussion document open to the public. Comments on this document are taken up in the development of a Draft White Paper on the issue. The Draft White Paper is now policy and may be adopted by Cabinet as formal government policy in the form of a White Paper.

The Department of Education may then require the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee to develop legislation to give effect to the new policy, particularly where this policy requires changes to existing or inherited laws. We would then table a Bill in Parliament (drafted by the Department of Education after consulting with the state legal advisers). But before we table the Bill, we as a committee would go through it word by word, sentence by sentence, clause by clause.

In practice, however, the Department of Education did the actual policy development work. For example, we were simply briefed about the plans to implement Curriculum 2005, but the Department of Education drove the entire process. From time to time, the Minister would consult the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee with respect to emerging policies and we would then engage these policy positions.

One should say, though, that it was often the organised and privileged sectors of South African society that made the most effective use of this vehicle for participation. Such groups would often present very sophisticated and well laid-out technical papers for our consideration. This was not always true of the broad democratic movement or the majority of people in South Africa.

I am disappointed, though, with the role of the media within these public hearings, since they could have served an important educational role in building public interest on education policy matters. We would have three days of rich public debate on, say, the South African Schools Bill, but the media would look only for sensational items rather than provide systematic coverage of the legislative and public hearings process.

The one piece of unfinished business of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee during my tenure was the fact that we had the power to interact with the provinces but did not really do so. Our plan was to visit each of the nine provinces, but there simply was no time. We did, however, invite MECs (Members of the Executive Committee)[2] to provide a provincial perspective on an emerging policy, eg the South African Schools Bill. We would ask MECs how they thought the policy would impact on their particular provinces. But we could have done more in this regard.

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee would also exercise its authority with respect to specific problem cases in education. For example, consider the Vryburg High School case, where there were allegations of racist beatings of black children and their segregation within the school premises. In such cases, we could have summoned the school principal, the chair of the governing body or other stakeholders. But we did not do this often enough and as planned.

The ANC Study Group

Now it is important to distinguish the role of the ANC Study Group within Parliament. While the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee was a multiparty forum, the ANC Study Group was the caucus of the party on education matters. The ANC Study Group really came into action only on crucial issues facing the legislature. For example, the proposal to outlaw corporal

punishment would be taken into the Study Group for debate. These debates were often vigorous and intense as we took these issues apart among ourselves. I would actually have preferred to take these debates into the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee itself, but this was not possible given the politics of the time. The Study Group therefore became a forum for establishing, through debate, a preferred position to be taken into the Portfolio Committee for a decision. Furthermore, we used the Study Group to bring our own constituency into the policy-making process, but this included organisations not necessarily allied to the ANC. The Study Group was a mechanism, then, to resolve internal differences among elements from the broad democratic movement. It is important to note that in this context the Study Group, though formally composed of about 30 members, would have different people attend its meetings at any one time depending on the issues on the table. In this way the Study Group broadened participation in the policy process, especially among parliamentarians.

This raises the question about the relationship between the then Minister of Education, Professor Bengu, and myself as Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee and the ANC Study Group. I am aware of the fact that the media sometimes created the perception of conflict between these two positions and that the Portfolio Committee and the Study Group were at times in conflict with the Department of Education. I only wish to say that of all the ministerial portfolios, the most positive and co-operative relationship was the one between the Minister of Education and my own office. For example, not a single amendment would be proposed by the Portfolio Committee without first taking it to Minister Bengu. We would convene hearings, and my researcher, Sue Mathieson, would give us a detailed analysis of the hearings which we would then also share with the Minister so that he knew what some of the debates and issues were around a particular policy position. In addition, Minister Bengu ensured that one of his advisers, Thami Mseleku, sat on the Study Group as a member. This meant that the Minister was constantly in touch with the issues being debated within his constituency. The Minister and I had an unwritten agreement that if either one of us needed to see each other, we would do so within 24 hours. I would sometimes call him in the very early hours of the morning and ask him to set aside about 30 minutes in his day for a meeting, and he would oblige.

We tried to influence policy jointly. One example was the push by private, and especially church, schools to become government schools. Recall that in the White Paper there is reference to public schools on private land. These schools, especially in the Catholic community, were quite willing to become public schools but wished to retain their religious character at the same time. This was a sensitive constitutional question. We believed strongly within the Study Group that no public school should reflect one particular religious perspective. But Minister Bengu prevailed on us as a committee and, as a result, we allowed public schools with a particular religious perspective to exist in South Africa. I believe that this situation is unconstitutional, but the public has not challenged it.

Policy contestation

I have so far described in general terms the role and scope of authority of Parliament in the making of education policy. It might be useful now to reflect on specific instances or 'cases' of policy contestation which demonstrate the crucial and contested role of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee.

The first major contestation to face Parliament concerned the White Paper on Education and Training of 1994-95. The backdrop to this contest was a set of earlier debates between the ANC and the National Party on single-medium schools. The National Party wanted the issue of single-medium schools resolved as a constitutional matter, but they were defeated on this matter. They then tried to reintroduce the debate through the White Paper. It is important to understand that, from the perspective of the ANC and the Portfolio Committee, this was the first White Paper on Education and Training. We saw it as a crucial document that would formally collapse the apartheid edifice in education. We wanted a triumphalist White Paper that celebrated in formal policy terms the victory of education struggles. For this reason, the first draft of the White Paper, released as a discussion document, generated intense resistance and defiance among white National Party politicians. They attacked what they saw as the document's militant language. The matter was so contentious that it actually brought Mandela and de Klerk together for serious bilateral discussions. I recall being summoned by the President to meet a delegation of numerous conservative Afrikaner groupings, some not even represented in Parliament, on issues relating to the White Paper.

We decided that the language of the White Paper could be changed and made more acceptable to these groups without giving ground on the actual goals we wanted to achieve through the new education policy. We therefore changed the language of policy without losing ground on the issue of single-medium schools. We insisted that learners retain the right to be taught in the language of their choice, making some allowance for implementation of this position where practical. It is this background that explains why the Education Clause was one of the last three clauses to be settled in the Constitution.

It is important to understand our actions as ANC parliamentarians in the context of the times. Remember these were the days of the Government of National Unity (GNU). It was important at that time to secure the transition. The situation was explosive and we were on the brink of civil war. Our policies were therefore crafted in a context where ensuring a smooth transition was as important as developing progressive policies for social transformation. The question I therefore posed at the time was: 'why use language that will alienate powerful constituencies when we can use a different language to achieve the same goals?'

A second case study of policy-making in education concerns the provisions of the Schools Act. We wanted free and compulsory education for the first nine or ten years but were forced to focus attention on the practical implementation of this proposal. If education was free for all, then extra resource demands would be made on government and we would be unable to redress inequalities in the system. The state would be putting money into education on behalf of those who could afford to pay. More seriously, we would then be creating a mediocre system across the board, the middle class would leave the public school system and the quality of public school education would decline sharply. We would rather have schools and parents who could afford to pay for their schooling to do so, thereby making available state resources to support public rural and township schools. We grudgingly accepted this compromise position on free education after consultative inputs by outside experts during public hearings of the Portfolio Committee. For this reason, we chose a fourth option from the three presented to us by the so-called Hunter Commission into the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Education in South African schools. Furthermore, by not placing a 'cap' on school fees, we knew that we would be allowing privileged schools to hire more teachers and thereby perpetuate a two-tier system. This was a difficult compromise.

In conclusion, what lessons were learned for education policy and politics from these five years of service in Parliament? I think the most important experience for me has been learning how to nullify an existing system while simultaneously building a new one. For example, we needed to reform the matriculation examination system in practical terms, but we could not immediately discard it. This generates all kinds of contradictions and dangers, such as the emergence of a two-tier public school system. This legacy is of great concern to me. Another important lesson I take away from the first five years is the value of listening to the public – however it is defined.

Endnotes

1. Parliament is in fact the national legislature. It consists of two houses, the House of Assembly and the National Council of Provinces, the latter presenting provincial concerns in the national legislature.
2. The MEC in South Africa is a Member of the Executive Committee of the provincial cabinet. Though not officially the case, these persons were often referred to as 'ministers' by the general public.

CHAPTER 4

The role of the ANC Education Study Group in the legislative and policy process

Susan Mathieson

In 1994, the ANC came to power with a massive election victory in South Africa's first democratic elections. In the field of education, as in every area, a radical vision was being forged for a transformed education system based on equity, democracy, the redress of past inequalities and responsiveness to developmental needs. Although the new ANC MPs had no experience of Parliament, they brought a sense of urgency and idealism about the role of Parliament in transforming society. The ANC had to learn how it was to function now that it had gained access to state power, and how best to co-ordinate its activities across Cabinet, the various ministries and departments and Parliament itself. At the same time, it had to build new relationships with its mass-based constituencies outside of government, when those constituencies had no prior experience of working with Parliament and government, but only of opposition politics, and when most of the leadership of those organisations had taken up positions within the state at different levels.

This is the background against which this chapter addresses the role of the ANC Education Study Group as it worked through the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education during the first five years of democratic government. It looks at the role of the ANC Education Study Group within the Portfolio Committee, and its relationship to the Ministry and Department of Education, the ANC-SAP-COSATU tripartite alliance, other progressive organisations and civil society in the education sphere, and the role played by the ANC Education Study Group in holding these relationships together within the emerging structure of the ANC as government. The role of the ANC Education Study Group in the unfolding education policy process is brought out in more detail through a reflection on its role in the passage of key policy and legislation in this period.

These insights are based on my experience as ANC education researcher in Parliament from 1996 to 1999. They do not refer to the role of the ANC Education Study Group since June 1999.

The role of portfolio committees in the new Parliament

When the ANC came into Parliament, it brought high aspirations for making the legislature a more meaningful site of democracy in the unfolding state. During the apartheid years, portfolio committees were perceived as little more than a rubber stamp of the executive. With the ANC in Parliament, new roles were mapped out for the portfolio committees. They were identified as being responsible for fulfilling sections 57(1) (b) and 59 (1) (a) of the Constitution, which make provision for 'representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement' and facilitating 'public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the Assembly' (Manual on Committee Procedure for National Assembly Committees, 1997). A significant addition to the role of the portfolio

committees has been to give them responsibility for 'monitoring, investigating, inquiring and making recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, rationalisation, restructuring, functioning, organisation, structure, personnel, policy formulation or any other matter it may consider relevant' in relation to the relevant government department (Manual on Committee Procedure for National Assembly Committees 1997). It has been much harder, though, to influence these broader policy issues than to amend legislation, which falls directly under the authority of portfolio committees. Portfolio committees have limited resources, and for this reason tend to focus on the key pieces of legislation. Since 1994, the primary role of the portfolio committees has been to manage the passage of legislation through Parliament by facilitating discussion, holding public hearings and deciding on any amendments to bills before they pass into law.

Portfolio committees have certainly taken on a new vigour since 1994, but the public face of portfolio committee work provides only a limited window on their scope as vehicles for extending democracy. Given the oppositional nature of parliamentary politics there are inevitably limits to the extent of open discussion around sensitive policy issues in such an open forum as the portfolio committee, where each political party is seeking to present to the public its considered view on a policy issue. This is in the nature of parliamentary democracy, even if it may be handled in a more sophisticated manner in more established democracies. And given the size of the ANC majority, it is not as if the party has to win the support of other parties to pass legislation, although such consensus is often sought.

However the ANC's commitment to democratising Parliament should not be sought just in the open debates of portfolio committees and in the House, but also through the processes that lie behind these. It is in certain of the ANC study groups, and the relationships they have built with the ministries and the Cabinet on the one hand and with the constituencies the ANC represents on the other, that some of the greatest strides towards a new democratising role for Parliament lie. In a sense, developing a strong and independent legislature is as much about establishing democratic practices within the ANC as it is about establishing democratic practices between political parties. And, given that the ANC is likely to be the majority party for many years, this will be critical to establishing a dynamic democracy in South Africa.

The functioning of the ANC Education Study Group in relation to the Education Portfolio Committee

Portfolio committees have ANC study groups that act as the ANC caucus to the portfolio committee, although not all of these meet regularly or function as effective caucuses. In education, the ANC Study Group was particularly strong. All issues were discussed thoroughly and openly in the ANC Education Study Group, which met each week prior to the Portfolio Committee, and clear positions were agreed upon to take to the Portfolio Committee. There was a general rule that ANC MPs should not participate in Portfolio Committee discussions if they had not attended the ANC Education Study Group and understood what the ANC position was on an issue. The Study Group had a relaxed and comradely atmosphere. All important aspects of education policy and legislation were considered in depth, and the quality of discussion around fundamental issues was generally high.

The consensual and relaxed atmosphere of the ANC Education Study Group was matched by the oppositional and more formal style of the Education Portfolio Committee. In both meetings, the chairperson set the tone for discussion, but his role in the two forums was very different: in study groups, there was a genuine seeking of consensus and an openness to be guided by the views and insights of members, while in the Portfolio Committee it was the ANC that set the agenda for decision-making. ANC MPs came into Education Portfolio Committee meetings as a confident and united team who faced the opposition parties across the floor. However, as the opposition parties, in particular the National Party, weakened, it became an increasingly uneven match. With little valuable debate taking place between parties, the most useful role of the Education Portfolio Committee became that of a forum through which the Department of Education, as well as various stakeholders in education, could flag issues in a public forum and inform the public about developments in education policy. The serious debate around policy options and hard questioning around tensions in education policy were taken up in the ANC Education Study Group and only taken to the Education Portfolio Committee once they had been addressed to the satisfaction of the ANC.

The significance of the Portfolio Committee and Study Group chairpersons

It is important not to generalise about the functioning of study groups and portfolio committees during the first five years of democratic governance. While a significant number of study groups and committees made important contributions to the shaping of policy and legislation, some remained passive observers of the legislative process, or saw their role as simply echoing the ministry rather than playing a complementary role to the executive. The differences between portfolio committees can be largely accounted for by the differences between their chairpersons. This is not to say that chairpersons did all the work, but that the work done by other committee members was largely dependent on the role carved out for the ANC study group and portfolio committee by the chairperson.

One of the reasons why the leadership of chairpersons was so important was that few structures were in place to define the work of portfolio committees or to provide adequate support for portfolio committee or study group work. The power of portfolio committees was potential and constitutionally guaranteed rather than actual. It was up to chairpersons to make sense of the possibilities and limits of the portfolio committees through a combination of political 'suss', good management and communication skills and sheer hard work.

The most active and able chairpersons have tended to be those committed to fundamental transformation and worked closely with progressive organisations identified with the ANC. They have also tended to have strong views on their role in reshaping the legislation coming before their committees. At the same time, the ANC in the executive has sought a greater centralising role, which serves to reduce the power of the ANC in the legislature in shaping policy. The potential exists for tension between the ANC in the executive and in the legislature.

However, the enormous capacity of the ANC to weather divisions is still evident. The important role played by the ANC in the legislature is increasingly being recognised by the executive and assimilated into the ANC policy process. Often, when ANC chairpersons have insisted on changes to legislation, they have proved to have their ears closer to the ground in picking up potential problems with proposed legislation and policy, and they have played a

uniting role within the ANC by bringing the broader constituency of the ANC into the policy process. In the second term of office, there has been a greater recognition of the role of the legislature in the policy process, with the Governance Committee playing a bigger part in mediating between the legislature and the executive.

The ANC Education Study Group was fortunate to have Dr Blade Nzimande as its Chair for the first five years, and the quality of the ANC Education Study Group and the Education Portfolio Committee was significantly influenced by his motivating role. He had been actively involved in education struggles and in the development of ANC education policy prior to 1994. Before taking up his position as an MP, he had been director of the Natal Education Policy Unit, which had been established to formulate ANC education policy as it moved towards taking over government. He commanded respect among the progressive education organisations, and displayed a deep intellectual grasp of the issues involved in education transformation. However, he did not see himself first and foremost as an educationist, but always contextualised his approach to education transformation within the broader political perspective of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). As a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the ANC and of the National Working Committee (NWC) for the first two years, he had the authority to manage the political processes within the ANC in relation to education policy. At the same time, his position as the Chairperson of the SACP brought him close to the trade union movement, as well as providing a broad interpretive framework through which he understood developments in education.

The role Nzimande developed for the ANC Education Study Group was to use the ANC majority in the Portfolio Committee to shift the balance of power in education towards the ANC and the constituencies it represents. The twin goals pursued by the ANC in the Education Portfolio Committee were to shore up the authority of the Minister of Education and government in the process of transforming the education system, while at the same time empowering the constituencies that the ANC represented by giving them access to the legislative and policy process. This was achieved by establishing an open, democratic and consultative process in the ANC Education Study Group with regular representation by the Ministry, Department and organisations affected by the legislation, paralleled by a Portfolio Committee process that was determined by the mandate of the ANC.

However, it is not as if the Chairperson ran the ANC Education Study Group single-handedly. Unlike in many of the portfolio committees where the ANC had little prior experience, the ANC had always been active in the education sphere. Many of these activists were represented on the Education Study Group, including key leaders from the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), Membathisi Shepherd Mdladlana and Randall van den Heever, who were successive deputy chairs of the Education Portfolio Committee, In a very real sense, the ANC Education Study Group worked as an experienced team with a strong central core, with each member bringing their particular contribution to the work of the group as a whole.

The role of the ANC Education Study Group in the political co-ordination of ANC education policy

One of the key challenges experienced by the ANC since coming to power has been how to retain and build upon the political coherence that it built up as a liberation movement. In

established parliamentary democracies, it is accepted that when a political party comes to power the party structures become less active as party activists and officials enter the structures of the state. In South Africa, the shift of power from a mass democratic movement outside the state to a majority party at the helm of the state has been even more dramatic. Since coming to power, the ANC has reasserted that it should maintain its character as a national liberation movement, given the enormous task of transforming South Africa. However, implementing this will not be easy and it remains to be seen to what extent this will be implemented in practice.

The ANC has had the task of building new linkages between its mass-based constituencies outside the state and those who are working in government at different levels. It has not been easy to maintain a coherent policy-making process across these different sites of power. There has been a tendency at times for the ANC to fragment as those in government come under pressure to deal with new constituencies and to make political compromises, while those outside of government come under pressure to pursue the interests of their particular sector, in the absence of a shared consensus on the direction of ANC policy.

The relationship between the ANC inside and outside of government has been coloured by the different tensions that exist within South African society, in particular the enormous gulf between social classes that persists even as the racial makeup of the ruling class has shifted. These structural inequalities are part of the inheritance of a developing country that has to contend with a globalised capitalist system in which it must compete for its survival on a playing field where the rules have to a large extent been set by the most powerful players. The space available for small developing nations to negotiate their own terms for participating within the global world order is uncertain. In fact, the major debates within the ANC during the first five years have been over the extent to which the ANC can define the terms on which it relates to national and international capital without undermining the health of the economy. The leadership of the ANC has tended to take a cautious view, with the primary focus of the new government being to first seek acceptance within that order by managing the economy along orthodox lines. This more cautious approach is to an extent inevitable, since the ANC as government has had to take over the state as it has found it and to make it work. However, the mass-based and progressive organisations have had an important role in ensuring that the long-term commitment of the ANC to fundamental transformation is constantly placed on the agenda.

The ANC Education Study Group has played an important role in establishing political linkages between the ANC both inside and outside the state in the education sphere. Through this it has encouraged the development of a coherent process for ANC education policy development, and has helped to prevent splintering between the ANC in government and its allies outside of government. As democratically elected representatives of the ANC, who are located between the ANC inside and outside of government, MPs have an important role in mediating the development of government policy. While ANC study groups are not official structures of the ANC, their location in Parliament and their powers to amend legislation and influence policy through the portfolio committees have made them important sites through which the ANC and its allies can become involved in the development of policy by the different ministries. The role of MPs is distinctly political rather than managerial, which frees them from the constraints placed on government departments and, to a lesser extent, on the ministries.

The next two sections will explore how the ANC Education Study Group worked to build an ANC policy process that could span government and the mass-based and progressive organisations outside of government during the party's first five-year term of office.

The relationship of the ANC Education Study Group with the Ministry and the Department of Education

The relationship between ministries and the portfolio committees is inherently difficult to manage, despite the fact that the minister and the chair of the portfolio committee usually come from the same political party and so should not have substantive political differences. Ministers are members of ANC study groups, but can find it difficult because of other commitments. This difficulty arises from the ambiguous balance of power between the minister and the portfolio committee, since while the portfolio committee has the power to amend any legislation and to call the work of any government department to account, there is a need for the minister to be seen to be driving the political process. In addition, legislation and policy is in theory directed by the ministry, while the task of departments is to give shape to ministerial policy. Ministers will often defend the legislation and policy emanating from their department on principle, even when it is incorrect and does not reflect ANC policy, because to do otherwise would be to admit that the minister is not driving the policy process.

Within departments, too, there is a tendency for ANC cadres to identify with the bureaucracy they are a part of, so that if a department has developed legislation that turns out to be problematic in terms of ANC policy, they will tend to defend that legislation rather than to engage openly with the ANC in the legislature or in the progressive organisations. What this points to is the difficulties in building coherent ANC policy across different parts of the state and civil society when ANC cadres in each of these sectors are bound by day-to-day loyalties within their particular sector. A challenge for the ANC since moving into the state has been to maintain a balance between the coherence of the ANC as a political party across these different sites of power, while at the same time embedding an ANC perspective within government.

Given this context, the relationship between the Education Portfolio Committee and the Ministry and Department of Education in the first term of office was remarkably amicable – in fact, unusually so, when compared to other portfolio committees.

It is even more remarkable when one considers the many reasons why an antagonistic relationship could have developed between the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, Dr Blade Nzimande, and the Minister of Education, Professor Sibusisa Bengu. Indeed, the media and opposition parties predicted such a difficult relationship. Politically, there would appear to have been a wide divide between Nzimande, the leading light of the SACP, and the more moderate, old-guard politics of Bengu. At the same time, while Nzimande had a forceful political presence, and in the early years was identified as a rising political star, Bengu was identified early by the press as one of the weaker ministers. It would have been easy for the Minister to become defensive and resentful of such a powerful Chairperson.

What were the factors that made this seemingly ill-suited combination of Minister and Portfolio Committee Chairperson work? First and foremost was the fact that a reasonably coherent policy framework for the transformation of the education system had been developed, and that this framework was broadly understood and shared across the ANC.

The need for a strong ministerial role was identified as central to the achievement of a transformed education system. At the same time, the opposition parties identified that their biggest opportunity for derailing the ANC's vision for transforming the education system lay in weakening the power of the Minister of Education and in decentralising decision-making to the lowest level, where they believed they could still influence the implementation of education policy. The fact that the media and the opposition were looking for gaps between the legislature and the executive made it imperative that the Ministry and Portfolio Committee work together to build a united and coherent ANC vision for education transformation. And the vulnerability of the Minister, in particular with the media, created the necessity to support and defend his authority. Some of the most significant interventions made by the ANC Education Study Group through the Portfolio Committee were to strengthen the powers of the Ministry and government in the legislation. Often, the ANC Education Study Group intervened to empower the Minister where too much power was seen to have been ceded away from the centre – hardly a manoeuvre likely to offend a minister.

The other broad area that was taken up by the ANC Education Study Group was to ensure that the interests of key ANC constituencies in education were represented in the legislation. This was not achieved in any crude populist sense, but within a framework for education transformation that prioritised the democratisation of governance structures and the achievement of a more equitable, nonracial and nonsexist education system. Bengu appreciated Nzimande's more activist background and saw the interventions of the ANC Education Study Group as adding this dimension to the legislation and policy, which was not always fully developed in the draft legislation brought to the Minister by his Department.

However, what existed between the Minister and the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee was not just the outcome of political necessity but a genuine respect and mutual regard and consideration. Some of this went back a long way. As Nzimande often reminded the Committee, it was Bengu who had secured his first loan as a poor student at the University of Zululand. One of the great strengths of Bengu was his willingness to listen and to accommodate all points of view. Unlike many ministers, he did not feel uncomfortable about sharing his power, and he tended to be supportive of colleagues and to give them a free rein. He always expressed appreciation for the work of the ANC Education Study Group and allowed it to strengthen his policies, rather than seeing it as a threat. This inclusive approach was also reflected in Bengu's politics within the ANC: he did not identify strongly with a particular tendency within the ANC, and accepted people on their distinctive merits, rather than judging them according to which camp they belonged to. His greatest weakness was that he was probably too nice a person for the cut and thrust of politics, and he seemed to be personally hurt by the attacks on him, in particular from the media, which made him appear even more vulnerable. He was appreciative of the fact that Nzimande was always supportive of him, both in public and in private.

Another important personal factor in the chemistry between the Ministry and the Portfolio Committee was the minister's advisor, Thami Mseleku, who has since gone on to become Director-General in the Department of Education. Nzimande, Mseleku and Bengu all had links that went back to the University of Zululand, while before they became MPs Nzimande and Mseleku were two of a handful of black lecturers at the University of Natal. Even more importantly, Nzimande and Mseleku had worked closely together as senior

activists in the ANC in Pietermaritzburg, as well as being involved in ANC education structures. This shared political history and perspective made it easy for the minister's advisor to become the key political link between the Ministry and the Portfolio Committee. Mseleku also played a prominent role in liaising between the Ministry and the Department of Education, and so was able to build political coherence across department, ministry and parliamentary lines. He managed to combine the roles of politician, activist and bureaucrat with ease. His regular attendance at meetings of the ANC Education Study Group further facilitated co-ordination between Ministry and Portfolio Committee, and a pattern was established whereby controversial issues were first raised by the Ministry with the ANC Education Study Group so that a united position could be taken to the Education Portfolio Committee, and in some instances resolved without reference to the Portfolio Committee.

Over the five-year period, significant steps were taken to co-ordinate activities across the legislature and the executive in order to strengthen the public image of the ANC in education. There was increasing co-operation between the Ministry, the Department and the ANC Education Study Group in managing Parliament as a public forum for debating ANC policy. As the ANC headed for the second democratic election, the sense of working together as a team in popularising ANC achievements in education increased. The ANC Education Study Group took a conscious decision not to leave questions and interpellations to the opposition, but to use the space themselves to pose questions and raise interpellations in order to draw out the many achievements of the Ministry and Department of Education. The Chief Whip's Office played an important role in strengthening this public aspect of the ANC's role in Parliament.

The challenge for the ANC Education Study Group has been to strike a balance between a critical distance – which ensures that the legislature can intervene in the legislative and policy process with an independent voice – and the need for the ANC to work in a co-ordinated and united manner across the legislature and the executive. Throughout the first term of office, the ANC Education Study Group asserted the right of the Education Portfolio Committee to intervene to change legislation and policy that did not sufficiently reflect the policy of the ANC, or where insufficient consensus had been built by the Minister and Department of Education within the education alliance. At the same time, the ANC Education Study Group did much to build consensus across the ANC in the development of education policy.

The role of the ANC Education Study Group in relation to the alliance structures and progressive organisations in the education sphere

One of the most significant shifts that has taken place in the ANC is that just as its power across government has become entrenched, the strength of the ANC-aligned organisations outside the state has diminished. In fact, the greatest difficulties in adjusting to the post-apartheid environment have been experienced by the organisations outside the state that played such a significant part in the overthrow of apartheid. Most of the key leaders of these organisations have taken up positions within the state, thus diminishing their organisational capacity, even as it has increased their access to state power. Just as significantly, their structural position within the ANC has shifted: in the pre-1994 period, the alliance organisations were the vehicles through which the ANC directed its opposition to the

apartheid state, whereas today power has shifted into government, with its locus in the President's Office and the executive. In many of the progressive organisations membership has dropped and the quality of their political input has declined. Now that the major struggle for a national democratic state has been achieved, organisations have found it hard to mobilise their constituencies. There are simply more avenues for political, social and economic advancement for black people than there were in the past. There are some notable exceptions, where organisations have succeeded in defining a role for themselves in the political process which has made them relevant to the constituencies they represent. In education the most significant of these is the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU), which, while it has faced many tensions and dilemmas in defining its relationship with government and its constituency, has continued to be a significant force in the education policy process.

The ANC-aligned organisations have sought to entrench the power of the ANC-led state so that it can carry forward a programme of radical social transformation, but they have had to find ways of empowering the state that increase their own influence within the policy processes of the ANC as government. The challenge for the mass-based and progressive organisations has been to find ways of working with and supporting government that also strengthen their organisations and serve the interests of their membership. They have had to come to terms with the changed political landscape, and to count their gains in influencing the political process in more modest terms. It has been difficult for organisations to accept that their continued access to the political process of the ANC as government is a considerable achievement. Often what is most apparent is the relative weakening of their hold over the decision-making processes of the ANC, rather than the fact that through the ANC they now have direct access to state power.

At the same time, the ANC in government has had to engage with a much wider range of social forces. In the higher education sphere, for example, student organisations were the backbone of resistance to the apartheid order and the struggle for people's education, but institutional transformation now depends more heavily on those who are in positions of power such as the vice chancellors and university administrations. As government-supported institutions, they also have a new responsibility towards the ANC as government and are bound to implement its policies, and therefore have a stake in shaping those policies. Business, too, has been keen to play an increasing role in education policy and implementation, partly out of a sense of social responsibility, but more importantly in order to ensure that students emerge from the education system with the skills required to develop the economy. At the same time, the business community has the potential to provide funding which could make a significant difference to the overall budget for education. As government, the ANC has a responsibility towards these constituencies that it did not have to the same extent as a national liberation movement.

This raises questions about the role of the ANC Education Study Group in relation to these new constituencies, and the extent to which it was the task of the ANC Education Study Group to acknowledge this changing role of the ANC as government, or whether the ANC as a political party could identify the core allies of the ANC as its immediate constituency, while other relationships were managed through the Portfolio Committee structure. Of course the Chairperson was the same in both cases, so a degree of slippage between these roles was possible. The question of how the ANC should define its allies in education was not directly

debated within the ANC Education Study Group, but was addressed in practice on the basis of historical affiliations and perceptions about the identity of the ANC. Many members of the ANC Education Study Group had been active in education struggles, either through the teacher unions or through student politics, and it was here that they identified their historical allies. The idea that institutional management or school principals should be taken more seriously than students and teachers jarred with the activist history of some ANC Education Study Group members. At the same time, the ANC as a political party had a core of support which had a first claim on the ANC Education Study Group even as it engaged with new constituencies.

However, it was not just on the side of the ANC Education Study Group that these new relationships caused unease. Institutional management, in particular of the higher education institutions, at times tended to view the Portfolio Committee with a degree of contempt, as being little more sophisticated than the student activists they had to deal with in their institutions. They found it hard to accept that the sometimes slipshod parliamentary processes should play such a critical final role in shaping the legislation that bound their institutional environment. They often found it difficult to interpret the political landscape and the way in which power moved across the Department, the Ministry, the Portfolio Committee and the ANC Study Group. They tended to judge the potential of Parliament on appearances, and underestimated the political sophistication and capacity for making decisive interventions that worked through the apparently chaotic Portfolio Committee process.

During the first five years, the ANC Education Study Group still identified as its key allies the mass-based and progressive organisations that had formed the backbone of the national liberation struggle. The Study Group has played an important role in assisting these organisations to define their relationship to the new democratic state. Within Parliament, the ANC majority and the strengthening of the portfolio committee system has given these historical allies of the ANC greater access to legislation and policy-making. The ANC Education Study Group helped them to enter parliamentary politics on a more equal footing with those sections of society that were experienced in lobbying Parliament, could mobilise resources and better understood how the parliamentary system worked. Many of the mass-based and progressive organisations had no prior experience of the mechanisms of Parliament. The ANC Education Study Group provided a forum within Parliament for the ANC and its allies where policy options could be debated, even if the final decision-making rested with the Study Group. In this way the Study Group was able to build on the political processes that had developed prior to 1994 and to take these forward into the new environment. The Portfolio Committee had the final say over legislation; with the ANC majority, the ANC Education Study Group, led by the Chairperson, had a decisive role in settling any issues that arose between ANC-aligned organisations, the Ministry and Department of Education and other stakeholders.

However, it is not as if the ANC Education Study Group was the perfect vehicle for co-ordinating ANC education policy. The most important limiting factor was the lack of resources available to study groups, and the limited time MPs were able to devote to study group and portfolio committee work. The only human resources available to the ANC Education Study Group were a researcher, and an administrator for the Chairperson. There was no budget for the Study Group, and portfolio committee funds could not be used by

party-based study groups. In addition, the poor administrative and research support for portfolio committees provided by Parliament was a constant source of frustration. MPs also had many other commitments. The Chairperson had many other responsibilities and commitments, so had limited time to devote to educational issues. Ordinary committee members were expected to sit on at least two portfolio committees, the meetings of which often clashed, and MPs had to juggle these commitments with constituency and other political work. They undertook these various tasks with minimal secretarial and administrative support from often underqualified staff.

The ANC Education Study Group sought to fill a gap in the ANC policy process. Ideally, the co-ordination of policy should have happened through the structures of the political organisation. However, with the ANC moving into government, its political structures were diminished. While there has been much talk of building a policy capacity for the ANC outside of state structures, this has not materialised. The key growth in policy-making capacity has been in the President's Office. Because of its location at the centre of government, this has a very different character to that of an ANC policy unit outside the state, which would have been more accessible to the organisation's grassroots support base. This tendency to shift the political locus of the ANC into the state may continue, which will leave ANC study groups even more responsible for continuing to liaise with organisations affiliated to the ANC and ANC constituencies outside of government.

The ANC Education Study Group was most able to play this role when it had the support of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The education policy units and the Centre for Education Policy Development, established by the ANC prior to 1994, have at times played a critical role in assisting organisations in preparing responses to legislation. At times, progressive academics and intellectuals have also worked with and represented different interest groups. What they managed to do was to provide a bridge between the interests of organisations and the presentation of these interests in a manner that could be absorbed into legislative and policy changes through the Portfolio Committee process. Given the limited time available to MPs to process amendments, it was much easier to respond to specific recommendations on legislative changes than to act as interpreters of generalised attitudes to legislation and policy.

However, during the first term of office the extent to which these research units were able to support the ANC Education Study Group and organisations affected by the legislation diminished. Once the ANC was in government, funders were not convinced that money should be spent on progressive NGOs, and it was seen to be government's responsibility to support its own policy capacity. Increasingly, these NGOs had to define their role as contract education research agencies rather than as activist academics within a coherent ANC policy process. Since the ANC Education Study Group could not pay for the services of these NGOs, they became increasingly less able to support the Study Group.

While the Ministry and Department of Education have a full-time staff and bureaucracy to guide their relations with Parliament, the progressive and mass-based organisations tend to have limited resources available to devote to lobbying and communicating with Parliament. The one exception in this period was SADTU, which managed to sustain an ongoing relationship with the ANC Education Study Group and effectively lobbied the group with the support of its own research and legal team. The Ministry and Department have therefore been able to sustain much more consistent relationships with the ANC Education

Study Group than the mass-based and progressive organisations in civil society. Without sufficient resources, it is increasingly likely that study groups and portfolio committees will become mere mouthpieces for the ministries and departments, rather than playing distinctive roles based on their responsiveness to the broader constituencies that voted for the ANC. It is likely that defining a more proactive role for study groups and portfolio committees will continue to depend on the hard work and commitment of MPs and ANC support staff in Parliament, rather than becoming inherent in the structure of Parliament and the ANC.

Using the parliamentary process to amend policy and legislation

This section of the chapter looks more closely at some examples of different types of intervention in the policy and legislative process in order to illuminate the role of the ANC Education Study Group and the Education Portfolio Committee in the policy process. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to explore the specific legislation in depth or the processes prior to legislation and policy coming before Parliament. These wider issues will be only be alluded to inasmuch as is required to understand the processes in the ANC Education Study Group and the Portfolio Committee.

Amending major legislation: the South African Schools Act (1996)

While the ANC Education Study Group had followed the process leading up to the presentation of the draft South African Schools Act to the Education Portfolio Committee, it was only from this stage that the Study Group played a critical role. The process of writing Education White Paper 2 on the organisation and governance of schools was a reasonably inclusive process, but some critical areas had been left unresolved – in particular, the question of financing the schools system. The difficulty facing the Department of Education was that state resources were not sufficient to bring all schools up to the standard that had been enjoyed by whites prior to 1994. At the same time, government wanted to focus its resources on improving the standards in schools located in predominantly black areas that had been neglected under apartheid. In order to avoid creating a crisis in the best-resourced schools and risking a head-on collision with previously advantaged minorities, government supported a school financing model that allowed parental contributions to top up the shortfall in what government was able to provide. Strong school governing bodies with the authority to set and collect compulsory school fees from those who could afford to pay were central to the South African Schools Act. Strong school governing bodies had also been had been a central demand of the ANC-aligned and progressive organisations, but there was a feeling that the way in which these bodies were articulated in the draft South African Schools Act that came before the Portfolio Committee was more attuned to the demands of the Model 'C' constituency than to ANC education policy arising out of the experience of the PTSAs (parent, teacher, student associations).

This shift in the emphasis of the draft South African Schools Act, and the sense of alienation felt by ANC-aligned education organisations and intellectuals came about as the Department of Education fulfilled its obligations to Section 247 of the Constitution, which required the Department of Education to enter negotiations with school governing bodies

before any changes were made to their powers. The most articulate and organised of these school governing bodies were those established in the Model 'C' schools as the outgoing apartheid government sought to semi-privatise the elite state schools it had established for whites.

Progressive education organisations and intellectuals were determined to reclaim their role in the policy process, and this was possible as the process moved out of the Department of Education and back into the political arena of the Portfolio Committee and the ANC Education Study Group. At this time, the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) had seconded one of its senior researchers to work with the ANC Education Study Group, and he played a key role in mobilising the resources of the CEPD to co-ordinate the responses of progressive education organisations to the draft South African Schools Act. The CEPD hosted a weekend workshop drawing together progressive education organisations, intellectuals, MPs from the ANC Education Study Group and officials from the Ministry and Department of Education to interrogate the policy and legislation. Out of this meeting emerged a reasonably coherent response to the draft legislation. This formed the basis for further work to formulate inputs to the Portfolio Committee hearings held on the draft South African Schools Act.

The ANC Education Study Group proposed substantial changes to the draft legislation based on the impressive and precise inputs to the Education Portfolio Committee hearings. Significant changes were made on the basis of proposals by constituencies that had not been able to make representations to the Department of Education in the drafting stage. For example, the sections on representative councils for learners, on codes of conduct and on school discipline were substantially improved by the contribution of COSAS (Congress of South African Students). With the assistance of the workshops and the CEPD, COSAS had been able to formulate mature and considered proposals based on the experiences of students. Other constituencies that had been overlooked in the consultative process had an opportunity to participate in the policy process: for example, an academic working with farm schools was able to bring amendments based on the representations of the rural education organisation she belonged to.

However, it is not as if the ANC Education Study Group simply implemented all proposals coming from the mass-based organisations. All proposals were carefully evaluated against the overall ANC policy framework. For example, SADTU lobbied hard to change the formulation of membership of school governing bodies to reduce the majority of parents from an absolute to a relative majority. However, after much discussion this proposal was turned down by the Study Group, since the role of parents in school governing bodies was held to be paramount.

One of the key achievements of this process was to assist in overcoming the sense of alienation and discontent that had begun to emerge within the progressive organisations around the South African Schools Act. The debates and discussions also played a significant part in familiarising key stakeholders and MPs with the intentions and content of the Act. By participating in the process of drafting the Act, those stakeholders became more committed to the policy framework, and felt a greater sense of ownership and commitment to implementing it. As problems have emerged in the implementation of the Schools Act, these are seen as shared problems, rather than simply the responsibility of the Ministry and Department of Education.

Much of the debate led to considerable clarification of the legislation. For example, the debate around parental representation led to a formulation that was crystal-clear, and that avoided the confusion that had arisen over the difference between absolute and relative majorities. The section on powers and functions of school governing bodies was also considerably simplified. In this way the ANC Education Study Group and the Portfolio Committee acted as a gatekeeper for poorly drafted legislation, forcing the Department's legal team to make their intentions clear.

Most importantly, the debate opened up the question of school financing and the balance of power between school governing bodies, principals and teachers and the state. The somewhat laissez-faire emphasis in the draft South African Schools Act was tightened up, as the powers of school governing bodies were balanced against the authority of principals, education authorities and the Minister of Education. The most significant areas where changes were made were in admissions policy, which was moved back to the jurisdiction of education authorities, and in the setting of compulsory school fees, which was made subject to national norms and standards established by the Minister of Education. The potential for a semi-privatised sector to emerge within the state education system was thus considerably narrowed, and the powers of the state to intervene in schools practicing discrimination in admissions and fees policies was increased. It could be argued that such legislative safeguards have been ineffective following the opening of the floodgates to allow a semi-privatised sector within the state sector. However, given government's inability to fund the state sector adequately, the alliance structures proposed no viable alternatives for school financing. This points to the bounds within which the ANC Education Study Group worked in amending legislation. While it could shift the balance of legislation on the basis of representations at public hearings, it could not act on its own in rewriting legislation.

The fact that the ANC had a majority in the Portfolio Committee meant that it was not necessary to win the consent of other parties on all issues. Hence many of the differences over issues were settled within the ANC Education Study Group. The key negotiations took place at the point of the ANC Education Study Group. However, it is not as if the Study Group acted alone. All of its recommendations were hammered out in consultation with key officials from the Ministry and Department of Education and with the support of the Department's legal team. Once the key proposals of the ANC Education Study Group were identified, these were discussed by the Chairperson and the Minister of Education. Given the degree of collaboration in the process leading up to these proposals, it was hardly surprising that there was little disagreement. The only proposal that the Minister was not happy to concede was over the space allowed to church schools to continue within the state education system while keeping their distinctive religious character. This concern of the Minister was accepted by the ANC Education Study Group.

The wide involvement in the South African Schools Act that was facilitated by the ANC Education Study Group was in many ways the high point in participatory policy-making in education. As their funds dried up, it became increasingly difficult for progressive NGOs to support Parliament, and without this support it became harder to involve organisations in the legislative process. However, the ANC Education Study Group was able to tap other sources of support and continued to engage critically in the legislative and policy process.

Intervening in the policy process: the Higher Education White Paper (1997)

The powers of the Portfolio Committee to amend legislation are fairly clear. However, its powers in relation to policy documents are more diffuse, since White Papers and other policy documents come to the Portfolio Committee officially only once they are completed. Therefore, while the Portfolio Committee can comment on White Papers, they cannot amend them. This can be problematic, since the legislation should be guided by the policy framework, and so the need for consultation on policy issues is at least as important as for legislation. In addition, MPs are better placed to comment on broad policy issues than on detailed legislative amendments, so in many respects it is more important for them to be involved in the policy process than in amending the legislation itself.

The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was established by the Minister of Education to develop a policy framework for higher education, but a gap emerged between the NCHE process and the drafting of the Higher Education Green Paper and White Paper within the Department of Education. While the NCHE process had mobilised the progressive intellectual community, it had failed to engage sufficiently with the ANC and its affiliates, and even more importantly it had failed to win the complete confidence or engagement of the Ministry and Department of Education. The most important area where differences had surfaced was around the proposals for governance of higher education. There was a consensus among the ANC and its affiliates, and the Ministry and Department of Education, that the NCHE proposals gave too much power to the proposed Higher Education Council, and that the authority of the Minister in policy-making should be strengthened. What was not recognised was the leverage the Ministry and Department of Education would gain through the proposed national planning framework, which would for the first time be linked directly to the funding of institutions. By failing to carry the Ministry and Department of Education or the ANC and its affiliates along with its proposals, the NCHE process lost momentum. As the process moved back into the Department of Education for the drafting of the Green Paper and White Paper on Higher Education, much of the complex and sophisticated work in mapping a framework for the transformation of the higher education system was lost.

The Green Paper and the Draft White Paper on Higher Education failed to capture the vision for an integrated and transformed higher education system that had been achieved by the NCHE. The tension between equity and development that had been kept alive in the NCHE report, and to some extent in the Green Paper, was replaced in the Draft White Paper by a crude economism, which saw higher education as a provider of human capital for an untransformed labour market in a seemingly benevolent global order. The Draft White Paper defined the elite sector of higher education as meeting international standards of excellence, and therefore to be left largely intact. The Draft White Paper failed to recognise that the restructuring of the higher education system would have to be addressed holistically with the scope for developing new configurations of the institutional landscape in order to overcome the apartheid legacy of inequality and inefficiency and to address current and future higher education needs. Emerging from this perspective was a retreat from the planning framework proposed in the NCHE report and supported in the Green Paper. Instead, the divide between historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions, as well as the sectoral divide between universities, technikons and colleges, was to be left undisturbed, while the

three-year national planning framework was to be reduced from a means of fundamentally impacting on higher education priorities to a technical instrument for the allocation of funds.

The ANC Education Study Group had been largely left behind in the drafting of the White Paper. Given its limited resources, it was still struggling to absorb the Green Paper hearings and respond to these when the Department of Education produced its Draft White Paper. The first response of the ANC Study Group was to seek to delay the process in order to give the Study Group an opportunity to respond to the Draft White Paper. However, this was not an option for the Ministry, since parliamentary deadlines dictated that if higher education legislation was to be passed in 1997, the Bill would have to go to Cabinet before the winter recess. This pressure on ministries to deliver legislation raises the danger of developing legislation that has not had adequate time for consultation and the maturing of policy positions. However, the ANC Education Study Group recognised the dilemma facing the Ministry and accepted the time frame that was being proposed, which left the Study Group about two months to establish a process for amending the Draft White Paper, and to get agreement on all the changes.

At the same time the Study Group established two parallel processes: the one was to bring together a group of ANC policy experts to work with the Study Group to develop a coherent critique of the Draft White Paper. These experts were drawn from the EPUs, the CEPD, as well as the ANC intellectuals who had been on the NCHE commission and task teams. With the South African Schools Act the CEPD had co-ordinated this process, but now it was left to the ANC Education Study Group researcher to pull this process together. The second approach of the Study Group was to mobilise the embryonic ANC Education Policy Committee to take political responsibility for the process initiated by the Study Group. This committee was based at Luthuli House, the ANC headquarters, and was established to respond to the need to develop coherent ANC policy positions for education across the different terrains of the national and provincial ministries, Parliament and ANC-affiliated and other progressive organisations. The committee's effectiveness has been limited by its lack of resource capacity, being dependent on a single organiser based at Luthuli House. However, it did bring political legitimacy to the process initiated by the ANC Education Study Group, and ensured that the team established by the Study Group took its mandate from the ANC as a whole. This mandate was further tested at a workshop of the education alliance structures organised by the ANC Education Policy Committee. The workshop was critical in bringing education organisations identified with the ANC back into the policy process. The level of alienation and hostility towards the Draft White Paper was becoming apparent. There were even threats from the South African Student Congress (SASCO) of non-co-operation and mass action that could only have further destabilised higher education institutions. Given an opportunity to engage with the policy process, the SASCO made a number of valuable contributions around institutional transformation, student affairs and governance, both at a system and at an institutional level. Their persistent demands for the Broad Transformation Forums to be recognised even led to a new structure being given legislative status in higher education institutions: the institutional forums.

While it was relatively easy for the ANC Education Study Group to draw up a submission on the Draft White Paper, the seriousness with which the Department of Education took this submission was dependent on the intervention of the Ministry of Education. To this end, the

Ministry set up a meeting between the Study Group team and the departmental drafting team to work through the recommendations. Because this submission represented more than just the views of the ANC Education Study Group, but actually came with a mandate from the ANC Education Policy Committee which was chaired by the Minister of Education, and also had the support of the alliance organisations, the Ministry took responsibility in the final stages for ensuring that this position was reflected in the White Paper submitted to Cabinet.

As was the case with the South African Schools Act, the final draft of the Higher Education White Paper had the broad support of a wide range of constituencies. It also had greater credibility with institutional management, since it represented a much deeper understanding of higher education. The whole process of discussion around the content of the Higher Education White Paper created a better understanding and greater sense of ownership by key constituencies, including the Department of Education, that would have to lead the process of transforming the higher education system. The new Deputy Director-General of Higher Education, Dr Nasima Badsha – appointed after the Higher Education White Paper was completed – played a key role in the redrafting process that was initiated by the ANC Education Study Group. Her involvement in the NEPI prior to 1994, and then as a member of the NCHE Commission, has ensured a high degree of continuity between the different stages of policy development and implementation for higher education. In the implementation of legislation, continuity in leadership is as important as getting the wording right. The role of the ANC Education Study Group in keeping the participatory process of policy-making alive was an important factor in maintaining this continuity in the people involved in higher education transformation.

However, as with the South African Schools Act process, this level of involvement by the Study Group and Portfolio Committee is unlikely to be maintained. It required the Study Group researcher to put in considerable hours of unpaid overtime, and depended on the highly qualified members of the Study Group's policy support group to put in many unpaid hours of work. The commitment and enthusiasm of this group was reminiscent of the pre-1994 activist days, and is unlikely to be repeated now that the ANC is in government and people expect to be paid for their labour. MPs do not have set hours, but the process certainly required them to put in more hours than could be expected on a regular basis, given their other commitments.

Strategic interventions: legislating the South African Council of Educators (1998)

Not all legislative changes require the same degree of extensive consultation and debate that was required for the South African Schools Act and the Higher Education White Paper. The ANC Education Study Group has at times been able to make strategic amendments to legislation and to bind the parties into an agreement because of its political authority as the ANC and within the Portfolio Committee. This happened in the Employment of Educators Act, when the Department of Education had failed to get the teacher unions to agree to the inclusion of a chapter constituting the South African Council of Educators (SACE) on a statutory basis and to make registration with SACE compulsory for all teachers. Negotiations had broken down at the Education Labour Relations Council, and the Department of Education had decided to withdraw the section dealing with SACE from the Employment of

Educators Bill. However, the ANC was able to offer political leadership through the Portfolio Committee and facilitate an agreement on the inclusion of a chapter on SACE which satisfied all stakeholders. This amendment was led by Ismail Vadi, a member of the ANC Education Study Group and Portfolio Committee who had identified it as a crucial issue in developing professionalism amongst teachers. This demonstrates the critical interventions that ordinary MPs can make in the work of the Portfolio Committees where chairpersons create the space for them to do so.

Intervening in labour relations (1998)

The ANC Education Study Group played an increasingly important role in relations between teacher unions and the Ministry and Department of Education in 1998 as tensions began to brew between the state and the public sector unions. The Chairperson and Deputy Chair played a role in averting a strike threatened by the teacher unions in June 1998. The key issue here was whether the Minister or the provincial MEC was the employer of teachers. According to the Constitution, education – excluding higher education – is the concurrent responsibility of national and provincial government. However, since provinces control the education budget it was argued that it would be inappropriate for the Minister to be deemed the employer. At the same time, it was hoped that an awkward confrontation with SADTU could be deflected from the Ministry of Education to the various provinces. For the public sector unions this would have disastrous consequences, since they would have to hammer out different agreements with each province rather than working through a national bargaining chamber for all teachers. At the same time, it would have undermined the ability of the Minister of Education to establish broad policy frameworks for teachers, and would have undermined the capacity to approach issues concerning educators nationally in a coherent manner. The ANC Education Study Group was able to reopen negotiations between the Minister and the unions and to participate in the mediation process that unfolded. This led to a much more constructive dialogue between the Ministry and Department of Education and the teacher unions. This paved the way for the Employment of Educators Act at the end of 1998 and a number of significant agreements on teacher performance and teacher-pupil ratios. The ANC Education Study Group played an important role in political co-ordination by drawing together the ANC as government and the teacher unions, stressing their common commitment and subordination to the ANC's broader policy goals of improving the quality of education for the majority, and by asserting that it was not acceptable for these to be sacrificed to the short-term sectoral interests either of government or the teacher unions.

Ultimately, a strong and independent legislature requires a strong portfolio committee system. On paper, portfolio committees have been given considerable powers, but they do not have the capacity to exercise these powers in a consistent manner. While the ANC Education Study Group did make significant contributions to the legislative and policy process, it was a somewhat ad hoc and uneven contribution, given the limited resources and infrastructure supporting portfolio committees and study groups. However, it did manage to exercise an effective oversight role, and was able to summon the resources to intervene when problems were identified.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to track the emerging patterns through which ANC Education Study Group established its role in the policy-making processes of the ANC in the first five years of democratic governance. By focusing on the role of the ANC Education Study Group, this chapter has sought to demonstrate the potentially crucial role of the ANC in the legislature in building democracy. This is critical in the transitional period, given the wide social inequalities that persist and the pressures on government from national and international capital to create a market-friendly environment. The extent to which the ANC as a political party can continue to co-ordinate its support base across the state and civil society will have a significant impact on the extent to which social needs are prioritised on the political agenda. While the portfolio committee and study group system has some weaknesses, it has demonstrated a degree of creativity and robustness that has made a significant contribution to entrenching patterns of democracy within the new South African state.

CHAPTER 5

Reconstructing education: reflections on post-apartheid planning, systems and structure

Andrew Donaldson

After the unbounded inventiveness of the 1990–92 National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), the reconstruction of South Africa's education systems and structure after 1994 was always going to be a somewhat frustrating contest between ideals and implementation capacity. It also involved adapting to a new constitutional order and confronting immense financial and personnel management challenges – largely unexplored in the NEPI project.

A decade later, the NEPI reports still provide valuable perspectives on the goals and options of education system change. But the path South Africa has followed in the intervening years has included some unanticipated turns and invites a reconsideration of several critical assumptions and choices.

The focus in this chapter is the education system as the outcome of regulatory, organisational and financial interventions by the state. Alongside the broad developmental view taken as the point of departure in the NEPI papers, several pragmatic considerations are highlighted below, drawn from contemporary themes in applied public finance. The contrasting perspectives perhaps help to explain some of the ways in which South Africa's education system has evolved – they also indicate key planning and policy issues for future attention.

A public finance perspective is inevitably cautious in its estimation of the contribution that education development can made to reducing poverty, promoting development or stimulating economic growth. Social progress is a construct of infinite complexity; our capacity to shape the future is partial and inadequately informed. Education development has faced larger challenges over the past decade than were confronted even in the heady debates of the NEPI research programme. Progress has been uneven, but the achievements of the post-apartheid years have been considerable. The chapter concludes with a reminder that with the devolution of education management to provinces, school governing bodies and institution heads, education policy can shift from administrative concerns to pushing ahead the frontiers of education system change.

Education, development and public policy

The role of education in support of broader social and economic development was a central theme in the NEPI research group report entitled *Education Planning, Systems and Structure*:

> Human resource development is central to meeting the twin challenges of restoring economic growth and improving income distribution in the South African economy. Education and training contribute skills and productivity, and thus underpin long-term economic growth. Education and training facilitate social and occupational mobility of individuals and households, promoting industrial growth, urbanisation and coherent rural development programmes. Education and

> training are also valuable social and economic entitlements in themselves, contributing directly to individual, household and community welfare.[1]

The research group went on to explore the role of the state, both in directly providing and financing education, and through indirect regulatory and other functions. Much of the report concerns the tension between government financing, management and organisation of education and training and the evolution of decentralised management, privately financed arrangements and market-based co-ordination. But attention was also drawn to the importance of striking a balance between educational progress and other dimensions of development:

> Progress in education without industrial investment and employment creation brings social discord, frustration and ultimately the erosion of the resources on which education itself depends. Education expands in growing economies, furthermore, partly because governments expand education provision, and partly because private spending on education and training increases with growth. Education brings substantial rewards to beneficiaries, which fuel both private demand for education and pressures on the state to provide or subsidise education opportunities. Thus governments confront hard choices about priorities for resource allocation to education and training.[2]

There are three large themes here. Firstly, there is the immensely complex interplay between educational activity and broader social and economic needs. Schools and colleges do what they do partly in anticipation of the cognitive and other demands that society and the workplace will make on their students. Education and training play constructive roles in a human 'value chain' – children learn, and that learning prepares for or rehearses future social and economic activities. But the ruthless competitive forces that discipline the corresponding relationships in the industrial value chain are either absent or relatively weak in education. We rely on a largely bureaucratic curriculum design process. And we rely on institutions of public administration to assign resources and maintain appropriate quality controls.

It is not enough to know that education yields positive rates of return – the data on which these naive calculations are based are at best crude and anachronistic indices. We need to know that the educational activities in which we currently invest are productive and efficient. In the steadily advancing economies of 19th-century Europe, or when class structure is rigid, education can be construed as a socially reproductive function, in which activities can be assessed in relation to familiar roles and retrospective knowledge. But in a growing dynamic economy, where schools open new opportunities and the future holds unpredictable social and economic challenges, familiarity may be a poor design criterion.

Of course, it is possible that traditional curricular content and teaching methods remain the most appropriate foundation for modern learning. But even then, there are no straightforward measures of the value added in the classroom. For economic accounting purposes, value is measured by salary costs and depreciation of fixed capital. Unlike the market sectors, there is no purchase price that 'reveals' value in consumption.

In the absence of market signals, education planners have sometimes relied on formal projections of 'manpower requirements' (sic) as the basis for higher education system development. These grand designs have seldom survived the test of time – partly because they typically neglect questions of curricular content and quality.

So the administrative processes have a great deal of work to do. The NEPI project rightly drew attention to the importance of good governance in contributing to quality assurance,

through openness of information about education and training and access to policy formation and policy debates, and through dispersion of decision-making powers:

> Flexibility, accountability and responsibility come with relative autonomy or empowerment at the level of the school, the local education authority, the training centre or the industry training board.[3]

Attention was also drawn to the importance of diversity and flexibility in post-basic education and training, along with assurance of standards of competence and reliability of qualifications. The direct and indirect linkages of secondary schools, colleges and higher education institutions with the labour market are likely to be stronger when institutions can adapt to demand pressures and depend in part on user fees and contractual service delivery.

The second cluster of system issues is sometimes characterised as the 'internal efficiency' of education and training arrangements. Given the resources over which it disposes, how well does the education industry perform? Robust indicators of the efficiency of resource use are extraordinarily hard to identify, but there is nonetheless an energetic literature on the subject.

The NEPI Planning, Systems and Structure group drew attention to international evidence on several critical school quality variables or cost-effective interventions:[4]

- Effective school administration;
- Availability of books and other teaching aids, including improved educational technology;
- Curriculum development and adaptation;
- Content of teacher training and in-service support;
- Good relations between school and community;
- School-readiness or preschool programmes; and
- Nutritional support of infants and school children.

The research group also noted that productivity in schools relates in part to the reward structure of the system – encouraging the work effort of students, rewarding good teaching, deepening the incentives that promote effective learning. The argument can lead, of course, in several directions: for some, these are themes that reinforce the case for decentralised school ownership and greater choice; for others, the implications lie rather in the design of the regulatory and governance arrangements.

There is a third critical theme in the broad interface between education and development. The NEPI reports took as their point of departure several strong presumptions about South Africa's future economic development path – with equally strong implications for education and training. One important point of departure was *equity* – a commitment to equality of educational opportunity. The principle of *redress* was also accepted as fundamental, both in its implications for education restructuring and in a more general presumption that education must play a key role in reversing the apartheid legacy of inequality and disadvantage.

The NEPI process uncovered a set of economic development questions intimately bound up with the core principles underpinning the education restructuring project. The *Framework Report* refers to several conditions for a 'high-skill development path' – a strong state, open to civil society, a flexible and efficient bureaucracy, a good-quality basic education system and a clear economic growth path.[5] The report noted the capacity constraints that inhibit prospects for achieving high-quality basic education and drew attention to the

tension between growth and equity considerations in development models. But this was not carried through systematically, and perhaps could not be in the absence of an agreed economic strategy.

In the course of making policy, preparing budgets and implementing programmes after 1994, these issues came to the fore, sometimes explicitly, more often in the unheralded pragmatic adaptation of government agencies to the challenges of post-apartheid restructuring.

One arena in which the larger economic development questions had to be addressed was that of macroeconomic policy. The pre-1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) contained a broad commitment to sound fiscal policy and opening the economy to international trade and finance. But the RDP detailed a wide and ambitious range of social and infrastructural development aims, and the first few years of democratic government were characterised by sweeping reviews of policy and far-reaching institutional change. The gap between promise and delivery remained wide.

In mid-1996 the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy was announced, effectively putting a ceiling on government expenditure growth and removing uncertainty about the intention to reduce the budget deficit and pursue an export-oriented industrial strategy.

Education did not feature explicitly in the 1996 macroeconomic framework, but it did include an undertaking to introduce a levy-based training programme, subsequently elaborated in a 'skills development strategy' negotiated at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). Although the levy-grant scheme only took effect in 2000, its design and introduction were substantial new challenges and effectively upstaged the equally important renewal of the further education college sector.

A sharp decline in defence spending, and the phasing-out of the general export incentive scheme (which was incompatible with World Trade Organisation rules), in the mid-1990s allowed education and health expenditure to rise moderately in real terms without compromising fiscal policy targets. In 1996 and 1997, public spending on social services increased steeply, partly because RDP projects gathered momentum and partly because the first phase of a three-year agreement raised real wages substantially.

A strong commitment to equity and social development – reflected in the building of rural clinics, community water supply projects, housing development, a primary school nutrition programme, a new child support grant and sustained investment in electrification of low-income communities – contributed to a marked reprioritisation of government expenditure in favour of social services in the first years of the new government. By the end of the decade, however, new pressures had emerged:

- Despite a commitment to accelerating infrastructure investment in the 1996 macroeconomic strategy, capital expenditure by government remained sluggish and maintenance of physical infrastructure deteriorated.
- The failure of the economy to create jobs, even in years of strong growth, argued for new initiatives in industry, tourism, small business development, agricultural support and other economic programmes.
- Following years of declining military spending, Cabinet agreed to a phased modernisation of maritime and air defence capabilities.

In the context of continued restraint in aggregate government spending, social departments have had to explore options for greater equity and improved service delivery within a broadly stable real expenditure envelope.

A public finance perspective sheds some light on the relevant issues. There is, firstly, the appropriate balance between the main education programmes – early childhood education, the foundation years of primary schooling, secondary and further education options, higher education subsidies, teacher education, learners with special needs, support for adult education programmes. There are many compelling social needs, but they may not have equal claims on the fiscus. Universal access to a sound basic education is frequently argued to be a core responsibility of the state. On efficiency and fairness grounds, higher education and career-related training should at least partially be privately financed. When wealth and incomes are highly unequal, a progressive government will want to ensure that its education spending is targeted in favour of the poor. This may be hard to achieve, particularly where the access of higher income groups to state-funded education is well established.

Secondly, there is a range of organisational and governance issues. Budgeting procedures, accountability and financial management arrangements can contribute to improved resource management and internal efficiency. Strong institutional management and active school governance are evidently critical factors in improving school performance. But it takes time for sound institutions of governance to evolve, and there may be some tension between decentralised administration and promotion of access and equity.

There is a third cluster of what may be thought of as regulatory and pricing issues. Registration and regulation of private colleges, certification and structure of remuneration of educators and regulation of access and fees are important elements of the policy architecture. Their effects are not always adequately understood. The principal tension is perhaps between protection of quality and standards, on the one hand, and the dynamics of long-run technical progress on the other. Education in the 20th century was a slow-moving industry, in which the incentives to adapt and innovate may have been smothered by well-intentioned protectionist measures. In the first decade of the 21st century, however, advances in electronic communication may well force a more rapid pace of change.

What follows are some brief notes on several of the education system challenges of post-apartheid South Africa, illustrating some of the ways in which these themes emerge in policy and programme design.

Adapting to the new constitutional order

One of the five 'guiding principles' of the NEPI enterprise was a 'unitary system'. South Africa's constitution-makers, however, opted for a quasi-federal structure, in which responsibility for education is shared between the national and provincial 'spheres'.

In broad terms, policy and co-ordination are under national charge and higher education is solely a national function. Provinces are responsible for the management and financing of school education.

The NEPI *Framework Report* identified 'centralised' organisation with equity considerations and 'decentralised' arrangements with 'institutional or community autonomy/participation'.[6] Recognising the need to address both local democratic pressures

and the central equity imperative, the report allowed for a variety of 'articulating mechanisms' between central and local structures.

The Governance and Administration research group recognised four levels of accountability and administration (national, regional, district and school management) and emphasised the importance of introducing an effective district level of governance. The research group envisaged a series of regional education boards, comprising representatives of district boards together with delegates of mass-based education organisations and regional officials.[7]

Nowhere in the NEPI analysis was the primary tension of the new constitutional order anticipated. Now that provincial education departments have been carved out of the fragmented education authorities of the previous regime and a coherent policy framework is in place, South Africa has begun to exhibit the characteristic pressures of a quasi-federal system. Central policy aspirations come into conflict with the administrative and resource constraints of the regional administrations.

Some debate has arisen around the notion of 'unfunded mandates' – policy commitments embedded in national legislation or policy that provinces lack the resources to implement. The presumption is that a policy imposed by national decree should be given effect through a corresponding and sufficient transfer of funds. The difficulty can of course be viewed from the other side: collective policies should not be agreed until implementing agencies can confirm their capacity to implement shared agreements.

The underlying resource constraints and the need to confront priorities and policy options arise whether the education system is unitary or federal in structure. One advantage of South Africa's constitutional arrangements is precisely that it throws up these tensions within an agreed institutional context. The national and provincial education departments are required to confront the resource implications of policy choices, and in turn education departments must set out their funding requirements as part of a provincial budget process in which other social spending pressures are also articulated and examined.

A centralised budget process might well permit equity considerations and broad education policy questions to be more directly addressed than the quasi-federal arrangements now in place. Regional management and efficiency considerations, conversely, are more likely to be confronted when education competes with other functions in provincial budget discussions.

But the advantages of both regional administration and central co-ordination are critically dependent on the core 'tools' of bureaucratic review and accountability. The immensely improved information management capacity that electronic communication has made possible in the course of the last decade or two greatly enhances the potential value added by regional and central administration. These advantages remain largely unexploited in South Africa's national and provincial education departments.

The microeconomics of the classroom

Modern information management systems open up many avenues for improved monitoring, expenditure management, resource allocation and quality assurance. Departmental administration has a large role in improving education. But it is also important to reinforce the dynamics of productivity enhancement in the classroom.

The microeconomics of schooling was not a prominent theme in the NEPI reports, although several aspects were sensibly reviewed – curriculum modernisation, the importance of school-level administration, ongoing teacher education, for example. As noted above, the *Planning, Systems and Structure* report drew attention to both cost-effective interventions aimed at improving education quality and the importance of incentive-compatible institutional arrangements.

Reinforcing the status and role of school governing bodies has been a central theme in the South African education reform programme. Strengthening school discipline has also been given emphasis, and efforts are under way to reduce the prevalence of underage and overage students in classrooms. These are undoubtedly sound reforms, although their benefits will take time to filter through. An ambitious curriculum reform project has been initiated and more recently subjected to critical review.

The challenge is immense. Extraordinarily high repetition rates, particularly in early primary years, and dismal school-leaving examination results in many schools are the more obvious symptoms of systemic decay. Building a new culture of excellence in basic education will require changes to the rules and incentives governing school management and educators' work efforts.

Greater decentralisation of administrative responsibilities facilitates the needed reforms. Procurement of classroom materials and supplies, maintenance of buildings, supervision of in-service teacher education and reward of performance are among the functions that have traditionally been departmentally performed, but are properly school-level management responsibilities.

Building effective school governing bodies and strengthening the capacity of school managers are critical development challenges. There is a pragmatic choice to be made between pursuing improved school-level governance through administrative and regulatory reforms or through restructuring ownership and accountability in favour of independent school authorities. Either way, the locus of financial and administrative responsibility needs to shift towards the school and away from departmental bureaucracies.

Organisational issues and personnel management

Personnel management is the centrepiece of healthy education administration. Yet these issues hardly featured in the NEPI research programme. A report on teacher education explored options for the organisation, accountability and professional development of teachers. There were occasional references to the inclusion of educators amongst other stakeholders in the structuring of governance of the education system. Industrial relations, trends in remuneration, the structure of employee benefits and performance-related incentives in the education sector were not addressed.

These have turned out to be major challenges to the new administration. The removal of remaining discriminatory elements in the remuneration scales, extension of benefits to all employees, increased employment, salary-grade adjustments associated with improved teacher qualifications and substantial real increases in salaries in 1996 have all contributed to the rise in personnel expenditure from 86% of provincial education spending in 1996 to 91% in 1999. Implementation of the disciplinary code and introduction of new peer review or quality-assurance measures have been inhibited by protracted negotiations. Injudicious

management of early retirement, voluntary severance and personnel redeployment programmes has led to a loss of skills and some discontent.

Problems in personnel management are closely tied up with the broader organisational balance between departmental and school-level administration. School governing bodies and principals are called upon to take greater responsibility for school management, but face inconsistent and cumbersome departmental personnel regulations and procedures.

The reach and influence of the centralised bargaining structure, and the limited role of provincial education departments and treasuries in this forum represent substantial barriers to more flexible personnel management and performance-related remuneration arrangements.

Schools that serve high-income communities and have effective, well-established governance structures are able to supplement teachers' earnings by rewarding extracurricular activities and can employ supplementary staff on the strength of fee income. These are creative responses to the rigidities of the official teacher supply, but they lead both to considerable differentiation between schools and unhappy divisions between staff within schools. The obvious policy response is to allow schools that have the governance capacity to manage their own personnel to do so fully. Such schools can be financed through a straightforward subsidy formula, releasing departmental administrative and support services to concentrate their resources on disadvantaged schools. This appears to be the direction in which schools policy is moving.

Further and higher education

The NEPI *Framework Report* gave emphasis to the role of 'articulation', both in further and higher education.

> ... it will be important to construct articulation mechanisms to ensure that technical and vocational education and training skills are portable and certifiable, and equivalent to skills and certificates in the formal sector. The need for these mechanisms is motivated both by the high level of differentiation likely in this sector, and by the fact that many people entering training schemes will not have had a fair chance in the formal system. Thus, not only will these mechanisms facilitate the inter- and intra-sectoral mobility required for economic growth, but they will also promote equity.
>
> ... it will be important to ensure that vocational skills are also socially articulated – put within a framework where social and political competence is at least as much part of the overall educative aim as are functional skills. The international lesson is clear in this respect: it is adaptable, portable and general growth skills which prove to be the most productive for a society in the long run, rather than narrow vocational skills.[8]

The notion of a 'high-skill' development path that lies behind this vision has found practical expression in the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the enactment of a skills development strategy that aims to bring all formal employment under the discipline of sectoral education and training authorities and to boost human resource development through levy-financed learnerships and other skills programmes.

This is an ambitious restructuring of the training and skills certification environment. It has spawned a new generation of curriculum committees, accreditation procedures, sectoral authorities, industrial training strategies, career development plans and institutional

redesign. How much impetus has been given to productivity-enhancing training programmes remains unclear.

What *is* clear is that the renewal of public sector post-secondary education institutions has not kept pace with these developments. Both higher education and the further education sector have been investigated by official inquiries. Little progress has been made in implementing or responding to proposed reforms, particularly those relating to financing and institutional restructuring.

By design, the new skills development strategy encourages new relationships between employers, learners and vocational education institutions. The levy-grant financing arrangements invite colleges to develop courses directed at the training needs of industry and to seek contractual service agreements with employers or representative employer organisations. By strengthening the demand side of the vocational education nexus, it seems plausible that the relevance and effectiveness of study programmes will be enhanced. Thus far, developments along these lines have been disappointing. Colleges have been slow to adapt and for the most part remain unduly constrained by regulatory and bureaucratic restrictions.

Universities and technikons, in contrast, have considerable institutional autonomy, and there is a healthy competition between institutions in course content, extracurricular options, areas of academic specialisation and campus ambience. A marked slowdown in enrolment growth has emerged in recent years, mainly because the flow of qualifying secondary school-leavers has stabilised. This provides an opportunity for consolidation and repositioning of higher education institutions, but it has also thrown up sharply their contrasting circumstances.

Reduced student numbers, coupled with weak financial administration, threaten the viability of several universities, technikons and colleges. Recent legislation strengthens the power of the Minister of Education to intervene where rationalisation or restructuring is needed, or where financial management is deficient. As diversity is a characteristic feature of the higher and further education sector, the aims and processes of such intervention are unavoidably multifaceted and controversial.

In discussing options for restructuring higher education, the *Planning, Systems and Structure* report distinguished two broad approaches. The first would focus on expanding and strengthening technical colleges and other post-secondary institutions responsible for the formal educational programmes that complement an enhanced occupational skills development strategy. The second would see universities and technikons continue to grow, broadening their activities to include vocationally oriented courses offered to students of varying abilities and needs. The report concludes:[9]

> There is a deep tension here between the autonomy of universities and technikons, which carries with it the important principle of academic freedom, and the regulation of the higher education system through financial provision, accreditation of degree and diploma programmes and co-ordination of admissions, which must be aimed at securing an appropriate mix of academic development, independent scholarship, training of high-level personnel and applied research. How universities and technikons are governed, and the nature of their formal links with community authorities, industry and commerce, other education and training institutions and government departments, will critically affect trends in the organisation of higher education.

The report goes on to emphasise the link between universities and education colleges and the critical role of tertiary education institutions in promoting qualitative change in the school

system. This may well be the single most important area of system change, both for the internal coherence and effectiveness of the education sector and as the foundation for the wider contribution of education to human development.

The most striking developments in tertiary education over the past decade have been neither in the public college sector nor in higher education, but in the growth and diversity of private college and university programmes. Career-oriented education is increasingly international in scope and electronic in character. These are trends that hold considerable potential for raising the efficiency and competitiveness of the industry. Indeed, the distinction between public and private academies – while signifying an important cluster of governance and financing options – is an unhelpful organising principle for education in the 21st century. Public policy aims to enhance the dynamic evolution of the education and training sector in its various organisational forms.

Conclusion

The five guiding principles of the NEPI project – nonracism, nonsexism, democracy, a unitary system and redress – while clearly underpinning a transformation agenda, left a range of important policy goals unexamined. A tension between 'equity' and 'efficiency' and the possibility of associated policy trade-offs thus remained unresolved in the *Framework Report*. This need not imply a project failure – an improved understanding of contending policy goals is not a trivial achievement.

But there is a danger that uncovering the complexity of policy-making can contribute to political and bureaucratic inertia, and the effort of responding to complex challenges can unduly strain administrative capacity. When the apparatus of the state suffers structural fatigue, both policies and their implementation can stray from their intended paths.

The creation of nine regional education departments after 1994 and the transition to provincial budget-making and provincial legislative oversight have been immense structural reforms. The administration of schooling – personnel management, curriculum reform, construction and maintenance of buildings and provision of learning materials – has suffered some setbacks over this period. Provincial budgetary and financial management has swung through a full cycle of expansion, overexpenditure, curtailment and restoration of fiscal balance. These are adjustments that carry considerable costs, both in the quality of services and in organisational disarray or depressed morale. A sustained period of quality enhancement in schooling now depends on continuity in policy and steady progress in educational management, school governance and curricular support. In further education and training and higher education, similarly, a strong focus on sound administration has to accompany policy reforms and institutional restructuring.

Within the context of South Africa's larger social and economic challenges, education departments compete with several other pressing claims on public resources. Growth, employment creation, redistribution of income, the administration of justice and social development may all be served by progress in the education system, but educational development will itself be frustrated if other functions of government are inadequately promoted.

The division of revenue between the national, provincial and local spheres of government, and the distribution of funds within provincial budgets, are the main processes

through which resources are allocated. But the discussion above points to several important related dimensions of public policy:

- Improved use of information management systems has considerable potential to contribute to better administration of education.
- Reinforcement of school-level governance plays a critical role in enhancing the internal efficiency and management of education resources.
- Staff employment and personnel management should in due course devolve to school governing bodies and principals in well-managed schools.
- The role of tertiary education institutions in promoting qualitative improvements in the school system needs to be strengthened.
- Both public and private sector initiatives contribute to the dynamic evolution of the education and training sector.

The financing of education in South Africa already reflects a considerable diversity of arrangements, drawing on resources and management capacity from both the public and private sectors. Opportunities for growth and strengthening of education lie largely in an improved interface between departmental administration, institutional management and private interests in schooling, further education and training and higher qualifications. The summary report of the NEPI Education Planning, Systems and Structure research group is perhaps a reminder of the continued relevance of this theme, even in a considerably changed constitutional order:

> Arrangements for the financing and management of education and training are critical determinants of equity of access and efficiency of education provision. Appropriate mixes of public and private involvement need to be sought, linked to the distribution of benefits associated with education and the capacity of individuals or households to meet education costs ...
>
> In any constitutional structure ... it is important that government should not only play an education management function, but should also promote efficiency-improving innovation and flexibility. This implies a new orientation in education departments: from inspecting, prescribing, restricting and controlling to research and design, promoting change, encouraging development and driving educational progress.[10]

Endnotes

1. National Education Policy Investigation. (1993) *The Framework Report and Final Report Summaries*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. p. 133.
2. National Education Policy Investigation. (1993) *Education Planning Systems and Structure*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. p. 7.
3. *Education Planning, Systems and Structure*, p. 106.
4. *Education Planning, Systems and Structure*, p. 9.
5. *Framework Report*, p. 24.
6. *Framework Report*, p. 23.
7. *Framework Report*, p. 163.
8. *Framework Report*, pp. 36–7.
9. *Education Planning, Systems and Structure*, p. 84.
10. *Framework Report*, pp. 152–3.

SECTION 2

Policy concepts, contests and criticism

In this section, the authors re-examine the core progressive values (equity, redress, democratic participation, etc) that underpin the transformation of apartheid education. Positioned at different vantage points (government, public administration, education), they also interrogate the meaning and impact of these value commitments in the lives of practitioners.

CHAPTER 6

The role of the state in the governance of the education system

Naledi Pandor

The advent of democracy in South Africa was accompanied by a number of complicated policy challenges. These included the legitimate educational expectations of the previously oppressed majority of South Africa, as well as the belief held by those who had benefited from a privileged education framework that there would be very little alteration in the system that had served them so well. The aspirations of these different groups were reflected in a range of policy documents that had begun to emerge in the late 1980s and the period leading up to the democratic elections in 1994. The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), an umbrella for progressive organisations that had not been banned by the apartheid state, produced several policy documents that set forward proposals which had been discussed and negotiated with a broad and diverse range of organisations and communities.

Policy perspectives

In the build-up to the 1994 election, several organisations produced policy statements that had a profound influence on education policy-making and implementation in the period after the election. The National Education Coordinating Committee (NECC) had led the way in tabling a policy framework asserting the right of all people to education and calling for the integration of progressive education norms into the post-apartheid education model. The NECC's assertion of people's education for people's power reflected their intention that education would empower communities and individuals by giving them an equal opportunity in education, a new curriculum and ethos, and a voice in the governance of education and the formulation of educational policy.

The NECC sponsored the NEPI (National Educational Policy Investigation) process, which went on to provide a set of policy options that incorporated the principles that had been articulated by the NECC. The NEPI also gave a clear indication of the complex nature of the policy challenge that would face new policy-makers. For instance, the NEPI investigations highlighted the financial disparities in education financing, and confronted the post-1994 politicians with the task of redressing the stark inequities that had been identified.

In the midst of this active policy development phase within the MDM, the apartheid government published the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) as its blueprint for education reform. The ERS sought to make a few adjustments to the inequalities in funding and resource provision, and handed over school control and governance of white schools to white communities. Little else was changed, but once it was implemented the ERS had a major impact on education, with repercussions well into the late 1990s.

At the same time, the recently unbanned ANC was emerging as the leading organ in politics and policy formulation and tabled own its framework for a new education policy.

The main focus of the document was education provision at the school and college level, with very little provided on higher education. The ANC framework committed the party to ensuring access to education and training for all citizens, and it indicated that redress and equal provision would be the guiding principles in education delivery.

The ANC also undertook to ensure that communities would have a role in policy development as well as in the governance of schools, and promised that educational policy and practice would integrate education and training, and provide learners with critical problem-solving skills and abilities. The ANC framework affirmed a commitment to equity, redress and the promotion of nonsexism and nonracialism.

In the run-up to the elections of 1994 the MDM published its most significant policy statement, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This was an all-encompassing and detailed framework of policy imperatives that the MDM would seek to implement. The RDP dealt with all aspects of socioeconomic change in a democratic South Africa. The education policy enshrined in the RDP confirmed that all children would enjoy 10 years of basic education and training provision. Furthermore, the state would ensure that, over time, access to further and higher education would be increased and that education and training would be linked to a coherent and planned Human Resource Development Strategy. In addition, the RDP affirmed the need to increase access for blacks to science and technology education and indicated that the new government would put in place a national student loan scheme to provide funding to needy students in higher education.

Alongside these policy statements, and adding to the complexity of education policy development, was the existence of Model 'C' (formerly white) schools and the constitutional concession made to these schools in the constitution-writing process.

The newly elected Parliament of 1994 was confronted by all these complex features of education, and faced the task of transforming education through passing legislation that would actually bring about change. In doing so, they had to work through a legislative process that was shaped by the Constitution, which had granted executive powers to the provinces and given them the right to develop education policy, fund education and change the sector within the confines of nationally determined norms and standards.

The first major policy expression of these aspirations, the White Paper on Education of 1995, states that all South Africans have a right to 10 years of compulsory schooling. This is the national norm set by the Minister of Education. The task of the provincial executive committee is to ensure that funding and physical resources are found to ensure that all have access to the mandated years of compulsory schooling.

Education policy in the era of transformation

In order to understand the process of educational policy-making during and after the period of transformation in South Africa, it is necessary to consider the roles and powers of the National Assembly and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education.

The role of Parliament

Parliament is the institution that draws up the laws of South Africa. It is made up of the National Assembly and the second house, the National Council of Provinces (NCOP). The

executive presents bills to Parliament, which set out the policy direction that the government wishes to follow. In 1994, Parliament agreed that the Reconstruction and Development Programme, as well as the Interim Constitution, would form the policy model to guide government legislation. Members of Parliament in all portfolio committees use the policy model as their guide in the legislative process. Once bills are tabled in the National Assembly or the NCOP, committees are set up and have time to consider the bills. They may decide to hold public hearings or carry out investigations into various aspects of the bill. These committees have the right to change policy and legislation and have impacted positively on a number of policy documents.

The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education

This committee has been confronted with the most significant legislation in South Africa, as education legislation determines the future and seeks to change the past. The committee's first major task was to process the White Paper on Education, the first major education policy statement by the government. The Portfolio Committee held public hearings involving all the national education stakeholder bodies, and various organisations presented oral and written submissions on the Education White Paper process.

As with all credible policy actors, the committee saw its role as ensuring that the Education Bill would directly address the legitimate aspirations of all South Africans for an equitable, well-resourced, quality education system. In the process of dealing with the bill, the ANC MPs in particular had to give serious consideration to the framing of clauses that would offer South Africans a solution to their education demands and challenges.

The Education Bill

The Education Bill was eventually passed by Parliament and it met firm resistance from the policy-makers who had overseen and shaped apartheid education policy. The parties referred the Education Bill to the Constitutional Court, claiming that the Bill violated the Interim Constitution. The court ruled that the Bill was in fact in line with the Constitution. The parties that had opposed the Bill did not have the transformative policy model of the RDP as the guide, and, as a consequence, unlike the ANC MPs, they failed to recognise that policy formulation is central to the challenge of transformation. In the meetings held to process the Bill, ANC MPs suggested a large number of amendments, which brought the Bill in line with the principles of redress and equity in the Constitution.

Since the 1996 Education Bill, which set out the guiding national norms and standards, several other policy challenges have been met. Among these are: the passing of the South African Qualifications Authority Act, the Higher Education Act, the South African Schools Act, the completion of a national survey and register of education resource needs as well as the tabling of a report on gender equity in education, the adoption of a new curriculum framework – Curriculum 2005 – and a report of a future model of further education and training.

The implementation of the Education Bill reveals that the Portfolio Committee on Education is one of the parliamentary committees that has had to face constant opposition to formal government policy and to transformation. This opposition has clearly demonstrated that it wants to ensure that education remains the preserve of a privileged few and not

the right of all. In such a context, the committee members from the progressive movement have had to ensure that they are fully conversant with education policy and able to identify policy options and proposals that can effectively serve the role of eradicating the apartheid legacy in education.

Parliament's future role

The policy framework as proposed in many pre-1994 documents and several thereafter is now firmly in place. The Portfolio Committee now has the policy tools to monitor and evaluate educational change. It is set to move into a phase of investigation and evaluation, the focus of which will be the impact of policy on education practice. Recent history has shown that financial resources have a significant impact on policy implementation. The Portfolio Committee is likely to have a strong interest in monitoring the use of resources allocated to education in the provinces. Thus far, the Portfolio Committee has sought to give legislative effect to the education right in the Constitution. The effects of the policy on practice will now be studied and strengthened or amended to ensure that all South Africans enjoy their right to education.

CHAPTER 7

Policy values: problematising equity and redress in education

Crain Soudien, Heather Jacklin & Ursula Hoadley

Policy formation in South Africa since the advent of democracy in 1994 has been heavily underscored by the moral injunctions of restoration, renovation, renewal and redress. Landmark laws and regulations have been promulgated which presage new non-discriminatory social arrangements, efficient administrative practices and participatory modes of governance in a range of public services. Education, not unexpectedly – given its place in the social engineering agenda of the apartheid government – has been a notable beneficiary of these processes. Important developments in this sector include the establishment of a reconfigured single national Department of Education, the adoption of a complex new curriculum called Curriculum 2005 and the passing of a far-reaching new education Act, the South African Schools Act (1996). These initiatives, and indeed many others which have come in the form of provincial regulations and gazetted announcements have sought, specifically, to redress past injustices, provide a high-quality education for all South Africa's people and contribute to the eradication of poverty in the country.

At first reading, the potential of these developments for achieving significant reform and change of the system appears to be obvious. They are all predicated on the intention of moving the education system from its roots deep within the inequities of the past to a future which is – rhetorically, at least – framed by the high-minded principles of equity and equality. There are, however, sufficient grounds for pause. A substantial number of criticisms are surfacing to suggest that the restructuring process within the country is not without its problems, contradictions and paradoxes (see Gilmour 1997; Samoff 1997; Tikly 1997; Jansen 1999; Sayed 1999; Chisholm, Soudien, Vally & Gilmour 1999; and Ota 1997). Soon after the promulgation of the South African Schools Act, Gilmour (1997) made the observation that the new government was conflating *equality* and *equity*, and in so doing was ceding the ability, as Secada (1989:74) observed, 'to consider other fundamental issues that should fall under the rubric of educational equity'. Other criticisms have followed. Ota (1997), for example, argued that the transformation of education in South Africa is encumbered by economic, legal, political and articulation constraints. He makes the observation that while the transformational agenda in South Africa is informed by 'principles and objectives' which are 'in place' (Ota, 1997:488) the logical fit among the various policies is still in question. Sayed (1997 & 1999) has pursued the argument somewhat further and concludes that it is not the question of articulation within the policy universe that is a problem, but the possibility that '... current educational policies accentuate educational inequities along the lines of class rather than race' (Sayed 1999:150). Tikly (1997) has shown how susceptible to different economic, ideological and political impulses are educational policies, and how these differences are mediated through the governing discourse of economics.

Using a case study, this chapter looks at how policy development in South Africa is configured. It argues that policy is a terrain inhabited by a number of discourses which spring from a variety of often conflicting social and economic impulses. The approach taken in this chapter is to show that while these discourses coalesce at particular moments, they more often displace and sublimate each other. We argue that the dominant trend in the system is to present education as a consumer good as against a public right.

Policy and contradiction

This chapter accepts the premise that the education transformation project in South Africa is indeed beset with the difficulties alluded to by Ota, Sayed, Tikly and others. It seeks, however, to develop these arguments. In order to do so, there is need to conceptualise the object of analysis more clearly. Ota (1997) and Tikly's (1997) approaches, for example, reify policy within the narrow literal confines of what policy is presumed to say. If policy is to include the idea of 'any system of management based on self-interest as opposed to equity' or 'finesse in general' or even 'artifice', policy must be read in more complex political and performative terms. Policy needs to be read as a site and a moment of engagement in which enunciation is preceded by displacement, and where the act of inscription is fundamentally also an act of negation. In these terms, the object of analysis has to include, simultaneously, the policy text at its moment of generation, its implementation and indeed its analysis. In seeking to comprehend the complexity of South Africa's education policy, the full panorama or landscape in which policy is implicated or even present must be digested, as Ball (1990, 1994) and Bowe *et al* (1996) have pointed out. This includes a recognition of the continuities and discontinuities between policy generation and implementation, and, critically, the process of policy critique. The point is that policy is a site of interpellation in which a multiplicity of negotiations, formal and informal, and sleights of hand take place recursively. These are initiated at the point where policies are originated, are present in the moment of their inscription, are active when policies are mediated to the public, are signally present when they are implemented, and continue to shape the meaning of particular policies when they are subjected to critique in the academy and elsewhere. Policy is constituted and reconstituted within a continuum of activities and events, from the textual to the practical. Within these processes of constitution and reconstitution, outcomes arise which are both intended and unintended. These are complex. As regimes of practices and trends, they could be coherent in so far as the intended and the unintended are in alignment, or they could be structured in manifest contradiction. The contradiction could, moreover, present itself as the assertion of one or other hegemonic ideological or value framework.

This chapter begins by arguing that policy constitution in South Africa is structured in contestation. Textually, the inception of policy is surrounded by distinct discourses or frameworks. This contestation is carried into the arena of policy implementation and analysis. To show this contradiction, the chapter uses the central facility of school choice which is built into the educational system. The chapter argues that this contradiction is characterised by the dominance of the commodification of education over other elements of the system, such as the right to free access.

Theoretically, this discussion is based on the argument that contestation is made possible through interpellation. Processes of interpellation are essentially processes of power. They

involve the exercise of different forms of ideological, economic and political voice and bring to the policy site interests which carry the authority of civil and other power groups variously defined and legitimated as 'the people', 'the community', 'the state', 'the fiscus', and so on. These interpellations connote understandings of what Labaree (1997:41) has called 'the intersection between what we hope society will become and what we think it really is, between political ideals and economic realities.' These understandings presuppose a meta layer of questions about the nature of school in relation to the ideal society embodied in the following interpellations: What should schools do? How should they be structured and managed? Who should be the beneficiaries of school (society or the individual)? Are schools consensual organs of the society they serve? What missions ought schools to pursue?

These questions arise in the context of a transforming South African political landscape represented, on the one hand, by a formal democracy bound, constitutionally, to the development of a rights-led public culture, and, on the other, by the commitment to a market-led economy. The terms of this context present a set of problems which, as Labaree (1997:41) has pointed out, include tensions between democratic politics (public rights) and the capitalist market (private rights), between majority control and individual liberty, and political equality and social inequality. In the American context, these dichotomies precipitate two paradoxes:

> ... unfettered economic freedom leads to a highly unequal distribution of wealth and power, which in turn undercuts the possibility for democratic control; but at the same time, restricting such economic freedom in the name of equality infringes on individual liberty without which democracy can turn into the dictatorship of the majority. (Labaree 1997:14)

In the South African version of this problem, a history of colonialism and racism has both exacerbated and exaggerated poverty and privilege. The country is enmeshed in a matrix of race, class and gender social relations which might be represented as what Sharp (1988) has called a 'discourse of domination'. While this discourse and the social practices around it have continually reconfigured race, class and gender oppression and exploitation and generated shifting hierarchies of privilege and opportunity, it has produced for poor black people a state of almost permanent subordination.

The structural rigidity of this context has placed particular demands on the transformation process and regulated how voice might be interpellated. Transformation in South Africa has been called upon to address and to overcome obstacles perceived to impede the achievement of equity, and so, in the name of practices such as affirmative action, processes have been instituted to accelerate the representation of previously under-represented communities within the public and the private spheres. This demand essentially interpellates the voice of what the public media somewhat cynically call the 'previously disadvantaged'. At the same time, the voice of the economy has made clear the difficulties of an open-access educational system and has called for a strategic partnership between the government and the people in taking responsibility for what happens in schools. Within this process, government has adopted the approach that it can only provide the basic minimum, and that beyond the minimum it is the responsibility of parents as consumers of education to decide how much they wish to have for their children's schools. These difficulties have brought into sharp relief the dichotomy between the need for a democratic public order and a privatised market economy.

Discourses within the policy arena

Given this background, the experience of educational reform has been, as Labaree (1999:41) has said of American educational history, 'a tale of ambivalent goals and muddled outcomes'. The values and ideals which have surfaced in and around education have made of schools and the larger administrative networks in which they are located institutions which propound the objective of social equality but consistently maintain inequitable practices.

In his discussion of the dissonance within the South African Schools Act, Tikly (1997:179) identifies what he calls different 'levels'. These he refers to as the *economic, ideological* and the *political*. While this is useful, the approach taken in this chapter is to name the mindsets within policy discussion. At least three such groups of mindsets, values and ideals – or discourses – can be identified within the South African policy context, none of which is pristinely distinct or uncontaminated. Imbricated in each of the discourses are elements of the others. These discourses are *social equality*, *resource efficiency* and *social reconstruction*. The provenance and significance of each of the discourses can be analysed in terms of their representation of the social order, the nature of South Africa's location in the global economy, their understanding of the role of education in relation to society, their conception of the kind of citizenship education should encourage and, as a consequence, their understanding of education as a public and a private good. Through its explication of how school choice works, the chapter will argue that these discourses – as value frameworks – exist alongside each other and can sometimes be synchronised and brought into alignment; often, however, they are in contention.

The social equality discourse is extremely powerful in South Africa, and is reinforced textually and politically through legislative enactment and political process. At the heart of this discourse is the argument that schools have a role to play in inducting the young into their full social responsibilities. Schools have to ensure that all learners are provided with the full repertoire of skills to be able to understand, negotiate their way through and contribute to the society in which they live. School and education in this discourse are instruments of society to provide the new generation with those qualities which make of them human beings. In this sense, school and education are public goods that are offered within a transparent public domain. The world into which young people step is a world which is theirs to shape and determine.

Resource efficiency as a discourse is about means and ends and about the shaping of educational objectives in light of the distribution of scarce resources. Schools and communities are encouraged to reach as far educationally as their economic resources will permit. Baseline levels of provision of personnel, equipment and materials are assumed to exist in terms of which learning and teaching approaches are presumed to be possible. Beyond these baselines, communities and individuals have the right to exercise their individual tastes. Communities are encouraged within this discourse to make consumer choices about education. Schools are projected as sites of choice. The education one pays for is the education one receives. Education is thus, fundamentally, a commodity which one transacts privately in a world where demand and supply factors determine the quality of what is available and might be competed for.

The social reconstruction discourse is often conflated with the social equality discourse. While these discourses intersect at particular levels of analysis and implementation, they are

distinct. Social reconstruction as an address is pre-eminently normative. Primacy is given to who or what the state and its subjects ought to be. Embedded within the textual form of the new reforms are ideal versions of teachers, students and parents as the state would like them to be. Foremost in these idealised identities are individualised subjects fulfilling juristic, social and economic roles in which middle-class values are prized. This is particularly the case in the South African Schools Act (and the Norms and Standards document), in which the teaching subject (the teacher), the learning subject (the student) and the parent are defined clearly and neatly in terms of their rights and capacities. School in this discourse is a conditioning site for positioning parents, teachers and students in relation to each other and the state. In the South African context, the role of the reconstruction process is to reorder a disordered state.

These discourses serve to pull the transformation project in a number of competing directions and consist of different conceptions of school. The different conceptions of schools proposed in the value framework represent the kinds of schools the country wants and the kinds of interests which uphold alternative educational values.

The argument here is that these value frameworks exist at almost every level of the system. They are often enunciated within a single narrative or a set of socioeducational practices. The chapter seeks to show how they operate within the arena of school choice.

School choice and admission processes: education as a public right versus education as a commodity

In this section, it is argued that issues of equity and redress in schooling now play themselves out primarily through school choice and admission processes within parameters set up through policy-led restructuring of the school system.

In the sphere of schooling, policy reforms have had the effect of reshaping schools at the level of the individual institution, disembodied from a broader institutional matrix. This is in contrast to apartheid policies, which embedded schools firmly within racially and spatially defined departments, at least until 1992. While post-apartheid policies have retained a small but significant private school sector, the vast majority of institutions have been recast as public schools with school-based governance structures and a financing system increasingly oriented towards site-based management.

A key element in the reconfiguration of schools arises from redefined processes of disbursing and generating finances. There are three strands to the new financing approach of the state. Firstly, personnel costs are publicly funded according to a standard formula based on learner-teacher ratios. Secondly, in terms of the Norms and Standards Act (1998), public funding for non-personnel costs are disbursed according to criteria that attempt to redress inequalities in existing levels of infrastructure and in relation to the economic capacity of the parent community. Thirdly, the South African Schools Act (SASA) enables schools to set user fees at a level acceptable to the school's parent community and encourages governing bodies to supplement public funding through school-based funding initiatives.

Within this legislation and regulations are the discourses of social equality, resource efficiency and social reconstruction. The Norms and Standards Regulation (1998) is the pre-eminent expression of commitment on the part of the South African state to social equality and social reconstruction. The state has deliberately structured into its funding formulae

approaches that recognise the historical disparities within which schools find themselves. However, the SASA cuts across this ameliorative set of intentions. Through granting schools the right to set user fees, the state is instituting financing practices which embody the principles of consumer choice. The effect of this is to internalise the public-private distinction within the public sector. The first two sets of financing practices are consistent with the social equality discourse and, to a lesser degree, the reconstruction discourse. However, where the notion of schooling as an equitably resourced public good is foregrounded, the third has the effect of locating individual schools within a market which differentiates schools according to the degree to which a particular parent body is able to supplement public provision with additional private funding. Thus financing practices, like governance and management practices, construct the school as an individual institution differentiated from other schools in terms of cost and quality of offerings. This is pre-eminently the expression of resource efficiency. While some schools are more 'public' than others, in so far as they generate less private supplementation of public funding, all schools assume an institutional form suitable for insertion into the schooling market. In this context, notions of equity and public right have come to connote state responsibility for basic provision rather than comparability of quality and cost provision across the system.

The broad market logic of provision has been tempered by the introduction of legal protection for parents who cannot afford to pay the fees of the particular school to which their children have gained access. This takes the form of a requirement that parents qualify for a reduction in fees in cases where households annually earn less than 30 times the annual school fee. On the face of it, this protection might appear to offer the promise of opening up schools with high fees to poorer families – and so fulfilling the equity pledge of the state more meaningfully. However, in practice this is unlikely to be the case. Parents in schools that charge relatively high fees do not see it as being in their interests to 'subsidise' the children of families that do not pay. At meetings of such schools, parents have considered petitioning the state to abandon what they perceive to be its 'discriminatory' stance towards them. Schools themselves are inclined to minimise the number of families that pay reduced or no fees and have the effect of reducing the overall income upon which the school can rely.

The logic of provision outlined above creates a terrain in which schools must seek to position themselves well in the market by attracting the most desirable learners, ie those who are likely to perform well academically *and* whose parents are likely to pay the fees set by the school, or better still, to allow the school to increase these fees. The primary strategy for achieving these ends is control of learner admissions through strategies such as the delineation of geographical 'feeder areas' and the privileging of applicants with good academic records. Clearly, some schools are better positioned in this market than others, by virtue of reputation based on previous performance, their association with particular former apartheid departments of education and their geographical position.

At the same time, learners and their parents seek access to what they consider to be the best-quality schools that they can afford within the bounds of practical constraints (such as geographical distance and ability to pay fees). The research reported below suggests that choice of schools is influenced by the learner or family's identification with the social values which they associate with the school.

In the long run, the most 'desirable' learners (in terms of ability to perform academically and capacity to pay fees) tend to agglomerate in the most 'desirable' schools (in terms of

human and material resources and capacity to produce academic results). This sets in place a spiral in which strongly positioned schools can capitalise on these strengths and become stronger, while the inverse applies to weakly positioned schools. What arises, ultimately, is the ascendance of consumer choice as a practice within the entire system. Consumer choice thus eclipses social redress and reconstruction.

The final section of this chapter illustrates these trends with reference to a particular case study. The case study is set in an historically black and working-class area within Greater Cape Town and shows that the logic of school choice and admission processes outlined above is deeply embedded in the school system.

School choice: the pervasiveness of the market

This section compares the way choice is realised within two schools in order to illustrate the ways in which the internal dynamics of schools create a certain interface between the school and learners, pulling learners in different directions. It also shows how some learners are able to, and do, exercise a measure of choice, whilst other learners are confronted with fewer opportunities for choice, or greater degrees of constraint. The purpose of focusing on this development is to illustrate the claim that embedded within the public system is the practice of the commodification of provision.

The dramatic changes in the composition of some schools since the opening-up of the school system in 1994 can broadly be described as follows. Middle-class black and white students have moved to independent schools and privileged state schools, freeing up spaces in 'boundary schools' (former Model 'C' schools on the borders of historical group areas), which have been taken up largely by middle and lower middle-class black, Coloured and Asian students. Similarly, there has been a change in the racial composition of many former Coloured and Asian schools, which are generally better resourced than black schools. The result has been a dramatic alteration of the class composition of the under-resourced public school sector, where the majority of students are from working-class backgrounds. The fact that many of the children of politicians and the middle and professional classes are not in the under-resourced sector is significant in terms of the bleeding of social capital out of this largely impoverished sector. This impacts on the capacity of parents to participate in and influence the management of the school, and affects the school's policy and cycle of change.

The nature of school choice has also changed with the new patterns of enrolment in schools. In the past, school choice had very specific implications in terms of race. Broadly, white students attended private or local state schools which were of a generally good quality. The move now has been towards selecting schools that are independent or privileged state schools. The 'local' (or geographical proximity of a school) is not a primary consideration. In the case of black students, the issue of school choice in the past was far more complicated, and was connected to apartheid group areas legislation, demographic patterns, as well as patterns of mobility. Where there was a predominance of migrant labour amongst this sector of the population, the choice was largely between sending students to rural or urban schools, ie where the parent or relative worked (urban) or where the family was based (rural, generally 'bantustan'). The choice usually centred around issues of cost and social support, as well as stability. For instance, when at particular times urban schools were sites of political activity, schooling in a rural setting was construed as being less disrupted and more stable.

This logic has shifted, and, with the present composition and distribution of schools, different considerations about the ways in which school choice is realised have arisen. Due to the spatially organised nature of schooling, school choice – particularly in the case of the Western Cape, where schools are encouraged to implement zoning policies – has largely been based on locality and whether students are economically in a position to make choices beyond the borders of their locality. In the South African context, choice opportunities are not evenly distributed socially, and the higher the socioeconomic level of the individual the greater the choice opportunities. This is an indication, as well as a result, of the increasing commodification of education, ie more money buys a better education.

Issues of locality are compounded by issues of class and language. These also play a role in parents' and students' selecting schools within close proximity to their homes and within their social community. In addition, resources and stamina are needed to appeal against decisions made by schools regarding admissions. In the South African context, school choice is largely informed by the material environments which constitute and constrain the lives and opportunities of families.

Ostensibly, policies that enhance school choice are introduced in the interests of social equality and redress. The outward form of the policy has been strongly articulated in the language of amelioration. In the context of the broad changes outlined above, the question therefore arises of who is able to benefit from increased equality of opportunity in an 'educational market'.

In the international literature on school choice, which examines the results and effects of school choice policies, there is evidence to suggest that rather than achieving social equality, they in fact entrench the opposite. It is argued by some that the primary aim of school choice policies is to bring about reform in education by developing market mechanisms, which are believed to foster educational excellence over the long term (Dale 1997:452). The recent literature has focused on the cultural, political and symbolic components and implications of school choice programmes (see Archibald 1991; Angus 1992; Cookson 1992; Edwards & Whitty 1992; Bowe *et al* 1994). Proponents of school choice claim that an education system organised around free choice will enhance competition amongst schools and in turn promote educational performance. Chubb and Moe (1990), two of the most ardent supporters of school choice policies, boldly state that

> ... reformers would do well to entertain the notion that choice is a panacea ... It has the capacity all by itself to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in a myriad of other ways. (1990:13)

Some proponents further argue that enhanced choice policies and associated new bureaucratic arrangements will particularly benefit families from disadvantaged communities (Moe 1994; Pollard 1995).

Opponents of school choice fear possible increases in social inequality (Astin 1993; Lee 1993), maintaining that it will produce elitism and segregation and entrench class inequalities (Gerwitz *et al* 1995). Furthermore, it is middle-class parents who are likely to exercise choice opportunities that are available, and those previously disadvantaged in the school system are unlikely to benefit within the new educational market. Wells (1993) points to the fact that 'the lack of power that some families experience is embedded in their social and economic lives' (Wells 1993:48). Walford (1992) further argues that, rather than

introducing mechanisms which will ensure a more fair and equal education system, the proclaimed ideology of choice – that anyone can benefit – in fact masks the differentiation in the system that it produces.

Another issue arising out of the literature which is of relevance here is the way in which working-class choice is theorised. Broadly, working-class parents are conceptualised in deficit terms against a middle-class norm – those who are able successfully to negotiate the schooling market in seeking out the best educational choice for their children. In certain studies (especially Gerwitz *et al* 1995) several characteristics of working-class parents are presented, including the belief that all schools are basically the same and the belief that academic ability is fixed regardless of which school is attended. So working-class choice is primarily determined by considerations of distance, safety, convenience and locality.

Although there is a small literature regarding school choice in South Africa (Hoadley 1999; Tikly & Mabogoane 1997; Vally 1996; Davids 1999), many of the assumptions regarding the way choice operates in this country are drawn from the international literature, especially Britain. Arguably, the weakness of this literature in relation to South Africa is that it posits sociological categories (middle class and working class) that do not reflect the complex sociology of South Africa. Further, some of the general assumptions about the class characteristics of choosers do not necessarily apply in a South African context.

The issues raised above will be discussed in relation to the case study, which examined two former Department of Education and Training (DET) secondary schools in a working-class community in Khayelitsha, located approximately 30 kilometres from Cape Town. The sample of 40 students was small, and it is not clear whether the findings presented here are generalisable. However, questions are raised in relation to how working-class actors make choices, and the extent of choice found in this context. The purpose is to show that school choice does regulate learners' access to, and distribution across, schools in this context, albeit in context-specific ways. The logic of school choice is thus a major factor in shaping the school terrain with regard to equity and redress.

The schools will be referred to as School A and School B. Although the student population profiles of the two schools appear similar in terms of socioeconomic level and location, there are important differences which have implications both for the ways in which the learners select schools and the schools select learners. One of the central differences between the schools is that the majority of learners at School B come from the Eastern Cape as educational migrants or children of migrants. In terms of schooling, these learners are disadvantaged in a number of ways. Some of these relate to curriculum and language differences between the two provinces, and others relate to social problems associated with migrancy, including the disruption of familial relationships and support. Another difference between the schools is the incidence of overage learners, which is linked to migrancy. Although the percentage of overage learners is high in both schools, at School B it is 76%, as opposed to 55% at School A. Numbers of overage children are taken as an indicator of a prior disrupted schooling experience. Levels of migrancy and numbers of overage children are taken to indicate a more 'at risk' and vulnerable student population at School B. It will be argued that the migrant working class is more disadvantaged than the settled working class in relation to making educational choices.

How learners at the two schools made choices shows how educational actors in context (ie where policy translates into practice) are differentially positioned to take advantage of

opportunities within a market-oriented schooling structure. The vast majority of students at School A gave reasons for their choice in reference to the school being 'the best', 'important' or 'having a high standard of education'. Their choice is thus academically oriented and their concern centres around rational considerations of which school offers them the optimal chance of success.

Table 7.1: Motivation for school choice, School A

Motivation	% of interviewees
Based on school reputation	85%
Sibling attendance	10%
Unknown	5%

School A has established a reputation within the community as being one of the 'best' schools. Its matriculation pass rate in 1996 was 86%, as opposed to 27% at School B (representing the highest and the lowest pass rates amongst the nine secondary schools in the district that year). However, the 'best' in Khayelitsha is often perceived to be 'second-best' in relation to the broader context of Cape Town. Many of the better-off families in Khayelitsha send their children 'across the line' to former House of Representative or House of Assembly schools in the adjacent Mitchells Plain area and formerly white suburbs of Cape Town. Amongst those who either do, or are only able to, make choices within the locality of Khayelitsha, an inter-school hierarchy of more and less desirable schools is established. So the classification of 'best' is relative in terms of the choices available. This is a qualification made by several of the students themselves:

> [School A] was the *best black school* in the Western Cape. Many people recommended it. (Oscar)
>
> Because [School A] had the *highest pass rate in Khayelitsha*. (Zanozuko)
>
> At [School A] you get an important education. [School A] is different from other schools in Khayelitsha. It is the *best school there is around here*. (Thembinkosi)
>
> [authors' emphasis]

Table 7.2: Motivation for school choice, School B

Motivation	% of interviewees
Availability of places	50%
Proximity to home	35%
Sibling attendance	5%
Unknown	10%

At School B, half the learners stated that School B was not their first choice, and that they had opted for the school because it was the only one where places were still available. This can largely be attributed to the fact that many migrants come to Cape Town late in the school year (generally in February or March) when the admission procedures in most schools are completed, and the more desirable schools are full.

> I didn't find a school in my community. There were still spaces here [at School B] for registration. I was doing Standard 7 in the Eastern Cape and I came late in January. (Siphokazi)

> It was the only school [School B] that could take me because all was full. (Mzuvelile)

> I came late from the Eastern Cape. They accepted late registration here [at School B]. I went for the holiday to the Eastern Cape. I had to wait for money for the train. (Bathini)

For the remaining students, most cited nearness to their homes as their reason for their choice.

> [School B] is near to my house. I haven't got money for transport to other schools. (Nontsikelelo)

> [School B] is near to my home so I can walk here. (Sakhiwo)

Although learners at School B are engaged in choice processes, they are often not able to consummate those choices due to material constraints, because the schools that are perceived to be better are filled first, and a hierarchy of schools in terms of vacancies is established.

In the school choice debates, there has been a shift in focus to market theory-related analysis of how parents choose schools, which has neglected the way in which schools have selective mechanisms. In the context of the case study, this chapter will show how the operation of choice by both the *school* and the *student* needs to be taken into account.

White (1988) suggests that the school's power over students is a function of the competition of many (students) for one (school). By 1 December 1997 (the end of the school year), School A had a notice posted on the front door saying '1998 Standard 6 full', whereas School B was sending letters to a number of primary schools in the community stating that places were still available for Standard 6 students. School B's registration process extended two weeks into the first term of 1998; very little teaching and learning occurred during this time. School A had approximately 4 500 applicants, of whom 400 could be accommodated. One HOD (head of department) from the school put it this way: 'Of course the parents and students who care the most are the first in line.'

There are no clear admission policies at either of the schools, except for the fact that neither school accepts students from other schools into Grade 12 (although School B did in fact admit several new students at this level in 1998). However, there are strategies in place at School A to draw high achievers from the surrounding primary schools. Ten application forms for School A are sent to the principals of the primary schools to be given to the top ten achievers in Grade 7. Several students reported having received these forms in Grade 7; Andile, a student at School A, stated: 'I was in the top ten at primary school and I got given forms to go to [School A]. At [School A] you get an important education.'

The schools thus have differential capacities to employ selection processes. These serve to constrain further the opportunities of some. In this context, as in others, despite legislation

that states that no learner may be excluded from a school, students still compete for places in the better schools, and often have to settle for schools that still have vacancies.

The above discussion seeks to explain the dynamics of school choice in the context of the case study showing how both students and schools choose. Issues of academic results, numbers of overage learners and migrancy determine, to a large extent, the kinds of schools that students choose (or are able to choose). Further, the selective mechanisms employed by schools and the competition for 'better' schools enhance choice for some learners and constrain choice for others.

It is argued in the literature that middle-class choosers possess a high capacity for, and a high inclination towards, school choice, as opposed to the working class, who generally have a low capacity and low inclination (see especially Gerwitz *et al* 1995). The case study shows that amongst the sample of students there is a low capacity (in terms of resources and opportunities for choice) but a high inclination towards seeking the best educational opportunities available.

Despite differing degrees of constraint, both groups engage in choice processes, and distinguish between schools in terms of their choice rationale, challenging the suggestions in the literature regarding working-class choice processes. Schools are not regarded as basically the same, and academic ability is not construed as fixed regardless of which school is attended. Choosers are not disconnected from local knowledge about schools nor from the process of selecting schools from the range of opportunities available to them. There is a broad class pattern of choice. However, within the sample the migrant working class is more disadvantaged than the settled working class, and the question of who is able to consummate their choice is significant in examining the realisation of school choice policies in context.

In the light of the policy discourses outlined earlier, educational actors in this case study are as yet not cynical about notions of social equality and redress. Within this context, the case study illuminates both a positive and a negative story attached to school choice. On the one hand, to the extent that they can, families exercise choice in rational and informed ways. In no way do they appear to be disinterested or disconnected from the educational market. As Muller (1998:6) puts it, '... in South Africa, the desire for education, the burning thirst for it, is spread throughout the entire community'. Choice in this context is class-related mainly in terms of the limitations of the choices, but not in terms of the inclination to pursue the best educational choices available.

On the other hand, the research shows that, for the large majority of learners, choice is largely constrained by location and cost. The opportunities promised by the post-1994 legislation and the opening-up of schools to all who may choose to attend them – regardless of race – do not extend to all sectors of the population. The working class is disadvantaged. The inter-school stratification within this locality, and the establishment of the 'prestige' of certain schools, should be considered as an important explanatory factor in considering school choice. This results in a 'selective effect', the filling up of certain schools, which limits the choice of many. Some learners are more able than others to get to the front of the queue.

Conclusion

It is hard to dispute the fact that the South African educational system has been considerably renovated. The arrival of the new democratic order has brought to the discussion, and indeed

to decision-making, a commitment to social justice. It is true, nonetheless, that the commitment to justice has been severely compromised and that the discourse of resource efficiency appears to be in the ascendant over the discourses of redress and renewal. Efficiency, however, is being managed within the parameters of marketised choice. If choice is to become a defining feature of the educational system, and if choice is to override the public right to education, then the system is being reconfigured ineluctably around education as a private good. The danger of this privatisation of public rights is essentially that control of the system will shift away from the state towards groups of consumers who will invoke their rights as consumers above their responsibilities as citizens. This has indeed begun where parents who are exercising their choice to place their children in particular schools are challenging the demand of the state that they subsidise the education of children whose parents cannot pay. In the Western Cape, a form of independence is beginning to emerge within the public school system where particular schools, especially former white schools, are organising themselves into what is being described as a Section 21 movement. (Section 21 refers to legislation through which close corporations are established.) The intention is for schools to be able to exercise their independence from the state through their ability to control their own finances.

More critically, the research drawn on in this chapter points to a deep and pervasive acceptance of the discourse of privatisation. The case study has demonstrated the presence, and the effects, of choice and commodification deep within the ranks of the working poor. It is disconcerting, therefore, in the new policy regime to see a tendency towards the structuring of public spaces according to privatised logic, and the apparent acceptance of this logic. Fortunately, while there is no doubt about the ascendancy of commodification in the education sphere, there continues to exist a publicly stated commitment to redress and equity. Subordinated as this commitment might be, it is important to recognise that it has not been erased as a pivotal feature of the new South Africa. What this commitment makes possible is the mobilisation of civic voice. Already, disagreement about the direction of the state's liberal-market policies has provoked dissent within the trade union movement and from other representatives of civil society. It is important to hold on to this possibility.

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CHAPTER 8

The educational policy process in post-apartheid South Africa: an analysis of structures

Gatian F. Lungu

Post-apartheid South Africa has attempted to put in place the most elaborate and inclusive public policy processes in Africa. The 'stakeholder' approach to policy-making adopted by the democratic government in 1994 has led to the evolution of an elaborate, multistage process that attempts to enlist as much input from the public as possible. This elaborate policy apparatus does not come as a surprise for three fairly obvious reasons. Firstly, the long history of racial discrimination, and later apartheid policies which systematically excluded non-whites from policy structures and processes, has led to a strong desire in the democratic movement to create more inclusive and transparent policy processes. Secondly, the fact that South Africa was among the last of the African states to achieve majority rule meant that it had the opportunity to observe and learn from the achievements, mistakes and omissions of other African states. Returning exiles, and the presence of a sizeable group of experts and scholars from African and other countries, brought useful comparative insights into the processes of governance generally, and policy-making in particular. Thirdly, South Africa is relatively well-resourced, by African standards, to finance and manage elaborate policy structures and processes.

However, despite these positive aspects of the policy process, policy-making in post-apartheid South Africa still faces a number of challenges and constraints. Firstly, there are variations between government departments on the use of established processes; while some attempt to be as inclusive as possible, others confine participation in the policy process to certain stakeholder groups, leaving out others. Moreover, a policy area as large as education – with thousands of institutions, nine regional departments, a number of labour unions and interested NGOs – literally affects almost the entire population. Adequate representation of all these stakeholders is structurally limited. Secondly, the quality of the policy process is affected by attitudes of the sponsoring departments; a determined executive can and does push through unpopular policies, disregarding the inputs and views of stakeholders. Thirdly, stakeholder input presupposes that participants have the knowledge, skills and interest to engage effectively in policy debates. As the discussion below clearly illustrates, this is often not the case. Some stakeholders do possess these attributes, but others, among them parents from certain socioeconomic backgrounds, do not. Thus, these and other issues confound the policy process in several areas in South Africa.

This chapter discusses the policy process as it has unfolded since 1994, with special reference to education. As in many countries, education is a large and heavily contested area of public policy in South Africa, consuming a large share of the national budget, and attracting several public debates, controversies and viewpoints. Compared with other policy areas, education has a very diverse set of stakeholders, with educators alone forming a formidable force of policy actors. To facilitate discussion, the chapter begins with a brief

conceptual review of the generic policy process, then it proceeds to examine the South African version or versions of the generic process. A third section deals with the dynamics of educational policy within formal and informal structures and processes, as well as opportunities and constraints that surround it. The fourth section concludes by raising issues for further research and practical considerations.

The policy process in perspective

The term 'policy process' is ambiguous within the terminology of policy analysis. In one sense, 'policy process' can refer to one of the models of policy-making, namely the 'policy process model' in which policy making is viewed as a series of activities. According to Dye (1992:24), the process model does not emphasise 'the *content* of public policy to be studied, but rather the *process* by which public policy is developed, implemented and changed'. In this sense, then, the term 'policy process' is a name given to a specific model applied to the analysis of public policies. In another sense, the phase refers to specific stages of policy-making arrayed through time. According to Jones (1977) and Anderson (1984), the policy process has the following stages: agenda-setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy assessment. In this latter sense, the policy process consists of logically sequential phases, implying that it is a rational process. Indeed several authors identify these stages as part of the generic process of policy-making. Dunn (1994) lends support to the phases referred to above, but ties them to what he refers to as the policy-analytic procedures in this manner:

Table 8.1: Stages in the policy process

Policy process	Policy-analytic procedures
Agenda-setting	Problem structuring
Policy formulation	Forecasting
Policy adoption	Recommendations
Policy implementation	Monitoring
Policy assessment	Evaluation

Note: Modified from Dunn 1994:17

While the five phases on the left side of Table 8.1 are generic stages of the policy process, the five activities on the right are intellectual activities of policy analysis, and may or may not be part of the policy process. Indeed, no government follows the phases sequentially, and at times may omit some of them. Similarly, governments do not always deploy policy analysts, and even when they do, their work is not always directly linked to the phases of the policy process.

The above description of the policy process merely deals with the structure of activities but not with influences on the policy process. To understand influences on the policy process, it is necessary to resort to other policy models which seek to explain forces that shape public

policy in a liberal democratic state. Anderson (1984) groups these forces into 'official' and 'unofficial' actors: the former consist of governmental institutions such as the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, while the latter comprise institutions of civil society such as interest groups, NGOs, and the general citizenry. Warwick (1975:65) presents a more complex model of the forces that shape public policy by adopting the environmental approach to policy analysis. He classifies the policy environment into external and internal sub-environments for an agency, and adds the 'remote' and 'proximate' elements in both environments. Remote factors are those that exert indirect impact on the policy process, while proximate ones exert direct influences. Another perspective is provided by Dye (1992) who attempts to answer the questions of *who* makes policy and *how* policy is made. With regard to the first question, Dye identifies elites, the masses, interest groups and governmental institutions as actors who exert influence on public policy. With regard to the second question, Dye lists several ways or methods of making policy: non-rational intuitive, rational comprehensive, incremental and games-simulation methods.

Useful as generic frameworks are, their shortcoming is that they have an underlying assumption that the pattern of policy processes is similar in all countries, ignoring their peculiarities. It is thus necessary to examine circumstances under which certain factors influence policy more than others, especially in individual countries and even policies of individual government departments in the same country. Lungu (1985) observes that in developing countries generally, and African states in particular, public policies tend to be more influenced by elite groups both inside and outside government than by other groups and factors, and the method of making policy, though often presented as rational and radical, is actually characterised by randomness and incremental change:

> Although educational policies in developing countries are supposedly intended to benefit the masses, and are meant to be implemented in a radical manner, real beneficiaries and influential elements are often members of elite groups whose conservative orientation dictates a gradualist approach to educational reform and implementation. This observation suggests that elite and incremental models of policy-making are particularly relevant to the understanding of some general causes and consequences of educational policy-making in developing countries. (Lungu 1985:288)

While policies are generally influenced by elite groups and implemented in an incremental manner, care must be taken not to over-generalise these models to all public policies. There are several instances when policies are influenced more by government institutions than by elites, and certain political contexts dictate a radical course of action. What emerges from the above analysis is the multiplicity of both sources of influence on, and methods of, implementing public policies. It remains for analysts to identify which of these are at work, either singularly or in combination, in a given public policy.

The policy process in South Africa

As is the case with other countries, post-apartheid South Africa has both formal and informal policy process. Reference has already been made to the fact that the country has one of the most elaborate formal policy processes on the African continent. Broadly speaking, the South African formal policy process can be divided into parts, the first being what could be termed as the *White Paper* process, and the other the *legislative* process.

The White Paper process

In a way, the South African policy-making process can be described as the White Paper process due to the great emphasis on formulating national policies through this type of government document. The process begins with the publication by a national department of a discussion document, usually a product of the think-tank assembled by the minister. This moves to the next stage, namely that of extensive research. The research consists of exploring various dimensions of the policy issue, visits by the think-tank to various national locations and other countries and institutions abroad, consultation with other government departments and relevant stakeholders. After this is done, the next stage is that of the Green Paper. Essentially, this document raises a number of issues and questions regarding a given policy, and after approval by the national Cabinet, it is published for general comment. This is followed by provincial workshops, parliamentary portfolio committee hearings, and workshops on selected topics culminating in a national conference. After this event the finalised policy options are published in the form of a White Paper. From this stage, public policies can follow either the parliamentary process, beginning with a draft bill, or go the route of an executive policy programme announced by the minister of the national department concerned. An example of the first route was the South African Schools Act of 1996, and an example of the second route was Curriculum 2005, which was announced as an executive policy in 1997 (Department of Education 1997). The White Paper process conforms in several respects to Dunn's agenda-setting and policy formulation stages described above. The emphasis in this process is on problem identification and definition, and generating a broad consensus on policy proposals and strategies.

The legislative process

This process builds on White Papers, and begins with a draft bill by a national department. The draft bill is refined and redrafted and submitted to the Cabinet. From the Cabinet the bill goes to state law advisers, from where it goes to the National Assembly or the National Council of Provinces. It is automatically referred to the relevant portfolio committee or select committee for consideration. These committees conduct public hearings and refine the bill and then resubmit it to one of the houses of Parliament. After one house approves the bill it goes to the other. When both houses of Parliament have passed the bill, then it goes to the President for assent, and is finally published as law of the land. It can be reviewed for constitutionality by the Constitutional Court, and, if found wanting, can be returned to Parliament for amendments. The legislative process is essentially a policy adoption stage, while the implementation and evaluation stages are responsibilities of individual departments who sponsor a bill.

The policy process at work: Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005, the South African version of outcomes-based education (OBE), was formally announced by the Minister of Education in February 1997. In his message the Minister noted that:

> Almost two years of careful planning and development have gone into the new curriculum, which is to be phased in general and further education and training from 1998. The Department of Education

> embarked on the curriculum review in August 1995 and key stakeholders have been party to the process. (Department of Education 1997:1)

Taken literally, the Minister's message is a misleading policy statement. It does not reflect the impact of environmental factors, as suggested by Warwick (1975), referred to above; such factors extend well back to the pre-1995 era. According to Gabriel (1999), the roots of Curriculum 2005 lay in the negotiation era (ie 1990–94) when both the African National Congress (ANC) and organised labour debated the need to gear the educational system to the needs of a democratic but industrialising country. In 1994 the ANC published a document titled *A Policy Framework for Education and Training* (ANC 1994). This was followed by the White Paper on Education and Training, while the broader Reconstruction and Development Programme of 1994 had already given a blessing to OBE ideas. These documents were critical of apartheid education and its methods, and called for more effective teaching and learning methods. Gabriel (1999) also observes that Curriculum 2005 was influenced by the global trend of 'good practices' in the public sector, and in this case by OBE policies and practices in advanced countries like Australia, Britain, New Zealand and the US. In fact, he categorically states that Curriculum 2005 was directly borrowed from Australia and the US:

> Although the title Curriculum 2005 is unique to South Africa, OBE has largely been borrowed from the USA and more specifically from Australia ... The eight areas of learning are similar to those used by the Australian education department. The Australians also have a national Curriculum Framework (NCF) ... The eight learning areas are similar to those used by the Australian education department. (Gabriel 1999:29)

Such influences suggest the existence of proximate and remote factors influencing educational policy in South African education, as well as raising the question of the role of various groups, including the elite, in advocating OBE ideas. One obvious factor has been the apartheid legacy, which has propelled the new government to seek novel ideas and ways to solve the educational crisis it inherited in 1994. Another obvious factor has been globalisation. In an era of privatisation and cross-borrowing from international 'best practices', South Africa had little option but to take note and resort to OBE.

The Minister's message above suggests that Curriculum 2005 was propelled by the think-tank group, especially the Center for Education Policy Development (CEPD), an NGO affiliated to the ANC. He also refers to the stakeholders: actually, the stakeholders involved in the process of formulating Curriculum 2005 included the national departments of Education, Labour and Manpower, the National Training Board, as well as organised business and organised labour. Missing from the list were organisations representing both parents and learners, though parent-controlled school boards and learners would be involved at institutional levels. Similarly, reference to research meant, among other things, that the formulation of Curriculum 2005 followed a rational comprehensive review process; for example, in each province 30 schools were sampled for pre-testing OBE ideas and methods, after which the Department of Education proudly announced that schools 'were ready to hit the road with Curriculum 2005'.

As a policy process in education, Curriculum 2005 has some revealing features, both in terms of what has been done and what has been omitted. Firstly, it is important to note that Curriculum 2005 was neither a White Paper nor a law, but an executive policy announced by the Department of Education. In this sense, then, it departs from the formal policy processes

attributed to the South African policy-making above. However, it was not divorced from the White Paper on Education and Training; rather, it was an outcome of that document, supporting the view presented above that some policies emanate directly from White Papers. Secondly, there is compelling evidence that in formulating Curriculum 2005 rational policy analysis was utilised, and that the generic phases of the policy process were actually adhered to. Thirdly, there is evidence, too, that various stakeholders were involved in this process. However, that is about all the evidence in support of the generic policy process. Beyond that, there are a number of policy-making deficiencies to be noted.

The weakest point of Curriculum 2005 as a policy process was the engagement of stakeholders in the process. It is not clear to what extent representatives of teachers, for example, were adequately incorporated, because press reports at the time indicated that a large section of teachers had problems with Curriculum 2005, largely due to the lack of training in OBE but more so due to the threatening policy of rationalisation of teachers (Mukhuba 1999). Indeed, it may also be that representatives of various stakeholders were part of the educational elite in the country – the group that understood and could debate intelligently about the philosophy of OBE. If Curriculum 2005 had engaged stakeholders, they at least did not massify their participation.

A second shortcoming in the formulation of Curriculum 2005 was the failure to estimate the extent to which resources could act as constraints in implementation. It is not clear from the records that the 30 schools earmarked for pilot projects in all the nine provinces included those that were under-resourced, and this problem emerged very visibly when the policy was implemented at the national level in 1998. A policy-analytic process that accompanies policy formulation cannot be regarded as sound if it cannot estimate costs of the policy, and Curriculum 2005 in this respect was more of an attractive fad than a cogent policy.

In conclusion, it is possible to see the intention of creating a genuinely inclusive policy-making process in South Africa. However, if one considers the actual debate and implementation of policies, such as Curriculum 2005, there remain serious questions surrounding the inclusion of stakeholders and the acknowledgement of resource and capacity issues in what is an inherently political and potentially highly contested process.

CHAPTER 9

Democratic participation, decentralisation and educational reform

Nazir Carrim

This chapter analyses the notions of 'participation' that inform current educational reforms in South Africa. I argue that the processes of educational decentralisation under way in South Africa are premised on assumptions of representative and participatory modes of democracy. I show that forms of representation currently promoted in educational legislative texts and practice, such as 'community', 'representative', 'interest' and 'stakeholder', allow particular kinds of participation and constrain others. I go on to argue that these modes of representation and participation are fraught with tensions in their attempt to homogenise people's identities and facilitate direct participation. In the process, rather than providing a way in which people's lived realities are incorporated into processes of policy formulation, they have the effect of silencing significant voices and therefore run the risk of encountering problems in realising policies at the level of implementation.

Introduction

The processes of educational reform in South Africa are characterised significantly by educational decentralisation. This does not mean that educational centralisation is not simultaneously in operation; rather, it suggests a shift to more decentralised ways of educational governance, under the close supervision and co-ordination of an educational centre. There seem to be two main reasons for enacting a shift towards greater educational decentralisation. First is the argument that processes of decentralisation, whether economic (privatisation), political (decentralisation) or social (individualisation), are more consistent with the development of democracy. Second is the argument that policies are more effective when they allow for maximum participation, forcing policy to engage with people's lived experiences and perceived interests at the local level. This, it is argued, allows for more effective policy implementation. Both these arguments, however, complement each other, in that educational decentralisation is seen to allow for both the development and deepening of democracy and for the democratisation of policy formulation and implementation. Educational decentralisation, therefore, is an intervention of and for democracy.

This chapter argues that current attempts to democratise the educational system and educational policy formulation and implementation foreground educational decentralisation as a mechanism to allow for the achievement of democracy in South African education. I argue that this is premised on specific modes of representation and participation so that educational decentralisation in South Africa is represented through terms like 'community', 'representative', 'interest' and 'stakeholder'. In the process, I show that these attempts to democratise education in South Africa are fraught with tensions which homogenise people's identities. Despite allowing for direct participation, these tensions have

the effect of silencing significant voices, and run the risk of encountering problems in realising the implementation of policies in practice.

In the first part of this chapter, I look at the implied modes of representative and participatory democracy in the National Education Policy Act of 1996 and the South African Schools Act of 1996, and their links with the politics of a negotiated settlement and the new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). In the second section, I focus on the notions of 'community', 'representative', 'interest' and 'stakeholder' participation and note the ways in which they are currently experienced currently. In the conclusion, I argue that current practices do not achieve their stated aims of direct participation and the recognition of people's actual identities. Furthermore, democracy in South African education, whilst significantly greater than in the past, is currently limited, and needs to be deepened to achieve its consolidation and the realisation of policies in practice.

Democracy in South African education

The establishment of democracy in South Africa has necessitated the democratisation of the educational system. As such, it is important to locate the current educational reforms within wider processes of transition. For the purposes of this chapter, two important features of this transition are of particular relevance: the politics of negotiations and the Constitution. The politics of negotiation have brought to the fore particular modes of representation and participation which have also resonated in the processes of educational reform. The Constitution, the outcome of negotiations between the anti-apartheid movement led by the African National Congress (ANC) and the apartheid regime led by the National Party, provides a legislative frame for notions of representation and participation, and thus has a direct bearing on the focus in this chapter.

The politics of negotiation and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

The transition from apartheid to democracy came about through a protracted period of negotiations between the then 'white' Nationalist government and organisations within the anti-apartheid alliance led by the African National Congress (ANC) – currently the dominant party in Parliament. Although there were many moments of doubt about whether such talks would succeed, the negotiations were characterised by two important features: first was their inclusive nature, and second was the emphasis on the 'common project' of developing South Africa as a competitive, democratic nation within the context of a global political economy.

Basic to the negotiation process was the need to ensure that they would be inclusive. The legitimacy of the negotiations depended on providing space for the expression of all political and civil society interests in the construction of South Africa's future. Given this, the views of 'black', 'white', conservative, radical and various types of civil society interests – women, religious, traditional African, gay and lesbian and disabled – were actively solicited. The logic of such an approach was to ensure that, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, the process had the consent of the South African people and was seen as the legitimate expression of their will. Both these ideas – the importance of consent and the expression of the 'people's will', as elaborated by John Locke and Thomas Hobbes – are basic conditions of a social

contract through which democratic governance may be legitimately established. In this process, however, two modes of representation were implicitly endorsed: 'interest group' and 'representative'.

The drafting of the Interim Constitution, adopted in 1996 as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, explicitly recognised multiple and specific interests in society. In Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights gives particular attention to these interest groups in assuring that none of the interests they represent would be subject to unfair discrimination and that the expression of such interests is protected by the state as a democratic right. Clause 9 of Chapter 2 states:

> The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, belief, culture, language and birth.[1]

As depicted in the above clause, the South African Constitution is among the most inclusive and comprehensive in the world. However, it endorses a particular form of participation via a specific mode of representation.

People with specific interests, expressed through organisations that promote such interests, are seen as participants in the deliberations of society. All the above-named interests are viewed as basic human rights and are protected. Thus, individuals who are organised in formal associations of one sort or another are recognised and protected. However, people who may have particular interests but are not represented by organised formations do not receive recognition and their views would not necessarily be taken into account, Such views, if noted at all, would be rearticulated by 'others' who would be in 'other' organised groupings. What we notice here is how particular people are allowed to participate and that their participation is made possible by a particular mode of representation.

Who articulates the views of particular interest groups? The 'representatives', who are supposedly chosen democratically within the specific interest group and act on others' behalf. As such, two things happen. First, interest-specific groups are recognised and, second, their participation is made possible through their 'representatives'. We may see these as two modes of representation and participation: 'interest group' and 'representative'. I return to these modes later in this chapter, but first it is important to note the context from which they emerged.

The coming together of 'representatives' of such 'interest groups' is for the particular purpose of contributing constructively to the building of a South African nation in ways that further the development of democracy and the economic growth of the country. In the words of the Preamble of the Constitution:

> We ... adopt this Constitution ... so as to ... build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful pace as a sovereign state in the family of nations.[2]

As such, the recognition of specific 'interest groups' and the allowance of their expressions through their 'representatives' is premised on the condition that their participation is needed to contribute to the common good of a united nation. As such, the recognition of specific interests is not necessarily a recognition of the interest in itself, but an acknowledgement of the role it may play in developing a democratic nation. Implicit here is the bringing-together of the specific and the common, and the concomitant tensions between, on the one hand, the need to homogenise, and, on the other hand, to acknowledge the particular. Despite these

tensions, the recognition of the specific or the particular is seen as necessary for the construction and legitimation of a consensually endorsed 'common project'. Consultations with such interest groups therefore also become a necessary condition for any intervention. The views of specific interest groups need to be solicited in the formulation of any policy or intervention before it may be regarded as legitimate. It follows that the more we are able to consult different interest groups that we recognise, the more likely it is that the intervention under consideration will be supported and viewed as legitimate and having the mandate of the people.

Another important outcome of the negotiations, endorsed in chapters 5 and 6 of the Constitution, is the reconfiguration of South Africa into a parliamentary democracy with powers and duties allocated to nine provinces. This arrangement, which significantly recasts the racially segregated architecture of apartheid, also ensures that provincial variations are taken into account and the relative autonomy of the provinces is given a legal foundation. On this level, we may note that the definition of South Africa in terms of a Parliament and nine provinces puts into place a process of decentralisation as well. The motive of educational decentralisation and reform are informed directly by these aspects of the politics of negotiation and the provisions in the Constitution.

There are various processes underway to establish and develop democracy in the educational sector. These range from structural reconfigurations of the educational bureaucracy (deracialisation), rationalisation and institutional change to curriculum reform. In this chapter, I concentrate on the modes of representation and participation implied in two major pieces of educational legislation: namely, the National Education Policy Act of 1996 and the South African Schools Act of 1996. These two Acts provide a useful overview of the ways in which educational decentralisation is used strategically to allow for democratic educational transformation in South Africa.

The National Education Policy Act

The provisions of the Constitution within the educational sector are operationalised through the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (NEPA). It is the outcome of the discussions of two prior versions that were passed as White Papers in 1994 and 1995. The major thrust of the NEPA is to define the powers and duties of the national and provincial education ministries. In these specifications of the NEPA, a particular expression of educational decentralisation and modes of representation and participation are noticeable.

In the case of education, the demarcation of nine provinces means that the educational system can now be constituted by one national and nine provincial educational ministries, as opposed to the 19 racially and ethnically defined departments of education under apartheid. The powers and the duties constituted in the NEPA give provincial educational ministries considerable autonomy in deciding educational matters. This leaves the national ministry with the primary role of ensuring adherence to constitutional provisions, establishing and monitoring norms and standards of education in the country and providing support for provincial activities. Provincial ministries are free to determine educational policies, curricula, manage educational institutions as they see fit, employ educators and utilise educational budgets as they deem necessary. The NEPA allows for the decentralisation of powers from the centralised, national ministry to provincial ministries. This is in keeping

with the constitutional agreement that democracy in South Africa would be better served by recognising provincial autonomy, thereby preventing centralised decisions being imposed on provincial contexts, which are characterised by significant differences in resources, both human and material.

The decentralisation of powers and duties to provincial education ministries also implies a further dimension of representative democracy. All provinces are headed by Members of the Executive Committee (MECs). The empowering of MECs through educational decentralisation suggests that, given that MECs are elected, they ought to be given the right to exercise their electoral mandates and responsibilities. The MECs, thus, are also 'representatives' of the 'people', as is the national minister. In this way, educational decentralisation is legitimated as mode of democracy which recognises the role and participation of 'representatives' of the 'people'. Again, we notice a 'representative' mode of representation and participation that is legitimated through educational decentralisation. However, decentralisation capillarises representation, extends the ambit of its responsibility and broadens its points of execution. Whereas the Constitution depicts representative modes of democracy at the national levels, the NEPA specifies these on provincial levels, bringing representation and democracy closer to the 'people', as it were, at the pluralised, provincial levels. This allows for a greater degree of participation, since more people at the provincial level are able to participate in making decisions. As such, modes of representation imply degrees of participation.

The South African Schools Act

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) covers the funding, organisation and governance of schools. Like the NEPA, it too went through a series of draft white papers, discussions and debates before it was passed as an Act. The SASA outlines the powers and duties of school governing bodies, the nature of their composition and the procedures they need to follow in their official activities.

The SASA stipulates that all school governing bodies should be composed of 'representatives' from the school's parent 'community', the teaching staff, the student body and non-teaching staff, such as school administrative staff, caterers and janitors. The principal of the school is *ex officio* a member of the school governing body. The SASA also stipulates that all major decisions of the school need to be democratically decided upon by these parties and that there should be evidence of attempts to obtain the views of stakeholders. Whereas the Constitution depicts representative modes of democracy at the national level, and the NEPA at the provincial level, the SASA takes representative democracy to the level of the school – the local level. At the same time, bringing representative democracy to the level of the school implies a greater degree of participation by more people. The SASA empowers principals, teachers, students, parents and other school staff. It binds provincial ministries to ensure that policy decisions in the school are arrived at by taking into account the interests of all these 'stakeholders'. Decisions that have not been arrived at through such consultations may be deemed to be invalid and thus non-binding. The importance of ensuring inclusion, democracy, accountability and maximum participation is therefore brought to the local level of the school through the SASA.

In the light of the above discussion on the Constitution, we may discern in the NEPA and SASA degrees and levels of representative and participatory modes of democracy. It can also be noted that the more decentralised representation is, the more participation it implies. Educational decentralisation, in this sense, gains legitimacy as an educational strategy in that it is projected as promoting the capillarisation of power and the maximisation of participation. Educational decentralisation, then, is a mechanism for deepening and maximising representative and participatory modes of democracy.

Participatory democracy in the Constitution, the NEPA and the SASA also suggests notions of an active citizenry. Citizenship in this instance is viewed as partaking actively in the affairs of one's life, and this is viewed as a basic human and democratic right. In the participatory mode of democracy, citizens are active and critical. This is discussed quite extensively by Bobbio (1990), for example. In the following section, and with the above background in mind, I turn to the notions of 'participation' that are emerging within the educational context, through a consideration of the modes of representation that are at work.

Notions of participation

It was noted above that in the process of negotiation two modes of representation were identifiable: 'interest group' and 'representative'. In the discussion of the NEPA and SASA, two further modes of representation could be noted: 'community' and 'stakeholder'. It is to the implications of these modes of representations that this section of the chapter is directed.

The negotiation process brought together the state and the anti-apartheid movement, commonly expressed as 'the people'. The pitting of the people against the state was common throughout the existence of apartheid and in the resistance to it. However, as the negotiations progressed, both the notions of the 'people' and the 'state' became quite unhelpful, since they concealed more than they revealed. Which part of the state did the state actually speak for? The National Party, whilst the dominant party in the state, did not represent other political parties also in the state. Who exactly were the 'people'? When, representatives of the 'people' claimed to speak on their behalf, who exactly were they speaking for? In other words, notions of the 'state' and the 'people' needed to become more specific. As a consequence, who exactly was representing who, and on what basis, became matters of serious concern.

Interest groups

In the attempt to become more specific, notions of the 'state' and 'people' were replaced progressively by the notion of 'interest groups'. This was based on an acknowledgement that people had various and varying interests and that nobody can be assumed to speak on behalf of everybody's interests. In practice, it meant that it became necessary for specific interests to be articulated by particular 'interest groups'. Thus, from the 'state' and the 'people', 'interest groups' came to the fore as a mode of representation.

The earlier discussion on legitimating different interest groups in the Bill of Rights pointed to the importance of inclusivity in the establishment of democracy. However, in order to ensure inclusivity, the notion of interest groups as a legitimate mode of representation came into question. This was because any and all interests, following interest groups as a mode of representation, could be argued to have a legitimate claim for

recognition. The problem with this is that it does not allow one way of distinguishing between different interests, and moreover it does not allow us to determine which interests are more dominant and pressing than others. Are women's interests more important than the interests of disabled people? How do we determine this? Should the interests of white supremacist extremists be considered equal to the interests of the unionised workers? Thus, 'interest groups' as a mode of representation is limited and constraining.

'Representative' and 'weighted' participation

In order to address the problems and limitations of 'interest groups' as a mode of representation, it became necessary to ensure two things. Firstly, people claiming to represent particular interests needed to be 'representatives' of organised interest groups, rather than free-floating individuals expressing their own individual interests. The expression of particular interests needed to be shown to be interests of groups of people rather than individuals. Secondly, people claiming to represent the interests of such organised interest groups needed to demonstrate that they had the mandate to act as 'representatives' of that group and, therefore, legitimately to speak in their name, on their behalf. As such, a 'representative' mode of representation can be seen to emerge from this, and the chosen 'representatives' were allowed to participate in making decisions.

However, the 'representative' mode of representation and participation soon hit another problem. It is conceivable that an individual may meet the conditions of being a 'representative' of an organised interest group, but we still have no way of determining which interests take priority over others. Take for example, an organised white supremacist group, which democratically elects a particular person as their 'representative'. If the same process happens in an organised women's group, which interests should take priority? The white supremacist interests or those of the women? How do we deal with this?

'Weighted participation' provides a way out this apparent conundrum. If the interest grouping that is being represented by a 'representative' covers the interests of a large number of people, then it would take priority over other interests that are shared by a smaller amount of people. In this way, we are able to prioritise interests. In this scenario, numbers become the determining factor. Majority interests overtake minority interests, albeit with minority rights being recognised and protected. This also leads to the notion of 'weighted participation'.

If we have three 'interest groups', represented by three legitimate 'representatives', and the order of their interests represents, say, 60%, 30% and 5% of the population's interests, respectively, then – using the notion of 'weighted participation' – each of the 'representatives' would be given voting rights proportional to the number of people they represent. In this instance, the 'representatives' would be weighted at 10, 5 and 0,1, respectively, according to the value of their votes. This is done to ensure that minority interests do not exert undue influence in the making of democratic decisions, yet still allow for their participation in informing such decisions.

'Community participation'

Particularly in the SASA, we may note the use of the notion of 'community', where the SASA describes educational governance as serving the interests of the 'community'. In this, we discern another mode of representation and participation, that of the 'community'. The

'community', or local area, is thus endorsed in the SASA as a legitimate mode of representation, and it is possible to have a 'representative' who speaks on behalf of a local area, as a 'representative' of the 'community'. However, the notion of 'community' also recognises the particularities that may characterise different localised social settings. 'Community' differs from an 'interest group' in that 'community' interests, which are concentrated in particular social settings, could cut across various 'interest groups' as they contend with the same conditions that beset their local area. Thus, whilst the 'community' as a mode of representation acknowledges the local, it is wider than particular 'interest groups'. In another way, we can see the difference between 'community' and 'interest groups' as one between geographically bound assertions of identity and those that are materially or ideologically bound.

'Stakeholder participation'

The SASA allows for another important mode of representation, that of 'stakeholders'. The SASA circumscribes the 'community' by stipulating that school governing bodies need to incorporate 'stakeholders' in the school. Stakeholders are those who have a direct 'stake' (or interest) in the affairs of the school. For the SASA, the main stakeholders that ought to compose school governing bodies are the principal, teaching staff, student body, non-teaching staff, and, if the school body may so decide, members of the 'school community' whose services the school body considers they would benefit from. For example, a school governing body may co-opt a lawyer from the 'school community' to help the school on legislative matters.

Through the notion of 'stakeholder' representation and participation, we can notice that participation at the level of the school is circumscribed so as to ensure that only those directly affected by the school are allowed to be represented and empowered to participate. It narrows 'community' participation whilst at the same time allowing for it.

The importance of this discussion about 'interest groups', 'representative and weighted participation', 'community' and 'stakeholder' forms of representation and participation is to highlight two points (see also Sayed & Carrim 1998 for more on notions of participation). Firstly, it is crucial to emphasise that modes of participation are informed and circumscribed by modes of representation. Secondly, the shifts in modes of representation and participation are illustrated by the educational reforms that have taken place in South Africa, particularly through the processes of educational decentralisation.

I would now like to address a number of related questions. What have been the emerging patterns and problems with experiences of these modes of representation and democracy? Have they furthered the development of democracy? Have they increased the participation of people in practice? If so, who?

Some emerging patterns

This chapter has argued that educational decentralisation may be viewed as a strategy for establishing and developing democracy. This can be seen to be the case, since educational decentralisation allows for the capillarisation of power and increases the possibilities for participation and allows policies to engage more with the local and the particular. The

question is, has this been the way in which it has been experienced? In order to address this question, I look at the extent of participation on school governing bodies in terms of 'race' and gender, and the participation of teachers involved in processes of curriculum development.

In March 1999, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) released a report on *Racism, 'Racial Integration' and Desegregation in South African Public Secondary Schools* (Vally & Dalamba 1999). The report pointed out that 'black' parents and students are either underrepresented or not represented at all on school governing bodies. In the context of the report, this was seen as exacerbating problems of racial conflict in schools and an attempt at delegitimising the 'black' presence in these schools. Yet this is the case, despite such schools having established school governing bodies in accordance with the provisions of the SASA. This raises some interesting issues.

It is possible, as the SAHRC report suggests, that we may have 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' forms of representation and participation yet still exclude significant actors in the process. A school governing body may include the principal, teachers, students and non-teaching staff, as well as parents and 'representatives of the community' – thereby meeting all the provisions in the SASA – yet all of these 'stakeholders' may be 'white' only. This can easily happen, I suggest, due to the homogenising of people's identities in 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation. In this instance, teachers, students and parents are homogenised. It is assumed that teachers are all the same, with the same interests. Likewise, all students or all parents are assumed to be the same, with the same interests. The particular individuals that constitute 'the teachers', 'the students' or 'the parents' are homogenised in 'the group', and such groups are assumed to be internally coherent, without differences in and conflicts of interests. As the SAHRC report shows, differences *within* these groups exist, and it is important to acknowledge them if we want to address questions of racism in schools.

The same seems to be the case with regard to gender. The Gender Equity Task Team's report (Wolpe *et al* 1997) also noted the ongoing underrepresentation and/or non-representation of women, not only in school governing bodies but in the general workings of the school. In the same way, principals, teachers, students, non-teaching staff and 'community representatives' cannot be assumed to allow for the representation and participation of women. Other studies have also confirmed this; see, for example, Mahlase's study (1997), which looks at the problem in rural schools. Mahlase shows that the marginalisation of women continues despite the use of 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation. Again, it seems that the homogenising of people in terms of the modes of representation adopted does not necessarily allow for the many interests *within* groups to be expressed.

Another useful example to cite here is the lack of adequate consultation with teachers in the development of the new curriculum. Jansen (1998a, 1998b) pointed out that in the consultations around curriculum development, fora were set up to ensure consultations with 'stakeholders', 'interest groups' and their 'representatives'. However, on closer examination we notice that such consultations were mainly carried out with national-level 'representatives'. As a result, teachers at local level still feel they were not consulted in the processes of curriculum development, and hence the problems with implementing the new curriculum in

schools, where teachers feel uninformed and unprepared for it. The assumption within 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation that 'representatives' can actually be assumed to be accountable to and in fact truly 'representative' of their constituencies is a claim that cannot be taken as a given. It needs to be scrutinised. 'Representatives' may be so divorced from their own constituencies that they may not even speak on their behalf. Or they may only speak from and for a particular level of their organisation – in this case, national rather than local. As such, it is questionable who the 'representatives' in fact speak for.

The above examples, and there are many others, are meant to point to the problems within 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation. These problems point to: a) homogenising of identities in groups; b) the importance of acknowledging differences within groups; and c) the limitations of educational decentralisation as a mechanism for the development of democracy in education. It is to these that I now direct attention.

Homogenising identities

The problem with 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation is that they operate with two assumptions: 1) people may be assumed to have the same interests; and 2) that their 'representatives' in fact represent these interests and are accountable to them. Both of these assumptions are problematic.

The discussion on the participation, or rather the lack thereof, of 'blacks' and women in school governing bodies points to the dangers of homogenising people's identities in 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation. The definition of who constitutes an 'interest group' or 'the community' or 'stakeholder' is crucial, since it can exclude 'blacks' and women, for example. Various people, and consequently various interests, are contained with each of these modes of representation. 'Interest groups', 'communities' and 'stakeholders' are in fact made up of a multiplicity of types of people and interests. They are made of people who are 'raced', 'gendered', 'classed', etc. The notions of 'interest groups', 'communities' and 'stakeholders' do not necessarily give recognition to such identities, since they attempt more to homogenise these in terms of the notions of 'interest groups', 'communities' and 'stakeholders'. As a result, the 'representatives' of 'interest groups', 'communities' and 'stakeholders'cannot be assumed to be speaking on behalf of the actual people or interests within these modes of representation. At the same time, Jansen's points in regard to teacher participation in the process of curriculum development show that we cannot even assume that such 'representatives' in fact are accountable to those they are alleged to represent.

It follows from the above that the recognition of 'differences' among people is important to ensure that people's voices are genuinely heard and that they are, in their differences, allowed to express their own specific and multiple interests. This also suggest a more substantial deepening of our conceptions and experiences of democracy.

Educational decentralisation as a democratic intervention?

Throughout this chapter I have pointed to the ways in which educational decentralisation is enacted in current educational reforms, and the attendant possibilities and problems in regard to notions of participation. I have shown that whilst 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation move South African education into a more democratic dispensation, educational decentralisation cannot be uncritically assumed to necessarily lead to an increase in democratic practice.

It would be fair to state that the use of 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation in the move to decentralise powers and duties in education has led to the privileging of national structures, the homogenising of people's identities in ways that are more manageable for the current South African state and the continued avoidance of dealing with the very particular and complex ways in which people experience their lives and identities. In these ways, educational decentralisation has operated and been experienced as a mechanism of control, rather than as a democratic intervention, since people still feel unrepresented and uninvolved. This leads to the conclusion that for educational decentralisation to be truly accepted as a democratic intervention it needs to engage more strongly with the particular in its own terms, rather than redescribe the particular in more homogenised and general ways that are noticeable in the NEPA and SASA, for example. The importance of acknowledging the complex and different ways in which people experience themselves and their realities, as opposed to placing these in homogenised groups, becomes necessary in order that educational decentralisation may be seen to work. Ironically, this is in fact an argument to make educational decentralisation even more decentralised. Given this, it has to be restated that if educational decentralisation is to become more decentralised, then it cannot be assumed that this would mean that no educational centralisation would exist. This is not necessarily the case. The importance of an educational centre is precisely to ensure that people's interests and experiences are taken into account. The centre, therefore, does not need to disappear from the picture, but move from a controlling to an enabling role.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the politics of negotiation, the Constitution, the NEPA and the SASA. I have argued that these legislative texts put into place 'interest group', 'representative and weighted', 'community' and 'stakeholder' modes of representation and participation. In the process, I have shown that particular identities such as those of 'black' people, women and those at more local levels of organisation do not necessarily get involved. In the light of this, I have argued that whilst these forms of educational decentralisation do contribute significantly to establishing democracy in South African education, they are limited. Their limitations are due to the homogenising tendencies in such modes of representation and participation, which end up excluding significant actors in the processes of policy formulation and implementation. As such, I have argued that educational decentralisation cannot, in itself, be assumed to lead necessarily to an increase in democracy. It needs to speak to the actual ways in which people experience their identities, and be monitored centrally, to ensure that educational decentralisation leads to a deepening of democracy in practice.

Endnotes

[1] Constitutional Assembly. (1996) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996). Chapter 2, 9 (3):7.

[2] Constitutional Assembly. (1996) Preamble:1

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SECTION 3

Policy-making and implementation in higher education

The third section of the book focuses on 'higher education' as a particular case study of policy implementation struggles since the heady days of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE). The establishment of implementation frameworks in the early 1990s – such as the White Paper 3 and the National Qualifications Framework – are related to the harsh realities of 'restructuring' forced on higher education in the late 1990s as a result of globalisation pressures on the Third Word state.

CHAPTER 10

Higher education policy development in contemporary South Africa

Teboho Moja & Fred M. Hayward

This chapter focuses on the process of higher education policy development in South Africa during the period 1994 to 1997. We examine aspects of the policy development process which focus on eliminating the legacies of apartheid[1] and those which look at broadly based, quality higher education. We are especially interested in those aspects of higher education policies which pose challenges, are suggestive for effective policy-making and provide insights about policy realities.

We wish to emphasise that the 1994–97 policy development process builds on a long history of struggle and planning during the apartheid years. The development of the policies discussed here grew out of decades of contributions made through the sacrifice, death, anguish and pain for the opponents to apartheid. The early efforts set the stage for the gradual emergence of a more public discussion of educational policy as restrictions against some anti-apartheid organisations were lifted. When legal restrictions were finally removed in the early 1990s, there was an outpouring of ideas, suggestions and public discourse about education. Part of the debate included contestation about how decisions should be made in the new South Africa and who should be involved in policy formation.

By the 1994–97 period, higher education policy was one of the major areas of debate in the national policy discussions about creating an equitable, economically developed and democratic South Africa. A great deal of ground was covered during those debates. As a result, a substantial level of national consensus was reached on some areas of education policy, including the type of system desired, the need for greater accountability, increased government supervision and the protection of major aspects of institutional autonomy. There was agreement about the principles that would underpin the new system, such as greater access, redress, equality and high quality. There were also areas that remained contested, such as national governance structures, interpretations of institutional autonomy and diversity of programmes within a single system.

The demand for change: the pre-1994 era

The struggle that preceded the 1994 democratic elections had fostered demands for widespread participation in policy-making. The majority of people had suffered for the chance to take part in a policy-making process which would create a new system of higher education in South Africa. They claimed their right to be active partners in the development of a new higher education system. The Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) of the late 1980s and early 1990s drew on people who were concerned that the new policies not be drawn up by technocrats[2] and thus create a higher education system which would be only marginally different from the apartheid system. The consequences of this concern placed a heavy burden

on a very small group of volunteers, who, in the process of responding, developed expertise in this area and combined this role with their daily work obligations. The major criterion for inclusion in the policy-making process was a previous record of research and publication, a willingness and ability to take on the additional workload without compensation, plus a commitment to transformation of the system into one based on equity, access, justice and quality.

Input from the majority of black academics and students was channeled primarily through participation in the debates of research groups concentrating on specific areas. International contributions to the policy process were made by foreign academics active in the anti-apartheid struggle and sympathetic to the demands and desired direction of change.[3] In spite of the lack of homogeneity of this mix, the debates benefited markedly from the input of representatives of all the groups that participated in the research, workshops and conferences held during this period.

In the period before the elections,[4] most of the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) were alive with anti-apartheid activity. Management bodies and student organisations started the process of debating policy options and putting forward proposals for consideration by the new government. It was assumed that the negotiations and political agreements leading to majority rule would quickly usher in a new democratic South Africa with equal social, political, economic and educational opportunities for all its citizens. In this context, the 'activist institutions' were alive with the ferment, frustration, anger and violence which frequently permeated all corners of South African society for the majority population.

There were, of course, many sides to the struggle over apartheid. Some succeeded in ignoring the struggle and the debate altogether. For the proponents of apartheid, the prospect of change was threatening and alarming. What was especially noteworthy was the inaction and quiescence of many of the old critics of apartheid – especially the 'liberal universities' which had taken brave public stands against the government's imposition of apartheid legislation and segregated institutions.

Stages of higher education policy development

Early policy initiatives

The pre-1994 policy research, conducted by the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations' (UDUSA) policy forum and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD), proved how complicated and contentious the change process in the higher education sector would be despite the general agreement on its direction. Added to this was a growing awareness of the complexity of the transformation process as it began to unfold at a few of the historically black institutions which were the first to initiate the process.

In January 1994, the ANC draft policy framework for education and training was announced, providing a vision for higher education and the principles on which the transformed system was to be based. There were also recommendations that a national commission be set up to investigate the entire higher education sector as part of the policy-formulation process. A second phase of the preparatory work was begun in February 1994 by the CEPD, which had been asked to develop the Implementation Plan for Education and

Training (IPET) for the new government. The Higher Education Task Team (HETT) was one of the 22 task teams set up during this period. It focused on the preparation of the draft terms of reference for the proposed commission on higher education, in consultation with the higher education stakeholders.

The convenor of the HETT was appointed to the Interim Strategic Planning Team, and implementation of the recommendations by the HETT started immediately. In 1994, the Minister of Education allocated R20 million for student financial aid and embarked on an intensive process of raising money from international donors. The Department of Education was reorganised to incorporate the 15 former departments of education. The initial structure did not include the addition of the branch on higher education recommended by the HETT, even though a strong case was made. It was two years before the branch was put in place following the release of a discussion document by the NCHE, with a proposal similar to that of the HETT to establish a separate branch for higher education. By January 1995, R160 million was allocated for student loans[5] and the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) established. The Ministry released its first White Paper in March 1995. The White Paper on Education and Training[6] presented a general overview of education but focused mainly on the school sector and adult basic education. Higher education policy review and development was left to the NCHE and the consultative process which was to follow during 1995–96.

First steps towards a new national policy on higher education: the establishment of the national commission

The process for setting up the NCHE marked the beginning of a contested but consultative journey in the higher education policy formulation process. The first draft of the terms of reference, produced by the CEPD in consultation with stakeholders and endorsed by a reference group, was challenged by bureaucrats from the previous government acting in their individual capacities but claiming to represent the interests of the broader society. The process was frustrating, but through perseverance and toleration some agreements were reached. Minor changes were made to the original document, which was circulated once more for endorsement by the broader stakeholders in November 1994.

The general public was invited through the media to nominate candidates for appointment to the commission. Higher education stakeholders were asked to participate in developing a mechanism and criteria for the appointment of commissioners. A short-listing committee was appointed by stakeholders representing 12 national organisations. The committee recommended 20 candidates from a list of 91 nominees. Twelve commissioners were appointed by the President, acting upon recommendations by the Minister of Education. Commissioners came from a diverse background, and not all had been involved directly in the pre-election policy debates.

Creating a consultative process

Given the history of the struggle against apartheid, it was accepted that the mode of operation in developing a framework for the transformation of higher education would be interactive and participatory. Thus, for the NCHE transparency was essential, hence the setting up of the first electronic policy database, which became accessible through the World

Wide Web (WWW).[7] More traditional mechanisms for consultation played a major role. The website was designed to include submissions, research reports, feedback from stakeholders, and when completed, the discussion document and the NCHE report.

The consultative process, though lengthy and sometimes frustrating, was essential. It provided an opportunity for additional inputs from the stakeholders, encouraged debate in areas that were contested, allowed the airing of grievances (sometimes expressed in harsh and insulting language), built consensus and informed the public about the debates. The process took the form of national and international site visits, public hearings, national conferences, task group workshops and written feedback from the stakeholders. Each provincial site visit included trips to a number of institutions in the area, where meetings were held with the management, staff and student representation.

Evening meetings for the general public and constituencies of institutions not visited in the province were hosted by the Education Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) or a representative of the Department of Education in the province. The visits provided an opportunity for those commissioners who had never been to a historically disadvantaged institution or a college to visit one and to see the conditions at those institutions. The meetings provided an opportunity for the commissioners to make a presentation on the work of the commission and for the public to make inputs. These meetings were not easy to handle because they brought together people who had heard little if anything about the commission, as well as organised pressure groups with committed followers. The latter were represented at almost all meetings and seemed to push the same issues at each meeting. One of the frustrating issues was the continued questioning of the commission's consultative process. Ironically, the issue was first raised at a consultative forum set up by the NCHE for that purpose.

International visits were also undertaken by commissioners to discuss transformation processes in both developing countries and industrialised countries. Countries visited included Ghana, Nigeria, Australia, India, Chile and Argentina.

Policy debates, conflicts and their resolution

The debates on policy proposals often resulted in divisions within the commission. Where possible, these differences were resolved through a negotiated position, or as in the discussion document, several positions were put forward as alternative proposals for consideration by the stakeholders. In the commission's report, differing views were expressed where individuals felt strongly about a position, and were included in the report as alternative views of individual commissioners.

There was an extended debate over the principles and goals of higher education, informed by individuals' past experiences and ideologies. Through long hours of debate, commissioners finally agreed on a set of principles and goals for higher education. The section on principles was not as contested as the section on the goals. The solution reached was that the goals be divided into those which referred to government and national responsibilities and those which had to do with operations at institutional levels. During the consultations, the goals presented were not contested. The NCHE then put forward the proposed goals and principles, strengthening these sections by presenting the vision for a transformed system.

Another contested area was the proposed single co-ordinated system of higher education. One view urged greater flexibility within the proposed system in the types of programmes offered by universities and technikons based on regional needs. An alternative position was that the functions of the two subsectors should be clearly differentiated although the institutions should be part of a single system. The two views were put forward for public debate and the final proposal recommended a single co-ordinated system which recognised the diversity of institutions, allowing them to provide a range of higher education programmes. It was further recommended that planning, governance and funding arrangements should reflect this diversity.

Governance was another area in which strong differences existed regarding the relationship of the higher education sector to the government. Positions were put forward for public debate and a final position was taken by the commission to propose the establishment of two bodies, the Higher Education Forum (HEF) and the Higher Education Council (HEC), as a way of restructuring a new relationship.

These are but a few examples of the ways in which differences between the commissioners were resolved in the process of developing policy proposals. The NCHE discussion document and the report took into consideration the inputs made during public debates. In the end, some of the original proposals were reconsidered, altered, strengthened or dropped, while new ones were added.

Formal proposal for a new national framework: the NCHE discussion document and final report

The NCHE published a discussion document spelling out the commission's thinking and proposals for review and discussion by stakeholders. This document stimulated debate, even though some constituencies misunderstood its purpose and misinterpreted it as the commission's report for which the commissioners were seeking endorsement.

Following extensive consultation, meetings and further input, the discussion document was overhauled completely and a new document produced as the commission's report. The report was released in its draft form to the Department of Education in July 1996, to enable the department to start preparing the Green Paper. Finalisation of the NCHE report took an additional two months.

The Ministry of Education's response and proposals: the Green Paper

The release of the Green Paper marked the formal response of the Ministry of Education to the NCHE report. It was, as the Minister put it, 'a further stage in the process of public consultation with as broad as possible a spectrum of interests and stakeholders concerned with higher education.'[8] The public was invited to comment on the Green Paper either in writing or through participation at meetings that were scheduled with stakeholders.

The Ministry emphasised the importance of the vision and values which were the foundation of the NCHE report. It stated that: 'The Ministry believes that its vision and ambitious programme for transforming higher education must be based upon certain underlying principles and explicit goals.' The vision described a system of higher education which '... ensured equity of access and the possibility of success ... irrespective of race, colour, gender, creed, age or class.' The system was designed to meet employment needs; to

support democracy and human rights; to contribute to the advancement of knowledge; to observe international quality standards, and to respond to both the local context and national needs.[9] It was also to be based on principles of redress, access, democratisation, effectiveness, efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy and public accountability.[10]

The statements of vision, principles, goals and objectives in Chapter 1 of the Green Paper were a stronger, clearer and more concise statement of the government's commitment to equality, democratisation, and justice than those in the NCHE report. The Green Paper emphasised redress for the injustices of apartheid, both in the vision and in the specific recommendations for funding for an interim redress program to start in 1997.[11] Indeed, the government made a specific recommendation to allocate R150 million for redress in 1997, as an interim measure until major funding could be obtained for the 1998–2000 budgets. Gender equity also received more emphasis than in the NCHE report, which some had criticised for subsuming gender issues under race, class and equity. Critics had argued that specific actions needed to be taken if sexism, sexual harassment and other forms of gender discrimination were to be attacked effectively.

In the final analysis, the Green Paper endorsed the basic framework proposed by the National Commission on Higher Education. Some changes were made: for example, the HEC and HEF were combined into one body called the Council on Higher Education (CHE), due to concerns about possible conflicts and struggles for power between the two bodies.[12] The language and the recommendations in the Green Paper followed the letter and the spirit of the NCHE report. Taken as a whole, the Green Paper was well received, in spite of differences of opinion about several specific areas. After public discussion and modest changes, the Green Paper was expected to go forward, with only minor modifications, as the Higher Education White Paper and Act of 1997.

Struggling to meet political and public realities: the Draft White Paper

The White Paper was to build on the comments, criticisms and suggestions made about the Green Paper, as well as to reflect the goals and obligations of the Ministry. The challenge was to be responsive to public concerns while dealing with the political reality that the White Paper on Higher Education had to be ready by April 1997 in order to meet time requirements for legislative review and the constraints of the budget process for 1998.

The Draft White Paper[13] was released on 18 April 1997.[14] It differed significantly from some of the proposals contained in both the Green Paper and the NCHE report. It focused primarily on the role of higher education in national development, but devoted little attention to many of the values and goals central to the recommendations of the NCHE report and the Green Paper. It fell far short of both general expectations and the more extensive recommendations of its predecessors. There was a general feeling that this document downplayed key values and principles about justice, equality, redress and transformation of higher education central to public support of the NCHE and the Green Paper. There was a fear that the Draft White Paper would lead to little or no transformation.

The Draft White Paper's primary focus was on recommendations to create the conditions necessary for economic development in South Africa and neglected what the previous documents saw as preconditions for development in South Africa – especially strong

recommendations for additional funding for redress for the HDIs. Most critical was the omission of a special fund to counter some of the most serious education legacies of apartheid.

Another deficiency in the Draft White Paper was the lack of clarity about how transformation was to take place. There was confusion about the locus of power and responsibility for transformation between the Ministry of Education and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the stakeholders. While the functions and duties of the CHE were spelled out in lengthy technical detail, the Draft White Paper seemed ambiguous about its power and authority, leaving too much room for contestation. It created the impression that the CHE – which the NCHE had proposed be a semi-autonomous body between institutions of higher education and government – was now defined primarily as an arm of the Ministry of Education.

The White Paper and the Higher Education Act of 1997

The White Paper was approved in July 1997. Its major focus was the transformation of the higher education system to redress the inequities of apartheid and meet the needs of a new South Africa with fundamentally changed economic, social and political structures.[15] These changes were to be implemented within a new single coordinated system.[16] In the White Paper, government made a commitment 'to equity, justice and a better life for all.'[17] Higher education was expected to promote modernisation through internationally competitive research and high-quality[18] programmes. There was emphasis on the commitment to high academic standards throughout the system, both to increase international competitiveness and to ensure that the disadvantaged institutions of the past did not continue to have second-class status. The White Paper also focused on effectiveness and efficiency. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy were to be protected.[19] Accountability was seen to require a much greater role for government than in the past, putting special responsibility on government and the new Council on Higher Education (CHE). A related concern in the document focused on developing a new kind of 'institutional culture' which is learning-centred, eschews racism and sexism, and guarantees the safety of all (but with special attention to women) on campus.[20] The emphasis on student financial needs was in sharp contrast to the old order which did little to assist majority students. It markeds a major shift in funding priorities with rapidly increasing government commitments – especially in terms of poor and disadvantaged students.[21]

The Higher Education Bill was tabled in Parliament and passed following a demonstration by right-wing students in Parliament, which led it to adjourn for almost an hour while a peaceful resolution of the crisis was worked out.[22] The Act was approved in Parliament at the end of October 1997[23] and became the law of the land at the end of 1997.

Conclusions

The process of policy development was facilitated by a long-held commitment to transformation – the belief that South African higher education must undergo fundamental change. That commitment made the policy formation process much easier because it was firmly grounded on general agreement that change was necessary. While major differences of

opinion remained about some of the details of change, the long period of thinking and planning about the nature and structure of higher education in a new South Africa made the process much easier once the political situation allowed policy development to be formalised as a government responsibility, but with greater participation by stakeholders.

Much as the elections of 1994 resulted from the political negotiations at the World Trade Centre, the process decided upon as the basis for higher education change benefited from that experience. The structure and membership of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) also reflected the consequences of that negotiated settlement. All members had expertise in higher education. Among the participants were authors of some of the original apartheid legislation, as well as several of the most vocal critics of apartheid. It seemed to many that its membership alone guaranteed that the commission would not be able to function. Yet, as we have seen, in a remarkably short period of time it was working constructively and collectively to establish a new educational order in South Africa. In some ways, its apparent shortcomings – an invitation to dissonance, conflict and paralysis – may have helped give it both cohesiveness and legitimacy. The members forged a sense of collective responsibility for the future of higher education, which allowed them to work through their substantial differences to find a common voice.[24]

The completion of such an extensive and far-reaching public policy, as well as enabling legislation, in only two-and-a-half years is a major achievement. The policy-making process was characterised by extensive public input and debate at every stage in the process. It proposed fundamental changes in the structure and goals of the system of higher education.

What were the major successes of the process?

The lessons of the public policy development were reflected in the establishment and effectiveness of the NCHE. Its success was critical for the process which followed. While it is hard to pinpoint precisely what made the NCHE so effective, there are several factors which seem critical. Firstly, part of the reason for the commission's success lay in its diverse make-up – seeming an obstacle in the beginning, but in fact giving legitimacy to its activities. Secondly, the NCHE developed a clear sense of collective responsibility which allowed it to develop policy in spite of fundamental differences among its membership. Thirdly, the NCHE developed a vision that was accepted by all members – a vision which included acceptance of the damage done to higher education by apartheid and the importance of eliminating and redressing the most damaging legacies of apartheid.

From the outset, the open nature of the policy-making process adopted by the NCHE was a major reason for its success, as were its efforts to reach out for information and input. The NCHE allowed effective policy formulation to take place in a way that gained the support of the majority of stakeholders, government officials, the higher education community and the interested public. As we have seen, this was no easy task, but its many successes suggest lessons for the structure, 'culture' and operation of such policy-making bodies in the future.

Another important success of the process was the willingness of the policy researchers and the commissioners to focus almost exclusively on national questions rather than parochial issues. In so doing, they succeeded in capturing a broad national vision for public policy on higher education and helped pave the way for public acceptance and government approval of most of their policy recommendations.

The policy process was strengthened by the exploration of an implementation plan. The attention paid to mechanisms for implementation resulted in policy recommendations sensitive to the context in which higher education operates in South Africa – both in terms of the legacies of apartheid and the realities of the contemporary social and economic situation in the country. For example, with regard to redress there were concerns on the one hand about making policy based on past discrimination, and on the other about the need to find ways to ensure that the deficiencies caused by apartheid did not become permanent marks of second-class citizenship. In spite of the complexities of the issues, major progress was made in this area.

Weaknesses of the policy development process

As noted earlier, there were issues that remained unresolved because the commission recognized that they posed potentially insurmountable difficulties for reaching consensus. For example, while there was general agreement that a program for redress should be a critical part of the final public policy agenda for higher education, the commission was unable to agree on how this should be done, how it would be funded or how much funding (in a general sense) might be needed. Part of the compromise on these issues was the proposal for an 'audit' as part of the budget process and the proposal that HDI redress should be part of earmarked funding. This answered the critics who felt that little, if any, additional funding was needed for the HDIs (whose problems stemmed from mismanagement, in their view, not funding) and at least partially satisfied those who felt that substantial amounts of additional funding were essential if the HDIs were ever to be able to provide the high-quality education expected of them.

A somewhat surprising problem was posed by the limited enthusiasm and support from South Africa's liberal white institutions. While they participated in the process, the liberal institutions seemed more concerned about what they might lose than about how to overcome the legacies of apartheid they had so vocally opposed in earlier years.[25] The approach adopted by the historically advantaged institutions (HAIs) seemed to be defensive, and their submissions to the policy-making process were viewed with suspicion in some quarters. This standoffishness on the part of the HAIs deprived the process of potential inputs from a different perspective.

The lack of adequate data hindered the NCHE in its efforts to explore many of the questions about curriculum, structure and long-term needs, and left many public policy questions ambiguous or unanswered. The NCHE was also pressured by its limited time frame. For many members, there was not enough time for the extensive deliberations they believed were needed for such major changes. The problem was exacerbated by an understandable public eagerness to overcome the legacies of apartheid quickly, transform the system of higher education and make new opportunities available to the majority population. In the end, there was a recognition of the political reality that the governing party needed to move quickly to change the apartheid higher education system they had inherited. While there is no substitute for time, the NCHE was remarkably successful in moving as quickly as possible to take advantage of the long history of thinking and preparation for change nationally, the talent amassed for the policy effort, the resources at their disposal and the opportunity to draw on the experiences of other systems.

The participatory and democratic process used was important in the context of the authoritarianism of the previous policy-making system. Nonetheless, extensive public participation also required a substantial commitment from the members of the commission. The participatory nature of the policy development process ate up valuable time and energy – and, for some, good will. Yet, in the long run, the high level of public participation was vital to success. In spite of the fact that for many of the participants this was their first experience in the political and policy-making process, and given the extreme demands of time and expertise required to carry out such a mammoth task, this in itself laid the groundwork for success as the NCHE moved forward with the policy-making process in a context in which more experienced individuals might well have feared to tread.

Lessons from the policy process

The policy changes proposed grew out of the strong commitment of the majority of South Africans not only to overcome the inequalities and injustices of apartheid but to build something new and better. The key conditions for successful policy development were consensus on the need for change, general agreement on a vision for the future and an inclusive participatory process. For those involved, there was no doubt that the old system needed to be changed. Indeed, the system of higher education was so linked to the racism and inequities of apartheid, that almost everyone involved in the policy process agreed that fundamental transformation was essential.

A second important contributor to public policy formation was the presence of a powerful vision about the future – about a new order which would reflect the values and goals of most South Africans for a system of higher education based on principles of justice, equality and fair access for all citizens. This vision[26] was a driving force not only for members of the NCHE, but for the public and the new government. It provided a central focus for the recommendations of the commission.

The case for the centrality of a guiding vision for transformation is put especially well by John P. Kotter when he writes about the conditions for successful change in business. He suggest that of the '... elements that are always found in successful transformation, none is more important than a sensible vision.'[27]

Participation through debates, discussions and inputs by a broad cross section of the population was critical to the success of the policy formation process. Indeed, when policy began to deviate from the broad consensus developed through this participation – as with the Draft White Paper – the stakeholders made their unhappiness clear. They believed that without a clearly articulated vision in the White Paper, public policy efforts would fail to establish a new order.

Related to participation is the importance of *open, public discussion of issues and opportunities for public input* throughout the policy-development process. While there were times when the process seemed in danger of being smothered under an avalanche of talk, meetings and consultations, it was the openness to public debate and inputs that allowed the process to be concluded so quickly and helped maintain public support in the long run. This openness helped build *consensus* – another essential condition for effective public policy development.

Finally, for public policy to succeed there is a need for *committed leadership*. At both the policy development and the senior political levels, the leadership of all major stakeholder

groups participated and were heard. Although there was not unanimity, a consensus developed even here – built on the broad consensus the NCHE had established among stakeholders through its open, participatory processes. Government commitment was demonstrated both by the lack of interference in the process and by its deflection of those who sought the sanctions of higher authority to subvert it or gain special status for their positions. When the Higher Education Bill was tabled in Parliament, the political response was notable for its lack of partisanship. While there were criticisms, all major parties supported the general provisions contained in the Bill and only raised concerns about some of the clauses which they believed conferred too much power on the Minister.

There are many factors that bode well for the future of higher education policy development. Particularly important is the early outlines of a new culture of policy development and policy formulation based on principles of public participation, openness and consensus on policies for the future. The difficult challenge will be to move from the thoughtful public policy which provides the framework for a new system into the full implementation of transformation.

Endnotes

1 Though the impact and legacy of racism continues to have an effect, its manifestations for higher education generally are by no means unique to South Africa.

2 The term 'technocrats' in this context refers to policy experts who did not necessarily share the same political views and could be drawn from the old order – that is, the existing departments of education. These individuals were seen as fully steeped in the values which fostered and maintained the apartheid structures of higher education, and thus incapable of both understanding the changes sought and providing useful expertise or assistance to the transformation process.

3 The extent to which advice and participation was sought from foreign academics and higher education administrators, and the care which their views were examined, discussed, and incorporated was a remarkable measure of the confidence of the Mass Democratic Movement and the will of South Africans to consider alternative views. This was by no means a relationship of deference to foreign ideas, but an understanding of the costs and limitations resulting from the years of isolation of South Africa from the rest of the world.

4 We will discuss this subject in much more detail in our forthcoming book.

5 Figure provided Roy Jackson, Director of the Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA).

6 Department of Education. (1995) White Paper on Education and Training. *Government Gazette*, no. 16312, 15 March 1995.

7 The higher education policy database can be accessed through this address: http://www.hsrc.ac.za.

8 Department of Education. (1996) Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation. Pretoria, December 1996; Minister SME Bengu, 'To stakeholders, the public and interested parties,' pp. 1–2.

9 Green Paper, Chapter 1, section 3–3.4, p. 5.

10 Green Paper, Chapter 1, sections 4.1–4.7, pp. 6–7.

11 See especially Green Paper, p. 52.

12 Green Paper, p. 40.

13 This is probably the first White Paper in South Africa to be released as a 'draft' since a Green Paper is intended to be the government's discussion document.

14 Department of Education. (1997) Draft White Paper on Higher Education (General Notice 712); Draft Higher Education Bill (General Notice 713). *Government Gazette*, 382(17944).

15 There is no ambiguity since the goals are laid out in the first paragraph (see White Paper, 1997, section 1.1, p. 1)

[16] See section 1.2, p. 1. [All references of this type hereafter refer to the White Paper on Higher Education of 1997.]

[17] Section 1.6, p. 3.

[18] Section 1.2, p. 6.

[19] Sections 1.23, 1.24 & 3.33, pp. 7. & 35.

[20] Section 3.41, p. 37.

[21] See sections 4.39 through 4.49.

[22] The disruption of Parliament by right-wing students during the Minister of Education's speech, and Parliament's response to the disruption, was a telling example of the new openness and tolerance of the post-1994 election period. In an earlier era, the disruption – especially if it had been by black students – would have been met with force. In this case, the ANC parliamentary leadership temporarily adjourned Parliament to allow negotiators to reach a peaceful solution with the students, who were protesting the language policy in the Act, which they feared would limit instruction in Afrikaans. After a brief break and the restoration of order, the session continued.

[23] The Bill was approved by a vote of 190 for and 47 against. One of the ironies of the debate in Parliament was the disruption of the Minister of Education's speech by right-wing youth protesting the policy on language, especially the government's power over the choice of language on higher education institutions. The tact and thoughtfulness with which this serious and potentially violent disruption was handled by the parliamentary leadership is a tribute to their commitment to democratic values and their patience with even the most extreme opposition. Their response was a testament to accommodating differences while ensuring that the business of Parliament is carried out in a proper and dignified manner. See, for example: 'Tshwete slams Parliament protest,' *The Star*, 29 October 1997:3, and 'Official suspended after Assembly demo,' *The Star*, 30 October 1997:3.

[24] A mark of the collective responsibility and national conception of the members is illustrated by the written statements of differences appended to the report by several members of the Commission. Yet these were not 'dissents' in the usual sense, but rather labeled the 'alternative views' of individual members. See: NCHE. (1996) *A Framework for Transformation*, pp. 313–19.

[25] For example, the universities of the Witswatersrand and Cape Town adopted strong anti-apartheid policy statements during the struggle, including them in advertisements for positions, and on letterheads for local and international correspondence.

[26] This vision is reflected in Chapter 1 of the NCHE report and in chapters 1 & 2 of the Green Paper and Chapter 1 of the White Paper.

[27] Kotter, John P. (1996) *Leading Change*. Boston: Harvard University Press, p. 7.

CHAPTER 11

Making the NQF road by walking reflectively, accountably and boldly

Samuel Isaacs

In 1999, the South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education (SAARDHE) hosted a conference with the following theme: 'The Reconstruction of Higher Education in South Africa and the Role of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)'. I used that conference as an opportunity to pose several critical questions in relation to our work on a national qualifications framework: who is reconstructing what for which purposes? Is all this necessary to begin with? Who benefits from the rethinking of qualifications? In trying to reflect on these questions as SAQA's executive officer, I cannot claim a neutral position, nor do I wish to. However, I do wish to be true to the statement that 'we will make the NQF road by walking reflectively, accountably and boldly.' In those last three adverbs lie the keys to the successful reconstruction and development of all education and training, including higher education and training, in South Africa.

Making the NQF road by walking reflectively

An opening question could surely be: 'why make this NQF road?' To reflect on this requires a deep understanding of the nature and purposes of the NQF, and the need and desire among many for the reconstruction and development of higher education and training in South Africa. Such reflection is difficult because very often the vantage points, understandings and motivations of the individual – especially with regard to basic research questions such as 'who benefits?' – are so different, and the awareness levels so guarded and masked. In striving to be a reflective practitioner, I have had to ask myself these questions repeatedly, and the answers have not been easy or complete. I have also learnt that trying to share these reflections with others is not easy, and the dangers of misunderstanding so great. For as Polanyi rightly observed: 'you always know more that you can tell'; and as Spinelli records: 'whatever you think, it is more than that.' So, with those two caveats in mind, I will share in a distilled form some of the things I have learned from my reflections on these matters.

The NQF as a social construct

The essential nature of the NQF is that of a social construct, in that we as social actors in society not only theorise about, construct and implement it, but we also enable, actively change or work against it.

Three necessary criteria for a successful social construct

For the NQF to be a successful social construct three necessary criteria must be met:

- *Democratic participation of stakeholders*: legitimacy of the social construct is seriously undermined if this does not occur.
- *Intellectual scrutiny*: If the social construct cannot withstand intellectual scrutiny, its credibility weakens and therefore its legitimacy is undermined. For 'intellectual scrutiny', we can read academic scrutiny, international benchmarking, best practice, cutting-edge research and development and appropriate international comparators.
- *Adequate resourcing*: Most social constructs falter and fail because of the failure to consider the issues of affordability and sustainability. Designing and building social constructs that we cannot afford to maintain, let alone build, condemns them to failure. However, with regard to the NQF it is not just how much money the state provides, but rather how we release, align and focus the multitude of resources – human, physical and financial – already allocated for education and training.

How dynamic is the NQF?

Because the NQF is not a panacea for all the ills of education and training in South Africa, I always hasten to point out that I remain grateful to Gino Govender of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) who says that the acronym NQF stands for No Quick Fixes. It certainly is not a blueprint to be followed slavishly. It is a dynamic social construct that is and can be shaped through democratic participation and intellectual scrutiny by all stakeholders. The NQF is as good or as bad as the quality of that democratic participation and intellectual scrutiny. The SAQA has the important role of overseeing the development and implementation of the NQF. This development and implementation is the essential work of all stakeholders. In this oversight role, the SAQA has to ensure a high level of democratic participation and intellectual scrutiny. In addition, because the SAQA Act is enabling legislation, it therefore does not prescribe the NQF to the final or nth degree.

This permits the NQF to be both a dynamic and evolving social construct, enabling it to deal with real constraints and paradoxes in appropriate ways. The role of the SAQA is to ensure the coherence and the integrity of the NQF by exercising its oversight in a servant-leadership way.

A troubling question?

Is the NQF modernist, constructivist or post-modernist in nature, and therefore subject to the criticisms and advantages of the specific label? I will leave this question for the sociologists to argue, and merely point out that a critical argument around the NQF springs from the social uses of qualifications. The need for the legitimacy of qualifications in society requires an open and transparent process for the democratic participation of stakeholders and intellectual scrutiny by the public. In other words, democratic participation of stakeholders can, through close intellectual scrutiny, bring a multitude of world-views and theories to bear on the development of the NQF. This evolving NQF will tend toward particular theoretical directions as a consequence of intellectual scrutiny, rather than being determined in advance by tight definition.

The social uses of qualifications

The NQF is about interrogating our society's uses of qualifications, ensuring that all learners are able to develop to their full potential and enhancing our society's social and economic development. Through the creation of an integrated national framework for learning achievements, the NQF must facilitate access in its widest sense, enhance quality, accelerate the redress of past and unfair discrimination and develop both the individual learner and the economic and social fabric of society in respect of education and training.

The SAQA Act states that the objectives of the NQF are:

- To create an integrated national framework for learning achievements;
- To facilitate access to, and mobility and progression within, education, training and career paths;
- To enhance the quality of education and training;
- To accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination in education, training and employment opportunities; and thereby
- To contribute to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the nation at large.

These five objectives speak directly to both the global and national challenges facing learners in South Africa. Ulrich (1998) groups these global trends as:

- Quality in education and training;
- Lifelong learning provision;
- Intellectual capital as the defining competitive edge;
- Rapid technological advancement; and
- Change, change and more change.

The history of the NQF over the past ten years has been a struggle for the just, equitable and legitimate social uses of qualifications, social uses that will be legitimated through democratic practices.

Society uses qualifications to distribute the 'social goodies' through giving and refusing opportunities, allowing some in and keeping others out, and filtering out rather than empowering. When such determinations are unjust and inequitable, and condemn people to a life of underdevelopment and poverty with very little chance of redress, then serious questions emerge that require resolution.

As stakeholders of the NQF, the initial questions we must address are:

- How do our institutions and our practices measure up against the five key objectives of the NQF?
- Do we want to measure up to the NQF or not?
- What is it that we want to measure up to?

International trends in education and training

There are two pervasive trends in education and training today. Quality and lifelong learning dominate the education and training literature, contemporary reform movements in many countries and the new global economy. Underpinning these transnational trends are the global phenomena of intellectual capital as competitive edge, rapid technological change and

the ever-increasing rate of social, political and economic change. Globally, there is a powerful discourse about core competencies, generic skills, learning abilities, essential outcomes or, in our case, the *critical cross-field education and training outcomes* that must be mastered by all learners and embedded appropriately in all qualifications.

Conceptually, the NQF is at the cutting edge of such developments. However, we envy the capacity of many countries – for example, Scotland, Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Mexico – to implement such frameworks. As with so many globalisation trends, there is no respite for South Africa. These are challenges we must and can meet. The major task is to align the political, bureaucratic, technical and popular will in our society to achieve our stated objectives within agreed resources and timelines that are meaningful, relevant and achievable.

Increasingly, education and training in many countries are demand-led, outcomes-based and learner-centered. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, launched on 8 January 1999, is a good example of new education and training policy, like our own, that is aimed at addressing the need for quality lifelong learning.

Ron Tuck, Chief Executive Officer of the Scottish Qualifications Authority, regards the single biggest strategic challenge facing education and training providers as the delivery of provision, in order to combine high levels of flexibility for the learner with rigorous quality standards. The greatest obstacles to be overcome are the 'academic year-dominated', lecturer-centred and other traditional delivery practices of education and training institutions, which work against learner-centredness.

National priorities for education and training

Our national policy development processes have culminated in an impressive array of legislative measures to significantly transform our education and training systems. These include the following:

- National Education Policy Act;
- South African Qualifications Authority Act;
- Higher Education Act;
- Skills Development Act;
- Skills Development Levies Act;
- Further Education and Training Act;
- South African Schools Act.

The NQF is the cornerstone of this deep transformation, and all the legislation is coherent in its support of this concept. Underpinning this legislation are the imperatives of the government's human resources development and macroeconomic strategies. In addition, regional and local socioeconomic priorities impact on the relevance and responsiveness required of providers. The quality improvement of the schooling and apprenticeship systems are high national priorities. Further education and training (FET) has been flagged for a major overhaul.

When the Council for Higher Education (CHE) met for their first strategic planning meeting in 1998, I tabled the following priority areas requiring attention:

- Ensuring that the higher education sector is a single co-ordinated sector;
- Establishing the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), including clarification

on the future role of the Certification Council (SERTEC) for technikons and the Quality Promotions Unit (QPU) for universities;
- Developing a towering competence on NQF matters;
- Making interim arrangements for private higher education institutions and new qualifications;
- Creating coherence for SAQA and Higher Education Act-driven regulations; and
- Structuring relationships between Education and Training Quality Assurance (ETQA) bodies.

However, two years later, these areas have still not been satisfactorily addressed.

Conceptualising the NQF: the essentials

The conceptualisation of the NQF is driven by its five objectives and their consequences for the critical concepts of qualifications and quality assurance.

Outcomes-based education and training (OBET)

The SAQA Act introduces the notions of OBET very subtly in two phrases. Firstly, it defines a standard as follows:

> 'Standard' means registered statements of desired education and training outcomes and their associated assessment criteria.

The phrase 'desired education and training outcomes' is used but 'outcomes' are not defined. Secondly, it states the first objective of the NQF is to:

> ... create an integrated national framework for learning achievements.

The phrase 'for learning achievements' establishes the notion of learning results (outcomes) as opposed to learning inputs. While facilitative access, mobility and progression depend largely on establishing a common currency for the NQF, and any system based primarily on learning inputs for comparison becomes restrictive, the shift to OBET, though highly desirable, was not fully debated. What we mean by OBET therefore gets caricatured with other often narrow, technicist and behaviorist curriculum reform initiatives. Our OBET is primarily about systemic change, and we have reinvented OBET for our purposes in an holistic and educationally sound manner. As a result of the lack of full debate, ownership of OBET is not always confidently declared by stakeholders. In a few cases, I suspect that some wish it would just go away. The alternatives to OBET that will also achieve the objectives of the NQF have also not been forthcoming.

The debate has been further confused in that the schools curriculum reform initiative (Curriculum 2005), outcomes-based education and the NQF are regarded as synonymous, when in fact they are not. Such confusion bedevils systemic change.

Defining 'qualification'

The SAQA Act defines 'qualification' as follows:

> 'Qualification' means the formal recognition of the achievement of the required number and range of credits and such other requirements at specific levels of the National Qualifications Framework as

may be determined by the relevant bodies registered for such purpose by the South African Qualifications Authority.

SAQA worked very hard to operationalise its enabling legislation and published, after wide public hearing and comment processes, the National Standards Bodies Regulations (1998) which specified that a qualification shall:

a) Represent a planned combination of learning outcomes which has a defined purpose or purposes, and which is intended to provide qualifying learners with applied competence and a basis for further learning;
b) Add value to the qualifying learner in terms of enrichment of the person through: the provision of status, recognition, credentials and licensing; enhancement of marketability and employability; and opening-up of access routes to additional education and training;
c) Provide benefits to society and the economy through enhancing citizenship, increasing social and economic productivity, providing specifically skilled/professional people and transforming and redressing legacies of inequity;
d) Comply with the objectives of the National Qualifications Framework contained in section 2 of the Act;
e) Have both specific and critical cross-field outcomes, which promote lifelong learning;
f) Where applicable, be internationally comparable;
g) Incorporate integrated assessment appropriately to ensure that the purpose of the qualification is achieved, and such assessment shall use a range of formative and summative assessment methods such as portfolios, simulations, workplace assessments, written and oral examinations; and
h) Indicate in rules governing the award of the qualification that the qualification may be achieved in whole or in part through the recognition of prior learning, which concept includes but is not limited to learning outcomes achieved through formal, informal and non-formal learning and work experience.

These specifications are critical for ensuring that a qualification is holistic, in that it:

- Is a 'planned combination of learning outcomes';
- Provides 'applied competence'; and
- Is a 'basis for further learning' (ie promotes lifelong learning).

It also specifies the critical cross-field outcomes, which promote lifelong learning. Critical outcomes include but are not limited to:

a) Identifying and solving problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made;
b) Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community;
c) Organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively;
d) Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information;
e) Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion;
f) Using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others;
g) Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation;

h) Contributing to the full personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of the society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:
   i) Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;
   ii) Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
   iii) Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
   iv) Exploring education and career opportunities; and
   v) Developing entrepreneurial opportunities.

These critical outcomes are similar to other international comparators, and are variously described in other countries as generic skills, core skills, learning abilities and essential outcomes.

The term 'applied competence' is defined in the National Standards Bodies (NSB) regulations as follows:

> 'Applied competence' means the ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification.

Operationally, it means the integration of practical, foundational and reflexive competences. These are understood as follows:

- *Practical competence* – the ability to make decisions, knowing how and being able to do;
- *Foundational competence* – knowing and understanding what and why one decides and does; and
- *Reflexive competence* – the ability to learn and adapt through self-reflection and to apply knowledge appropriately and responsibly.

The issue of the assignment of levels to standards and qualifications (ie level descriptors) has been specified as *process* rather than defined. This action research process was chosen as the available international examples for *level descriptors* did not stand up to intellectual scrutiny. However, not having level descriptors specified created other problems for *standards-setting*, and while a number of discussion documents have been previously circulated, this matter is now receiving urgent attention. The problem created relates mainly to which qualifications and standards should be at which level. This is particularly problematic when we consider qualifications in different fields. The above illustrates some of the difficulties that arise, both in terms of intellectual scrutiny as well as with agreed decisions on how to proceed, with developing and implementing the NQF.

Quality assurance

Essentially, the NQF is about quality assurance. Access must be established to quality lifelong learning. It is quality that makes the difference, and quality does not happen by accident. Without a quality assurance system, the NQF's objective to enhance the quality of education and training is unattainable.

The NQF has been operationalised as a three-component quality assurance model. These components include:

- Setting the standards;
- Assessment in terms of the set standards; and
- Having a quality management system that covers, among others, the following inputs to learning: curriculum development, staffing and staff development, learner support, and learning materials and experiences.

It is important to note that OBET does not ignore the inputs to learning but deals with these seriously in the quality management system as part of quality assurance. This trashes the notion that OBET is only about outcomes and totally disregards learning inputs.

Implementation considerations

Difficulty of change

Change is far more complex and difficult than we can imagine. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli reminds us how problematic change can be:

> There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all who profit by the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit from the new order. The lukewarmness arises partly from fear of their adversaries, who have law in their favour, partly from the incredulity of mankind who do not truly believe in anything new until they have actual experience of it.

Handy (1998) reflects that the key to progress and survival in life and work is to be able to deal with paradoxes, and that this is not easy for most people:

> Life is like a seesaw, a game where the movement and the excitement come from a balance of opposites, because it will always inevitably be full of paradox. I believe that the key to progress and even to survival in life and work is to be aware that contradictions can coexist, and to learn to live with them.
>
> For instance, I argue that organizations have to be centralized and decentralized at the same time. They need to be both global and local. Differentiated and integrated. Tight and loose. They have to plan for the long term and yet stay flexible. Their workers should on the one hand be more autonomous, and on the other hand be more of a team. But the point is, we mustn't let people get confused by all that. We've got to find a way to live and work with these kinds of contradictions, to reconcile the opposites instead of trying to choose between them.
>
> I don't think most people can manage paradox very easily, so we will have to try and make life a little simpler to understand. The first thing to do is to make people aware that there is paradox, and that there is no simple solution. There is no golden route to glory and happiness in life. But, at the same time, we need to give some structure to things so that managing paradox becomes easier for people to handle.

We require not only the insight of Machiavelli and the wisdom of Handy, but, cardinally, a shared vision which is also collectively and individually owned. The overt and covert agendas of SAQA members, staff, stakeholders and government departments are potential threats to the implementation of the NQF. Bold conceptual leadership by the SAQA that is subjected to rigorous intellectual scrutiny and democratic participation is the only guarantee for transparent dialogue and accountable decision-making.

Dealing with complexity

The NQF and, indeed, most education and training reforms, are complex social constructs. The complexity can be easily underestimated, especially when there is a lack of an appropriately deep understanding of the systems requiring change and the potential unintended outcomes of chosen change strategies and tactics. The available level of capacity and effective leveraging of other potential resources are important considerations in choosing strategies and tactics for implementation. Over-ambitious plans, which miscalculate resistance or the withholding of support and resources by stakeholders, can prove very detrimental to implementation if they are not carefully assessed and the risks carefully managed.

Careful systems thinking must be applied to ensure holistic implementation, which allows for multiple implementation strategies for the various education and training bands, specific provider grouping, national and other agreed priorities. Macro-level plans recommended by provider groupings, as well as joint implementation plans between the SAQA, government departments and stakeholders, have and are being considered to ensure maximum coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.

Making the NQF road by walking accountably

General accountability

To be accountable is to be responsible for one's actions, to be able to explain them and in ways that are understandable to the wider public. This applies equally to all SAQA members, staff and stakeholders. We must all constantly seek an NQF that can be explained and understood and take responsibility for our actions in respect of it.

The SAQA has processes and procedures that ensure that it operates transparently in all its affairs, especially with its co-operation and consultation with stakeholders.

Since life chances are affected so critically by qualifications, it is imperative that all of society is able to participate democratically in setting their norms and standards as well as in being assured that the assessments for awarding qualifications are valid, fair and reliable.

The constitution and membership of the SAQA ensures participation over a wide range of education and training stakeholders. These include: the Departments of Education and Labour; organised labour; organised business; the South African Vice Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA); the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP); the Committee of Colleges of Education Rectors of South Africa (CCERSA); the Committee of Technical College Principals (CTCP); national organisations representing the adult basic education and training sector; national organisations representing early childhood education; the teaching profession; lecturers and trainers; and national organisations representing the special education needs sector. In addition the Minister of Education, in consultation with the Minister of Labour, appoints six additional members at their discretion and two members co-opted by the SAQA at its discretion.

This membership allows for full participation by the various stakeholders in the SAQA provided that members communicate and interact on a consistent basis with the stakeholder sector that nominated them. SAQA members do not hold mandates from the stakeholder groupings that nominated them, but are expected to reflect and articulate the concerns and

positions of their specific stakeholders with due regard to the functioning of the SAQA in overseeing the development and implementation of the NQF.

The standards-setting system allows for public comment, narrow and wide consultations in respect of standards and qualifications, and wide communication to stakeholders on:

- Membership of National Standards Bodies;
- Membership of Standards Generating Bodies;
- Registration of Standards Generating Bodies; and
- Registration of standards and qualifications.

The essential purpose of such co-operation and consultation is to ensure legitimacy through democratic participation and intellectual scrutiny, and thereby prevent the situation where any stakeholder grouping or individual is prevented from participating and from having their comments and objections meaningfully engaged with in the standards-setting process.

Similarly, the quality assurance system allows for public comment and wide communication to stakeholders on the accreditation of Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs).

In addition, ETQA Regulation 3(2)(h) states, as a specific criterion for accreditation as an ETQA, the organisation shall demonstrate that:

> in respect of the quality assurance function, it has national stakeholder representation at decision-making level, which representation shall ensure public accountability and transparency.

This requirement effectively prevents 'closed-shop' arrangements. For example, an ETQA for the qualifications of accountants would also include some members who are not accountants with a national public interest profile and with a specific brief to ensure public accountability and transparency for the purposes of the common good.

The SAQA's Electronic Management Information System has as its backbone the National Learners' Record Database (NLRD). This gives the nation's learners and administrators a comprehensive management information system that enables us to steer our learning system to focus on access, quality, redress and development, and to know how well we are doing.

The NLRD will allow us to do longitudinal studies for learners relatively easily and inexpensively. Such studies are extremely difficult and prohibitively expensive without such a facility. The results of these longitudinal studies will further assist us to give a more comprehensive account of our national learning system and subsystems. The individual learner's record will of course be confidential and will only be made available to a third party with the consent of the individual learner.

During the various public hearing and comment process, significant changes were made to both the NSB and ETQA regulations. Such responsibility and integrity, in taking democratic participation, intellectual scrutiny and resourcing seriously, has ensured that our NQF is being made, and more importantly owned, by the stakeholders.

However, as Joe Samuels, the SAQA's Director for Standards Setting and Development, points out, when stakeholders complain that they find a particular aspect of the NQF confusing, what they are often indicating is not confusion but contestation. These contestations must be addressed between the parties and the SAQA. Suitable resolutions must be considered and decisions taken appropriately and accountably.

Specific accountability

The primary function of the SAQA is to oversee the development and implementation of the NQF. The stakeholders carry out the development and implementation work. This gives rise to the situation where the SAQA is between a rock and a hard place when it comes to advancing the NQF.

The SAQA is dependent on National Standards Bodies (NSBs), Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) and Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies (ETQAs) for generating standards and qualifications and for assuring the quality of providers and their provision, respectively. If the various stakeholders are tardy or remiss in ensuring the formation and effective functioning of the SGBs and ETQAs, then the progress of the NQF will be seriously retarded and the learners will not receive the full benefits of quality lifelong learning for all which the NQF offers. This will mean that the issues of access, quality, redress and development will not have been addressed for the vast majority of learners. The SAQA cannot allow this to happen, and therefore has accepted the policy of ioint implementation plans (JIPs) between stakeholders and SAQA.

Coherent policy implementation is critical for the success of the transformation of our education and training systems. Unless strategies and tactics are carefully worked out and formally agreed upon by the relevant parties in such JIPs, then the 'devils in the detail' ensure policy incoherence and fragmentation, notwithstanding all the high principles of the original policy. These JIPs can, and must, ensure that the benefit of the NQF becomes a reality for all our learners.

The SAQA therefore takes both its fiduciary and leadership role very seriously. To this end, it seeks to meet its responsibilities in terms of the SAQA Act both in the letter and the spirit of the law. The activities of the SAQA are fully reported in:

- Annual reports to Parliament;
- The SAQA website (http://www.saqa.org.za);
- The SAQA bulletin;
- The SAQA updates; and
- The decisions of the SAQA.

Making the NQF road by walking boldly

Leadership

Walking boldly is about taking ownership and providing leadership. Anyone can complain and whine about perceived problems and difficulties, but who will do the analysis, give the alternatives and take the lead in showing better ways of dealing with our challenges and difficulties? Fullan (1999:ix) writes:

> The original *Change Forces* [1993] hit a responsive chord. Using a combination of new theories (in particular, chaos theory) and insights from our own and others' change projects around the world, I identified novel insights and better ways of comprehending overloaded and fragmented educational reform. I criticized and called into question key concepts such as vision and strategic planning, site-based management, strong leadership, collegiality and consensus, accountability and assessment. Not that these ideas were all wrong, rather they contributed to superficial thinking.
>
> It is time now to move even deeper into the analysis and action implications of studying the dynamics of change forces in educational reform. The field is richer in theory and more

> sophisticated in empirical investigation than it was five years ago. *Change Forces: The Sequel* focuses on the exciting progress that has been made very recently in thinking about and strategizing about organizational and policy reform. As before, myths are debunked and new insights are advanced. We will see that the concept of moral purpose – improvements designed to make a difference in the lives of students – is not as straightforward as it seems. We will unlock the black box of why collaborative cultures really work, and what it takes to sustain them. We will see that breakthroughs occur when we begin to think of conflict, diversity and resistance as positive, absolutely essential forces for success. We will probe deeply into the role of knowledge inside learning organizations, as well as knowledge and outside connections. We will learn from chaos and complexity theory and evolutionary theory that learning occurs on the edge of chaos, where a delicate balance must be maintained between too much and too little structure. We will understand that 'anxiety-containing' strategies are essential under such circumstances. We will appreciate how 'inside-out' and 'outside-in' orientations to change at the school level must come together. We will also unpack the problem of transferability – why others do not use obvious good ideas, and how to reframe the matter so that larger-scale change becomes possible. Finally, we will come to appreciate the essential fusion of intellectual, political and spiritual forces.

The kind of movement into 'deeper analysis and action implications' of educational transformation advocated by Fullan requires a special kind of leadership – fusion leadership. Fullan (1999:82) quotes Daft and Lengel (1998) on this issue:

> One theme in all types of fusion (interaction) is that organizational and personal fusion reinforce each other. Individuals discover their own wholeness in a fusion relationship with others. And organizational fusion needs the leadership and enthusiasm of participants to transform the larger system. Fusion is accomplished through conversation across traditional boundaries that meets people's yearnings to be part of something larger than themselves, to face reality and new challenges, to create a shared future together, and to take action that serves others and the organization. Fusion leaders understand how to orchestrate fusion to achieve bursts of motivation and change.

Such leaders will demonstrate integrity in taking intellectual scrutiny very seriously. Such scrutiny must deal with the issues of power, moral purpose and knowledge creation. The heart of enabling leadership lies in getting the balance and integration of these three right. Contestations, problems, difficulties, challenges and related issues must be honestly acknowledged and addressed. Similarly, other (and possibly better) ways of solving problems, implementing policies and resolving conflicts proposed by others must also be acknowledged and seriously considered.

De Mello (1990) regards this generosity of spirit in acknowledging one's own limitations and the contributions of others, as well as the deep conviction and motivation to include the excluded of society, as being the hallmarks of true humanity. And true humanity is the hallmark of exceptional leaders championing the common good.

We need educational leaders and organisations that hold onto the moral purpose of the systemic change and who are able to harness both the creativity and innovation, as well as to mobilise the power to achieve the desired changes. Fullan (1999) argues convincingly that moral purpose, ideas and power are the necessary conditions for successful systemic change:

> Ideas without moral purpose are a dime a dozen. Moral purpose without ideas means being all dressed up with nowhere to go. Power without ideas or moral purpose is deadly. Moral purpose and ideas without power means the train never leaves the station. The interactive systems I described ... – the deep meaning of collaboration to obtain substantial results – are precisely systems that gain their tremendous energy through the fusion of intellectual, political and spiritual purposes.

The NQF provides the moral purpose in its five objectives; the stakeholders and the SAQA processes have provided numerous innovations for systemic change; and it has political power. Real change for the advancement of quality lifelong learning for all South Africans is now possible if we seize the opportunities the NQF provides and demonstrate the kind of leadership characterised by:

- Deep integrity, both intellectually and ethically;
- Vision of and commitment to the moral purpose;
- Towering competence in national qualifications frameworks and related issues;
- Acceptance of the difficulties of managing change and dealing with complexity;
- Perseverance to work meaningfully and consistently; and
- Flexibility to change tactics and strategies without undermining the moral purpose.

All too often, the vested interests and opportunistic tendencies of stakeholders create turbulence, which, if not addressed through principle-centred leadership, can undermine the objectives of the NQF.

Leadership of the NQF

As a social construct, the NQF has leadership dispersed throughout its structures, practices, stakeholders and the wider society. The quality of that leadership ranges over a very wide spectrum and it is difficult to comment comprehensively about it in the absence of substantive research. What is clear, however, is that the NQF discourse has been established and that it is growing. There is strong and weak leadership for the NQF at government, SAQA and stakeholder levels. This both promotes and undermines the NQF.

Challenges faced by the NQF in higher education and training

Systemic change

Systemic change is complex with most social constructs, but is evidently more complex and difficult to achieve successfully for education and training systems. Part of the complexity and difficulty arises from the nature of education and training systems, while another part stems from the proposed changes themselves. Essential to this debate are the purposes, processes and social uses of education and training. To gain meaningful consensus on these, and especially on the proposed changes, is a mammoth undertaking.

Coupled to the above, systemic change is severely hampered when there is lack of understanding of its nature and issues of implementation. This is often evidenced by:

- An underestimation of the huge inertia within education and training systems;
- A lack of systems thinking;
- Incoherent and unco-ordinated implementation plans;
- Totally inadequate or only partial resourcing estimates in terms of the human resources, funding and organisational capacity required;
- An underestimation of the innovation and creative expertise required to effect the changes in intellectual and practical terms;
- An inability to deal adequately and appropriately with power struggles generated by the huge vested interests of particular stakeholders;

- The confusion of curriculum or operational, funding and cosmetic changes with systemic change; and
- Inadequate communication and change management strategies.

Confusing curriculum reform with systemic change

The NQF is about systemic change and not primarily about curriculum change. However, the existing paradigm in higher education and training (HET) often regards curriculum change as the equivalent of systemic change. The NQF registers qualifications and standards, and not curricula, courses or learning programmes. Curricula are the sole business of the lecturers, departments and faculties in the HET institutions and, for the purpose of quality assurance, their Education and Training Quality Assurance bodies. However, standards setting (which includes the determining of the requirements for qualifications) and quality assurance often get confused with curriculum design, which is rightly the preserve of the educator. Consequently, because of an understanding that whoever controls the curriculum has the power, there is a desire to control the standards-setting and quality assurance process as this is now seen as the new locus of power. The debate becomes intense when overlaid with issues of academic freedom, autonomy and public accountability, all of which the SAQA respects and supports.

The design of the NQF asserts that the social uses of qualifications require a social construct that legitimises the standards and qualifications and their quality assurance through democratic participation by stakeholders, intellectual scrutiny and resourcing considerations. HET institutions are solely responsible for their curricula, but are required to participate in the wider public process of standards-setting to ensure that standards and qualifications, which are internationally comparable, are registered and quality-assured. The wider public process also addresses the issue of relevance across disciplines and social and economic sectors.

Inadequate communication and change-management strategies

There has to be adequate public debate about proposed changes. The principles, values and objectives of the change have to be established through appropriate communications. There has to be constant evaluation of stakeholders' feedback. The change-management strategies must ensure that there is adequate ownership of the proposed systemic change as well as the requisite leadership adequately distributed throughout the system.

Appropriate communication strategies must endeavour to communicate clearly, simply and logically. Often antagonists exploit unclear and complex communications for their own purposes, rather than testing them against the vision or moral purpose of the systemic change. There has to be commitment to the vision or moral purpose of the systemic change.

Integral to systemic change of this nature is the ability to negotiate the required change with the various bureaucracies, and the balancing (often the mobilising) of the political, bureaucratic, technical and popular wills, of the society in which the change has to occur.

As the implication of systemic change required by the NQF becomes increasing more apparent, and real change is required, stakeholders will be inclined to selectively own and disown agreed decisions. Effective communications and management strategies must hold the stakeholders accountable for their agreements and actions.

The overt and covert agendas of NQF stakeholders

The most critical threat to the successful implementation of the NQF is the overt and covert agendas of the SAQA members, SAQA staff, government departments, professional councils and bodies, consultants, providers, industrial training boards and other stakeholders. This was highlighted at both the May 1998 and March 1999 SAQA staff retreats. This threat, which relates mainly to vested interests, competing ideas and organised politics, can be best addressed through adequate communications and management strategies as outlined above.

Opportunities for the successful implementation of the NQF

A unique creative space

South Africa has a unique creative space, shaped by its historical trajectory and the struggle for freedom and democracy, for the development and implementation of the NQF. An enabling legislative framework, with an impressive array of acts, is in place. The establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority, its extensive consultative process in publishing the NSB and ETQA regulations and its operationalising of its three infrastructural deliverables – the Standards-Setting System, the Quality Assurance System and the Electronic Management Information System – have resulted in the establishment of the NQF discourse. This discourse is growing rapidly and manifesting itself in a number of significant practices. There is a huge groundswell of alignment with the NQF and its processes across a wide range of stakeholders. By 30 June 2000, all 21 universities and 15 technikons submitted to the SAQA their existing qualifications in an agreed, outcomes-based format. More importantly, there is a growing awareness of the revolution in the way universities and technikons are thinking about their qualifications and the significant catalysing role that the NQF has played in this. While they have actively been shaping the NQF, it has also been shaping them.

International recognition

South Africa is internationally recognised as being at the forefront of qualifications systems thinking and development. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework closely resembles the National Qualifications Framework. The SAQA also continues to play an active role in the harmonising of qualifications within the SADC region towards the agreed goal of a regional qualifications framework.

The South African model has also attracted the attention of UNESCO and other developing countries in Africa as a solution to cater for their basic education and vocational education and training needs. The substantial international funding that the SAQA and the Labour Market Skills Development Strategy have attracted is indicative of the significance with which NQF developments are viewed globally.

Conclusion

Dr Mokubung Nkomo, the Chairperson of the SAQA, stated in his opening address at the Unisa Symposium on Quality Assurance for Open and Distance Learning (31 January 2000) that

> ... the challenge to all higher education and training providers is how you embrace this new power for real change to give South Africa an education and training system for the 21st century. Embracing this new power entails owning the NQF as yours as much as it is all South Africans'. It also requires commitment to the values implicit in the five objectives of the NQF. It requires you to build the NQF through reflective and accountable practices. It demands visionary and accountable leadership. It requires you to give an understandable account of how your sector and individual institutions provide quality lifelong learning for all higher education and training learners. It means that issues like accelerated learning and the recognition of prior learning (RPL) will have to be debated and that defensible practices are and will be the order of the day.
>
> We stand at a sea change. We can no longer uncritically accept the practices of the past and their underlying assumptions. Neither can we uncritically pursue innovations and new practices which are illegitimate, do not stand up to intellectual scrutiny and which are unsustainable. Failure on these three counts will ensure failure for an education and training system for the 21st century. The future in this regard is in our hands and indeed also yours.

Reflecting on this as well as Tuck's (1999) observation that 'combining high levels of flexibility with rigorous quality standards is the biggest single strategic challenge for education and training providers', I can only conclude that the NQF enables us to adequately meet these challenge if we are prepared to make the NQF road by walking reflectively, accountably and boldly.

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CHAPTER 12

Merging higher education institutions: the lessons of international experience for the reconfiguration of the South African higher education system

Jairam Reddy

Higher education institutions (HEIs) in most countries have undergone profound changes in recent years. Significant expansion of the system, in order to admit an increasing cohort of school-leavers, adult learners and generally a more diverse set of students than in the past, has been a central part of this change. The progression from elite to mass and universal higher education is becoming a reality in an increasing number of countries.

While these global changes have been unfolding, the legacy of apartheid has led to profound inequities and distortions of the South African higher education system. It is fragmented along racial lines, incoherent and has poor articulation between the different sectors. There is over-provision of HEIs in some areas, such as the Western Cape and Gauteng, while provinces such as Mpumalanga and Northern Cape have neither a university nor a technikon. Underprepared students from a poorly resourced and managed high school system show high failure rates. The participation rates of white and black students differ considerably, at 70% and 12%, respectively (National Commission on Higher Education 1996). Resources are poorly distributed between advantaged and disadvantaged institutions; subsidy levels are as much as R10 400 and as little as R6 200, respectively. In contrast to most countries, South Africa's higher education system (HES) is much larger than its further education system (FES). This leads to increased costs as well as the failure to provide the required middle-level technical and other skills.

Concurrently, the South African economy has slowed considerably – from a growth rate of over 5% in the 1970s to barely 1% in the 1980s and 1990s. Given these realities, the state subsidy to universities has declined from 85% to the current level of 60%. All signs indicate that this level of funding is unlikely to increase. Despite these cuts, universities and technikons are expected to meet increasing demands for admission, mostly from the disadvantaged sector. This brings the attendant challenges of providing academic support, providing more residences, unpaid student fees and a host of other problems associated with expansion and inflationary pressures. In addition, institutions are expected to improve the quality of their programme offerings and be responsive to the socioeconomic needs of the country.

Profound, unanticipated shifts have occurred in the South African HES since the completion of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report in 1996, the publication of the White Paper on Higher Education and the Higher Education Act in 1997. Principal among these, as reflected in the three-year rolling plans submitted to the Department of Education (1999), are:

- A considerably lower rate of growth in enrolments than predicted by the NCHE report, with decreases in the historically black universities, increases in historically Afrikaans universities and in the technikons. Among the reasons for this trend are declining

numbers of school-leavers with matriculation exemption, exclusion because of financial reasons and the failure to diversify the student body, eg through the admission of adult learners;
- Management and financial problems associated particularly with a number of the historically black institutions;
- The unevenness and lack of meaningful strategic plans from many of the institutions; yet predicting 'robust growth rates for the 1989–2001 period without any explanation of the underlying assumptions';
- The failure to increase the number of postgraduate students (13% of total enrolment) and to change the balance from programmes in the humanities to science, engineering and technology; and
- Streamlining of academic programmes to achieve cost-effectiveness, with core disciplines such as the languages, religious studies, the classics, etc being shut down without consideration of regional or national needs. This is indicative of the lack of meaningful progress within the regional consortia to achieve efficiency such as undertaking joint regional planning or rationalising of programmes.

It is in this context that the merging of institutions is beginning to assume increasing importance as a strategy to overcome the problems outlined above and to lay the basis for an efficient and a high-quality higher education system that would transcend the institutional landscape created by apartheid (Reddy 1998; Habib & Parekh 1999; Asmal 1999).

A note on terminology

Merger: An institutional merger can be defined as an amalgamation in which two or more component institutions give up their legally independent identities in favour of a new joint authority (Pritchard 1993).
Generic terms: 'rationalisation' and 'consolidation' can apply to reductions or closures of entire institutions of programmes and various new associations within or between organisational units. The deliberative terms are 'merger', 'affiliation' and 'collaboration', signalling a hierarchy of measures ranging from 'takeover' to 'co-operation'.
Merger and amalgamation: often used synonymously in the literature.

Types of mergers

Although a typology or generally accepted nomenclature of mergers has not emerged, a number of different configurations can be distinguished:
- *Cross-sectoral, transbinary or vertical*: these involve institutions working at different academic levels, eg between institutions in the higher and further education sectors or between universities and colleges.
- *Horizontal or lateral*: occur when institutions such as universities perform very similar roles in teaching, research and service; such a merger could take place between two institutions of similar size and power, between a large powerful institution and a smaller one (often referred to in the corporate sector as a 'takeover') or between multiple institutions.

- *Conglomerate or hybrid*: these are amalgamations between institutions involved in very different fields of study, as for example between the City of London Polytechnic and London School of Furniture.
- *Partial*: this could occur between constituent parts of institutions, eg the creation of a school of graduate studies and research from a number of institutions in the region, while leaving other components of individual institutions intact.

In addition, mergers can be either unitary or federated; a unitary model has a single corporate identity and management structure whereas a federated model allows for recognition of subinstitutional entities such as a campus with a high degree of autonomy.

Although there is much in common in the process of mergers, the dynamics, complexity and the process are likely to vary between these different types. Relationships with external controlling authorities, resource requirements, distance between institutions, personalities and their idiosyncrasies are all factors that will have a bearing on the outcome of any merger.

Review of the literature

What are the factors that lead institutions, which often differ considerably in programme offerings, geography, status and academic culture, to consider a merger? The following may play a role:

- It may be simply a question of survival, when faced with the clear possibility of closure because of declining enrolments, financial constraints, mismanagement, etc.
- Efficiency – governments are reducing support for higher education institutions and are encouraging the lowering of unit costs; a merger affords the opportunity to rationalise course offerings and optimise use of resources, resulting in an efficient set of institutions.
- A merger can enhance the status, salary and conditions of service, especially of the minor institution in the merger.
- The range of academic offerings can be broadened and course innovation could result, especially in cross-sectoral mergers.
- The increased pool of staff forms a critical mass of scholars to increase both the quantity and quality of research.

Mergers often result in multicampus institutions. Kerr (1971) lists their benefits:

- Concentration of external relations – with the state, for example – in a single office, from where they can be better managed;
- Facilitation of long-range planning, such as expansion, new endeavours and differentiation of functions among campuses;
- The achievement of diversity among campuses;
- Development of new innovative campuses in places of need;
- Better management, with the aid of specialists and with the exchange of experiences among campuses;
- Expansion of the range of available disciplines
- Better provision for transfer of credit both within and between disciplines;
- An enhanced level of student services;
- Increased strength of academic departments;

- Better facilities for teaching and research;
- Concentration of research development effort and better possibilities of accessing funds;
- Increased opportunities for career advancement of academic and general staff;
- Increased access and better library and computing facilities;
- Increased purchasing power for equipment and materials; and
- A more competitive basis for attracting overseas students and visiting staff.

Kerr also lists some liabilities of these multicampus institutions:

- They are more bureaucratic and less collegial in their management approach.
- Faculty senates and student governments have less influence.
- Centralised planning denies expectations to many people.
- The board of trustees is further removed from the local atmosphere of the campus.
- There are more points of possible friction over who does what and how.
- They are more open to control by an external authority than a series of independent smaller campuses
- Sharing of authority between the central bureaucracy and the campus administration generates conflict.

A key question arising from the establishment of these multicampus institutions is either 'one of differentiation or homogenisation of higher education' (Meek 1992). Neave (1983) argues that 'all systems of higher education display a dynamic towards integration'. Government policy is an important determinant of sustaining an integrated or a non-integrated system. Clark (1983), however, notes that the critical question is not one of integration or differentiation but one of 'legitimation of roles for different types of institutions' and campuses within the same system.

The first records of institutional mergers can be traced to the United States, where there were between one and 23 mergers reported annually during the period 1940–78 (Boberg 1979). In the United Kingdom, during the decade that followed the 1966 White Paper on Higher Education, 150 merger proposals led to the creation of 40 institutions (Meek 1988). In the 1980s, 41 institutions resulted through a process of merging 314 non-university institutions of higher education. The most recent example of dramatic mergers comes from Australian where 65 universities, colleges of advanced education and technical institutes have been amalgamated into 36 universities. Similar radical restructuring was effected in the Dutch non-university sector: by 1987, 314 of the 348 Hoger Beropsonderwijs (HBO) institutions had merged into 52 new institutions, while 34 remained independent.

These Australian and Dutch examples contradict the conventional wisdom that change in higher education systems is gradual, piecemeal and largely internally motivated (Becher & Kogan 1984; Van Vugt 1989). The two differ markedly in that in Australia the binary system was abolished, whereas the Dutch restructuring entrenched it.

Mergers can be driven by a growth strategy or by the necessity to overcome financial difficulties. Innovations in curriculum reform, new programme offerings, strengthening faculty resources, administrative efficiencies and economies of scale are some of the intended benefits. According to Martin and Samels (1993–94), 'the occasion presents a fine moment to redefine the university's identity and enhance its reputation'. These authors also point out that the difficulties should not be underestimated. These include: which programmes are to

be reduced and which expanded; rank and tenure of faculties; size and composition of the new board of trustees; and staff unions with collective bargaining agreements.

Millet (1976) made a number of pertinent observations in his study of mergers, which involved 10 case studies in the US. It may take up to 10 years to realise the objectives of the merger and to create an atmosphere in which both the advocates and protagonists accept the new reality. In general, boards of trustees tend to accept mergers readily, while faculty/staff are hostile. Their main concerns are retrenchments, loss of status and a new academic culture. Geographical proximity and previous co-operation between institutions are positive influences on the outcome of the process of mergers.

In the United Kingdom, it has been claimed that the merger of Royal Holloway College and Bedford College 'unleashed a great wave of creativity among staff and created a culture of openness to new ideas', and that the most important single factor in assuring the success of a merger is good management from the top (Pritchard 1993). This researcher also found unpleasant features resulting from mergers, including loss of jobs, being passed over for senior appointments and a clash of organisational cultures.

In an analysis of structural change in the Australian and British higher education systems, Mahony (1996) found that intersectoral mergers had the reputation of being difficult. The new unitary system in Australia has been called the Uniform National System because the existing diversity of the system has been undermined. There is, however, emerging a new regrouping of institutions, based on the quality audit of 1994, which would very likely lead to differentiation. Therefore, 'fears of homogenisation may be interpreted as the anxieties of a transition period from which the universities are now moving to a system more heterogeneous than which it replaced'(Mahony 1994).

Rowley (1997) undertook a survey for the Higher Education Funding Council of England of 30 mergers in the UK between 1987 and 1994. Typically, these mergers were between two institutions of unequal size, the larger one having 5 000–10 000 students and the smaller one having less than 1 000. Among the benefits were:

- An enhanced academic portfolio;
- The attainment of quality with respect to the smaller institution;
- The different cultures resulted in a 'dynamic mix' of staff of different educational philosophies and backgrounds;
- Unanticipated synergies resulted from the meeting of the various types and levels of staff; and
- Restructuring of governance resulted in greater transparency in the management process and improved governance.

The main problems associated with mergers are the personal costs of staff in moving house, disruption of academic and research activities and students having to move to a new campus and adapt to a new culture and courses. In a review of mergers, Fielden and Markham (1997) argue that 'the rationale behind any merger should be strategic and academic and not predicated upon the prospect of cost savings'. They conclude with three recommendations:

- Allow sufficient time for the merger process, to enable thorough evaluations to take place. In addition, time will permit trust and good relationships to be established between the institutions.

- Do not underestimate the costs and time involved in the areas of integration of administrative information technology systems and procedures, resolving property rights and staff development.
- Prepare for the massive demands that will be made on management time before, during and after the merger.

The lack of significant cost savings in mergers has also been supported by other studies (Samuels 1972; Meeks 1977; Mueller 1980; Johnes and Taylor 1990; Fielden 1991).

In London, the merger of King's College with the United Medical and Dental Schools of Guy's and St Thomas's hospitals and the Institute of Psychiatry resulted in an institution of 16 500 students – a large institution by UK standards. Among other aims, the merger was designed to 'bring themselves out of the single professional discipline ghetto' and expose future doctors to a wide range of science and other disciplines like medical ethics. It was also intended to encourage them to mix with students taking other courses. As a result of the merger, joint research teams are emerging in age-related diseases, psychological medicine and Afro-Caribbean medicine. It is felt that these teams will be able to compete for funds with the best of the country's research centres, such as in Oxford and Cambridge (*Guardian Higher Education* 1998).

At the heart of the system of mergers is the division of authority between the local campus and system-wide authority. The central executive is generally ascribed three crucial roles:

- Budgetary allocation amongst the various campuses;
- Planning, including rationalisation of programmes between campuses and sponsoring of innovative endeavours; and
- Representing the university to government and the community.

However, mergers often result in the addition of new bureaucratic layers and the centralisation of power away from individuals, departments, faculties and senates of the constituent campuses.

Case studies

University of the West Indies

In 1972 three campuses amalgamated to form the University of the West Indies. The merger included Jamaica, with all faculties including medicine, but excluding engineering; Barbados, with liberal arts and law; and Trinidad, with liberal arts and engineering. There was a single university council, with the vice chancellor located in Jamaica and pro vice chancellors in the two other campuses. There were logistical problems, given the island disposition of the campuses and long distances between them. Further, the dominance of the larger campus of Jamaica caused some disquiet. However, their shared political culture as democratic states was decisive in keeping the campuses together. With the discovery of oil, Trinidad flourished economically, while Jamaica remained poor. In due course, Trinidad built its own medical school and planned a technology institute.

There followed greater devolution of powers to each of the campuses, thereby reducing the power of the hitherto dominant Jamaica campus. For example, examiners' meetings were held on each of the three campuses. A hotel school was established in Barbados, reflecting the

importance of tourism to the region. Distance education programmes were initiated, and this led to students from the other islands feeding into the university. Financial imbalances were handled within the regional economic bloc with rationalisation of course offerings. Apart from cricket, the University of the West Indies is considered the most binding factor for the islands of the region.

University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (UBLS)

These three former British protectorates established the UBLS in the early 1960s. The main campus was located at Roma in Lesotho, with other campuses in Botswana and Swaziland. There was one university council, one senate and one vice chancellor, with pro vice chancellors at the other campuses. The deans and most of the senior staff were at the Roma campus, while the other campuses had heads of schools comprising the main faculties. The heads of departments were at Roma while the subject leaders were at the other campuses. This was seen as a transitional structure which in time would lead to the full development of the Botswana and Swaziland campuses.

There were distinct differences in the resource base of the campuses. While Roma was the dominant campus academically, it was also located in the poorest of the three countries. Secondly, there was a difference in the political cultures of the three countries: Swaziland was a strong feudal kingdom; Lesotho was a semi-democratic state where the power of the monarchy as well as of democracy was systematically undermined; and Botswana was an open democracy. These differences clearly had an impact on how the three territories viewed university autonomy and academic freedom.

In this climate, politicians rooted for their own campuses. In the middle of 1975 came demands for greater autonomy, and the UBLS broke into its three constituent parts, forming a university in each region. The failure to agree on a devolution model, especially with respect to financial matters, precipitated the change. Lesotho saw this as an infringement on its central campus. Chief Jonathan, Prime Minister of Lesotho, unilaterally declared the Lesotho campus an independent university. This manoeuvre took the other two by surprise. For a while, the campuses of Botswana and Swaziland came together to form the University of Botswana and Swaziland. In the 1980s, there emerged the separate universities of Botswana and Swaziland.

The Netherlands

The government of the Netherlands legislated for a radical restructuring of the higher education sector with the following objectives:

- Enlargement of the size of the non-university sector through institutional mergers;
- Extension of the autonomy of these new institutions with regard to the use of resources, personnel policy and the structuring of the educational process; and
- Greater efficiency in the use of resources – concentration of expensive equipment, co-ordination and rationalisation of course offerings.

Conditions were imposed by the government in order for the institutions to receive continued funding:

- A minimum enrollment of 600 students;
- Each merged institution to function as one administrative and educational unit with one board of governors, one board of directors and one body of staff and students.

A two-and-half-year period was allowed for the completion of the merger process, which included coming to terms with a new system of funding. Given that the minimum enrolment was set at 600 students, for 63% of the existing institutions merger was the only option to survive. Although these broad and compelling polices were set in motion, the actual merger process was left to the institutions themselves. To quote the Minister: '... only the absolute essentials have to be laid down at the central level and that as much as possible, the conditions have to be created for the implementation by the educational field itself ... the role of the minister must be remote'.

The remarkable success of the plan is illustrated by the fact the 314 of the 348 HBO institutions merged into 51 new institutions, while 34 remained independent. The mergers have resulted in largely multipurpose institutions, while 15% of the institutions preferred single-purpose mergers. The smallest of the merged institutions had an enrollment of 310 students, while the largest had 15 800. The majority had between 600 and 8 000 students. The resulting 85 institutions involved, for the most part, multiple mergers: the average was six, and and the largest involved 19 institutions. Despite the complexity, formal agreement in all of the mergers was reached within three-and-a-half years.

Australia

Under the impetus of Minister John Dawkins, Australian higher education was dramatically restructured between 1987 and 1991. The key changes were:

- Abolition of the binary system of universities and colleges and its replacement by a unified national system (UNS);
- Mergers to reduce the number of institutions and to create comprehensive universities;
- Allocation of additional funds to promote growth in student numbers;
- Reform of governance with more power to the vice chancellor; and
- Increased funding for research with more selectivity and greater concentration.

'The Dawkins policy of extensive institutional amalgamations was implemented through a cleverly devised administrative strategy' (Harman 1993). Institutions were required to make applications to join the UNS in order to qualify for federal funding as follows:

- 2 000 EFTSUs (equivalent full-time student units) – for membership of the UNS;
- 5 000 EFTSUs – a broad teaching profile with funding for some research activity;
- 8 000 EFTSUs – for comprehensive involvement in teaching and research.

The attractiveness of mergers under this plan became self-evident to the institutions. Thus 65 universities, colleges of advanced education and technical institutions were merged into 36 multicampus institutions. The following lessons are worthy of note from this exercise:

- Voluntary amalgamations were more successful than mandatory ones; however, compulsory mergers were necessary to achieve cost-effectiveness.

- Successful mergers were undertaken within permissible guidelines, including the proximity of institutions and academic coherence of programmes.
- Integrated models were more successful than federated ones. For the latter to work, strong leadership, new organisational structures, new symbols and geographical proximity were required.
- Up-front costs of mergers were not insignificant.
- The process was difficult and numerous suspicions and difficulties had to be overcome.
- The mergers have led to considerable mission drift, with diploma and certificate programmes being drastically reduced.

A successful merger

The merger of La Trobe University and the Lincoln Institute of Health Sciences (LIHS) is a good example of a successful cross-sectoral merger (Gamage 1992). La Trobe University was established in 1964 as Melbourne's third university. Despite satisfactory progress, it was clear by the 1980s that La Trobe was facing an academic imbalance; some 72% of its students were enrolled in the humanities and arts while the percentage in science disciplines was only 28%.

The LIHS was established in 1973, itself through the amalgamation of several small schools of health sciences and the Australian College of Nursing. By the 1980s disillusionment had set in; growth had been limited due to lack of accommodation and government pressure to amalgamate with several Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs). However, the LIHS resisted the pressure. It is instructive to read from the minutes of the LIHS's council minutes of 1981: 'That the amalgamation could lead to the loss of the identity, reputation and status of its students and graduates and that every effort should be made to prevent this occurring.' The LIHS then made several attempts to merge with both the University of Melbourne and Monash University, but without success.

It soon became clear to both La Trobe and LIHS that a merger between the two would overcome their respective weaknesses and result in a strengthened institution. La Trobe would acquire a prestigious health sciences school, giving the required academic balance, while the LIHS would be able to expand and gain all the trappings of university status. The resulting negotiations led to the issuing of a joint statement of intent for a merger of the two institutions. In 1985, two steering committees were appointed by the two chief executives. A majority and minority report released the following year resulted in a considerable degree of debate. The two councils accepted the majority report, which emphasised that the merger would have to be based on academic grounds, leading to advantages for both institutions. Both councils signed an agreement to this effect in 1986 and appointed an Amalgamation Implementation Committee with five sub-committees – staff conditions and industrial relations, administrative structures, legal, constitutional and governance, library structures and research. An external review of the administrative structure was undertaken by the vice chancellor of another university. Despite this progress, there emerged strong opposition from the La Trobe academic staff regarding funding, academic programmes and staff profile. A threatening address by the Chair of the Universities Council followed, to the extent that there was no alternative to the proposed merger. Yet by this time the opposition to the merger was so strong that the motion to confirm the agreement was passed only by the casting vote of the Chancellor of La Trobe.

With the formalisation of the merger, the LIHS became the Lincoln School of Health Sciences of La Trobe University, thus retaining its distinct identity. The staff of the LIHS was transferred to the salary structure and conditions of service of La Trobe. However, the problems did not end. The physiotherapists' association launched a campaign for their department at the LIHS to be transferred to the University of Melbourne instead of relocating to the Bundoora campus of La Trobe. The issue was only settled when the Minister of Education of the state of Victoria decided to establish a second physiotherapy school at the University of Melbourne.

Gamage (1992) describes this merger as a qualified success. The academic programmes were upgraded, new higher degree programmes were established and the staff profile improved. A centre of excellence in teaching and research was established with federal funding. La Trobe/LIHS became the sixth-largest Australian university, thus joining the league of the big universities. The university had a reputable School of Health Sciences, and a further three centres of excellence were established with federal funding. Among the possible reasons for the success were the voluntary nature of the amalgamation, the painstaking efforts and time given to reaching agreement, the rapid implementation of the merger plans, the co-operation of the staff association and industrial unions. Some dissatisfaction, however, resulted from the cost savings, which were less than half of the AUS$4,2 million estimated at the time of amalgamation, after two years as a merged institution.

A failed merger

Australia also presents an example of a failed merger – the University of New England (UNE). The components of the merger were:

- UNE, with 6 253 EFTSUs: six faculties and two-thirds of its students receiving instruction by distance education;
- Armidale College of Advanced Education (CAE), with 1 449 EFTSUs;
- Northern Rivers CAE with 2 296 EFTSUs; and
- Orange River Agricultural College, with 438 EFTSUs.

The promise of funding for growth, teaching and research as a comprehensive institution with over 8 000 EFTSUs was clearly a key driving force for the merger of these institutions. After protracted and difficult negotiations, the chief executives and registrars signed a formal agreement to work towards a merger. An amalgamation implementation committee (AIC) of nine people with the vice chancellor of the UNE was established. Despite conflicts, the AIC published two major reports. 'A flow of provocative and damaging public statements, especially those from senior academic staff of UNE criticising academic standards at Northern Rivers CAE, and those from senior staff of Northern Rivers CAE criticising the administration and financial situation of the UNE' did not make for easy discussions at the level of the AIC (Harman 1993).

One major development that affected the merger process took place when the New South Wales parliament passed legislation for a network of institutions, whereas the planning at the level of the AIC was for a unitary structure. Some campuses took advantage of this and demanded maximum devolution of powers to the campuses. The network came into being

in 1989, providing for management autonomy for each campus. The governance and administrative structure comprised a board of governors, a vice chancellor and a deputy vice chancellor (DVC) for each campus, with a central business manager and a central DVC for the network. A university-wide senate and budgeting system was agreed upon.

The university network made some impressive strides during its short existence. These included the introduction of a number of new degree courses, wider opportunities for staff in research and consultancy, innovative professional development centres, the establishment of open learning centres and increased enrolments of overseas students. 'However, the merger certainly failed from the viewpoint of securing effective co-operation in teaching and research between campuses, in establishing harmonious relationships and in working to secure the network university's long-term future' (Harman 1993). Disputes arose around the following issues, among others: a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of amalgamation, with disagreements on unitary-versus-federal models; confusion caused by the legislative process in advocating a 'network'; public attacks by staff of one campus on another; awarding of titles to senior staff; rules for promotion of staff; allocation of research funding, the development of university-wide degrees and diplomas; differences of culture between the institutions; and difficulties caused by the 5–7 hours' drive between the campuses.

In summing up the failure, Harman (1993) identifies three factors of overriding importance: firstly, the lack of a strong commitment to the single unified university; secondly, the lack of commitment to the idea of amalgamation – with some campuses wishing to dilute considerably the power of the unified constitution and devolve decision-making – and thirdly, the role of personalities. With UNE having three vice chancellors during this period, there was also a lack of continuity in leadership.

The network split into two universities in 1994; the combined campus of the former UNE and the Armidale CAE remained, while the campuses of Northern Rivers at Lismore and Coffs Harbour were to be part of a new institution.

United Kingdom: University of Strathclyde/Jordanhill College of Education

The successful merger of these two institutions in 1993 was not only the first to occur following the passage of the Further and Higher Education Acts of 1992 but also a transbinary one (Arbuthnott & Bone 1993). The process took 22 months to complete. In the process, Strathclyde, with its complement of 8 000 students, absorbed the 2 500 students and 700 staff from Jordanhill College. The success of the merger has been attributed to a number of factors:

- The academic courses were complementary rather than competing.
- Teaching and research capabilities were enhanced, and consequently able to respond more flexibly and effectively to the changing needs of society.
- The incorporation of teacher education into the university would provide these students with enriched opportunities through exposure to the whole range of disciplines of a comprehensive institution.
- New opportunities were created for research and consultancy services.
- The incorporation of a teacher education college was in line with international trends in Australia, North America and Europe.

A joint working party drawn from the two institutions, supported by three subgroups and a number of task groups – comprising in all about 100 people – was involved in the process of merger. Approval had to be obtained from both the Secretary of State for Education and the Universities Funding Council of Scotland following the submission of an 83-page document setting out in detail the merger plans. The timing of the merger was strategic in that the 1992 Education Act lifted the binary divide, thus easing the process. For Jordanhill College, it was an opportune moment, as its students could be offered university qualifications on a par with teaching education anywhere in the world.

The joint working group included members of the governing boards of both institutions. The senates and academic boards were kept informed of progress through the period of negotiations. The staff was also informed through open meetings. It was decided to retain the Jordanhill campus, while Strathclyde was assured of no additional financial liability from the merger. Both student bodies supported the merger for different reasons: for Jordanhill students, it offered the chance to become part of the strong, large, well-run students' union of Strathclyde; for the students of Strathclyde, they were now in a position to use the very fine sports facilities of Jordanhill. As assurances were given of no redundancies, both academic unions supported the merger. As the two unions belonged to different bargaining chambers, they were given a two-year grace period to harmonise their activities.

Norway

The Norwegian Minister of Education initiated an extensive reorganisation of the non-university sector in 1994 (Skodvin & Stensaker 1998). The central vision driving the process was that the creation of larger institutions with disciplinary specialisation should result in increased innovation, integration and effectiveness. In the process, 98 regional colleges were merged into 26 state colleges. These colleges comprised 14 business, 15 engineering, 25 education, 27 health education, 3 social welfare and 14 miscellaneous, with various specialisations. Nine of them emerged as multicampus institutions. A number of useful lessons emerged from this exercise:

- The focus on increased effectiveness overshadowed the other objectives and might have even hindered the attainment of increased innovation. This is supported by other studies (Dougherty 1996). The principal reason for this appears to be the larger-than-anticipated resource requirements and the considerable development costs involved in establishing new forms of collaboration, new study programmes and new research projects.
- While respecting academic autonomy, institutional steering is necessary in order to drive a process of creativity and innovation; this does not seem to have been effective in this merger process.
- The process seems to have resulted in considerable administrative gains but not academic benefits.

Hungary

Recent legislation enacted by the Hungarian Parliament will compel many of the country's public colleges and universities to merge (Agovino 1999). The central idea behind the law is for every city and town to have one consolidated state university instead of several small ones. As part of an overall plan to reform the nation's higher education system, the mergers are

aimed at greater efficiency, improved financial control, the introduction of an academic credit system and a student loan programme. Each of the institutions created by the mergers will have an elected rector, a governing council and a financial director.

The World Bank has lent the country US$150 million to help underwrite the plan, which is expected to cost US$250 million by the time of its completion in 2005. Bank officials were confounded, however, when the recently elected centre-right government decided to keep a campaign promise by abolishing tuition for undergraduates. It is hoped that tuition fees may be reintroduced after the institution of a student loan programme.

Political infighting has been a feature of the mergers – for example, the Minister of Agriculture lobbied hard, though without success, to have the agricultural university put under his control. However, an adviser to the previous Education Ministry is sceptical of the merger plan. He claims that the mergers will guarantee neither efficiency nor quality. The larger institutions will become more bureaucratic, and institutions will have both less responsibility and independence.

The consolidation concept has been discussed for over a decade since the end of communist rule in Hungary. In response, a number of towns had begun the process well before the enactment of the current legislation: for example, in the city of Debrecen two of the smaller universities were merged into a larger one, resulting in three instead of five institutions. Subsequently, the three institutions formed a federation and began offering joint courses.

An interesting feature of these developments is that courses are now being offered to university administrators on strategic planning, organisational development and finance. Despite the progress made, university officials across Hungary do not expect a smooth transition, given the different cultures, different management styles and different political interests.

Lessons from international mergers

Through coercion based on the power of the purse, the federal government was able to merge Australia's 39 colleges of advanced education and two universities into 13 higher education institutions (Harman 1986). It thereby achieved its intended reduction in teacher education enrolments, released resources to fund enrolments in other fields and, in the process, developed larger, more flexible institutional units.

In the Netherlands, it is clear that decisive legislation and strong steering by the government of the day achieved the remarkable transformation of the non-university sector through the system of radical mergers (Goedegebuure & Meek 1991).

Goedgebuure and Meek (1991) attribute the success of the radical restructuring of higher education systems in Australia and the Netherlands to the government's steering paradigm, which changed the boundary conditions under which the system operated rather than taking an approach based on planned and regulated change. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) explain this behavioural organisational change to analysing and designing the context to produce the desired activities. The significant difference between the Dutch and Australian experiences is that in the former the binary divide was entrenched whereas in the latter it was abolished. The remarkable fact is that these outcomes suited the educationalists in the respective countries. In the case of the Netherlands, compliance with government policy meant continued government funding, allowed the HBO institutions greater autonomy and free-

dom of control in development and in the use of their resources. On the other hand, Australia's colleges of advanced education won university status, giving them the opportunity to pursue research, while absorbing the CAEs removed the threat of diluting the binary line for the universities.

The voluntary Strathclyde/Jordanhill merger is in striking contrast to those which occurred in Australia in the 1988–92 period and in the Netherlands in 1983–88. Both of the latter processes were government-driven, whereas the Scottish Department of Education took a neutral view of the Strathclyde/Jordanhill proposal, and wanted only to be assured of the merger's financial viability and that it was being undertaken in the public interest.

Because each merger occurs within a unique set of circumstances, it is difficult to generalise, but useful lessons can be drawn from the experience (Meek 1988):

- Of all the resource requirements, the human component is the most important, involving personalities, power relations, foresight and the capacity to organise and lead. The process requires, in particular, leaders who are committed, who possess the capacity to bring about major organisational change and to transcend normal institutional and academic barriers and politics. The capacity to manage conflict generated by change is an important requirement.
- The commitment of the chief executives, trust between front-line negotiators, support of the governing body, consultation and free flow of information with stakeholders are all crucial for the success of the process of mergers.
- Fear and anxiety on the part of staff about their job security, their positions and possible loss of power and identity have to be overcome, despite the often general lack of support shown by staff for mergers.
- Planning, discussion and decisions must be taken in an atmosphere of openness, with representation from all stakeholders – no matter how difficult or unpleasant. Any secrecy will only add to the complexities and loss of trust.
- Mergers tend to add new layers of bureaucracy through consolidation of power by the hierarchy. The loss of local control, whether it be at department, faculty or senate level, lowers staff morale and confidence in the merger process.
- There is inevitably a loss of identity and academic culture unique to the institution. There are those who will claim organisational distinctiveness, and that the merger puts scholarly and international reputations at stake.
- Every merger is complex, conflictual and time-consuming. The time required for the planning and completion of the merger can be anywhere from one to ten years.
- 'There are no miracles in higher education and there are no miracles in the merger of higher education institutions ... A merger provides simply a new set of circumstances that offer new opportunities for accomplishment, and perhaps new pitfalls for failure ... Merger is not a process calculated to make all participants happy. Yet it is also a process that results in the preservation of essential educational services and opportunities' (Millet 1976).
- The forces that lead to a merger are often external and not within the control of the institutions. Relationships with external bodies – governments, funding bodies, accreditation bodies, etc, will have to be carefully negotiated often in an atmosphere of conflict between, for example, the control of one institution by local government and another by the central government.

'It is important to remember that while the achievement of a successful merger requires skilful leaders, dedicated to the idea of change, the merger process does not easily transcend normal organisational politics and conflicts'(Meek 1988). The success or failure of the merger will depend, among other factors, on the ability, skill and foresight of the central executive. 'At the heart of the university – whatever the relative emphasis upon teaching, research or public service – is the faculty/academic staff. If the multicampus system makes a positive contribution to the quality of the faculty found on each campus, it may said to be a success, regardless of other shortcomings' (Lee & Bowen 1971). The loyalty of the average academic is directed towards his/her discipline and not towards the institution.

There is a tendency, for academics in particular, to view changes of the type enacted in Australia by the Dawkins reforms as imposed by the power available to one actor – in this case, the government, by virtue of its control of the public purse. Goedegebuure and Meek (1991) propose an alternative view: 'the degree and extent of change in a complex system, such as higher education, is dependent upon the interaction of interests, strategic behaviour, norms and values, and ideologies of all concerned. Moreover, the more that these factors tend to coincide or converge, the more likely it is that the change will be extensive and ubiquitous.'

The case for mergers in South Africa

While institutions in the South African higher education system are exclusively free-standing, autonomous institutions, the position is somewhat different elsewhere in the world. The University of London, for example, is a loose federation of a number of colleges, Universities in India have affiliated colleges numbering in the hundreds, and close to half of the 14 million higher education students in the US are enrolled in multicampus institutions. There are other examples in the unified national system of higher education institutions in Australia (Meek 1992).

In considering the merging of HEIs, the uniqueness of the South African HES has to be posited against these lessons. The divides between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking, technikons and universities, urban and rural institutions, will add complexity and challenges to the process of mergers.

A review of the literature demonstrates that mergers and co-operation in the form of linkages contain elements of both competition and co-operation. Competition implies a presupposition of inherent inequality between institutions (Pritchard 1993). This has implications for the South African higher education system, considering that institutions established under the apartheid order have been under-resourced and disadvantaged in a number of ways (NCHE report 1996). The challenge for the South African HES is how to proceed co-operatively in the knowledge that competition will remain an inherent aspect of the system, and to manage the tensions that are likely to be generated.

Various recent government documents refer to questions of regional cooperation, rationalisation of programmes and mergers:

- *NCHE report (1996)*: While this report makes reference to the importance of regional consortia in the planning process and rationalisation of programmes, it is silent on the question of mergers.
- *Education White Paper – A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1997)*: With respect to institutional planning, the White Paper states: 'In addition, emphasis will

be placed on regional reviews of institutional plans as an integral part of the national planning process. This will be intended to promote regional co-ordination and collaboration as part of the national plan to enhance articulation of programmes, mobility of learners between institutions, the sharing of resources, including scarce academic staff, library and information facilities. It is also intended to reduce programme duplication and overlap. The Ministry will provide incentives to encourage and facilitate regional planning and co-ordination'. In the section on funding it explicitly states: 'Incentive funding will be available on a selective basis to support the costs involved in regional collaboration among institutions which aim to consolidate, merge, share or otherwise collectively improve the efficient use of their facilities and resources for training, teaching, research or community service.'

- *Higher Education Act of 1997*: In terms of this Act, the 'Minister may after consulting the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and by notice in the Gazette, merge two or more public higher education institutions into a single public higher education institution.' (Section 23(1)). In Section 38, it states:
  1) Public higher education institutions may co-operate with each other in any manner to achieve the optimal utilisation of resources and the performance of their functions.
  2) Public higher education institutions may establish regional or national structures to assist and facilitate the co-operation contemplated in subsection (1)
  3) The Minister may provide financial incentives to such structures and to public higher education institutions participating in such structures to achieve the aims of such co-operation.
- *National and Institutional Planning Framework for the Higher Education System (Department of Education 1998)*: In one of the first reports released by the Ministry, while ample reference is made and various strategies for cooperation, rationalising and planning, nothing is said about mergers.

It is clear that the Ministry went beyond the proposals of the NCHE report by incorporating the power of merging institutions in the Higher Education Act. The fact that the CHE would be consulted provides the institutions and other stakeholders with a means of influencing the process.

Peter Buchanan, in a report commissioned by UNITECH (an association of marketing and communications personnel of southern African higher education institutions) and entitled *A 1998 Assessment of Marketing and Communications in Higher Education in South Africa*, states:

> Clearly, at present the society has an overwhelming demand for practical skill development. Government should establish a geographically dispersed large number of institutions to provide training in immediately usable skills in the economy, and a much smaller number of collegiate institutions. Instead the government is engaged in creating a relative free-for-all, in which institutions compete as best as they can for students nationwide regardless of institutional capability. The result is chaos, and the outcome is almost certain to be mediocrity across the board.
>
> Differentiation among institutions of higher education must be restored to protect the system's integrity, and the necessary investments made to insure that the quality of education in similar types of institutions is uniform among them. With the majority of student bodies rapidly becoming Black South Africans, the government should merge tertiary institutions of the same type in the same geographical location to eliminate duplication, stop needless competition and conserve resources.

> Across the fence mergers should be mandated by government on the grounds of sheer economic efficiency, regardless of all other factors. Durban's technikons are the obvious example. There is a similar situation in Pretoria, though more complicated, a further example in Port Elizabeth. Six institutions should become three. There are a thousand excuses for maintaining six of them, but it is simply wrong to do so in such a resource-poor environment.

Despite the progress made with the variety of collaborative arrangements discussed in this chapter, there is little evidence of significant cost savings or improvements in efficiency. Most of them are add-on programmes which will enrich the HES. It appears that some additional incentive will be required for more profound change to occur. The incentives of earmarked funding provided for in the Higher Education Act, as well as in the White Paper, should stimulate such co-operation. This is unlikely to occur unless decisive steps are taken, through financial leverage, rationalisation of course offerings, mergers or amalgamation, that transcend the apartheid landscape of past institutional arrangements. Significant cost savings or improvements in efficiency will also be unlikely (Reddy 1998).

There are currently 21 universities and 15 technikons in South Africa. As has been indicated, many of these institutions were established in response to the ideology and practice of apartheid rather than to rational considerations of need and demand. Thus, given the current resource constraints, the over-provision in some areas, under-provision in others and the needs of the country, any meaningful process of transformation must aim to reconfigure the apartheid landscape into a more rational and equitably distributed set of institutions. It is in this context, and with the lessons drawn from international experience, that the process of merging institutions should receive serious attention in the reshaping of South African HEIs.

As a minimum, the mergers should achieve the following objectives:

- Transcend the divide between the historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, thus ushering in a new configuration of institutions that will be equitably distributed and be responsive to the nation's high-level personnel needs in education and training;
- Improved efficiency – reduction in the high failure rates, improved through-put rates and better management of finances and other resources;
- Improvements in the quality of programme offerings, teaching, research and service;
- The promotion of equity – more opportunities for the disadvantaged; blacks, women, the disabled, not only at the student level but also at the level of management, administrative and academic staff levels;
- Innovation in the activities of institutions so that they become more responsive to the needs of a rapidly developing nation in an information and technology-dominated world.

As a first step, it may be useful to map a broad plan for what a merged and transformed institutional landscape might look like when complete:

- *KwaZulu-Natal*: One university with five possible campuses – Durban-Westville, Howard College, Health Sciences, Pietermaritzburg and Zululand. It can then be decided how many faculties/schools are needed and affordable for the province and redistributed accordingly; full use should be made of existing infrastructure. If diversity is desired within the system, then the technikon structure should be kept intact, at least in the interim. Logically, this suggests the merging of the three technikons, with two campuses of Durban and Umlazi. As Natal and ML Sultan are contiguous institutions, it makes

sense to consolidate them into one campus. With time and progress, consideration should be given to the developing of, for example, branch campuses in the rural hinterland of the province, which is very under-served by higher education. The closeness of the campuses – with the exception of Zululand – a common language and working together as a consortium in the Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions (ESATI) for nearly a decade should provide a good basis for the negotiations.

- *Eastern Cape*: Two universities created by the merger of the universities of Rhodes and Fort Hare, and Port Elizabeth and Transkei, respectively; one technikon through the merger of Port Elizabeth, Border and Eastern Cape technikons with an appropriate number of campuses. Given the considerable distances between the institutions in this area, careful planning should be undertaken before a final decision is made on the configuration of institutions.
- *Western Cape*: The strength of institutions in this area presents formidable problems for mergers. As a start, two possibilities should be explored. The first is that of the health sciences. The high expenditure consumed by five such faculties, with two expensive medical and dental schools, should be brought under control. One possibility is for each institution to enrol its students but to share common clinical and basic science facilities. The second is more contentious, but with considerable possibilities of innovation and strength, and to compete effectively with powerful institutions in the region: a cross-sectoral merger of the University of the Western Cape and Peninsula Technikon. The neighbouring institutions would complement each other by bringing research, large and strong humanities and science schools with technology, engineering and applied science schools through offering a range of programmes from the doctoral level to diploma and certificate programmes. Given that both English and Afrikaans students attend these institutions in considerable numbers, a unique feature would be to develop as a truly bilingual institution – in contrast to the two other universities, which teach predominantly in either English or Afrikaans.
- *The Free State* has two well-functioning higher education institutions with diverse missions in Bloemfontein – Free State Technikon and Free State University. They should be left intact, but the anomalous Qwa Qwa campus of the University of the North should be merged with Free State University, following which the future of the campus can be determined.
- *Gauteng*: Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) and the University of the Witwatersrand, both large urban universities, should be left intact. Serious consideration should be given to merging the Medical University of South Africa (Medunsa) with the University of Pretoria. An apartheid creation, Medunsa suffers from financial problems, the disadvantages of single-discipline institutions, its close proximity with Pretoria and the high costs of building another tertiary-care hospital – all factors to be taken into account in this merger. The clinical and hospital facilities at Medunsa can be used for primary and secondary health care training. Witwatersrand Technikon to be left as is; Pretoria Technikon to be merged with Technikon Northern Gauteng and Technikon North-West; these latter two technikons are relatively small and have had a share of problems, while the strength of Pretoria Technikon can be utilised to strengthen these campuses.
- *North West*: The University of the North West and Vaal Technikon to be merged with the University of Potchefstroom, to provide the province with a strong hybrid higher education institution.

- *Northern Province*: The University of Venda to be merged with the University of the North; with Giyani College of Education, there will then be three possible campuses for this institution in the Northern Province.
- *Distance institutions*: As Vista and Unisa are performing similar functions, there is an obvious and compelling case for their merger. With the diminution of teacher training, one of the strengths of Vista has been undermined. Its residential campuses, which have been problematic, should be merged with the nearest merged institution – be it university or technikon. The White Paper gave an undertaking to set up a special task force to deal with the distance institutions. As they are complex and have a unique set of problems, they may well have to be dealt with differently through this task force. The future of Technikon SA can then be determined through this task force.

This reduces the present total of 36 universities and technikons to just 20 institutions, comprising 10 universities, 6 technikons, 2 hybrid institutions and 2 distance institutions. Given the current level of enrolments, the size of the resulting contact institutions would, on the average, be between 10 000 and 20 000 students.

The question of establishing some form of tertiary institutions in the Northern Cape and Mpumalanga, neither of which presently have a technikon or university, will have to be given serious consideration.

A plan as described above is one among a range of possibilities. As a result of careful study of the latest enrolment figures, demographics and other underlying factors, there may well emerge a different configuration. This exercise should not preclude partial mergers, the closure of certain campuses or their conversion to a different type of post-secondary institution, such as colleges of further education and training. A special task force set up by the Minister of Education, which should include representatives from his department, the Council on Higher Education and relevant stakeholders, should be charged with this task. Once a broad plan has been conceived, an implementation strategy could be formulated on a regional basis. International lessons caution that such a task is likely to be time-consuming, complex and demanding of resources, both human and financial. Earmarked funding should be provided to support the merger process.

The process of mergers

Thompson (1985) outlines at least five preconditions for a successful merger:

- Geography – physical distances separating institutions should not be too great.
- The transition is likely to occur more smoothly if there has been an experience of previous co-operation.
- If complementary instructional programmes exist and are not seen as competing, it will lead to greater diversification of educational experiences.
- If there is enhancement of the quality of academic programmes, academic excellence will be achieved.
- If there is political will from the state, it can influence the councils and chief executives.

Thompson also enumerates certain essential steps that are necessary in planning a successful merger:

- A detailed action plan arrived at through a strategic planning exercise;
- Clear articulation of the goals and objectives of the merger;
- Each institution to identify its strengths and weaknesses as well as the advantages and disadvantages of the merger;
- A steering committee to be established, to include representatives of the institutions, outside consultants (for their expertise and objectivity), community leaders and legal counsel;
- The steering committee to allow every constituency to have an input;
- The merger should be undertaken within the framework of the prevailing national and state legislation;
- Negotiating reports to be referred to the executive/management committees of the institutions for feedback and ratification of decisions;
- Several task forces or subcommittees will have to be established to deal with the major issues – governance, finance, personnel, academic programmes, students, etc;
- A successful merger takes time and a period of five years may be required for completion of the process.

In a recent publication, Habib and Parekh (1999) argue in support of mergers of South African higher education institutions because these would facilitate cost-efficiency through the effective deployment of the 'nation's higher education resources and infrastructure, it would lead to a more equitable distribution of black staff, to new institutional identities, optimise academic strengths of departments and thus be in a position to respond more effectively to the nation's needs and be internationally competitive as more overseas universities are establishing campuses in South Africa'. If such strategic mergers are not undertaken as a matter of urgency, they predict dire consequences for the future of higher education in South Africa. Though passionately argued, their claims are not supported by persuasive evidence. Such mergers are likely to be part of a range of strategies deployed in order to transform the system. While there are possibilities of cost benefits, international experience indicates that more modest gains are likely. Rowley (1997), in her review of mergers in the UK, cautions about being overly optimistic regarding the outcomes of mergers. Encouraging, though, is the finding that mergers in industry have a failure rate of between 50 and 80% (Cartwright and Cooper 1994), compared to a rate of less than 10% for higher education (Rowley 1997). Transcending the divide between the advantaged and disadvantaged institutions, the legacy of a well-planned process of mergers will be an equitably distributed landscape of institutions, with the potential for innovation in programme offerings.

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CHAPTER 13

Globalisation, markets and the Third World university: preliminary notes on the role of the state in South African higher education

Jonathan D. Jansen

In the vision of activists and policy-makers, expressed through a succession of policy documents during the 1990s, the greatest challenge and imperative for higher education was encapsulated in that awkward word, 'massification'. But 'massification' did not take place, and if it did, it happened out of sight of the 36 quasi-public institutions of higher education in South Africa.[1] How is this to be explained? Can 'massification' as a non-event simply be explained in terms of local events or should the explanations be sought in that all-embracing concept, globalisation? Or do local and global events work together to shape institutional profiles and practices after apartheid? If so, 'the key problem then becomes understanding the nature of globalisation in ways that enable one to trace more precisely how, and with what consequences, it affects national policy' (Dale 1999:1).

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the effects of global influences on South African higher education institutions with a particular focus on the role of the state. I especially wish to focus on the implications for universities, and the most vulnerable group among them – the so-called historically black universities.[2]

Background

In the last three years, South Africa's public universities have been thrown into a vortex of unprecedented instability. Unprecedented, in that this new wave of instability had little to do with student uprisings or state oppression, but with a completely unexpected decrease in student numbers. After increasingly steadily between 1993 and 1997, and leveling off between 1997 and 1998, higher education enrolments fell sharply between 1998 and 1999. The head-count total for 1999 was expected to be 564 000 (that is, 41 000, or 7% below the total for 1998). In universities, enrolments were expected to drop by 6% (a drop of 25 000 students) from 1998 to 1999.[3] How is this dramatic and sudden drop in higher education, and especially in university enrolments, to be explained?

Among many causal factors listed in official and consultant reports, the three primary forces appear to be the declining numbers of high school students graduating with university entrance requirements, the proliferation of private higher education colleges and the growing popularity of technikons and other vocation-oriented institutions.

The first factor, namely the declining number of matriculation exemptions (which remain a statutory requirement for university entrance), is significant for the magnitude of the decline within a relatively short period.[4]

Table 13.1: Matriculation exemption passes

Year	Number	% of candidates
1994	88 497	18
1995	78 821	15
1996	79 768	15
1997	69 007	12
1998	69 856	13
1999	63 725	12

This decline is only partly explained by the attempt on the part of the Department of Education to standardise matriculation performance, interpreted within this bureaucracy as an increase in standards. It is more easily understood as the consistent decline in the overall quality of schooling throughout the 1990s. The matriculant performance of 1999, for example, reflects an eroding quality of education over 12 or more years. This decline clearly represents serious political consequences for the new government, a point well made by John Mattison in a lead story in *The Sunday Independent*. Whatever the political fall-out from this trend, the consequences are much more serious for the future of public universities and the long-term supply of an educated and skilled workforce.

The second factor, the growth of private higher education institutions, has clearly attracted a significant number of students out of the public system. Mabizela and his colleagues at the UWC Education Policy Unit suggest an upper limit of 600 000 students enrolled in private colleges, but this is almost certainly exaggerated, in part because it counts students in the post-compulsory school phase.[5] It is also not clear what percentage of students in private higher education are matriculants holding exemption passes. There is enough evidence, however, that private higher education continues to expand (with or without government accreditation or recognition), and attracts a very high proportion of students away from the public sector.[6]

The third factor, the shifts in student institutional choice within the public sector, is significant in that it addresses a long-standing complaint within policy circles, ie the existence of an 'inverted pyramid', with the majority of students in university (the base) and fewer students in technikons (the peak). In 1999, the ratio of students entering technikons for the first time exceeded the number of students accessing university education. It is also not clear what percentage of these students had the option of entering university (that is, hold exemption passes), but the effect on universities is to erode further the traditional student base available to this segment of the higher education system.

Taken individually, these three factors hold fairly serious consequences for the university sector. Taken together, they are devastating especially for the historically black universities. Indeed, enrolments in these institutions dropped far more sharply than enrolments in historically white universities between 1998 and 1999. After a sharp enrolment increase of 20% (18 000) between 1993 and 1995 to 111 000 students, enrolments in historically black universities declined to 92 000 by 1998 and to 79 000 in 1999 (a drop of 13 000, or 14%).

In addition to what I have called 'primary factors', the vulnerability of the historically black universities has been dramatically increased by three 'secondary factors.' Firstly, such institutions are more vulnerable, given that their student numbers have traditionally been secured – in the humanities – for reasons that are well known, ie only a small minority of black high school students graduate with science and mathematics subjects, thereby limiting their access to non-humanities faculties. Indeed, humanities enrolments dropped by 33 000 (11%) between 1998 and 1999, and only marginally for business/commerce majors (by 6 000, or 4%, from 1998) and science/technology majors (by 3 000, or 2%, from 1998). Secondly, historically white universities have relaxed their *internal* admissions criteria (over and above the matriculation minimum) in part because of the overall decline in available student numbers *and* in order to gain greater credibility with government, donors and other constituencies wary of predominantly white or non-African (as in the case of the University of Natal) student bodies. Thirdly, given the deracialisation of university admissions, and the perception that white universities offer better education standards and facilities, black middle class or promising students with bursaries are now much more inclined to enter historically white institutions (or private colleges) than historically black ones.

What does this mean in the daily reality of academic planning in an historically black university? Consider the effects of these factors on changing student enrolments within the University of the Western Cape (UWC) over a five-year period:

Table 13.2: UWC enrolments (1995–99)

Faculty	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Arts	5 838	5 034	4 619	3 533	2 289
Commerce & Health Sciences	1 319	1 345	1 291	1 361	1 257
Dentistry	192	210	201	210	208
Economics & Management Science	2 816	2 766	2 700	2 402	2 120
Education	1 103	1 041	1 092	994	669
Law	1 495	1 686	1 678	1 496	1 348
Religion & Theology	239	243	214	214	147
Science	1 651	1 465	1 355	1 257	1 043
Total	14 653	13 790	13 150	11 467	9 082

It is against this background that the potential closure of certain historically black universities has become a real possibility. This raises fundamental questions about the role of the state in the crisis facing higher education and, especially, its role in resolving this crisis.

Will there be any universities left?

There are several descriptions of the emerging crisis in higher education (Subotsky & Cooper 2000; Cloete & Bunting 2000). There are very few theoretical accounts of why this crisis exists in the first place. In this section I wish to analyse and assess the changes in higher education in the context of the role of the state and the demands of globalisation in an economy made increasingly accessible to internationalisation.

The changing role of the state

In the period between formal negotiations and the national democratic elections (1990–94), black universities assumed that their future could be negotiated on the basis of a certain moral advantage that they held over their white counterparts. The historically black universities, through a forum of historically disadvantaged institutions (the so-called HDI Forum), expected some massive reparation fund that would eliminate deficits and advance infrastructure at levels of funding that would eventually level the playing fields with historically white institutions. After all, it was the historically black institutions that had led the fiercest struggles against the apartheid state and accommodated the masses of African and rural students when historically white universities persisted with the race-restrictive admission policies that kept their institutions white. And it was the historically black universities that had produced the generation of politicians who now occupied Cabinet posts and parliamentary offices. It seemed reasonable, therefore, that there would be a significant and differential treatment for these institutions by the state.

However, by the time the Minister of Education, Professor Sibusiso Bengu, left office in 1999, it was clear that a previously ambiguous policy on historically black universities was being replaced by a much more stringent, managerialist stance towards this component of the university sector. The state took the position that the dilemma of the black universities was largely of their own making. Black universities were subject to extensive corruption, allowing their student representative councils to exploit university resources; they paid excessively high salaries to their senior executives; they enrolled students without insisting on fee payments; and they were in general inefficiently run. According to one high-ranking higher education policy-maker, most of the R60 million set aside in 1999 for 'redress funding' to HDIs had to be used 'to bail out institutions' who could not meet their payroll. Against this background, government officials insisted that 'the students were voting with their feet' (Rensburg 1999) and that these universities had to 'save themselves' rather than expect the state to bail them out of their dilemma.

The black universities, of course, had a very different explanation of the causes of their dilemma. It was they state, they argued, that insisted on 'massification' after the April 1994 elections. It was the state that demonstrated ambiguity in the first years after apartheid with respect to the payment of student fees. It was the state that failed to deliver substantial redress funding in favour of black institutions which had made it possible for many disadvantaged students to receive higher education; such students, they argued, would never have gained access to further study at the white universities. It was the state that failed to recognise that the funding formula worked against institutions who enrolled disadvantaged students who took longer to progress through their first qualifications than was the case with students enrolled in the historically white institutions.[7]

The appointment of Professor Kader Asmal as the second post-apartheid Minister of Education in mid-1999 reinforced, in managerial terms, what the Bengu leadership had established in principle. It was Asmal who saw through the passage of amendments to the Higher Education Act enabling the Minister to intervene directly in institutions where mismanagement and corruption had come to light. The Minister now has the power to appoint 'independent assessors' to investigate maladministered institutions, and to appoint an 'administrator' to govern such institutions in collapse.

In a short period of time, the moral currency of historically black universities had been devalued by the managerialist position of the state with respect to the sector. The once-persuasive power of a discourse of disadvantage lost its currency in the state after 1996. It was this crucial turnaround in official perspectives and public images of the black universities that left this sector exposed and vulnerable when student numbers suddenly declined in the 1998–99 period.

But the increasingly managerialist position of the state cannot be understood outside the demands of globalisation and the conscious effort of the South African state to seek incorporation within this powerful discourse. The roots of incorporation can be detected within the lead documents (especially the report of the National Commission on Higher Education) to Education White Paper 3, the first major policy statement on higher education after apartheid.

Globalisation: incorporation and displacement of South African universities

Every major policy document in science and education after 1994 contains in the preamble bold statements about South Africa's role in the global economy; the importance of economic and educational competitiveness within a globalised community; the growth of new technologies and innovation; demands for new kinds of workers that should be prepared for these globalised realities in the 21st century; the proliferation of new modes of knowledge production based on international partnerships and norms, to which South African knowledge industries should aspire (Kraak 2000).

It was these documents that allowed for and encouraged the growth of private higher education. Indeed, the South African Constitution itself protects the right to establish private higher education. To be sure, the policy enthusiasm for different kinds of providers in the mid-1990s did not anticipate that in a short period of time, student enrolments would decline so dramatically, threatening several public institutions. Nor did the thinking at the time anticipate the speed and forms of private higher education expansion. It would, nevertheless, be difficult to simply override existing legislation and, more importantly, a broad political position that economic growth depends on opening up markets (including higher education) to international competition and incorporation. Herein lies the problem faced by government officials. What appears to be an attempt to curb private higher education, through 'moratoria' and new legislation, is in fact an attempt to question an umbrella political stance expressed through economic policy, but, by implication, to question education and other social policies as well.

To emphasise the point, it is not simply a matter of private higher education. National incorporation into the phenomenon of globalisation includes acceptance of its norms,

premises, rules and standards for education. Thus, education policy in South Africa after 1994 has routinely reflected discourses and practices associated with globalisation (see Edwards & Usher 1997). The pedagogic expression of globalisation includes: performance-based education (competencies, outcomes, learning ends); standardised testing; quality assurance; mergers, closures and restructuring of higher education; outsourcing, staff layoffs and reduction and the move towards sessional employment; policy and funding emphasis on science and technology education; the downsizing of the humanities; benchmarking education performance against international standards (the Third International Mathematics and Science Study [TIMSS], for example). In other words, if a globalised economy means the alignment of its strategic activities (innovation, finance) on a planetary scale in real time (Carnoy 2000), then a globalised education means the transnational alignment of education policy and practice towards the same strategic goals.

It is in this context that we can begin to understand the rise of private higher education in the context of the economic and educational alignments of the nation state under globalisation. This point is well made by one of the most astute commentators on international trends in higher education in a recent article on this phenomenon:

> The 'logic' of today's market economies and an ideology of privatisation have contributed to the resurgence of private higher education, and the establishment of private institutions where none existed before. (Altbach 1999:312)

As a consequence of the opening-up of national borders to private higher education, and given the decline in the status and perception of public institutions, it is little wonder that an estimated 300 000 students left the public system of higher education in South Africa (Mabizela 1999). In other words, private higher education has in fact displaced public higher education as institutions of first choice among many high school graduates.

Such alignment with globalisation also means that the market becomes increasingly important as an instrument for deciding what kinds of institutions remain 'viable' and 'competitive' and which should be closed and discontinued. In both official discourse (Rensburg 1999) and the studies of policy analysts (Subotsky & Cooper 2000), the notion of 'students voting with their feet' or of clients making market-based decisions about where to study, and for what price, has become a perfectly acceptable way of talking about teaching and learning in higher education. What was unthinkable in *left-wing* circles inside South Africa is now taken for granted: the student is a client; the vice chancellors are chief executive officers; the academic programme should be vocationalised and sensitive to changes in the labour market; academics should become entrepreneurs, marketing their courses; staff as human resources should demonstrate productivity; faculties and departments become 'cost centres'; mergers and acquisitions (such as the incorporation of colleges or the merging of technikons) should be pursued; 'international partnerships' become the stock-in-trade of competitive universities; and links with the business sector become important measures of progress (Jansen 2000; see also Oblinger & Verville 1998).

Private higher education, understood as the logical extension of globalisation and South African incorporation into it, will therefore remain a powerful force within post-apartheid society. To be sure, the state will from time to time attempt to manage this sector as well, but it will not be able to change the fundamental rules by which markets determine the higher education landscape in South Africa. The so-called moratorium on the registration of new

private higher education institutions will eventually be lifted for three reasons. Firstly, both the Constitution and the Higher Education Act protect the right to private education. Secondly, private higher education is simply another form of international trade. For this reason, the moratorium declared in early 2000 immediately raised protests both from international universities ('why then should we accept South African students in our countries?') and powerful foreign governments from whose territories such private organisations operate. Thirdly, South African universities have increasingly formed partnerships with international universities (private and public) as a means of increasing their own competitiveness and standing in higher education after the isolation of apartheid. To dismantle or set restrictions on private higher education is in fact to confront national legislation that opens up borders for economic and educational exchange, sensitive international trade relations with foreign governments, and complex institutional arrangements validating private-public partnership relationships.

What is crucial, therefore, in understanding the trajectory of higher education policy and planning in South Africa is the relationship between the state and markets as it unfolds today. In this regard, I wish to review the argument made so far through five main theses on higher education restructuring.

The first thesis is that the state has in fact played a powerful *political* role in the shaping of higher education by using the logic of markets to 'sort out' the weak from the strong in the unstable ecology of universities. By using market logic rather than more overt forms of state intervention, the government apparatus has been able to achieve its overriding macroeconomic goals without having to deal with political backlash on two fronts:

- The charge of state interference within autonomous institutions, something that (sadly) is a response more readily made by white universities than their black counterparts; and
- The charge of undermining black universities, buttressed by tales of a romantic past ('you cannot touch Fort Hare') of struggle and disadvantage.

It is not very useful, therefore, to view the role of the state as noninterventionist with respect to higher education. Here the distinction drawn by Michael Apple (in his citation of the work of Mark Olssen) between classical liberalism and neo-liberalism is apt:

> Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neo-liberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. (Apple 1999:4)

While earlier theories of dependency described the Third World state as a victim of larger global forces in the world system, it is now clear that the post-apartheid state has participated voluntarily and actively in globalisation (see Dale 1999; Jansen 1999). Higher education policies explicitly aligned the South African economy with, and incorporated the higher education system within, the globalised economy.

The second point I wish to make concerns several ironies with respect to the marketisation of higher education. The irony of market-led provision of higher education was not that it placed universities in competition, but that it coexisted with calls for increased institutional co-operation. The argument for greater co-operation remains standard: that greater efficiencies of scale could be achieved; that duplication could be avoided; that the planning of higher education was an artefact of apartheid; that wastage should be avoided;

that synergies could be achieved; that quality could be improved. It was always going to be impossible for organisations charged with facilitating co-operation (such as the Adamastor Trust in the Western Cape or the Eastern Seaboard Association of Tertiary Institutions in KwaZulu-Natal) to succeed in this competitive environment, in which the state threatened to remain on the sidelines: merely setting the rules of the game. The other irony was that despite the historically disadvantaged status of the black universities, the white universities (and in particular the Afrikaans institutions) would be the ones to triumph and survive at their expense. The higher education game was being played not according to the rules of the moral high ground or historical disadvantage or development co-operation, but on the basis of the harsh, cold logic of the market, that is: the fittest survive in an unregulated environment where students are free to choose 'the best' without constraint or coercion.

The third point of relevance concerns the response of institutions to the marketisation of higher education. Here it is important to understand that tying regulatory policies to state funding has guaranteed compliance among universities and technikons for whom a significant percentage of their revenue comes from the public purse. The useful rumour that future funding was to be linked to the submission of new programmes generated the feverish production of 'programme templates' among all institutions for submission to the Department of Education for funding purposes. In search of recognition for degrees and diplomas, institutions rushed to submit reformatted qualifications for registration with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and accreditation with the Council on Higher Education (CHE). Not following official requirements for new programmes placed institutions at immediate financial risk. Similarly, the development of 'three-year rolling plans' with projected student numbers (the single factor determining levels of state funding) were generated at breakneck speed because not being seen as planning enrolments threatened future state funding – even if this meant that institutions over-predicted enrolments by a factor of 10% in the first planning period.

The fourth consequence of restructuring is that when institutions subscribe to policy mandates on the basis of regulatory or funding requirements, then we cannot expect a 'deep' sense of transformation to prevail, especially with respect to the institutional curriculum. While universities have conformed to the requirements of the SAQA, albeit in the more palatable version of 'whole qualifications', this has not translated into a fundamental review of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment in institutions. That is, the SAQA requirements have been interpreted as bureaucratic demands rather than as educational imperatives. There are many reasons for this state of affairs, including the lack of capacity at many institutions to foreground the curriculum demands of the new system. But it also has to do with the inability of the SAQA to present an articulate statement of the educational underpinnings of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). At workshop after workshop presented by SAQA officials, the presentations dealt with numbers of credit hours, level descriptors, field location of the discipline, definitions of key concepts (How is a unit standard different from a standard? What are assessment criteria?) and requirements for portability. The emphasis on formal language and technical requirements completely overshadowed the 'first principles' of the NQF. These were the many regulatory and bureaucratic 'strings tying down Gulliver', as one of the original proponents of the NQF put it.[8] Clearly, with many academics reading policy as regulation and prerequisite for financial viability, it is to be expected that the educational value of higher education policy is completely lost on the institutions concerned.

The fifth and final point of relevance is that market-led reforms of higher education allow the state to renege on fundamental equity goals with respect to the staffing and student profiles of universities and technikons. Students representing 'the poorest of the poor' will no longer have access to higher education in a system based on strict adherence to fee structures and payments, and in which the surviving institutions are no longer compelled to further relax the once-stringent criteria used to ensure racialised admission policies. That is, higher education will once again become restrictive, drawing a particular class of students into universities and another class of students into low-status institutions. There is considerable evidence from work done elsewhere that 'in practice neo-liberal policies involving market solutions may actually serve to reproduce – not subvert – traditional hierarchies of class and race' (Apple 1999:3; Whitty 1997). In South Africa, race will become less important in institutional definition, since in 1999 African students in white technikons and universities (39%) for the first time exceeded the numbers of Africans in black universities and technikons (33%). Class stratification will assume greater importance, with rural African students increasingly siphoned off into second- and third-class institutions. This realignment of universities (and other institutions) in a new class hierarchy is the real tragedy of globalisation: it not only witnessed the incorporation of the Third World state (South Africa), but it displaced Third World citizens within it from access to privileged institutions (Jansen 2000a).

Conclusion

In June 2000, the Minister of Education received a report from a 13-person task team on 'the size and shape' of higher education in South Africa. This report provided typologies of different kinds of higher education institutions to replace the existing landscape of institutions – a landscape which the Minister of Education described as 'the geopolitical imagination of apartheid planners.'

The earlier analysis of state, markets and globalisation suggests that the so-called 'size and shape' committee could be seen as an instrument to effect what cannot be done through direct political action by government. That is, to realign higher education with markets and the imperatives of globalisation through what appears to be the deployment of technical expertise in the form of the 'size and shape' task team. This team consists of selected vice chancellors,[9] business and labour representatives, and members of government and parastatal organisations. The 'typologies' generated by the task team will in fact create a hierarchy of world-class institutions, with very few universities at the top and, lower down, other kinds of institutions such as universities of technology and community colleges. In essence, the aggregate number of public institutions occupying the higher education landscape will be decreased immediately. What this means is that the political pressure to continue state funding of marginal black universities will ease, while space is created for more private institutions to officially occupy the space left by the diminution of what are seen as decrepit public universities. Rather than 'restructure' higher education, the 'size and shape' committee will simply reassign status within and among existing institutions.

It would therefore be a mistake to assess the restructuring and reorganisation of higher education as simply a response to a crisis in the national fiscus or falling student numbers. This recasting of higher education is more clearly understood as a response to globalisation,

expressed through greater privatisation of higher education, stronger alignment of academic qualifications with market needs, fewer high-quality institutions which can be competitive within an international market of higher education institutions, and more direct linkages between universities and business in pursuit of new modes of knowledge production (the so-called mode 2 debate).

This is not to suggest that the Third World state is either powerless or that globalisation is ubiquitous (Jansen 1999; Weiss 1997). Indeed, the South African 'typologies' suggest that deep-seated inequalities exist within the national system of higher education, and, therefore, the impact of globalisation will invariably deepen these inequalities of institution type. Furthermore, the South African state has explicitly located itself within the logic of globalisation and markets, as higher education policy positions clearly signal. For these reasons, the extinction of 'less fit' institutions was always going to be inevitable as a goal of the post-apartheid state, even though the strategy will remain a surprise to those who gambled on official commitment to the masses of disadvantaged students who are now destined for a lower-class higher education, if any at all. In his authoritative review of the international experience of private higher education, Altbach (1999) concludes by noting that:

> Private institutions provide access to those who can afford to pay for instruction. Few private universities can afford scholarship programmes for students from poor economic backgrounds or can provide academic support programmes for ill-prepared students. As a result, private universities contribute little to social mobility or to providing educational opportunities for bright but disadvantaged students. Letting market forces fully determine who studies at private universities ensures that only those who can afford the tuition will be able to attend. (1999:320)

The real threat of South African incorporation into a global economy, where higher education is regarded as another form of competitive trade, is that the state simply sets new terms for the admission of students into higher education. Class will displace race, though imperfectly, in deciding who is able to access higher education and, by extension, high-income employment and social mobility. Higher education realignment with international markets will therefore not address that most intractable of social problems after apartheid: inequality. In fact, it may very well deepen inherited inequalities set by class and race.

Endnotes

1. At the time of writing (March 2000), South Africa had 21 universities and 15 technikons.
2. I wish to place on record my unease with designations such as 'historically white' or 'historically black'. This transfer of an American usage conceals too many complexities, eg the fact that historically black universities were for many years Afrikaner-dominated in matters of governance and staffing, and that historically white universities remain ideologically and culturally 'white'.
3. In this section I draw liberally on the comprehensive database of the Department of Education, 'Report 1: students in universities and technikons, 1993–99' (Draft Higher Education Planning Statistics, July 1999); I also draw on various reports produced by Ian Bunting on the same subject.
4. It should be noted that there is some discrepancy between this Edusource-reported data and that released by the Matriculation Board. According to Dr Cobus Lotter, Director of the Matriculation Board, the following were the number of 'senior certificates with matriculation endorsements ... issued by SAFCERT': 1994 (91 893); 1995 (78 821); 1996 (78 933); 1997 (71 889); and 1998 (78 821). The minor variations can be explained by different collection points in time during any given year for which the data is reported (eg excluding re-mark results and supplementary examination results and, in 1998, the Mpumalanga

statistics). Note, though, that the percentage drop in the Matriculation Board statistics for the highest and lowest SAFCERT endorsement allocations (1994–97) is also 21% and that the actual number of exemption certificates offered by the board dropped by 31% between 1994 (31 989) and 1998 (22 016).

5 See 'An overview of private higher education in South Africa', a research project proposal of the University of the Western Cape Education Policy Unit, July 1999.

6 See Salim Vally's report in the Wits *Quarterly Review of Education and Training* (vol. 6, no. 2, June 1999) in the section on 'trading in futures – private companies for further and higher education' (pp. 17–18).

7 Funding is based on both student enrolment and progression rates. Enrolling students who fail or drop out in large numbers is therefore counterproductive in the long term.

8 Interview with Professor Pam Christie, June 1999, Pretoria.

9 Chosen by the Minister through the offices of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), it is striking that none of the Task Team members came from 'high risk' universities, ie the rural, African universities where the crisis of student numbers and accumulated deficits is most severe, and where closures are imminent.

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Policy capacity and implementation realities

The analysis pursued in this section unpacks the notion of 'policy capacity' within the education and training system in the mid to late 1990s. Was there in fact the requisite capacity to transform ambitious visionary policies – for example, 'outcomes-based education' and education management development – into practice? The authors also question, however, the analytical capacities and frameworks deployed in studying the problem of implementation.

CHAPTER 14

Building capacity to deliver education in South Africa?[1]

John Welton

This chapter reflects on the process of education transformation in South Africa based on the research and development work undertaken by the author as part of a Government of South Africa/UNICEF programme of work in South Africa. The programme has been extensively reviewed by Knutsson and O'Dea (1998) in a 'Reflective essay on the contributions and experiences of UNICEF to the process of supporting the movement for children's rights and development in South Africa, 1974–1997'. Since 1994, technical support has been provided to the Department of Education and to three provinces – Northern Province, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. UNICEF technical consultants have worked directly with head teachers, superintendent education managers and both provincial education and national planners and managers. The research methodology that informs this chapter combines participant observation with consultancy. This process involves working closely with individuals and groups of practitioners in the development process. The prime sources of data are therefore documentary analysis of real-time planning materials, observation of planning and management behaviour, focused interviews with key participants, and focus groups held during training and consultancy activities. The chapter also draws from UNICEF's work undertaken with the national Department of Education, including support for the Task Team on Education Management Development (EMD) which reported to the Minister of Education in *Changing Management to Manage Change in Education* (Department of Education 1996c).

Education development and the transformation of education

Over the five years since the 1994 elections, the Department of Education has worked to establish a new vision for education in South Africa, consonant with the national agenda for reconstruction. The African National Congress (ANC) set out an Implementation Plan for Education and Training (ANC 1994) within its overall Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC 1995).

The policy framework was followed shortly by the White Papers on Education and Training (Department of Education 1995) and the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools (Department of Education 1996b), which set out the principles and framework for a nonracial education and training system based on basic human rights, democratic governance, access, equity, justice and accountability. The first two white papers were followed by the National Education Policy Act (Department of Education 1996a), more commonly known as the South African Schools Act (SASA) and the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (Department of Education 1998a) and Admission Policy for Ordinary Schools (Department of Education 1998b).

The Task Team report on Education Management Development (Department of Education 1996c) started from the belief that education management development is the key to transformation in education, and that management is not an end in itself but an essential part of achieving the central goal of promoting effective teaching and learning. The team posed a question which faces head teachers, senior education managers and provincial education managers – whose daily work puts them in the front line of the transformation process for education in South Africa – 'How can the goals for improved learning and teaching in a transformed education system be realised'?

Building on the task team's broad concept of EMD, the task of education development in the new South Africa includes:

- Establishing and communicating a new paradigm for learning;
- Establishing and communicating a new paradigm for leadership and management;
- Establishing and monitoring structures and procedures for supporting learning;
- Establishing and monitoring processes – including the ground rules for decision-making;
- Developing individual capacity and effective teams; and
- Developing department/institutional linkages; implementing policies for redress.

Transforming learning

It is a fundamental aspect of education that, for the most part, people learn to learn in the way they have been taught. Similarly, they learn to teach in the way they have been taught. The apartheid education system attempted to institute processes and procedures for organising teaching which were aimed at maintaining social and ideological control. The process of social and educational transformation in the new South Africa aims to break this cycle, but the experiences reported by front-line South African education staff consistently suggest that progress is very uneven. Many of the teachers, head teachers and the staff who support their work at circuit, district, region and provincial levels report that they lack role models for the new paradigms of management and learning, and are left feeling ill-equipped for their roles as agents of change. Rather, they feel disempowered, deskilled and deprived of professional esteem and status by the pressure that they experience to both manage the present and build the future.

While there is a great deal of activity being undertaken both nationally and locally to transform the education system, much of this work is fragmented, lacking the coherence that will build the critical mass for change. One of the results of the far-reaching programme of policy-making and legislation has been to deskill and disempower teachers and managers whose professional knowledge and identity has been challenged. Necessary as this professional challenge has been, it needs to be accompanied by a strategy for implementation which includes a major programme of reskilling and re-empowerment. The ANC policy framework (ANC 1995) noted that policy statements may be judged on many grounds but often omit two important items:

> '... how their proposals are going to be implemented (and by whom), and under what conditions they can be implemented successfully'. In their absence, policy statements may seem to be no more that hopes and dreams. The development of IPET is an attempt to address these issues. (ANC 1995:7)

This chapter reflects on the fact that, in practice, there has been no systematic, system-wide strategy for implementation.

The rhetoric and reality of transformation

The EMD Task Team (1996c:42) summarised the system-level challenges to the transformation of education which needed to be tackled urgently. These challenges included the inheritance of:

- Dysfunctional structures;
- A mix of old and new styles of management and work ethos;
- Insufficient appropriately skilled people;
- Absence of an appropriate work ethos and management vision to drive integration and delivery;
- Insufficient clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities within and between levels of management;
- Inadequate systems and procedures;
- Poor co-ordination of resources;
- Inefficient and ineffective delegation; and
- Crisis management in response to immediate problems rather than planned development.

At school level, the Task Team (1996:20) identified the following management and governance challenges:

- Lack of clarity with regard to roles and responsibilities;
- Lack of legitimacy of principals, school management teams and inspectors;
- Poor working conditions and physical resources
- Inappropriate management structures and systems support;
- Lack of experience of good management practices;
- Uneven levels of experience and capacity in governing bodies;
- Lack of understanding in the community about the role of governance in education management; and
- Inequalities and disparities in resources and capacity.

The changes identified by the EMD Task Team as needed for school-level education are echoed in other sectors. For example, the National Committee for Further Education (Department of Education 1997a:42, 37–8) presented a picture of colleges as lacking:

- Plant and infrastructure;
- Governance and management structures;
- Planning capacity;
- Administrative and organisational systems;
- Support functions;
- Quality training of trainers;
- Linkages to industry;
- Quality assurance; and
- Management information systems.

These lists represent a baseline of management issues to be addressed in order to create an education system which will efficiently and effectively support learning. The EMD Task Team emphasised that the changes needed were not merely technical but would require a fundamental shift in organisation culture, often referred to as a 'paradigm shift'.

Table 14.1: The paradigm shift in South African education

Old South African education	New South African education
top-down	democratic
hierarchical	collegial
bureaucratic	responsive
centralised	decentralised
disempowering	empowering
fragmented	integrated
rigid	flexible
lack of ownership by participants	stakeholder ownership
conservative	creative
controlling	transformative
closed	open
discriminatory	inclusive

Summarised briefly, this change was characterised as moving from a system which was controlling, rigid, hierarchical, bureaucratic and discriminatory to one which is visionary, flexible, collegial, democratic and inclusive. The vision of a cultural change in management reflects that planned at a national level for the new South Africa, and at a classroom level in the new approach to learning and teaching.

The challenge of a new approach to learning and teaching

The new approach to school level learning and teaching has its flagship in Curriculum 2005 (Department of Education 1997b). Curriculum 2005 aims to establish a balanced curriculum embodied in eight new learning areas. An outcomes-based approach to learning and teaching, it involves a major change in the culture of schools and classrooms, and requires teachers to move from a didactic approach to learning to a more learner-centred approach. This cultural change in the delivery of schooling involves a paradigm shift equivalent to that discussed above for education management. In practice, this change requires:

- Major retraining of teachers and administrators to understand the new approach to supporting learning, and learn new skills and attitudes to learners;
- New materials significantly different from traditional content-based texts, etc; and
- New relationships between administrators, teachers, learners, parents and employers which seek to empower rather than direct stakeholders in the learning process.

Changes in the cultures of managing learning

The attempt to move from an 'old' to a 'new' organisational culture, whether of management or learning, reflects a shift well known outside education, and one which is very difficult to achieve within a single organisation let alone within a whole education system. An essential characteristic of the old South African model was control and resistance to change. The new models of management and teaching presume new relationships, reflective practice, experiment and risk-taking. Teachers, managers and governors are required to step out of their old skins, and venture into a new world without any certainty of protection or success.

At all levels, there are major problems of going to scale. That is to say, there are pockets of effective teaching, curriculum change, strategic planning and management development, but the process of implementation is still very uneven, and in overall terms, weak (Knutsson & O'Dea 1998:86).

Symbolic or real change?

At grassroots level, there is greater familiarity with the jargon of transformation than practical understanding of what it means and how it can be implemented. In September 1998, a focus group of 25 senior education managers (SEMs) from five regions in KwaZulu-Natal moved behind the jargon of transformation to describe it as a process of development and improvement involving:

- Moving from the status quo to a desired goal;
- Implementing policies for redress;
- Retaining what is agreed to be good while at the same time improving what may need to be better;
- Ensuring that what is, is 'acceptable';
- Learning and applying new practices and techniques;
- The correction of mistakes;
- Improving quality; and
- Instilling and developing new attitudes and behaviour.

They summarised the following problems which they experienced in implementing change:

- Despite the existence of policies, legislation and plans on paper, there is a lack of strategic thinking about both aims and the process of implementation and co-ordination;
- Continued poor resource utilisation, including human resources;
- A lack of transformational leadership to empower colleagues and provide role models for new management behaviour;
- Lack of a consistently shared vision from national level to all provinces, and from provincial through regional, district, circuit, school and classroom levels;
- A need for a process of role clarification, including definition and development of the working relationships between different stakeholders;
- Lack of understanding of the processes needed to establish effective and efficient delegation of authority from head office to other levels;
- Limited monitoring and evaluation of educational outcomes at all levels, or of successful implementation of a culture of quality assurance;
- Lack of support for the processes of change from senior management

The SEMs occupy a key leverage role for transformation in that they occupy the front line of support for schools and head teachers. I will dwell a little on their part in the change process, as their experience represents a microcosm of the experience of many other change agents and suggests part of the way forward. The SEMs' own readiness and capacity to support the change process in their circuits and schools is affected by the extent to which others recognise and accept their leadership position and permit them to change from 'policing' the education system to their new developmental role as change agents.

In the latter years of the apartheid government, 'school inspectors' and managers were deeply distrusted in some communities for their assumed complicity with the process of maintaining social control through education. The SEMs interviewed in the focus group described the changes in their roles since 1995 as moving from inspector, snoop, judge and rule enforcer towards becoming supportive change agents, developers, trainers and planners. The SEMs recognise that they will always have a role as monitors in the system, as well as supporting it – but within a quality assurance rather than quality control model. They will also continue to have some form of *fire-fighting* role. This 'before and after' characterisation is based on the SEMs' consciousness of the stereotypes held by many teachers and others of the former role behaviour of inspectors, as well as on an idealised view of their transformed roles.

In such an exercise, what is not said is often as important as what is said. The 'ghetto humour' of a professional group is often an important indicator of the feelings of participants and the reality of the situation. While considering their former and their ideal typical transformed roles, the SEMs got below the surface rhetoric of transformation, but equally they had a very realistic view of the extent to which they had been able to change. In practice they noted that they are still largely:

- Responding to crisis;
- Working in a top-down organisational culture;
- Acting as the messengers for their district, regional and provincial offices;
- Used to deliver materials and collect information;
- Enforcers of regulations; and
- Unable to visit and work in some schools and areas.

In common with many other professional groups in South African education the SEMs reported that they had received very little training or time to adapt to their new roles. One of the truths of delegation and decentralisation is that no change can occur unless those who seek to empower see the need to change their own working patterns and expectations of those to whom they have delegated responsibility. We have dwelt on the case of the SEMs at some length in this chapter because they represent a classic example of change agents who cannot work effectively unless permitted to by the people with whom they interact.

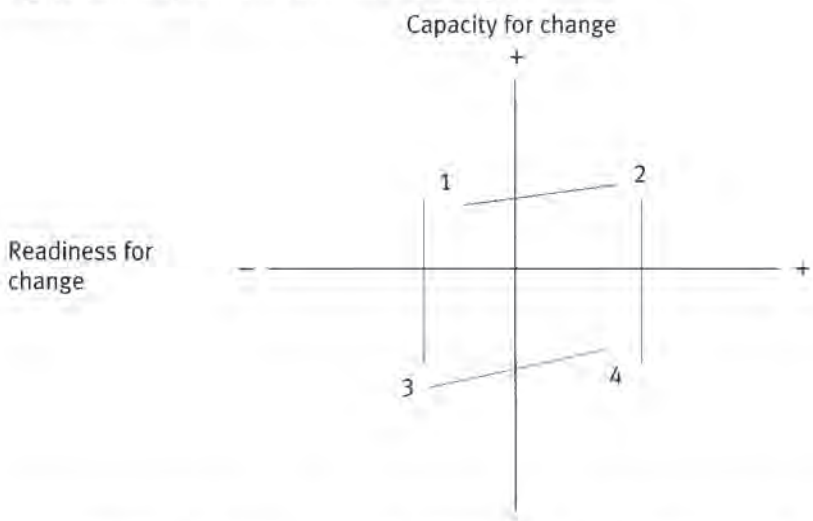
Support for the shock troops of transformation

Five years after the first democratic election, there is no full, 'up to scale' systematic national or provincial programme to support change in the management of learning, and no coherent strategy for education management development. Support for curriculum change and EMD at provincial level is at best uneven. The pressure felt by teachers, head teachers, senior education

managers and others is leading to grassroots cynicism and, in some areas, an apparent rejection of the transformation policies as simply jargon – a symbolic rather than a practical reality. At best, the national policies are well accepted at provincial and local levels, and the main call is for help in interpretation and how to implement. In other cases, the gap between national policy and local practice is such that there is a danger that the transformation policies will be seen as foreign implants subject to a process of 'tissue rejection'.

The problem of capacity and readiness is summed up in Figure 14.1. The two axes represent degrees of readiness for change and capacity (ie possession of the skills and knowledge needed) to support change. Readiness includes motivation to change. For most staff, the problem is not of readiness for change, but capacity: how to move from point four to point two on the model. Staff who resent or do not see the need for change are represented in box three. Here, training may help move people by providing an opportunity for greater understanding of the nature and need for change, leading to improved motivation and 'readiness for change'.

Figure 14.1: Capacity and readiness for change



As the EMD Task Team report noted (1996c:18), 'recent changes to the system of education governance has resulted in school heads being unprepared for their new role as "chief executives"'. To this can be added: lack of preparation to implement Curriculum 2005; new labour relation frameworks; new systems of assessment and examination; new systems for funding schools; new admission policies; and many other new and farsighted policies. While the head teachers I have worked with have mainly welcomed the changes, without adequate training they lacked capacity to lead the transformation.

Innovation overload

Faced with the magnitude of their roles as change agents, many teachers, head teachers, senior education managers, and directors – right up to superintendent general level – are suffering from innovation overload; in other words, they are transfixed by the magnitude of the problem. Like the proverbial generals who, when faced with a new situation, only have their experience of fighting the last war to guide them, most of the grassroots leaders of educational change are

guided primarily by their previous experience. Their knowledge, skills and attitudes as managers were honed in a system which produced behaviour no longer regarded as legitimate.

The questions that teachers, head teachers and administrators ask are basic: how to get beyond the jargon words of transformation, affirmative action, redress, outcomes-based education, new paradigms of management, participative management, and so on, to arrive at a practical understanding of:

- What is the function of the school in the new order?
- What is my role in supporting learning and teaching?
- What does transformation (in all its forms) mean for me and my work?
- What new knowledge, attitudes and skills do I require?
- How have my professional relationships changed?

The need to demystify curriculum and education management development

As we will see later, the help that is sought is not esoteric knowledge but ways to implement policy at a very practical level. In my work at national level and in the three provinces, I have been repeatedly asked for help to understand how to manage change and for basic skills of planning and organisation. At grassroots level, by far the majority of needs expressed for management development are for explanations of:

- What the new policies are;
- How policies can be implemented in practice;
- How to develop basic planning and organisational skills; and
- How to manage learning and teaching in ways appropriate to the new paradigm.

The transformation process and agenda needs to be informed by a practical theory and strategy for change which is communicated and understood throughout the system from both the Ministry and Department of Education to the classroom. The practical theory and strategy for change should be reflected in achievable policies which are implementable within known time and resource constraints, and underpinned by practical procedures and processes. Further, there needs to be an integrated approach to implementation involving all those concerned with delivering the new forms of learning and teaching. For example, curriculum development, changes in the qualifications framework and assessment procedures, the processes of education management development and the reform of teacher education all need to be planned and implemented as a coherent package.

The practical theory of educational change must have at its centre:

- Knowledge of how children learn;
- Practical understanding of the ways in which schools can support that learning;
- A clear understanding of development and change processes at national, provincial, institutional, classroom and community levels;
- Knowledge of how people learn to change, and what support is needed for them during the change process;
- Clear understanding of the way in which different parts of the education system and processes impact on one another – learning and teaching, curriculum and assessment reform, teacher and management training, and provisioning;

- Mechanisms for reviewing performance at all levels, with the courage, where necessary, to revise or discard or put on hold policies which are found to be unimplementable within any realistic time frame; and
- Identification and development of skills required for effective individual and team work to attain goals.

Paradigms and pyramids

There are a number of additional problems that have to be overcome in order to establish effective support for educational development at a national level. The paradigm that underpins the changes sought within the new South Africa aims to reduce the separation of 'learners' and 'teachers', 'managers' and 'managed'; to replace the former top-down, hierarchical and controlling culture of education management with a culture characterised by participation, transparency and flatter structures. However, progress may have been inhibited by the mystification of teaching and management, rather than seeing these as everyday, practical processes of supporting learning.

I argued earlier that the vision of education for the new South Africa seeks to establish a new culture of teaching and management behaviour which is very different from previous practice. Teachers, and managers at all levels, are finding the change difficult, not least because moving toward flatter management structures can have the following implications for them:

- In common with other stakeholders, at a time of change they have a good deal to lose as well as to gain. (In the case of South Africa, changing the style and practice of teaching and management is one of the key features of transformation; the inherited style and practice is regarded as inefficient, ineffective and morally unacceptable.)
- Teachers and managers who have moved from the old to the new system feel deskilled.
- Teachers and managers who have come in new to the new system may lack the skills and knowledge to function in their management roles.

A key problem is that some of the managers who should be leading feel disempowered; they cannot see their way through, and feel deskilled and, in some cases, lacking acceptance by other stakeholders.

At this time, there is a need for the processes of mass democratic and social mobilisation for change to be accessible. In practice, the jargon of the new policy framework appears alien and more concerned with theory than practice. At grassroots level, what is asked for urgently is the knowledge, skills and understanding to support and survive the relentless pressures of practical day-to-day planning and problem-solving. A key need is to understand how to manage change, and in particular how to respond creatively to conflict.

A 'barefoot' approach to education development

In practice, teachers and managers need basic information, skills and role models for new relationships and ways of working. Delegation of planning, budgeting and governance to school site level requires basic skills that were not developed under the former centralised system. Similarly, moving from managing a formal curriculum and a didactic style of

teaching to the outcomes-based approach requires new forms of professional leadership by head and senior teachers, subject advisers and inspectors. The speed of legislated change and the lack of time for major retraining has left many teachers and managers feeling deskilled. Their immediate need is for rapid 'reskilling'. An analogy might be taken from the concept of the 'barefoot doctor'. In medicine, the application of the term 'barefoot' is not designed to demean the role of front-line medical workers in poor communities, but recognises the fact that a very large proportion of medical need can be met with generic medical skills. Postgraduate qualifications in heart bypass surgery are not needed to play a crucial role in maintaining the health of 98% of a population. A key component of the competency of the barefoot doctor is knowing the limits of his or her knowledge, when to ask for advice and when to refer a 'patient' for more specialised attention. Similarly, a pharmacist knows that perhaps 90% of needs encountered over the counter can be met by some three dozen basic generic drugs – albeit combined and packaged in countless different ways. The rest of the pharmacy cupboard contains the specialist drugs prescribed by doctors for rare conditions which only a minority of the population will ever experience.

Similarly, most of the practical management skills of teachers, head teachers and district and provincial officials are better understood in terms of a culture of *barefoot management*: the generic 'life skills' of the manager rather than those which are only used at particular times and levels within the system. What is needed is extensive training in the generic concepts and practices of management development and supporting learning in order to implement the new policies.

Specialist and generic skills

Only a minority of those people involved in managing the education system require specialist training, reflected in qualifications from business schools and master's-level university programmes. An example of the specialist skills needed is illustrated in the government paper which sets out the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (Department of Education 1998c). The paper notes that, at provincial level, each education department will need the following specialist skills:

- At least one but preferably several highly skilled strategic financial analysts;
- Several high-level accounting experts;
- Several highly skilled information systems experts;
- At least one senior statistician or applied numerical analyst;
- At least one person skilled in education planning and forecasting techniques; and
- Ability to understand and operate computer systems and databases.

However, at a more generic level, devolution of budgetary responsibility to district, circuit and school levels will require widespread general knowledge of financial budgeting and control, as well as strategic and operational planning.

Going to scale: who are the new managers?

The task of educational development in South Africa is immense. Including all those concerned with the governance and management of schools, I estimate that around half a million South Africans require some form of basic training in education management

development (including school governance) in addition to all the other training needed to implement Curriculum 2005 and other policies.

Much has already been achieved – the assembling of the single education system, new institutional arrangements, the processes and procedures for provisioning and paying teachers in a single system, and so on. However, in terms of real capacity for transformation to scale, the outcomes are very patchy, and, as I have argued earlier, delays in establishing sound implementation strategies, including training, may even bring the main transformation policies into disrepute. Where there is a need for major cultural change, there is a limited window of opportunity before disillusionment sets in.

In practice, the number needing training to run the new and transformed education system is vastly greater than half a million people. One major limitation to many of the policy and framework documents that we have read is the separation of education management from other aspects of the teaching and learning process. I have already noted a relationship between the new cultures and practices of teaching and learning, and those of education management. In practice, all who make decisions that affect the planning and implementation of learning – including the learners themselves – are involved in a similar and essentially interconnected process. There is a close similarity between new paradigm, which focuses on the learner's role in managing their own learning, and the paradigm of devolved and participatory management; both involve greater involvement in decision-making and changes in the management relationship. Stakeholder involvement in decisions relevant to their work, democratic empowerment, flexibility to meet local need, and the development of reflective practice have their parallels in each arena: at the individual learner's desk, in the classroom, the head teacher's office, in the work of the circuit, district, provincial or national education manager.

The ways in which learners, teachers and other managers behave, at whatever level, are part of the hidden curriculum of transformation. The most powerful factor in the change process is the way in which stakeholders at every level model the knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes to each other.

In order to provide a role model of the processes and outcomes of transformation, learners, teachers and managers need to:

- Understand what they are meant to be doing, and how they are expected to behave under the new culture of managing learning;
- Be free to create and re-create institutional cultures, structures, procedures and processes which are consistent with the new culture of learning at all levels, from school desk to superintendent-general and minister's office;
- Be able to practice new behaviours safely, without censure, subject to a culture of quality assurance which involves positive forms of monitoring and evaluation; and
- Develop a culture of reflective practice.

In particular, the transformation process in education requires knowledge of the way in which adults, as well as children, learn. A major omission in the documentation of the EMD process in South Africa has been consideration of the way in which managers learn. From observation in a wide range of settings at provincial and national levels, it is clear that lack of understanding of development and learning processes is leading to management behaviours which are counterproductive, however well-intentioned. The examples are legion: the

manager who seeks to decentralise by diktat rather than by negotiation, interpretation and reskilling; the manager who believes it is sufficient to figuratively hit people over the head with reminders of their responsibilities under legislation rather than work with them to interpret what it means for their work, and to find ways of helping them implement change; the teachers who fail to change their style of classroom management to enable students to learn to take responsibility for their learning.

Conclusion

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn from this chapter which are in themselves simple common sense, but nonetheless have powerful implications for the success of South Africa in achieving the transformation of the education system. Their obviousness and simplicity illustrate the barefoot approach to management which this chapter seeks to promote:

1) It is important, for the effectiveness of the programme of curriculum and management development, to stop talking about the distinction between teachers and learners, managers and managed, but to see a single new paradigm of education development working throughout the education system from the learner's desk to the minister's desk.
2) The process of managing education is not just the province of that minority of stakeholders who have traditionally been termed 'managers', and their skills are for the most part generic and not highly specialist.
3) It is important to move away from the idea that management knowledge is esoteric and scarce. Such a view not only separates the managers from the managed in a way which is in conflict with the development of the new paradigm of management and learning, but also devalues grassroots experience including that intrinsic to African communities. In the main, we need barefoot managers (BfMs) not MBAs.
4) We must not separate management development from the other elements which support learning: the development of curriculum, assessment, monitoring, provisioning, and so on. There is a particular danger of separate development at all levels within the education system, between different sections and activities – from national deputy director-general level to the different subject departments within schools.
5) The hidden curriculum of management behaviour at all levels, from minister to learner, conveys messages which either enhance the processes of transformation or lead to *tissue rejection*. People lead as they are led, manage as they are managed, learn or fail to learn as they are taught or supported in their learning. At all levels we need role models to demonstrate appropriate and effective ways of working, both individually and collectively: to convey, via the explicit and hidden curriculum, the attitudes, knowledge, values, behaviour and relationships needed to transform the education system and society.
6) We need to base development and support policies and practices on a sound understanding of how managers learn, recognising that there is an equivalence in the relationship which is being promoted between teachers and learners at school and those which the new South Africa is seeking to promote between stakeholders in its institutions.
7) There is an urgent need for generic 'education-life skills' training designed and provided within a coherent ladder of professional and career development, from:

- Learner to teacher;
- Teacher to head of department (HoD);
- HoD to deputy head;
- HoD to subject adviser;
- Deputy head to head;
- Head to SEM;
- SEM to director;
- Director to ... and so on.

8) EMD should not be separated from the other aspects of education development that we have discussed. It will be very important for the national department, as well as for provincial departments, to maintain a strong and practical overview of the working relationships between all units and programmes which focus on different aspects of education – such as initial teacher education and continuing professional development (CPD), quality assurance, curriculum development, assessment, district improvement and management development, which in turn cannot be separated from school governance.

Postscript

The report of the President's Educational Initiative Research Project (Taylor & Vinjevold 1999:227) concludes by recognising the progress which has been made to restructure education at the highest levels and establish a coherent progressive policy framework. However, they note that progress has been severely constrained by institutional malfunction in all parts of the system.

There is still a window of opportunity to prevent the fragmentation caused by the disjointed incrementalism which has characterised the policy process to date, but it is vital to act determinedly now, and at all levels. An often-forgotten aspect of the decentralisation process in education is that for empowerment to occur there has to be a strong and effective centre from which power is delegated. Our experience is that at grassroots level learners, teachers and other managers are being prevented from developing along the lines envisioned because those people and bodies who have traditionally been their line managers have not themselves transformed. The case of the SEMs outlined earlier in this chapter is an example of a group of key change agents who are unable to change unless they are themselves empowered and supported in the process of becoming role models for the support of learning.

Endnotes

[1] This chapter has been developed from an earlier paper written jointly with Dr Sibeso Luswata, (Programme Officer, Education, UNICEF, South Africa), with the title 'MBAs or BfMs for children? Demystifying the role of education management in the transformation of education in South Africa'. The views and conclusions represented in this chapter represent those of the author and should not be taken to represent those of UNICEF or any other organisation.

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CHAPTER 15

Changing patterns of educational management development in South African education

Yusuf Sayed

South Africa is a society that has witnessed remarkable changes. It has moved from being an authoritarian, undemocratic, racially segregated society in which economic power was in the hands of a few, to a more open and inclusive society. In particular, the changes in the field of education have been remarkable and spectacular. This chapter examines the educational changes in South Africa by critically considering the debates about the most appropriate form, content and knowledge base for educational management development (EMD). In particular, this chapter focuses on the report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (TTEMD) (Department of Education 1996a).

The focus on EMD is significant. There is a growing recognition and widespread awareness that successful policy changes that are implemented and institutionalised in every school in the country require structures, people and processes that are responsive and able to work with the new, desired change (see, for example, Fullan 1991). It is within this context that the Minister of Education established and mandated a Task Team on Education Management Development (TTEMD) to consider, research and report on the possible direction(s) for EMD in South Africa (Department of Education 1996a).

The view of EMD in South Africa is considered from four different vantage points. Firstly, the chapter provides a brief schematised overview of the different stages of educational policy development in South Africa. The emphasis is on the steady but committed policy thrust towards greater decentralisation and devolution within a national policy framework. Secondly, the particular policy history of EMD will be revisited. The narrative that unfolds indicates the often-submerged processes of policy contestation. Thirdly, the chapter reflects on the conceptual underpinnings of the emerging EMD framework in South African that both constitute and are constitutive of the changing global thinking around educational management. Finally, the chapter concludes by considering the future of EMD in South Africa and the potential difficulties of moving towards the Department of Education's often-stated claim for a 'new educational paradigm'.

Phases of educational policy development in South Africa (1994–99)

Educational policy developments have been wide-ranging and comprehensive, and a number of important policies have been introduced since 1994. These include the restructuring of the curriculum in the form of Curriculum 2005, the move toward outcomes-based learning, the integration of education and training through the National Qualification Framework (NQF) and the restructuring of the higher education system through the Higher Education Act (see

Christie 1995; Sayed 1996 & 1997; de Clercq 1997). However, the final outcomes of these various policy initiatives cannot yet be predicted.

In reconstructing the making of the quilt thus far, three distinct yet interrelated phases can be identified. The first phase (1994–95) involved establishing a unified, democratic and accountable educational system that was participatory in policy development and responsive to the needs of the previously disenfranchised and oppressed. Thus, the key imperative following the elections of 1994 and the constitution of the new national and provincial departments of education was to integrate the previously fragmented and racially and ethnically divided education system. The creation of a unified education system required setting in place new structures and processes as well as the appointment of new officials. But the ability to reconstitute and recompose the educational system was constrained by a number of factors. These included the so-called sunset clause, which emerged from the multiparty negotiations process and which protected the employment of officials who had served under the previous system, making their replacement difficult (see Sayed 1997). At the same time, the new officials who were appointed were politically acceptable, but often lacked the necessary knowledge and skills to manage the system. Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of the uneasy coexistence of 'old' and 'new' perspectives was the fact that the education budget for the new Ministry had been allocated prior to the elections (see Sayed 1995 for a more extensive discussion). Policy development at this point could be thus characterised as a challenge to lay the foundation for the new, and was essentially a period of 'accommodation and adaptation' as the new Ministry sought to come to terms with its positioning in an open polity.

The second phase (1995–97) was marked by a flurry of policy commissions and investigations that produced analytical reports on different aspects of the education system. The most significant of these include the first White Paper (Department of Education 1995a) which provided the basis for the National Education Policy Act (Department of Education 1996d). This Act outlined the basic principles of educational provision under the new government and included commitments to democracy, equity and redress, desegregation, accountability and transparency. Further commissions and acts were passed during this phase, including the National Commission on Higher Education (1995), the Hunter Commission (Department of Education 1995b), the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (1995), the National Qualifications Framework (1996), the South African Schools Act (Department of Education 1996c) and the Higher Education Act (Department of Education 1997). More recently, the report of the National Committee for Further Education and Training, and the report of the National Commission for Special Needs Education have been published. Throughout this phase, the rate of policy change was phenomenal, reflecting the government's desire to restructure and transform the education system.

This second phase of educational policy development can be characterised as the setting of 'frameworks' (Samoff 1997) or what can be seen as symbolic policy. Such policies signal and provide images of the desired educational outcomes and focus on 'frameworks' rather than the specific content of educational policies (see Sayed 1997). It was thus a phase during which the Ministry of Education tried to concretise the electoral promises it had made, and was mainly marked by an attempt to express key goals, values and objectives. A key failing of the second phase was that it paid insufficient attention to issues of implementation (de Clerq

1997) and was marked by a minimal engagement with the processes of institutionalising change. In addition, it failed to set particular educational priorities. However, in contrast to educational policy development prior to 1994, it did make certain policy choices rather than providing options, as was the case of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI).

This lack of attention to the process and context of educational policy development was recognised by the Department of Education. Thus, during the third phase, the Ministry of Education used its action plan for 1998–99 to acknowledge the imperatives of improving the provision of educational services and paid far more attention to the difficulties and necessary resources needed for ensuring successful implementation and institutionalisation of educational policies. This was not surprising given that the Ministry of Education and the government in general had been tested in respect of its ability to lead change and transformation in the parliamentary elections of June 1999.

In this third phase, our attention turns to the key concern of this chapter, namely, the drive toward EMD work. It is thus not unsurprising that the Ministry of Education committed a significant proportion of the money allocated to education out of the Policy Reserve Fund to the establishment of a National Institute for Education Management Development (EMD Workshop 1998). In essence, policy development in South African education has entered a phase where the main emphasis is on delivery and implementation. As part of this phase, the Ministry acknowledges the centrality of teaching and learning – the educational policy minimum. In other words, putting structures and frameworks in place must be about improving the quality of the teaching and learning environment. The challenge during this third phase is to translate the symbolic intentions of policy which emerge from the second phase into concrete and visible beneficial outcomes in all classrooms. It is thus not surprising that the third phase has been marked by intense conflicts and bitter battles as the reality of implementation takes hold in schools.

The process of policy development since 1994 is inspiring in its scope, depth and focus. Yet, all the policy texts and acts reflect a key tension in policy development. The tension is between the imperative for strong central regulation and control – given the disparities of the past – and the simultaneous commitment to extending participation and democratic control in educational policy development. This tension emerges strongly in the South African Schools Act (see Sayed 1997), and was manifest in a Constitutional Court legal battle between the Minister of Education and the provinces over the powers and responsibilities of the Minister. The case was settled in favour of the Minister whilst also recognising the decentralised power of provinces. The intersection between centralising and decentralising forces in education is the point at which the debate about EMD in South Africa needs to be located, since a key condition for successful educational devolution ('site-based management') is the extent to which school communities are able to manage schools.

The unfolding EMD narrative

An analysis of the processes involved in the EMD debate needs to begin with the recognition of the administrative, management and governance structures and processes inherited from the apartheid system. These were not only fragmented and divided, but were also characterised by a top-down authoritarian culture with marked disparities in terms of racial and gender representation. Further, the system embodied undemocratic, secretive and

hierarchical patterns of management and administration (NEPI 1992). The problems of apartheid educational management and governance are best captured in the TTEMD report (Department of Education 1996a) which identified a number of deficiencies, including:

- Crisis management;
- Dysfunctional structures;
- Insufficient appropriately skilled people;
- Poor co-ordination of resources;
- Inadequate systems and procedures;
- Lack of legitimacy of principals; and
- Inequities in resources and capacity. (Department of Education 1996a:20 & 22)

It was this inheritance that the new government sought to transform in rethinking the field of EMD in South Africa. In 1996, a Task Team for Educational Management Development (TTEMD) was appointed. The Ministry of Education felt that a task team would enable it to give further expression to the education commitments outlined in its first White Paper (Department of Education 1995a).

The work of the TTEMD was framed by the work surrounding the organisation, governance and funding of schools in South Africa (Hunter Review Committee, Department of Education 1995b; White Paper 2, Department of Education 1996b) which culminated in the enactment of the South African Schools Act (Department of Education 1996c). In rethinking school governance and management, the Ministry of Education sought to create a united and integrated system of school governance and one that facilitated extensive participation in schools, particularly by parents. The key implication of the policy surrounding school governance and organisation was the need to devolve educational control to the schools through the statutory recognition of school governing bodies that were, in the main, composed of parents. This policy has been subject to a lot of controversy (see Motala 1996; Tikly 1997; Sayed 1997; Sayed & Carrim 1997 for a more extensive discussion). For the purpose of this chapter, the devolution of educational control has, at the stroke of a legislative pen, created far more active participants in education and has redefined the work of the schools. In this respect, the issue of EMD, and the need for capacity-building in order to ensure successful educational devolution, has now assumed a position of central importance.

The TTEMD consisted of nine members and its work was supported by a reference group of 22 people, representing the broader spectrum of stakeholders in education. The work of the Task Team lasted from March to November 1996, and its final report was produced in December 1996. The mandate of the TTEMD included the following:

- To make practical strategic proposals for improving education management capacity.
- To make specific proposals for establishing a National Institute for Education Management Development.
- To consider matters related to resource mobilisation, co-ordination and management for a countrywide educational management development programme.
- To provide an interim education management support service. (Department of Education 1996a: 12)

The above mandate included a focus on EMD at the system, provincial and school levels. In fact, a key strength of the work of the TTEMD was its success in working with provincial

educational departments and, in some cases, giving a lead to EMD at this level. The methods of investigation of the TTEMD included consultation with provincial and national education officials, surveys, commissioned studies, colloquia, contact with NGOs, and study visits to other countries and institutions.

In essence, the Task Team argued for a new 'paradigm' in EMD (to be discussed in the next section) and motivated strongly for a National Institute for EMD (Department of Education 1996a:66–74). As discussed in the previous section, it was the recommendation of the need for a national institute that provoked so much controversy and debate and reflected the sometimes submerged conflicts in the policy process in South Africa.

Following the publication of the report, the Task Team and the Ministry felt that some of the key issues had not been resolved; principally, that of the formation of a national institute. The Ministry therefore accepted the recommendation that an Interim EMD Unit be established headed by the chair of the Task Team, Jonathan Godden. The Interim Unit was tasked with finalising and establishing consensus about a national institute. This process began in early 1997 but the Interim Unit made minimal progress with respect to the institute. Instead, its energies were diverted and directed towards creating a training programme for the newly elected school governing bodies that were created as a result of the Schools Act. Having failed to make headway with the campaign for and establishment of a national institute, the head of the unit resigned in 1997. In fact, the initial momentum of the Task Team had stalled in 1997, with the Ministry seemingly unable to agree on the necessity for an EMD institute and the aims and trajectory of EMD in South Africa.

Towards the end of 1997, the Ministry seemed to change its view; in December it appointed a lead consultant who had been a member of the TTEMD (but not of the Interim Unit) to co-ordinate a small group to outline clear and concrete recommendations on the formation of a national institute. This process now seems to have been accelerated, and in March 1998 a workshop on EMD was held with departmental officials where agreement was reached about the formation of the institute (EMD Workshop Notes 1998). However, the formation of the institute has not yet materialised. Thus, there is presently a period of hiatus in the work of the department's EMD programme.

This EMD narrative reflects a growing need for EMD in South Africa, and yet it has been marked by some delay around the establishment of the institute. The obvious question to ask is, why? More importantly, what the narrative reveals are some of the submerged processes of policy formulation. The initial participatory and open process of discussion surrounding the TTEMD report (Department of Education 1996a) has given way to a dialogue behind closed doors mainly involving the national and provincial departments of education. The policy hiatus partly reflects the concern in the national department in forming national structures to drive transformation forward when much of its strategy for educational reconstruction had been to work within the confines of the inherited system. In fact, a glaring absence within the policy transformation framework is the radical changes that could have been made. Instead, the government chose the 'steady creep' mode of transformation. This is understandable, given the reality of the negotiated settlements that preceded change and of the financial constraints facing the education system and all government services in general.

The EMD framework of the TTEMD report: borrowings and innovations

The framework for EMD in South Africa emerges out of the work of the TTEMD, which has reviewed national and international trends in the field and outlined a distinct philosophy and conceptualisation applicable to the South African context. Three interrelated approaches in the discourse of EMD can be identified; namely, the 'technical skills approach', the 'concern with people approach' and the 'governance and management approach'. This chapter argues that each of these approaches is related, not necessarily in a linear or causal way, to particular periods in the evolution and reconstruction of South Africa's educational system.

This first approach to EMD research and training in South Africa had been dominated by white Afrikaner universities, in which the emphasis was on technical administrative functioning with guiding and controlling being the leitmotif (see Department of Education 1996a and McLennan 1998 for a more extensive discussion). The overriding concern was with loyalty to the state and state regulation – hardly surprising in the context of apartheid and the commitment to the fundamental pedagogics of Christian National Education. This was akin to the Frommian notion of the authoritarian personality, in which a person in a management position was part of a hierarchical chain with – in the case of South Africa – God and government at the apex. This approach translated, and to some extent still translates, into training programmes where people being trained in EMD (mostly principals) are introduced to laws, rules, regulations and technical processes. It is not surprising that it is mainly Afrikaner universities that dominate the field of education and law in South Africa. The best example of the approach of EMD training and its emphasis on control is typified in the works of Van der Westhuizen *et al* (1991), also in control of knowledge production in the field through their relationship with South African education journals and publishing houses. Yet the strength of this orientation was and is its focus on the 'production' function of management and leadership (see Hoy & Miskel 1982; Leithwood 1998).

The technical skills approach to EMD was prevalent at the height of apartheid educational ideology. During that period, EMD was called upon to serve the broader needs of apartheid education in order to ensure greater regulation, control and command of schools. In this context, the philosophy that underpinned the EMD approach was to ensure that principals and senior education officials upheld apartheid policy.

The second approach in the field of EMD surfaced as a concern with people, and this was marked by greater emphasis on the relationship(s) between groups and individuals or what is referred to as the 'relationship function' in educational administration and leadership (see Hoy & Miskel 1982). This approach to EMD found expression at a time when the state, reeling from the 1976 and 1980 educational struggles, began to explore different strategies of control. Specifically, this period was characterised as educational reformism (see Kallaway [ed.] 1984), in which the state sought to draw people into the apartheid educational system. This was EMD with a 'human face', and was not driven solely by strong control and naked repression (see Leithwood 1998; Arthur & Welton 1998 for a more extensive review of this approach in an international context).

The third approach is termed the 'governance and management' approach, and had its genesis in the work of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI 1992) and in

debates about participation, democracy and the creation of an active civil society in education. This approach, following the NEPI Governance and Administration Research report (1992), is known as the governance and management model. It transcends the above two approaches by its concern with the distribution of power in the education system and the relationships between people and structures. A key training component of this approach has been to facilitate the participation of civil society in the governance of the education system. This approach focuses primarily on processes of change, and was articulated with an awareness of the need to change the education structure. In particular, it draws from the work of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee, which devoted substantial resources and energies towards building parent, teacher and student associations (PTSAs). PTSAs were, according to the NECC, structures that could, on the one hand, represent the views of those denied a say in school governance. On the other hand, PTSAs were also perceived as bodies that could take over the management of schools from illegitimate and authoritarian principals and school management committees (see NEPI 1992 and Sayed 1995 for a more extensive discussion). The emphasis of this approach is on broadening the definition of EMD to include a concern with processes of educational change and an intimate connection with the political, economic and social arenas. It challenges EMD to become a comprehensive concept that focuses on change and transformation.

The governance and management approach to EMD coincides with the period of transition. It was connected to a phase in which the legitimacy of the education system was being negotiated. It was thus a period in which the focus on EMD work had to articulate with and consider the creation and training of people for structures that were regarded as legitimate. This was a period in which training provision in EMD programmes had to accommodate more people from the 'community' rather than mainly principals and senior teaching staff. The focus on EMD training for PTSAs thus was not merely incidental. It was inextricably connected to the changing political order in educational governance.

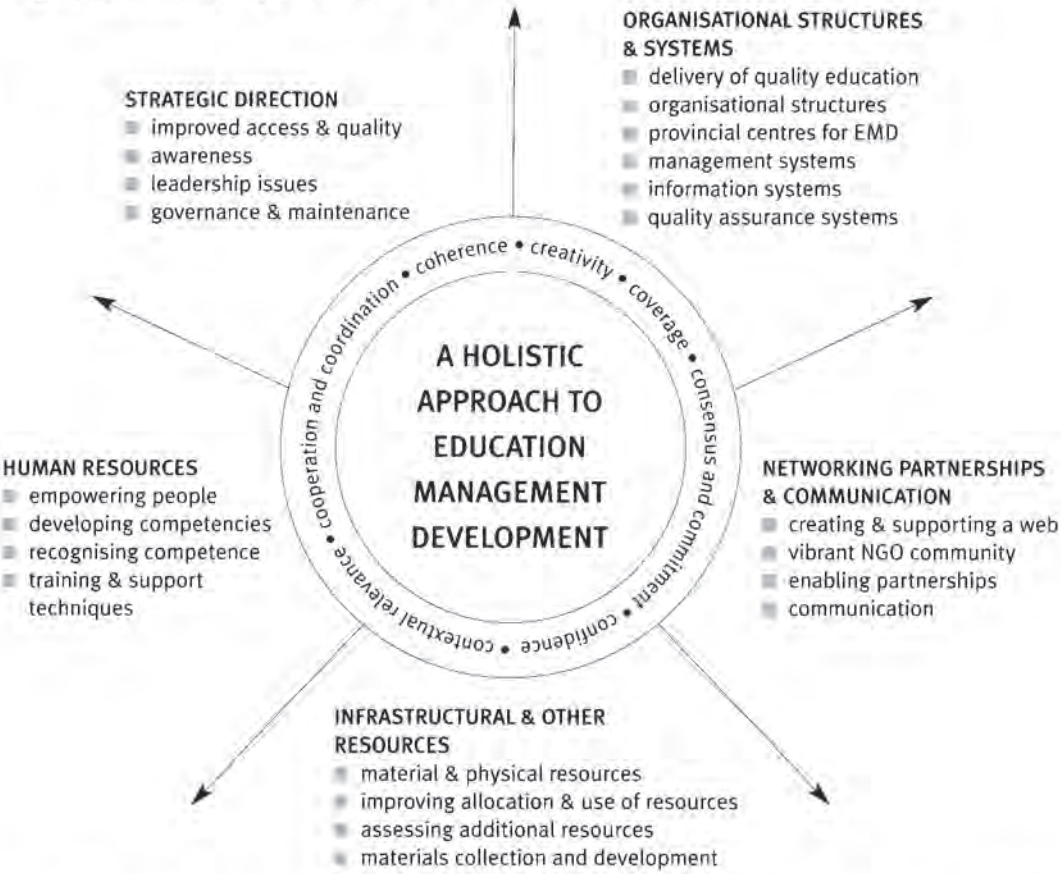
The report of the TTEMD integrated these three approaches in their suggested conceptualisation of the field for the South African reality (Department of Education 1996a:16). The report argues that EMD work in South Africa needs to encompass three interrelated features:

- The development of legitimate structures within a context of devolved decision-making;
- The development of leadership skills; and
- The development of individual and team competencies. (Department of Education 1996a:16)

Within this framework, the TTEMD report argued for a 'new' approach or 'paradigm'. This new approach is captured in Figure 15.1 (Department of Education 1996a: 36).

The synthesis reflects the integration of two key aspects of education development in South Africa, and may be considered to bring together two different approaches to education change. The first aspect and approach is a focus on the technical competencies of educational management ('knowing what'). The second aspect and approach is concern with the understanding of change rooted in the traditions of struggle with a clear focus on creating legitimate structures and working in a collective fashion ('knowing why'). The latter aspect and approach can be said to reflect the 'tacit' knowledge that many South Africans have learnt as a result of the struggle against apartheid education. It is thus the bringing together of

Figure 15.1: The new approach to EMD



technical skills with appropriate political attitudes, structures and ways of working in an open polity.

Based upon the above approach, the report adopted a number of what it terms 'practical principles', namely, consensus, commitment, confidence, co-operation (Department of Education 1996a:37). This was driven by three important guidelines, namely, effectiveness, efficiency and reliance (ibid). The bulk of the report is devoted to elaborating this framework and highlighting the practical and conceptual applications of this approach for South African education. Whilst this 'new' shift is indeed laudable, a number of problems present themselves. The next section turns to the conceptual and practical difficulties of the 'new' approach to examine the potential it has for improved teaching and learning quality and building the necessary capacity for educational change.

The future of EMD: pitfalls and possibilities

In any attempt to transform education and in particular EMD, teachers are key agents of change. Therefore, it is not surprising that some of the most heated battles in South African education currently take place between teacher unions and the national and provincial departments of education. Given this context, it is surprising that the TTEMD, which argues

for a stronger team approach in school management, makes minimal reference to how teachers can participate in the governance and management of schools.

Perhaps the most important difficulty with both the report of the TTEMD and indeed the whole EMD process in South Africa has been that the discussion has not shifted beyond the symbolic and imaging level. In the report of the TTEMD, what is presented are 'new' approaches and frameworks with little substantive discussion of how they would impact on both the education system and the schools. Two particular issues merit discussion to illustrate the point. Firstly, what the report lacked – and there is no indication that it was part of the supporting reviews and documents of the TTEMD – is a critical review of the different approaches for EMD training provision, with suggestions for alternatives. In fact, what is of critical importance in EMD in South Africa is not simply the content and framework of training and provision but also the search for more creative and specifically South African and African approaches to EMD. Secondly, a document that highlights the significant role of capacity-building and a more inclusive approach to EMD training provision, given the imperative need for equity and redress, does not provide adequate discussion of the extent, scope and coverage of any capacity-building programme. Furthermore, it does not indicate ways in which equity and redress can be realised in the everyday realities of EMD in schools. In fact, a consistent feature of educational policy development is that symbolic commitments to overcome the legacy of apartheid inequities are not always realised in the crucible of practice (see Sayed 1997).

A notable omission in the EMD process is due attention to African philosophies and approaches to management in general and educational management in particular. Specifically, the TTEMD report makes no reference to indigenous management approaches such as *ubuntu* (see Christie *et al* 1994 for a more thorough review of such approaches). Whilst many of these accounts, particularly in the business context (see Alfred & Potter 1996), tend to present an idealised account of philosophies such as ubuntu, these approaches indeed hold out the promise for a more contextually relevant and distinct approach to EMD. Thus, despite the incorporation of the values of diversity and relevance in the TTEMD's framework, there is a paucity of discussion and debate around African philosophies and approaches to management in the document. This is of critical importance to ensure that the trajectory of EMD does not simply reproduce training manuals, books and workshop formats and content imported from the North (particularly the UK) with minor adaptation and modification. This was apparent in the case of the University of Bristol School of Education's EMD project in 1995–96 which attempted to use materials developed elsewhere and with minimal adaptation for the South African context.

The synthesis proposed in the TTEMD report (Department of Education 1996a) between 'knowing what' and 'knowing why' is sharply and poignantly reflected in the educational bureaucracy in the new South Africa. The present bureaucracy is a combination of those who had previously been 'managing' the system and those who entered the system rooted in the educational struggle and were consequently regarded as legitimate and responsive to the 'needs of the people'. It was and is the relationship between the two that is key to educational change in South Africa, as the 'old' had to reorientate their work in the new political context whilst the 'new' had to learn the technical skills of managing an education system. This is not an easy task and is best captured in the words of a senior education official in the Eastern Cape Education Department; 'In a few months I moved from controlling a budget of R2 000

to R2 million and I am unsure how to do so'. This quotation also strikingly illustrates the scope of the educational management challenges in South Africa. The TTEMD report (Department of Education 1996a) would have been of considerably greater utility had it more effectively considered the nature and content of changing the philosophy and practice of the educational bureaucracy in South Africa. Thus, a major omission of the document is the failure to engage systematically with the management challenges facing the transformation of the South African educational bureaucracy.

The work of the TTEMD and subsequent deliberations led to the creation of a framework for changing EMD in South Africa. It has also succeeded in arguing for an appropriate organisational structure for its further development. In this sense, the South African education system is poised to reorient and restructure inherited patterns of educational governance and management. Moreover, the work of the TTEMD and subsequent processes have focused attention upon the necessity to consider more carefully the process of implementing change. A crucial precondition for the successful realisation of the planner's dream is the need to capacitate and train people to become successful change agents. It is as much a question of equipping school communities with the technical competencies of management as it is a question of providing them with the necessary attitudes and orientations of the new policy context within which EMD operates. Thus the crucial question is to what extent the new approach to EMD will materialise in practice. In this respect, the key role-players will be the national and provincial departments of education and their commitments, both in terms of financial and human resources, to EMD work in South Africa.

Conclusion

The sobering reality of educational policy development in South Africa is the financial crisis that has beset the system, whether perceived or real (Vally 1998). The national and provincial departments of education are in the process of stringent austerity programmes manifest in teacher and departmental rationalisation strategies and general cutbacks. Thus, the successful and full-scale implementation of EMD is critically dependent on the extent to which financial and human resources are available. In this regard, there is sufficient reason to be sceptical. Most of the provincial departments have not focused on EMD training, and where such training has occurred it has been partial and limited. Furthermore, none of the provincial departments has embarked on major training programmes for school capacity-building despite the provision in the South African Schools Act (1996) that enables them to make appropriations from provincial budgets for such training. Consequently, the major forms of EMD training have been provided by the NGO sector, which has latched on to EMD work as the new 'fad' for donor funding and higher education institutions. In the case of the latter, previously Afrikaner higher education institutions retain the monopoly for EMD training and provision, albeit with a slight shift in focus. Whilst acknowledging these difficulties, it is important to note that the successful institutionalisation of the desired policy changes indicated in the numerous policy documents will depend upon the extent to which EMD training and provision is provided in South Africa. It is only with the passing of time that researchers will be able to reflect on the extent to which new forms of EMD training and provision will enable the successful institutionalisation of the many educational policy changes that have occurred.

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CHAPTER 16

Implementation of outcomes-based approaches to education in Australia and South Africa: a comparative study

Cliff Malcolm

Those of us who have grown up with bureaucratic management in education (including centralised development of syllabuses, curriculum materials and assessment) might assume that 'the curriculum', like a new car, can be designed by experts, road-tested and then released into the market. A complete set of operators' manuals, training programmes and spare parts would accompany the release (Malcolm 1999a). The basic research and development for the car could as well have been done in another country, with some adjustments necessary to suit local conditions. It makes sense to ask of the car, 'does it work?' and look to data and performance in the country of origin. But the metaphor of the car does not apply to education, and the questions 'does it work?' and, more importantly, 'will it work for us?' are not at all simple. Education and curriculum are complicated. Quite apart from the influences of history, culture and politics in shaping curriculum and implementation, we can have difficulty deciding even what we mean by 'it works'. In any case, there are many different models of outcomes-based education operating around the world (Malcolm 1999a). At the same time, none of them seeks to deliver the curriculum to schools as a final product: intentionally, they leave the final development to teachers – the agents who are closest to learners, who work at the critical interface of teaching, learning and assessment.

This is not to deny the value of a study of outcomes-based education in other countries. This chapter cannot answer with a simple yes or no the question, 'will it work here?' It can provide inputs to local discussions and decision-making. To do this, it needs to explore the meaning of 'working', features of the models in question and the historical, cultural and political factors that gave rise to them and their implementation. My aims in this chapter are as follows:

- To describe the contextual factors that gave rise to outcomes-based education in Australia and South Africa, and the particular models that were chosen;
- To explore the conditions in schools and the teaching profession that facilitated or worked against implementation, including the implementation strategies used; and
- To discuss successes and failures, and challenges that outcomes-based education raises – both in its theoretical conception and in the practical aspects of application.

Structure

I have chosen to focus on Australia (rather than the US, Singapore, Canada, etc) for comparison with South Africa because there are many similarities between the Australian and the South African models of outcomes-based education (though the two models are not the same). As well, the Australian model has been operating for long enough (4–5 years) for

some data to be available about implementation and how the reform is 'working'. However, the social and educational conditions in Australia and South Africa are vastly different, and critically important in the discussion.

I have used the Australian story to provide the basic structure, and along the way referred to the South African situation as counterpoint. I have assumed that readers have direct knowledge of the South African developments, and access to detailed analyses of them. Accordingly, I have not described them as fully as I have the Australian ones. On the other hand, my perceptions of the South African situation and the questions South Africans are asking have been my guides in writing the Australian story.

One of the great difficulties for me has been to decide how to link the two stories. I have chosen a structure that says: 'This is the Australian experience; this is the South African experience; how might the Australian experience help in South Africa?' I have depended on a small number of theoretical ideas as the bridge:

- Choices between constructivist and behaviourist learning theories, organic and bureaucratic management, modern and postmodern philosophies of knowledge;
- Distinctions between 'inputs' and 'outcomes', and processes of curriculum design;
- The roles that teachers, principals and Department of Education officers have of 'professionalism' and their professional roles, and how these role perceptions can change; and
- Issues in the management of change.

The definition of outcomes-based education

'Outcomes-based education' has many meanings and models. In South Africa, for example, outcomes-based education in the vocational and higher education sectors has language and structures (concern with competencies, recognition of prior learning and 'unit standards') markedly different from the language and structures used in the schools sector (Jansen 1999).

I have confined my attention to the general education and training band of the schools sector (in South Africa and Australia). By this choice, 'outcomes-based education' in South Africa is somewhat synonymous with Curriculum 2005, and, in Australia, with the nationally developed Curriculum Statements and Profiles.

Acknowledgements

Much of my account of the Australian story is based on my direct experience as a manager in state education departments, a writer of the nationally developed science outcomes-based education framework and a leader in providing support materials and assistance to schools. I have cited Australian documents where they are available and accessible to me in South Africa.

I am grateful for the assistance I have had from Max Stephens, (Board of Studies, Victoria), Richard Jenkin (Department of Education and Children's Services, South Australia) and Rosemary Hafner (Board of Studies, New South Wales) who have responded so willingly to my urgent calls for information. I am also grateful to Peter Moodie (Sethlare Trust, Johannesburg) for the time and trouble he took to work through early drafts of this chapter, and for the insightful and creative advice he offered.

The rationale for the selection of outcomes-based approaches to education

The arguments for outcomes-based approaches in Australia and in South Africa have much in common. They include:

- *Social arguments* – to improve equity and distribution of opportunities in multicultural and economically diverse nations, and build democratic participation, cultural expression and national identity.
- *Economic arguments* – as both nations shift their economic bases from primary production to value-added production. The shift requires new outcomes of education, emphasising, for example, competence, creativity, self-management and teamwork, rather than the knowledge acquisition that dominated in the past (Spady 1997).
- *Management arguments* – to enable greater effectiveness and efficiency in schooling (for all learners), guide management decisions within the system and increase the accountability of teachers, schools and the system.
- *International trends* – towards complex performances as the desired outcomes of education, and outcomes-based approaches as ways of managing education.
- *Education, training and lifelong learning* – to provide better articulation between schools, vocational education and adult education.
- *Political reasons* (beyond those implied above) arising from the nation's immediate history and current political context.

To see how the rationale expressed itself in each country, and to expose the differences as well as the similarities in the two developments, I will compare the contexts in some detail.

The social context

Australia is a multicultural country, and this character has been defined essentially through three waves of immigration (in modern times). The first, from European settlement (as a penal colony) in 1788 to the gold rushes of the 1850s, was mainly British. The next wave, following the Second World War, was encouraged by programmes of government assistance. As well as Britons, it brought people from Western and Central Europe (especially Holland, Italy and Greece). It was at this time that Australia began to see itself as a multicultural society. The third wave, from the mid-1970s onwards, brought immigrants from South East Asia, especially Vietnam, China and the Philippines. According to the 1996 census, over 40% of Australians were born overseas, or had one or both parents born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1997). In some schools, 30–40 different ethnic groups are represented, with learners speaking 15–20 different languages. This is the reality of many Australian classrooms. Even so, most immigrants were and are English-speaking: only 2,6 million people (of a total of 18,5 million) in the 1996 census spoke a language other than English at home. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders numbered only 0,3 million people.

Australia's multiculturalism, however, is quite different from that of South Africa. In Australia, immigrants generally see themselves as joining and enriching what is essentially a Western culture, and speaking Australian English. By contrast, cultural groups in South Africa (especially those represented by the 11 official languages) see themselves and their traditions as having a deep past in this land, and a continued future in South African life.

The mix of rural and urban populations in Australia is also different from South Africa. Eighty-four per cent of the Australian population lives on only 1% of the continent, along the European-like eastern coastal belt and the south-west corner, around Perth. Few people live in the Asian-like north, or the central deserts. Only 14% of the population are classified as rural (ABS 1997).

The distribution of wealth and services in Australia is uneven, though not as dramatically as in South Africa. Unemployment in Australia stands at about 6%. Social services (including medicine, transport and subsidised housing), pensions and unemployment benefits support the poor, the sick and the old. Even so, earners in the top 20% of incomes take home almost half of the national wage bill, while the bottom 20% of earners take home about 4% (ABS 1997). These variations create their own kinds of 'multiculturalism' and make particular demands on schools.

Despite the differences in degree of social variation, questions of equity, diversity and effective learning – especially as they relate to curriculum design, assessment and educational opportunity – are important in both countries. Accordingly, both countries have given formal emphasis to 'learner-centred education'. Learner-centred education is intended to be not just learning-centred (every learner achieves the outcomes), but to acknowledge the roles of learners' interests and prior knowledge in effective learning, and to allow for variations in curriculum from one school to another, and from one learner to another.

The economic context

Until recently, the Australian economy, like South Africa's, depended on mining and primary production. For Australia, this changed when Britain – its main market – realigned with Europe in the 1970s. At the same time, world prices for primary produce declined. As Australia looked to reshape its economy, it found that, relative to other OECD countries, it was characterised by (Holland 1992):

- Low productivity;
- Low skill levels in much of the workforce. (Much of the workforce, outside the professions, trades and technical areas, received little or no formal training beyond their years at school. Even where extensive on-the-job training occurred it was generally not recognised for purposes of career advancement or pay.);
- A workforce that was highly segmented, with a large number of small unions, based on their specific craft/trade knowledge; and
- Lack of skills in organisational development and management.

Hence the 1980s in Australia were marked by the restructuring of industry, dramatic changes in education and social polices and the development of stronger relationships with Asia. The changes were weighted towards the privatisation of utilities and services, deregulation, reduced trade tariffs and new emphases on value-added production and efficiency. These pressures of globalisation continue. They sit uncomfortably alongside plans for social development and equity.

These issues are central also in South Africa. At the same time, as the nation emerges from apartheid (and 300 years of structured imbalances in employment, infrastructure and education), it is shifting its economic base. Its Growth, Employment and

Redistribution (GEAR) policies sit uncomfortably alongside plans for reconstruction and development.

In both countries, the demands of economic restructuring and value-added production call for redefinition of the outcomes desired of schooling, for systems and curricula that achieve the new outcomes efficiently, for flexible opportunities for continuing education (lifelong learning) and for better access by more people to education and more education.

The education context

Participation

In Australia, school attendance is compulsory between the ages of 6 and 15. Most children enter a preparatory year at about age 5. Retention from Year 10 (normally the last of the compulsory years) to Year 11 in 1997 was 84%, and to Year 12, 72% (ABS 1997). However, the growth in senior secondary schooling is a recent phenomenon, brought about in large part by rising youth unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s and the restructuring of industry.

By 19 years of age, almost all young Australians have left school, but not formal education. Approximately 60% of students who completed Year 12 in 1996 went on to further education, in either universities or technical colleges (ABS 1997). For 20–24-year-olds, the percentage with Year 12 or higher is 75%; for adults aged 20–64 it is 60% (reflecting the lower retention rates of the past). Education levels in the Australian population are high enough that parents can generally provide considerable support for learners and their schools.

In South Africa, by comparison, 21% of those who start school complete Year 12, with only 5% obtaining matriculation exemptions (Park 1999). Some 30% in any class are 'repeaters'. For learners in Grade 1, the age distribution peaks for six-year-olds, but has a long tail: for every hundred six-year-olds in Grade 1, there are 10 nine-year-olds and one 13-year-old (Park 1999). The average time to complete Year 12 is 18 years (Edusource 1998) – the participation of 18–19-year-old South Africans in full-time education is as high as in most developed countries, but their schooling is remarkably inefficient. For adults, general education and literacy levels are low, and the capacity for parents to participate in their children's schools is limited.

Around the world, it is generally taken as axiomatic that educating more and more people to higher and higher levels is good for national economic and social development, and good for individuals: 'stay at school for as long as you can'. So, in countries such as Australia, where universal primary education is a given, recent decades have seen a tremendous expansion of opportunities for higher education and vocational education. Basic education (primary schooling), in such a context, is seen largely as a foundation for further schooling. Democratic principles of opportunity have pressed the tenets of 'foundations for further education' to override tenets of 'foundations for living' or even be equated with them. This logic deserves to be questioned in all countries, but especially in developing countries, where resources for education are more limited. It might be that there are more important purposes for primary education (beyond basic literacy and numeracy) than as a foundation for further schooling. It might be that the desired 'outcomes of schooling' should not be continuous through the educational spectrum, but linked to phases or stages of educational development. Outcomes-based education provides a way of tackling these questions.

Resources

Australian schools, like schools throughout the developed world (and approaching South Africa's Model 'C' schools), are well resourced: designed spaces with work areas, recreation areas, libraries and laboratories, photocopiers and computers, systems for storage and disposal of hazardous chemicals. Teachers, without exception, have three- or four-year qualifications and are active in professional development and professional associations. Principals and aspiring principals participate in management education programs, and are supported in their work by a variety of computer-based technologies. Classes typically have 25–28 learners per class. Time for preparation and professional activity is built into teachers' conditions of employment, and incorporated into school planning. Advisors and consultants are available through education departments or private providers (Malcolm 2000).

These conditions are a far cry from South Africa's, where, for example, less than half the schools have water or electricity available on site, class sizes can stretch up to 60–100 learners, and many teachers are underqualified (Park 1999).

There are probably few teachers in the world who do not wish for more resources – regardless of what they already have. So a teacher in Melbourne wonders how to use five computers in a class of 30 learners, while one in Mhutlane worries about learners who don't have pencils. Both teachers have to be creative in mustering additional resources and inventing alternatives, in making the most of what they have right now. This is not to deny the case for 'adequate' resources, but given a magic lamp and three wishes, what balance should a teacher strike between wishing for materials, and wishing for creativity and wisdom in the classroom? As well, it is an argument for freedom at the school level, whereby teachers can design curriculum not only to suit their learners, but to suit local resources. It is also an argument for giving schools responsibilities to choose the resources they need. Outcomes-based education, with its devolution of curriculum and management, can help.

Management and control

Australian schools have a long history of 'school-based curriculum development' and devolution, with teachers active in curriculum design and school management. For example, in the states of Victoria and South Australia, since 1966 there have been no state syllabuses, no state textbooks (or state-recommended textbooks), no state exams and no 'inspectors' in the general education band. Surveys conducted by the Science Teachers Association of Victoria through the 1980s showed that no primary school science teacher and only about half of the science teachers in junior secondary schools prescribed a 'set text' for their learners. (All teachers – even those who prescribed set texts – used a variety of textbooks and resources in their planning.) In short, teachers were responsible for developing curriculum, assessing achievement and setting standards. Common standards depended largely on professional interaction between teachers – within and between schools – assisted by in-service education programmes, professional associations and networks, and guidelines, frameworks and advice provided by education departments.

The South Australian 'Do it yourself curriculum guide' (Education Department, South Australia 1976) is indicative of the approach to school-based curriculum development in the 1970s. In the 1980s, government policies shifted to 'school-based curriculum development according to government guidelines'. Central guidelines were introduced for two, apparently

contradictory, reasons. On the one hand, innovation in schools in the 1970s was much slower than expected: most teachers persisted, more or less, with traditional approaches to curriculum and assessment. On the other hand, the Australian public feared that schools were diverging too much in their programmes and standards, and that closer accountability was required. So, in the 1980s, most Australian states developed statewide goals of schooling and 'curriculum frameworks'. The goals and the frameworks aimed to provide coherence, vision and direction, with all schools more clearly part of a single system. The vision of education centred on slogans such as 'access and success for all students' (Victoria), emphasising learner-centred, constructivist approaches and community participation. The frameworks were generally theoretical in style. They explained and illustrated theories of learning, approaches to curriculum design and school planning, methods of teaching, assessment and program evaluation, all consistent with the overall vision. (See, for example, Ministry of Education, Victoria 1984, and Ministry of Education, Victoria 1987.)

Outcomes-based education was introduced in Australia in the 1990s, in part as a further step towards central control, improved curriculum coherence and greater accountability of schools and teachers. Its central purpose was to develop an assessment technology consistent with learner-centred, learning-centred, constructivist approaches, well aware of the roles of assessment in determining not only what is learned but how.

By contrast, outcomes-based education in South Africa was introduced in part to loosen up a system that was seen to be too rigid (with its syllabuses, textbooks, exams and inspectors) and too divided (the legacy of apartheid). The South African school system, unlike Australia's, was one in which roles were distinct and narrowly defined – this is what a teacher does, this is what a principal does, this is what a learner does – to fit with bureaucratic structures and management. Principals, teachers and learners worked more as technicians than critical professionals. Delegation and avoidance of responsibility were common.

Neither teachers nor Department of Education officers (non-governmental organisations were often exceptions) have a tradition of 'curriculum development' in the ways this is understood in countries like Australia. In Australia, 'curriculum' is commonly thought of as 'all the arrangements that schools make for effective learning', including the uses schools make of government documents (Ministry of Education, Victoria 1984). Debates about purposes, philosophies, learning theories, content, methods, assessment and management have long been lively and public. In South Africa, 'curriculum development' in the past was mostly a matter of syllabus revision, often completed in fragmented ways by secluded committees, with minimal consultation and little trialling (Moodie 1999). (As part of this tradition, Department of Education officers at my workshops often criticise me for talking about curriculum as something that teachers design and do: they want to restrict the term 'curriculum' to the official documents handed out by the national department, and restrict teachers to designing 'learning activities'. 'Curriculum', for these officers, is little more than a new word for syllabus.)

Outcomes-based education has the capacity to provide the tighter structures and accountability that Australia sought, and, in South Africa, greater freedom for school-based curriculum development and learner-centred education. It does this by prescribing a single set of outcomes for all schools (defined loosely enough to allow local variations), and then devolving to schools the responsibilities for achieving those outcomes. Success lies, in part, in defining outcomes with the 'right' balance of freedom and control, in part with systems

of accountability, and, in part, with schools' capacities in curriculum design and management.

'Culture of learning'

As part of school-based curriculum development, Australian teachers and principals have long participated in in-service programmes and school-improvement projects. Most teachers are involved in 'after-school' meetings, to 5pm or later, most afternoons of the week (Senate report 1999). Such meetings, while usually centred on practical considerations of methodology, curriculum planning and problem-solving, readily encompass theoretical ideas related to education and management. 'Professional talk' is a common feature of Australian schools. So too is professional responsibility. Australians take for granted that teachers will meet basic standards of professional behaviour, and expect them to be active in school improvement. Teachers generally enjoy high levels of trust and respect in their communities (Senate report 1999).

South African teachers tend to be much more isolated in their professional lives, and more inclined to see themselves simply as technicians delivering the syllabus. For many individual teachers and principals, the basics of professional behaviour, such as punctuality, planning, task completion and ethical behaviour, are lacking (Asmal 2000).

It is debatable whether a 'culture of learning' is a precondition for educational reforms, such as outcomes-based education, or a result of it. The interaction works both ways, with values and actions building each other. The point is not to 'introduce' a culture of learning where there was none, but to change the existing one. (There can be no question that outcomes-based education in Australia, as in the UK, New Zealand and Canada, has changed the culture of learning through its increased emphasis on accountability.) Part of changing the culture is a reconceptualisation of roles and professionalism at all levels of the system. Outcomes-based education can help with this.

International trends

Many countries around the world are experimenting with outcomes-based education. This trend, and the experiences of other countries, remain important influences in Australian and South African planning.

Redefining the outcomes of schooling is possible in an inputs-based model (as is occurring in a number of European countries). Outcomes-based education is more than this, though. It is a management technology that can help with learner-centred education in a multicultural society, improve effectiveness and efficiency of learning, and provide for accountability of teachers, schools and whole systems. These possibilities were attractive in Australia and in South Africa, though with different emphases.

Education, training and lifelong learning

As noted earlier, Australia in the 1980s and South Africa in the 1990s were caught unprepared by the declining value of primary commodities in international trade, and by the need for value-added production. In both countries, the situation called for rapid restructuring of industries, workers, education and training. New outcomes were required of vocational and

technical education, the status of vocational education (as compared to academic and professional education) had to be increased, and the experiences and skills of workers who had few formal qualifications had to be recognised. Australia restructured industry, unions and education on an 'industry-wide' basis (so that, for example, the metals industry was considered as an entity, embracing plumbers, electricians, fabrication, etc), supporting it with an outcomes-based framework of education and training. South Africa followed New Zealand's model, introducing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) consisting of outcomes, modules and 'unit standards'.

As part of the effort to tackle issues of flexibility and the status of different kinds of education, South Africa's NQF is the single framework for all education – schooling, adult education, vocational and technical education, higher education. Yet, in South Africa, as in New Zealand, the language and basic discourse of unit standards and criterion-based assessment is different in the NQF from the traditions of schools and universities. (Similar problems exist in the Australian formulation.) This creates tensions and confusions that are, at present, only partly understood, and which may be intractable (Jansen 1999).

In South Africa, as in Australia, the fusion of education and training, of school education, vocational education and higher education, remain major issues. It is not yet clear that a single framework is the best way forward, but, in both countries, the requirements of education and training, and linkages between schools and industry, have been important in shaping the school reforms.

The political context

Most of the political influences in Australia have been implied in the earlier discussions: the reshaping of the Australian economy and society; a history of school-based curriculum development; belief in learner-centred education; and a trend, begun in the 1980s, to increase coherence and accountability within the school system. Even so, the development of outcomes-based education saw major battles between powerful interest groups – centralisation versus decentralisation of curriculum control, traditional content versus competencies as outcomes, behaviourism versus constructivism, the definitions and epistemologies of the learning areas, the desirability and wording of the outcomes themselves. The debates were compounded by the particular structures of government in Australia. Australia is a federation of states, in which the states have constitutional responsibility for education. In the late 1980s, a number of factors combined to make it possible for states to co-operate, resulting in the nationally developed framework for outcomes-based education. The various states retained their rights to adopt, adapt or discard the framework, providing a second arena for public discussion. In the final analysis, all states have either adopted the nationally developed framework or used it as a major input into their own frameworks. Nevertheless, negotiation and compromise throughout the process limited the extent of change, especially in the actual content of the curriculum.

In contrast, South Africa, with the achievement of democracy in 1994, the establishment of the first Government of National Unity (GNU), and the passage of the new Constitution, was in a position where major reform of education was not only possible, but expected (albeit with some anxiety). It was, in many ways, a political imperative. With primary responsibility for education policy vested in a strong national government, a mechanism for rapid development existed. The result was Curriculum 2005.

With its combination of learner-centred, outcomes-based education, its particular set of critical and specific outcomes and its absence of strong accountability measures, Curriculum 2005 is arguably one of the most liberal and adventurous education frameworks in the world. (Certainly, it is more adventurous than the Australian framework.) On the other hand, it is often presented in highly bureaucratic modes. This occurs at the policy level (for example, as an extensive list of 'performance indicators' threaten to become a prescribed syllabus) and in implementation (as the words and structures in the policy documents threaten to become 'the new dogma' [Asmal 2000]).

The principles, philosophy, assumptions, premises, characteristics and nature of the OBE systems

General principles

Outcomes-based education, as a management strategy, derives from 1950s notions of 'management by objectives' and more recent concepts of 'total quality management'. A guiding vision of education and desired outcomes are agreed to at the system (macro-organisational) level. Responsibilities for interpreting and achieving them are then devolved to the school (micro-organisational) level. From the bottom to the top, the outcomes that drive the system are the outcomes for learners (the 'clients'). In the spirit of 'total quality management' (with an emphasis on 'total'), all parts of the system are accountable via these outcomes. This is what Spady (1994, 1997) refers to as the 'design down' strategy: from curriculum and teaching, to timetables and school structures, to support services, resource allocation and senior management, everyone has the learning outcomes in clear view.

Outcomes-based education distinguishes between outcomes of learning and inputs. Curricula and teaching are inputs. So are management decisions (at all levels of the organisation), management structures (including school timetables), resources, support systems and facilities. For learners, inputs arise not only in the classroom, but the playground, the community and the home. The central task for schools is to recognise and manage these inputs, so as to maximise learners' achievements. The central task for district officers is the same – to organise suitable inputs to the school – and this holds true for regional offices and provincial offices. At all levels, creativity, flexibility and effective management are required. Organisational theories such as 'double loop learning' (Argyris 1976) and 'the learning organisation' are available to help (see Malcolm 1999b).

Argyris (1976) defines 'single loop learning' as the preparedness to ask, 'Did I properly follow the procedure laid out for this task?', but not to question the procedure itself, or the principles that guide it. He calls questioning the procedure and underlying values 'double loop learning'. Single loop learning is essentially corrective, on the narrow track defined by the procedure. Double loop learning, by contrast, is generative. It challenges the status quo and invites 'deep change'. Bureaucratic management and behaviourist learning strategies support single loop learning, but not double loop learning. This generalisation is lived out in schools and classrooms. Teachers do not challenge the validity of the syllabus, conventions of the timetable or the spurious 'accuracy' of test results. Learners, in their turn, do not challenge the teacher about why they are doing a certain thing, nor offer their ideas on how things should be done. For schools and classrooms to be learning organisations (in the sense

of 'deep change', innovation and self-development), they and individuals within them have to be prepared to question the procedures, goals and structures that drive them. Such a climate of questioning challenges the underlying power relationships in schools. Instead of emphasising unilateral control (from principal to teacher, teacher to learner) and fixed roles, the emphases shift to participation and questioning, shared control, flexible roles, free and informed choice (Argyris 1976).

This overall strategy of devolution according to a central vision and outcomes is strongly supported by research into organisations in industry (eg Peters 1992), and has wide appeal. It is politically attractive because it can be sold to different interest groups in different ways. Teachers like it because it gives them capacity to innovate and respond to learners. It brings decision-making and teaching and planning together in schools, where the decisions count. Principals like it because they have greater administrative power and flexibility, with some red tape removed (but some introduced). It offers business an example of business management in education. For governments, it cuts costs and shifts the onus of accountability from education departments to schools and teachers, thus removing policy-makers from the line of fire (Smyth 1998).

However, there are technical difficulties in translating the broad strategy into practice, especially in large education systems. At the conceptual level, these difficulties hinge on the definition of outcomes, and the roles of assessment in (formative) development versus (summative) accountability:

- The chosen outcomes need to be appropriate and widely understood. In fact, the selection and formulation of outcomes, in most countries, has been highly contentious (eg Malcolm 1999a; Spady 1994).
- Some outcomes of schooling are subtle but critically important. For example, in the mathematics classroom, learners form beliefs about themselves, the opportunities available to them and their relationship with mathematics just as surely as they learn to solve equations and calculate numbers.
- The reduction of an entire school system to a small set of prescribed outcomes runs the risk of narrowing scope and possibility within the system and within the classroom. Focusing too tightly on a narrow road prevents us from participating in life around us. Focusing too tightly on narrow outcomes can cut across the essential subtlety and holism of teaching and learning. At the same time, attempts to write outcomes that express complex sets of ideas in a small number of words can precipitate confused and varied interpretations.
- As a basis for management decisions, performance indicators have to be defined for each outcome. However, in writing performance indicators, there is always the prospect of selecting aspects that are easily measured, rather than aspects that are important. For example, recall of basic knowledge and procedures in mathematics is much easier to measure than 'creative problem-solving', or competence in 'thinking mathematically' about the world – especially if the performance is measured by pencil-and-paper tests.
- Assessment data can be used formatively (in shaping management decisions and teaching at all levels) or summatively (as is often the case in accountability, as a way of applying pressure on 'underperforming' teachers and schools). Striking a balance between support and pressure is always an issue in management.
- Assessment instruments and methods can distort the learning and the outcomes. This is apparent in countries such as the UK and Canada, where state testing using pencil-and-

paper tests has restricted the aspects of performance that are measured. Because learners' results on the tests have critical ramifications for teachers, principals, schools, districts, etc, teachers teach to the tests rather than the (broader) outcomes. If the test results come to be considered as the 'true measure' of achievement, the entire system becomes phony, blinded by its own numbers.

- The sets of outcomes and performance indicators provide a framework for assessment and reporting, but are insufficient as a framework for designing curriculum. The design and management of curriculum must draw on other frameworks (Clarke & Stephens 1999). This is partly a matter of 'grain size': outcomes are written in general terms (coarse grain) but day-to-day teaching requires details (fine grain). The selection of details invariably depends on other frameworks, perhaps unspoken. For example, a science teacher chooses and sequences detailed content according to the structure of the discipline or her knowledge of learners and their interests, as well as the set outcomes. In short, good curriculum design is more complex than having a set of outcomes. Frameworks for curriculum design can be articulated and public (though teachers will and should, by the nature of their art, always introduce additional ones).
- The same problem applies for inputs further removed from classroom activity. At the whole school level, at the district office, the learning outcomes are an insufficient guide to planning – other frameworks are necessary, with other measures of accountability. These will include frameworks for personal interactions and management, equity in resource allocation, financial accountability, and so on.
- Traditional education focused on the quality of inputs – syllabuses, texts, equipment, teaching and curriculum design – assuming that improved inputs would lead inevitably to improved outcomes. Outcomes-based education turns this assumption around, arguing that focus on the quality of outcomes will lead inevitably to improvements in the quality of inputs. Both claims are simplistic. In practice, they both operate, even if one or the other is unspoken.
- Outcomes have to be defined with sufficient generality that they enable learner-centred education – a curriculum that is matched to the experiences and contexts of learners in a particular school and location – but precisely enough that learners throughout the country can properly claim that they have achieved the same outcomes.

These problems can be overcome, but the solutions depend on:

- Clever formulation of the outcomes, assessment criteria and performance indicators, including clarity about the 'grain size' or level of generality that is appropriate in each case.
- Assessment techniques that are valid in relation to the outcomes, the curriculum in action, learners, teachers and schools;
- Balancing assessment as a guide to formative development of curriculum, teachers and schools, and assessment as a summative, accountability device;
- Having, alongside the set learning outcomes, (a) a framework of principles and values that guide personal interactions and processes within the system and (b) management plans and objectives which, while geared ultimately to classrooms and learning, have additional accountability measures.

I will return to these issues later, when considering features of the Australian and South African outcomes-based education systems.

The choice of outcomes

In Australia and South Africa, the outcomes-based education frameworks have an overarching set of 'critical outcomes' (South Africa) or 'goals of schooling' (Australia), which inform 'specific outcomes' in selected learning areas. The goals of schooling in Australia are:

- To provide an excellent education for all young people, being one which develops their talents and capacities to full potential, and is relevant to the social, cultural and economic needs of the nation.
- To enable all students to achieve high standards of learning and to develop self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, respect for others, and achievement of personal excellence.
- To provide a foundation for further education and training, in terms of knowledge and skills, respect for learning and positive attitudes for lifelong education.
- To develop in students, skills of English literacy ... numeracy ... analysis and problem-solving ... information processing ... etc.
- To provide students with an understanding of and respect for our cultural heritage ... etc.

South Africa's critical outcomes flow from the Constitution and are written in the form of outcomes statements. Learners should be able to successfully demonstrate their ability to:

- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written presentation.
- Identify and solve problems by using creative and critical thinking.
- Organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively.
- Work effectively with others in a team, group, organisation and society.
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information.
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Understand that the world is a set of related systems. This means that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.
- Demonstrate awareness of the importance of effective learning strategies, responsible citizenship, cultural sensitivity, education and career opportunities and entrepreneurial abilities.

Both countries have defined a set of 'learning areas' as an additional framework for writing specific outcomes. The learning areas are similar. In Australia, they are: English; languages other than English; health and physical education; mathematics; studies of society and the environment; science; technology; the arts. In South Africa, they are: language; literacy and communication; life orientation; mathematical literacy; mathematics and mathematical sciences; human and social sciences; economics and management sciences; natural sciences; technology; arts and culture.

The listing of 'specific outcomes' in Australia employs a different language from South Africa. The Australian framework defines 'strands' and 'substrands' of progression in the learning areas. Each substrand has a sequence of eight levels of achievement. Australia's

strands and substrands are roughly equivalent to South Africa's outcomes and assessment criteria. Levels of achievement in Australia are roughly equivalent to South Africa's 'expected levels of performance'. In what follows, for simplicity, I will use the South African language.

In their details, Australia's outcomes are much closer to traditional education than South Africa's are. So, for example, Australia's science outcome in 'natural and processed materials' has an assessment criterion: 'Students will demonstrate understanding of the ways that the substructure of materials determines their behaviour and properties.' Another assessment criterion is that, 'Students can explain how patterns of interaction of materials enable us to understand and control those interactions.' South Africa's specific outcomes are much more adventurous, reflecting the different politics of change and the different timing of its reforms. (The outcomes are also much further from teachers' backgrounds and experience.) For example, outcomes in natural sciences include, alongside the expected ones of concept development and process skills:

- Demonstrate understanding of how scientific knowledge and skills contribute to the management, development and use of natural and other resources.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the relationships between science and culture.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of ethical issues, bias and inequities relating to the natural sciences.

South Africa's outcomes have the capacity to drive classroom processes (as well as content) to a much greater extent than do the Australian ones. For example, critical outcomes such as innovative problem-solving, personal management and teamwork can hardly be achieved if learners are not involved in solving problems, managing themselves and working in groups in their classes.

Structures of the outcomes-based education framework

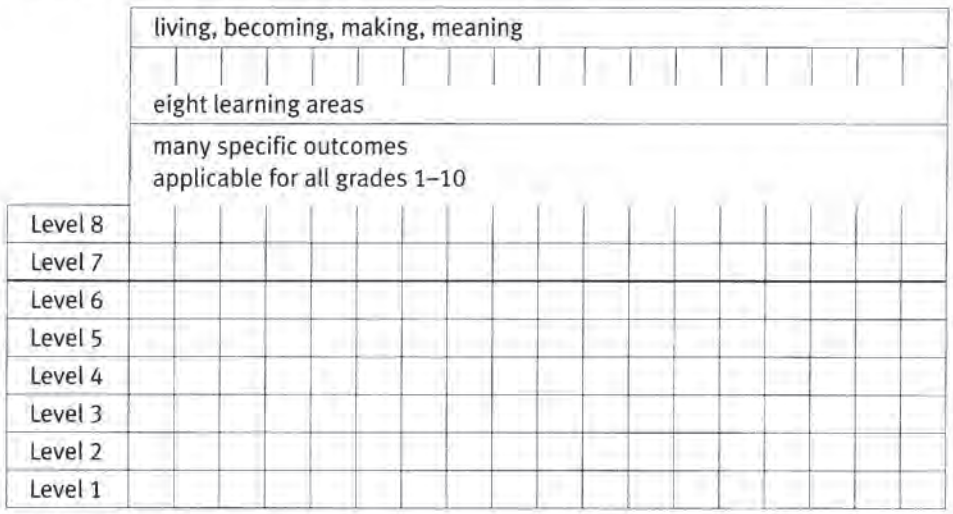
The Australian model

The nationally developed outcomes-based education framework in Australia has three components: the Common and Agreed Goals of Schooling (discussed earlier), and, in each of eight learning areas, a Curriculum Statement (to guide classroom processes and curriculum design) and a Profile (a set of outcomes and levels for the learning area, intended especially for assessment). The Statements are directed to inputs, the Profiles to outcomes (AEC 1994a, 1994b).

The structure of the Profiles is shown in Figure 16.1. In each outcome, 8 levels span years 1–10; levels 7 and 8 are extensions. Normally, learners are expected to achieve level 6 by the end of Year 10, but with individuals distributed about that norm. Six levels across ten years of schooling means about 1,5 years per level. Outcome levels do not align with year levels or grades.

The writers of the Profiles (and I was one) designed them with certain expectations about how they would be used. In any class, we expected different learners to be at different levels on a particular outcome. Accordingly, teachers would need to teach across levels, in ways that helped all learners progress from their current levels to the next ones. We had to define the levels of achievement to be continuous, with a view to the sorts of activities that could cross levels.

Figure 16.1: A schematic of the Australian approach to OBE*



**Note*: For simplicity, the language of 'specific outcomes' is that of South Africa's Curriculum 2005, not the Australian Profiles.

We expected also that any individual would likely be at more than one level on the outcome at any time. This expectation came partly from a view that learning is organic – that reaching into the next level is part of achieving the current level; that looking back and looking forward are part of effective learning. As well, we knew that the learning represented in any level would be quite complex (a competence). It would have to be developed over time, in different situations. It followed that 'standards' of achievement would be somewhat fuzzy – certainly not the stuff of 'marks out of 100' or tightly defined notions of mastery learning. The levels we needed were not to be incremental in the step-wise ways of mastery learning, but overlapping in a continuum of development.

We expected that, consistent with promotions policies in Australia and its history of learner-centred education, learners would generally be taught in their age group (year level) and remain with that age group as they progressed through school. Accordingly, it was possible that the range of levels in a class would increase for higher grades. (Learners' preferences for some learning areas over others further exacerbate this range.)

While we expected teachers to teach across levels, we expected them also to set targets for the class ('By the end of this unit, 70% of learners will be at level 4 or beyond in outcome 16') and individuals ('By the end of this unit, John will be at level 3 or beyond in this outcome').

We expected that teachers (and the whole system) would use the levels formatively (to guide teaching and the design of inputs), summatively (to report to parents and education departments), diagnostically (to identify individuals and groups in need of special attention) and as an integral part of programme improvement. Teachers would use the levels to identify and report learners' progress in the outcomes, not just their current standard of achievement.

We expected teachers to use the Profile grid as a tool of analysis, not a directive or syllabus. They would use it to: (a) map outcomes and levels available in their curriculum

units; and (b) map learners' current achievements. The grid, as a tool of analysis, can be likened to a street map: 'Where is this learner? Map 47, B5. What comes next?'. Teachers would respond by reshaping their teaching. The design of curriculum and teaching would not be linear from outcome (and level) to activity, but organic, arising jointly from teachers' knowledge and imagination, learners' knowledge and response to the teaching, and assessment, as well as the outcomes and levels. By this process, we expected assessment, teaching, learning and curriculum design to work together. The grid would be the basis for keeping track of and reporting learners' progress.

The analogy of the street map, with the grid viewed as a co-ordinate system, was an important idea in designing the outcomes and levels. A good co-ordinate system has a number of characteristics:

- It 'spans the space'. The space, in this case, is defined by the learners (every learner's current achievement has to fit on the grid) and the learning area (all of the desired dimensions of achievement have to be present).
- Its axes are 'perpendicular' (the outcomes do not overlap; achievement on one outcome does not invariably mean achievement of another, similar one). This requirement makes use of the grid easier. It also minimises the number of outcomes required. (At the same time, it is clear that interaction between outcomes is inevitable and desirable. For example, process skills such as investigating and problem-solving cannot be separated from the knowledge that is relevant to beginning the process, or the knowledge that results from it.)
- The scales on each axis are linear, and similar from one axis to another. The defined levels had to be 'in the right order' and more or less equidistant from one another (about 1,5 years per level). As well, 'level 4' on one outcome had to have much the same meaning as 'level 4' on another outcome.

None of these design criteria was easy to satisfy – not intellectually, not politically, not from the practical perspectives of teachers. For example, choosing outcomes to 'span the space' of a learning area involved defining that space, and arguing deep issues of philosophy, epistemology and the purposes of schooling. The process threatened to proliferate the number of outcomes, creating its own problems of overlap, overcrowding and manageability. On the other hand, integrating outcomes ran the risk of confusing their meaning. None of these problems was solved satisfactorily. (For example, in spite of having too many outcomes and overcrowding in the curriculum, governments in all states have added additional demands, for example, for civics education and computer education (Mann 1999).

The development of the Statements and Profiles involved wide collaboration (especially with teachers), and research with learners (especially to define the levels of achievement). Small-scale research during the development (Barley, Adams & Wu 1992) and subsequent large-scale studies (Hill 1995; Rothman 1999) have generally validated the design and the expectations listed above. The levels were found to have similar meanings across outcomes and learning areas, insofar as the average level of learners in a particular age group is much the same in all outcomes. The levels were found to be in the right order (in that the average level for learners in a higher grade is higher), and roughly equidistant. In any one grade, different learners were found to be at different levels, typically with three levels represented in lower grades, extending to four levels by Year 10. (Note that a range of three levels in one

grade is equivalent, in South African terms, to almost five grades: in a typical Grade 3 class, some learners are operating at Grade 1 level, others at Grade 5 level, on a particular outcome!)

South Africa

The South African framework is in many ways similar to the Australian one (so that, for example, I have easily been able to use the language of Curriculum 2005 to describe the Australian approach). The South African framework, at this stage, is not as well developed, partly because its purposes, in the immediate future, are different. Its first priorities were to announce a new vision of education, to redefine the outcomes of schooling and to provide a technology and support for learner-centred education. Use of the framework for accountability and reporting purposes was a lower priority. So, for example, levels of performance, though in development, are not yet finalised.

Curriculum 2005 does not draw the sharp distinction between inputs and outputs that is typical of outcomes-based education, and which is central to the Australian Statements and Profiles. For example, Curriculum 2005 documents often swing without comment between descriptions of outcomes – as in specific outcomes, assessment criteria and performance indicators – and descriptions of inputs – as in 'range statements' (illustrations of scope and difficulty) and 'phase organisers' (organising themes to enhance integration and coherence in the curriculum). By mixing prescriptions for outcomes with prescriptions for inputs, Curriculum 2005 cuts across the basic strategy of defining outcomes centrally, but devolving responsibility for inputs. This is not to deny the needs for policy advice on inputs and frameworks etc for designing inputs. (Curriculum 2005, like the Australian Statements, has no hesitation in laying out principles of learning, assessment and personal interaction in classrooms, and defining accountability not only by the learning outcomes but also the processes.) But in Australia, these policies are linked to inputs (the Statements) more than outcomes (the Profiles). It helps schools and teachers if they know when the documents are talking about (non-negotiable) outcomes, and when they are talking about (negotiable) inputs.

Curriculum 2005 gives little attention to levels of achievement and how they might be used. In the strict sense, it offers only three levels – Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase – each described by its own set of range statements (as indicators of scope and level). Although outcomes are continuous through all of the phases, each is treated somewhat separately: each has its own organisational structures, its own grouping of learning areas and its own phase organisers. Accepting these discontinuities, the levels defined in each Phase become 'exit levels' for the Phase. This implies a mastery learning view of achievement (as against the organic view that underpins the Australian model). This mastery learning interpretation is underscored by the promotions policy, where no learner is to spend more than four years in a particular Phase. Flexibility exists within a Phase (to give learners additional time, as required), but not across phases. Learners who achieve some exit levels from a Phase early do not have easy access to the next Phase. The same applies for learners who are promoted to the next Phase but then 'slip back' in their competence.

For a practising teacher, the three levels defined by the phases are too few to guide curriculum planning or on which to base assessment and reporting. Within a Phase, teachers have to define additional levels. This is no easy task, with only the exit levels as a guide! At

best it will lead to wide variations in standards and focus between teachers. It is more likely that teachers will abrogate, turning to published learning programmes (inputs). Alternatively, governments can provide more complete sets of levels. This process has begun, with the Gauteng Institute of Curriculum Development's draft Progress Maps (GICD 1999) and the Department of Education's draft Expected Levels of Performance (NDE 1999). The Progress Maps, like the Australian Profiles, in most learning areas have six basic levels plus an extension level. The Expected Levels of Performance are more complex. They have essentially one expected level per grade, but with two lead-in levels, for learners working towards the expected level. The lower of the two lead-in levels is the same as the expected level for the previous grade. Allowing for these overlaps, there are 19 distinct levels spanning grades 1–9. In my experience of writing generalised levels, this is too many. The sequencing is likely to define learning paths more tightly than is warranted, so that some learners get to high levels without touching lower levels. As well, by tying the levels to grades (even including lead-in levels), much of the flexibility of levels is lost. On the one hand, grade-based standards fit with the history of assessment in South Africa, and teachers are comfortable with them. On the other hand, the Australian experience (for example) has shown that in any grade, some learners will be as far as two grades above or below the norm – effectively creating five grades in one! This is a fact (Hill 1995; Sheldon 1999). Such variations in level cannot be accommodated in grade-based levels and teaching, especially while learners good in one learning area (say, maths) might not be good in another (say, arts and culture).

The descriptions of level (at the end of each Phase) are contained currently in range statements and performance indicators. The range statements are intended as general statements of level. They are often vague, and often written as inputs (the sorts of things that should be taught) rather than outcomes (the sorts of things learners can do). Because a particular concept of skill can be 'taught' at many levels of difficulty, such range statements give only a rough sense of level. To see the standard required, teachers must turn to performance indicators. The current set of performance indicators is incomplete. More importantly, their status is uncertain. In the absence of general descriptions of level, the listed performance indicators might come to be seen as the official 'syllabus' – like a list of behavioural objectives – rather than serving as illustrative examples. (Australia got around this problem by defining levels in broad terms, 'A learner at this level will be able to …', and then listing presenting performance indicators with the advice: 'This will be evident when a learner, for example, can …'.) In fact the status of performance indicators provided in Curriculum 2005 is unclear. For example, the Department of Education sees them as national policy, and a minimum requirement of the policy. The Gauteng Department of Education, on the other hand, has interpreted them as indicative only, expecting that curriculum developers and teachers will create their own.

Without the existence of levels of achievement in the outcomes, it is not clear how schools should proceed with reporting to parents and the community. Neither does the Assessment Policy offer a way forward, beyond the requirement that criterion-based approaches be used. Presumably, schools must design their own criteria and their own reporting systems.

As well as the direct usefulness of levels in curriculum and assessment, the process of writing them has indirect value. It forces the writers to say what they 'really mean' by an outcome, and what they mean by 'being better' at the outcome. The process feeds back into

the definitions of the outcomes. For example, what does it mean to be better at 'demonstrate an understanding of how scientific knowledge and skills contribute to the management, development and utilisation of natural and other resources' or 'demonstrate an understanding of concepts, principles, and acquired knowledge in the natural sciences'? 'Greater understanding' might rest with the concepts themselves (their number, their scope as explanatory devices, their difficulty), or the learner (the cognitive processes engaged, the breadth of the learner's philosophical concern, the stage of the learner's educational development), the context (the extent to which the learner is able to put the understanding to use) or all of these dimensions at once.

Attempts to write levels also highlight issues of content and the development of conceptual understanding. Some learning areas, traditionally, are not especially dependent on the selection and sequencing of content. Languages, the arts and technology probably fit this category. The question 'What can the learner do?' can be answered largely from a skills perspective, and levels of increasing competence defined. The idea that English is ultimately about being able to communicate, negotiate and create meaning is readily identifiable, and already in the style of a competence. It is difficult to write an equivalent sentence to summarise learning areas such as science, mathematics, and geography. It becomes necessary to talk about conceptual development and its own requirements for sequencing. (For example, assuming concepts of atoms and atomic structure are 'important', when should learners be introduced to them, and what should lead up to that introduction?) Issues concerning the selection and sequencing of content in learning areas such as science and maths, and ways content might be built in to outcomes – such as the Curriculum 2005 outcomes – are by no means resolved. Around the world, they have only recently been tackled as serious research questions (Fensham 1999; Malcolm 1999c).

Writing levels of achievement also helps identify overlap between outcomes. Drawing again on the natural sciences, the outcomes 'use process skills to investigate phenomena', 'apply scientific knowledge ...', and 'use scientific knowledge to support responsible decision-making', at the business end of curriculum design, teaching and assessment, and are bound to overlap. They could probably be condensed into one outcome, simplifying the framework overall. In fact, the writers of the draft Progress Maps (GICD 1999) and the draft Expected Levels of Performance (NDE 1999), had difficulty with overlap and clarity in the Curriculum 2005 outcomes, and were drawn to combining and modifying them.

There is no doubt that, in both the South African and Australian frameworks, there are too many outcomes. In Australia's Profiles, there are some 40 outcomes, each with 3–4 assessment criteria. In Curriculum 2005, there are 66 outcomes, each with 3–4 assessment criteria. This is too many to be manageable. It also 'overcrowds' the curriculum. The overcrowding is problematic, especially with governments continually adding to the framework – for example, new demands in Australia for civics education, computer education, and so on (Stephens 2000). A framework that extends over nine years of schooling might be expected to have a lifetime approaching nine years. This is a long time in the politics of education and social change! Australia's frameworks have been modified and added to in only 3–4 years since they were introduced (Jenkin 2000; Stephens 2000).

The number of outcomes is not only a question of manageability. It is a philosophical one related to the 'less is more' principle, and to belief in teachers. Condensing ideas into fewer words and simpler propositions changes the ideas qualitatively as well as quantitatively. It

also opens up a variety of interpretations, and the possibilities for teachers (and learners) to shape curriculum in their classrooms. But broadly defined outcomes need support from elsewhere – inputs such as illustrative learning programs and syllabuses, and teacher development. The authority of the outcomes is diminished, in favour of inputs, including teachers' skills and judgements. I will return to this argument later.

The processes of implementing outcomes-based education

Broad strategies

In Australia, it is difficult to say when implementation of learner-centred, outcomes-based education really began. As I noted earlier, moves towards learner-centred education and teachers as curriculum designers began in the 1960s. Notions of a system-wide vision, with central guidelines, district support services and devolution of management (especially management of curriculum) gained pace through the 1970s and were formalised in the 1980s. Outcomes-based education, as a technology, began to take shape in the late 1980s and was formally 'implemented', in most states, during the early 1990s. In some states (eg Victoria), it accompanied moves towards 'self-managing schools' (Malcolm 1999b), where, again according to government guidelines, schools assumed responsibility for most aspects of their planning, staffing and budgeting. In all states, learner-centred approaches and outcomes-based education were accelerated by computer-based technologies. Computers alter teaching and redistribute power and management in the classroom. For example, how does a teacher use five computers in a class of 28 learners? She designs 'projects' in which some learners work with computers, others with books and still others with equipment, all addressing the same outcomes. In this situation, learners are often more 'expert' than their teachers in particular domains. The roles of 'teacher' and 'learner' become blurred.

In the formal sense, however, the orientation of teachers to outcomes-based education began in 1990, through collaboration in the nationally developed Curriculum Statements and Profiles. This followed the earlier publication of the Common and Agreed Goals of Schooling in Australia. Collaboration of teachers and other stakeholders was achieved through professional associations of teachers, academics, business, etc, as well as education departments and schools. Thus, through a variety of avenues, teachers and schools had ideas about what was coming. The final documents were published at the beginning of 1994 (AEC 1994). Supporting documents (for example, *Using the Science Profile* [Malcolm 1994] and a raft of pamphlets and books) were released at about the same time.

From this point, implementation depended on the particular states. Some, such as South Australia and Northern Territory, opted to implement the nationally developed materials as they were. They moved immediately to distribute the materials and supporting documents, and provide in-service education. Some, such as Victoria and Western Australia, started later, because they chose to produce their own frameworks (derived from the nationally developed ones). New South Wales, following a change in government in 1994, embarked on a long project to develop a framework that retains syllabuses as the driving force, but where the syllabuses are shaped by the set outcomes. In Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia, the pattern of introduction of outcomes-based education was similar. Typically, they conducted orientation programs for a year, then required some degree of formal implementation. For example, South Australia required all schools (primary and secondary)

to implement all Profiles over a five-year period, beginning in 1996. An agreement was reached with schools and teachers that, in 1997, achievement data (based on teachers' judgements) would be collected in four areas of learning and, in 1998, from a further four areas of learning (Jenkin 2000). Victoria required all schools to use the frameworks for English and mathematics in 1995, extending to other learning areas in 1996. To exert additional pressure on implementation, Victoria required schools to report to the Education Department and parents in terms of the framework (generally on the basis of learning areas, not individual outcomes). It also introduced state tests (usually on a sample of schools, and only one or two grades) to monitor implementation and teachers' assessments (Stephens 2000).

The degree to which states used learners' achievements on the outcomes for accountability and management also varied from one state to another. In Victoria, for example, teachers reported learners' achievements to the principal and, through the principal, to the Education Department. If a teacher's results seemed out of line with those in parallel classes or results on the state tests, the teacher could be asked to justify his/her work. (This kind of justification was called for, for example, if a teacher claimed that every learner in his/her class was at the same achievement level.) Within the school, learners' achievements on the Profile were often linked to staff appraisal and staff development – if the results highlighted a particular need, the school and the teacher took action to improve the situation. Between schools, the achievement data allow comparisons of performance, and are used to identify areas of concern and interest.

In South Africa, the shift to outcomes-based education has been dramatic, as signalled by the White Paper on Education and Training (1995), the Curriculum Framework (1996), the Curriculum 2005 document (1997), and the Assessment Policy (1998). The Minister of Education officially launched Curriculum 2005 in March 1997, outlining plans for its implementation in Grade 1 in 1998. The policy was linked to a range of others, developed in parallel, including the National Qualifications Framework and the Norms and Standards of Teacher Education. Jansen (1999) observes that, before the 1995 White Paper, there was little reference in planning documents and discussions to outcomes-based education at the school level. Outcomes-based education arrived suddenly in South Africa – all the more because it was so different in concept from existing practice and language.

In this context, implementation first in Grade 1 made sense: Grade 1 teachers, traditionally, have tended towards curricula and teaching that were learner-centred and outcomes-based. Alongside in-service education for Grade 1 teachers, orientation and training programmes were conducted at all levels, albeit with limited resources, infrastructure problems and a shortage of workshop leaders who had ever actually worked in an outcomes-based system. The workshops and seminars were accompanied by general dissemination of information and ideas through posters, newspaper supplements, television and books. As well, to build an information base that would guide further planning and to develop and test some suitable materials, pilot programmes in selected Grade 1 classes were conducted in all provinces.

Numerous evaluations of these strategies and their effectiveness have been conducted. While there have been pockets of excitement and high achievement, most schools and teachers have complained that the process has been too fast, the resources unavailable. Workshops were too few and often too focused on the jargon and bureaucratic aspects of

Curriculum 2005, rather than underlying concepts and methods (eg the Chisholm Review of Curriculum 2005, 2000).

There are also issues of defining the 'target group' for in-service education. Focusing implementation first on Grade 1 (especially using 'cascade models' of in-service education) identified individual teachers as the target. Focusing on the Foundation Phase identifies a particular group of teachers within the school. Yet, in many ways, the successes of learner-centred education and outcomes-based education depend on whole-school approaches and overall leadership within schools. This would recommend that school leaders and whole schools should be a primary target for in-service education, that school development and professional development should work together, reinforcing each other. Change has to happen on many fronts at once, over time.

The concept of 'implementation' derives from the research-develop-disseminate models of curriculum development in traditional education. It made sense in cases such as implementing a particular learning programme or course of study. However, reforms such as Curriculum 2005 are different: as part of the devolution of responsibility, teams of teachers and educators at the school level have to shape and interpret the policy at the local level, then design programmes and systems to express it. Implementation is integrated with development, and change is continuous. I will return to this point later, when talking about the 'successes' of outcomes-based education in Australia.

Research and evaluations of the technology of outcomes-based education

In Australia, the concept of the nationally developed Profiles derived in part from projects in the UK, Ontario (Canada) and New Zealand, to name a few. It was shaped especially by smaller-scale innovations and research in Australia. For example, in Victoria, Griffin (1986) worked with teachers to develop what were variously called 'growth points', 'bands' and 'levels' in literacy, and tested them using item response theory. Similar work was done in Queensland (Sadler 1987) and South Australia (Education Department of South Australia 1992). In each case, the broad purposes were to work with teachers to define progression and levels of achievement, and explore teachers' analyses and professional judgements as reliable methods of assessment. In Victoria, it led to Profiles in literacy and numeracy for use in primary schools. In South Australia, it led to 'attainment levels' in all learning areas. Meanwhile, the Australian Council for Educational Research, whose charter includes testing and assessment services as well as research, had done extensive work in a number of states, using specially designed tasks and item response theory to formulate achievement levels (Masters 1990).

In each of these developments, the hope was to create an approach to assessment and reporting that supported constructivist learning theories, integrated assessment with teaching and learning, and underscored teachers' professional roles in curriculum and assessment (Jenkin 1995). They were the essential experience that shaped the design of the nationally developed Profiles.

Writing outcomes and levels, as noted earlier, is a demanding task intellectually as well as politically. In most learning areas, it proceeded in three stages: (a) broad canvassing with teachers and others, through discussion and rough drafts; (b) creative synthesis by a small group of writers, linking to teachers etc as required; and (c) evaluation and refinement. The

evaluations encompassed general feedback from stakeholders (typically concerning the selection and wording of outcomes and levels, the manageability of the system and the epistemologies etc underlying it) and a technical evaluation. The Australian Council for Educational Research conducted the technical evaluation. The council asked teachers to select learners (according to a sampling process within their classes) and make global judgements about achievements, levels and outcomes, based on evidence from the learners' day-to-day work in class. The technical evaluations provided data on clarity of the outcomes and levels, and on the ordering and spacing of the levels (eg Barley, Adams & Wu 1992).

South Africa, in designing its own framework, did not have this kind of local experience and research on which to draw. It was obliged to lean on overseas developments. Task teams explored approaches in Australia, New Zealand, England, Scotland and Ontario, as well as Spady's outcomes-based education from the US. In the final analysis, Spady and the Ontario model dominated, with Spady's ideas guiding much of the discourse, and the Ontario model informing much of the detail. (Spady's influence in Australia was minimal. He was seen to be too firmly based in behavourism and mastery learning to guide the constructivist, organic approaches that Australia was seeking.)

Following processes of collaboration and discussion in the White Paper (1995) and the Curriculum Framework (1996), the draft framework was developed by a series of technical committees (again in consultation with a variety of stakeholders) and published in March 1997. Interest groups and individuals responded to the draft (eg Malcolm 1997b), but in fact made little impact on the final documents (certainly in the natural sciences).

In the absence of assessment and reporting mechanisms in Curriculum 2005, the kinds of field testing and technical evaluations done in Australia were not possible. And time did not permit testing the documents as frameworks for curriculum development. Such evaluations would have to wait until implementation had begun. Results are now becoming available.

Research into teachers' existing knowledge and beliefs

It has been well established in educational research that the most important input to effective learning is not what the teacher or textbook says, but what the learner already knows (eg Duit & Treugust 1998). The important knowledge encompasses not only language and concepts, but learning strategies, beliefs and life experiences. The same applies to processes such as 'problem-solving': competence in problem-solving depends on knowing relevant content, and having experience of similar problems in the past, as well as on generic strategies and specific skills.

Applying these ideas to teachers, it follows that the knowledge and skills that teachers already have should be critical considerations in processes of school reform. Outcomes-based education in Australia was introduced into a situation where teachers were known to have experience in curriculum design and assessment, school management and teamwork. Constructivist learning theories and organic management were widely known (following major policy initiatives and in-service education during the 1980s), even where they had not greatly changed classroom practice. As part of the development of outcomes-based education in the early 1990s, processes of collaboration, representation and consultation gave the policy-developers plenty of opportunities to find out not only about outcomes, but teachers' beliefs about learning, classroom management and assessment.

In South Africa, there were no significant attempts to explore teachers' existing beliefs and practices, interests and hopes, as bases for the reforms. It is possible that prevailing beliefs were dominated by behaviourism and fundamental pedagogics. It is possible that teachers didn't think about such issues very much, and simply worked from textbooks. It is possible that teachers had done extensive experimentation in their classrooms and had formed exciting visions of education in their schools. None of these assumptions was tested. Nor was any attempt made to work with small groups of teachers, to test, even in a limited way, the feasibility of the policies being developed, or the pace of change that was possible for teachers (Moodie 2000).

Structures and roles

Within schools

Given 30 years of school-based curriculum development and devolution of management, it is not surprising that schools in Australia have evolved roles and structures to suit those functions. Teachers have long understood their multiple roles as mediators of learning, designers of curriculum and assessment, managers and leaders, researchers and learners, learning-area or Phase specialists, members of the school community, and pastoral carers (to quote the roles listed in South Africa's Norms and Standards of Teacher Education [NDE 1998]). That is not to suggest that all teachers live out those roles. In practice, the majority probably still see themselves as technicians (doing their job) or craftsmen (developing and refining the craft of teaching). But in most schools there are enough teachers who see themselves as intellectuals, problem-solvers, innovators and managers to provide leadership and set a climate of experimentation within the school. Schools depend on them.

Such 'expanded professionals' are well catered-to by professional associations (whether unions or subject-based associations), professional journals, district networks, advisor support services, Internet communications, workshops and conferences. They are also supported by management structures, including opportunities for promotion. Most schools have a curriculum committee (headed by a curriculum co-ordinator, with formal time allowance and responsibility) and perhaps a professional development co-ordinator. These co-ordination structures are additional to departments and/or Phases. Schools budget for professional and school development activities. Activities include attendance at district Inservice Education of Teachers (INSET), and workshops, projects and committee work in the school. Some time for development is built into teachers workloads, but most teachers are involved also in 'after-school' meetings most days of the week. Further, education departments in most states allocate 3–5 'pupil-free days' which schools usually use for meetings, projects and professional development.

Principals and vice-principals have responsibility for educational leadership and school development as well as administration. Aspiring principals know they have to have curriculum experience (perhaps as a curriculum co-ordinator) on their *curricula vitae*, and be conversant with education department policies and issues. Professional support for principals parallels that for teachers: workshops and training programs, professional networks, conferences, meetings and briefing sessions. Within the school, the principal usually heads a 'management team', comprising, for example (in a large school), vice-principals, an operations manager, a financial manager and the curriculum co-ordinator.

(The actual structures vary according to the size of the school and the structures that schools feel are appropriate.) The principal is supported also by a secretariat and computer-based management systems.

The third component of school management is the school council, or governing board. The school council is a representative group from school and community, with legal responsibility for the school and its management. School councils, typically, have a subcommittee structure, with subcommittees for finance, buildings and grounds, curriculum and community involvement. School councils, in most states, have been formally involved in curriculum planning since the mid-1970s.

Consistent with 'devolution according to government guidelines', schools, through their school councils, are required in most states to formulate 'school policies' or 'school charters', and design, budget for and implement management plans on long-term (3–5 years) and short-term (one-year) cycles. Councils report to their communities and the education department on achievements and evaluations relevant to their plans. Data on learners' achievements, as described by the outcomes-based education framework, are part of school decision-making and planning.

While some South African schools (usually from within the historically advantaged, white sector) have the sorts of structures, role definitions, role flexibility and depth of experience common in Australia, the great majority do not. To the extent that such roles and structures are preconditions for implementation of outcomes-based education in schools, they require urgent attention in South Africa. On the other hand, the issue is not simply one of skills. It is one of role perception. Teachers and principals, like learners, play the 'school game' according to their understanding of it. Once they know the game has changed, they can soon develop new skills. For example, many teachers have quickly become adept at designing learning programmes and providing leadership in their schools, once they realised these opportunities were now available and would be supported (GETC 1999).

School support

School support in Australia is provided through published guidelines and accountability frameworks, regional and district services, advisors and consultants. In most states, there are four levels of management: central office, regional offices, district offices and schools. The roles and sizes of these groups have changed over time, to suit different models of devolution. For example, in most states, central curriculum branches (who prepared curriculum materials and support documents) were dismantled in the early 1980s, and their functions taken over by private publishers and contractors. (Boards of studies continue to operate, publishing frameworks, course guides and some illustrative support materials.) The size and purposes of regional offices also have waxed and waned, sometimes to increase their autonomy as centres of management, sometimes to reduce it as arms of central administration. District offices have almost always been centres of services to schools, rather than arms of administration. The number of district offices and the number of their staff keep changing – partly through financial constraints (and uncertainty about the impact that advisors have anyway on what happens in schools), and partly from increasing privatisation of professional services (whether on a 'user pays' principle, or through government contract).

Current models of devolution, consistent with outcomes-based education, see schools as the centres of management, responsible for inputs and accountable for outcomes, according to centrally prescribed frameworks. This is the move towards 'self-managing schools' (see Malcolm 1999b). In such models, schools form their own plans, design and manage their own budgets, and purchase services as required. District and regional offices are diminished, concerned more with administration and accountability than the provision of services. (Note that communication technologies enable direct dissemination of information from head office to schools and direct reporting from schools to head office.) The state makes available support teams and special funding arrangements for underperforming schools and those with special needs. Such schools are identified through 'quality assurance' processes and accountability measures.

In fact, regional and district offices, in most states, remain involved in assisting with system administration and providing services (inputs). Regional and district workshops, support for whole-school workshops, leadership in teacher networks and cluster meetings, and advisory visits to schools were all part of the introduction and implementation of outcomes-based education in Australia.

The Australian model of devolution is premised on the idea that schools have the capacity, the will and the resources to manage their own development, given some additional pressure from central policies, frameworks and accountability measures. The levels of skill and capacity required for this are not clear, and, in any case, depend on environmental factors. The issue is partly whether the school is 'functional', and partly whether it has the wish and the management potential to change (Slavin 1998). Different interventions are required in each case. In a school that is functional but unwilling to change (perhaps because staff firmly support their current practices, neither perceiving the need to change nor believing in the changes that are suggested), mobilisation has to come from outside. Once the staff is mobilised, change can proceed and take hold. In a school that is not functional – for example, due to a lack of discipline among staff and learners, confusion about direction and inadequate planning – mobilisation is difficult and insufficient. Such a school needs concentrated, and continuing, external input. If it is totally dysfunctional, it needs dramatic intervention – for example, imported authority (such as Minister Asmal's 'guerrilla forces' in South Africa), changes of principal and key staff, and direct and ongoing involvement of facilitators.

In Australia, most schools probably fit the category of 'functional but unsure about change'. Mobilisation and some continued support, coupled with pressure from accountability measures, can be successful. In South Africa, many schools are barely functional. Mobilisation, for these schools, is not straightforward and not enough. Neither is intensive work with selected teachers. Any achievements will soon be dissipated or isolated in the rough and tumble of school life.

School development, principal development and teacher development have to fit together, reinforcing each other. In schools that are 'self-managing' and already operating in the style of 'learning organisations', workshops with individual teachers can suffice. These schools have internal processes and structures to capitalise on the workshops. In schools that are functional but unsure about change, more intervention is required at the whole-school level, perhaps through whole-school workshops and additional support for planning and experimentation in learning areas or Phases. For schools that are dysfunctional, intervention at the whole-school level is arguably a precondition for working with individual teachers.

Following this line of thinking, school support in Australia uses a mixture of whole-school development and individual teacher development. So, for example, the implementation strategy for outcomes-based education focused almost immediately on whole-school implementation, rather than starting with certain grades or teachers. By contrast, implementation in South Africa started from particular grades and selected teachers (often using a 'cascade' model to take the ideas into schools). In the first instance, it gave little attention to the involvement and education of principals, or the mobilisation of entire schools (GETC 1999).

The quality of support services is also important. Australia, by 1990, had a ready supply of educators who had personal as well as theoretical and practical experience of the kinds of education envisaged. Many of these teachers were highly skilled at demonstrating and modelling such education, mobilising teachers to change, and offering practical ideas. Because of South Africa's history, there is a great shortage of such people here. So, for example, implementation of outcomes-based education in Grade 1 commenced in many districts in South Africa before advisers and support systems were properly in place. The workshops that were conducted were often models of bureaucratic control, concentrating on jargon and the structure of the framework, giving little attention to learner-centred education, learning and the underlying theory of outcomes-based education. The purpose of the workshops, in practice, was not to mobilise the creativity and professionalism of participants, but to disseminate solutions and algorithms.

National and provincial relations

Education in Australia, according to the Constitution, is a state responsibility. The degree of co-operation that gave rise to the nationally developed Statements and Profiles is unlikely to occur again (although national committees at the levels of ministers and directors-general ensure exchange of ideas and planning). The state administrations are best considered as independent. In each state, the central office takes major responsibility for policy, guidelines and frameworks. Regions, districts and schools take major responsibility for the design and management of implementation. (In fact, the division between policy and implementation is simplistic: policies exist and are created at all levels of the system, with different purposes and different degrees of generality. Similarly, 'implementation' occurs at all levels of the system, as an integral part of management and system-wide planning.)

South Africa has an additional level of management, the national Department of Education, and the additional complexities of variations between the provinces. According to the Constitution, responsibilities not only for overall policy, but also for implementation and school support, are spread between the national and provincial governments. This complexity, especially at this stage of development in the new South Africa, is often a source of confusion and poor co-ordination.

Other institutions

Of course, there are other government departments (such as Labour, Environment, Arts, Science and Technology, Health, Social Services) and institutions beyond government that influence education policy and provide direct support to teachers and schools. I will focus on

the roles of non-governmental institutions (NGOs) in in-service teacher development and materials production.

In Australia, schools can use Education Department services for in-service education, or purchase services from private providers. Common providers include universities, teachers' professional associations (such as the English Teachers' Association, the Commerce Teachers' Association, etc) and private consultants. For large-scale reforms, state governments often contract particular groups or consortiums, on a tender basis, to develop and conduct appropriate in-service education.

Schools in Australia choose and buy their own books and equipment – whether for libraries, class sets in classrooms or teacher resources. Where learners are required to have particular books (texts, dictionaries, etc), they buy them themselves. (Financial support is available for learners who need it.)

Private companies are by far the greatest source of materials – teacher materials, learner materials, print materials, computer-based materials, equipment, audiovisual aids, stationery, etc. Teachers' professional associations and, increasingly, networks on the Internet, are also important. Some teachers' professional associations have their own publishing houses. All professional associations produce journals and newsletters, in which they include ideas for curriculum and reviews of newly available materials. In the late 1980s, most states greatly curtailed their involvement in publishing. Neither do states, generally, recommend particular texts and equipment. Publishers and equipment companies employ numerous representatives who negotiate directly with schools and teachers and liaise with policy-makers.

One of the realities of private publishing is that publishers pitch most of their materials to a relatively conservative market. This market is the biggest and safest – especially given that innovative teachers are likely to create their own materials, from a variety of sources. The state education departments sought to get around this problem, in 1990, by forming the national Curriculum Corporation. The Curriculum Corporation has as its board of directors the directors-general from all of the states and territories. It depends for funding on subscriptions from the states, sponsorships, contracts and sales of its materials. Its board expects it to be innovative, offering a lead to teachers and publishers. Sponsorships and subscriptions from the states make this economically possible.

The South African situation is different in a number of ways. Firstly, acknowledging the levels of poverty in South Africa, government provides learners and schools with the books they need. Secondly, South Africa has a tradition of teaching that is heavily based on textbooks. Over the last three years, many sites of production of learner materials for Curriculum 2005 have arisen. They include the national department, some (but not all) provincial departments, NGOs and private publishers. Some of this work has been contracted and guided by the national or provincial governments, and some has been entrepreneurial. In Gauteng, the Gauteng Institute for Curriculum Development operates in similar style to Australia's Curriculum Corporation. It is funded jointly through government, sponsorship and sales, to provide innovative ideas and materials.

The successes of outcomes-based education: what has Australia learned?

It is difficult, in Australia as in other countries, to make simple lists of successes and failures of outcomes-based education – especially if we are to use the ultimate criterion: more learners achieving higher levels on the outcomes. In fact, it is too soon to make such judgements. Adequate benchmarks did not exist (on a large scale) before the introduction of the Profiles, and those that did belonged to a different curriculum formulation. (The lifetime of curriculum frameworks is an issue. Even states who moved quickly to implement outcomes-based education in 1994–96, such as South Australia and Victoria, have since revised the actual outcomes and levels, and added programmes and new outcomes to the original formulation.) Benchmarking projects related to the outcomes-based education frameworks are currently in progress at national and state levels.

At the logistic level, Profiles have been implemented in a number of states, including South Australia and Victoria. To that extent, implementation has 'succeeded'. Teachers, education departments and parents are receiving and using assessments and reports of achievement based on the Profiles. By implication, all teachers are using the outcomes and levels as bases for curriculum and assessment. The extent to which this has changed classroom practice and learning effectiveness is not clear.

Assessments based on the Profiles have provided extensive diagnostic information on individual differences and variations according to location, socioeconomic status, etc. Perhaps the most remarkable of these findings is the extent of variation of levels within a class. For example, a South Australian study of 30 000 learners in grades 1–8 collected performance data in all learning areas (Rothman 1999). Typically (with some variations between learning areas and outcomes), about 50% of learners in a grade were operating at the average level for the grade. The other 50% were at higher and lower levels. Because each level takes about 1,5 years to achieve, this means that even the 50% operating within the level are widely spread, and the others more so. Within a class, the teacher in fact has 4–5 grades in one (in years 1–4) and 5–6 grades in one higher in the school. (Hill [1995] obtained similar findings for learning in English in Victoria.) The Profiles point up the fact that, in a Grade 6 class, one learner can be operating at Grade 4 level, while another learner is operating at Grade 8 level. This kind of data was not available from 'marks'.

The assessments that Rothman (1999) reports are not only part of the statistics of education, they are alive in the classroom. Teachers made the judgements, in the contexts of their teaching and personal contact with the learners involved. So, as part of day-to-day activities, teachers go back into their records to see what levels learners were at earlier in the year. They report to parents on a learners' standard (relative to the rest of the class) and progress (relative to earlier reports). It is hard to imagine that these processes have not impacted on classroom processes.

Rothman (1999) used the South Australian data also to compare performances of males and females. He found, for example, that for learners in Grade 4, girls were twice as likely as boys to be have achieved level 3. The pattern applied throughout grades 1–8: in English, girls are operating at a higher level than boys. In science, on content-based outcomes, boys in Grade 4 were twice as likely as girls to be working at level 3, but, by Grade 8, boys and girls were achieving similarly. Did the girls catch up? Did the boys lose pace? The key point is that learners not only start from different points, they progress at different rates.

Relationships between achievement and socioeconomic status are more striking. Grade 4 learners from middle and high socioeconomic backgrounds were twice as likely to have achieved level 3 as learners from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Marked differences arose also in science, mathematics, studies of society and environment, health and physical education, but not in technology and the arts. The data are reminders of the importance to learning of factors beyond schools, and of shortcomings in curriculum and teaching within the schools themselves. What learners already know and can do – from beyond schools as well as in school – are critical inputs to their learning.

Hill (1995), in Victoria, used data from the Profiles as measures of individual learners' progress in English, as well as their standard of achievement. Progress is the 'value-added' component of education. He found that schools which seemed highly effective in terms of the average levels of achievement of their learners need not be especially effective in the value-added component. In other words, while learners in a particular school were at levels higher than average, they nevertheless progressed at an 'average' rate. On the other hand, some schools (especially in disadvantaged areas) came out well above average on the value-added component, in spite of being below average in general standards. Schools can make a difference. Their effectiveness needs to be measured in terms of the progress their learners make, not just the standards achieved.

Australia has also learned much about conceptualisation of outcomes-based education, and ways to support teachers. These aspects are considered below.

The challenges of outcomes-based education

The overall concept

The basic tenets of Curriculum 2005, that education should be learner-centred, learning-centred and outcomes-focused, are surely unassailable. The importance of individual differences in effective learning are well established. Learners' experiences, current knowledge and skills, preferred learning styles, personal lives and priorities, and educational purposes are critical inputs to their learning, and to integration of their learning with their lives. In turn, learner-centred education requires that teachers be curriculum designers. They are the only ones in the education system who know the learners directly, understand the contexts in which the learners operate and are aware of the resources available. Curriculum materials that are designed centrally cannot suit everyone. It follows that they favour some individuals and groups.

At the same time, too much divergence in what learners achieve is problematic – especially since variations in what is learned are bound to depend on location, culture and socioeconomic background. This is a different kind of equity – one that gives all learners similar opportunities for employment, higher education, and so on.

The technology of outcomes-based education offers an attractive way of balancing equity in relation to individual difference with equity in the sense of common outcomes. The nation sets the outcomes, and teachers are responsible for designing (or selecting) curriculum. The logic is straightforward: (1) agree on the outcomes; (2) write them with the 'correct' amount of specificity, to permit local interpretation and expression, but still claim common achievements; and (3) give teachers and schools the support they need as curriculum designers. To this, add management tools, such as means of balancing 'support' with

'pressure' on schools and teachers. (One form of pressure is to make schools and teachers accountable for their learners' achievements by requiring them to report to government.)

Compelling as this logic is, the concept of outcomes-based education has probably been oversold by proponents such as Spady (1994, 1997). The value of keeping outcomes in mind as part of curriculum, teaching and assessment is not in question. But sets of generalised outcomes, by themselves, are insufficient as guides to teaching and assessment. Additional frameworks are required. One of the critical outcomes concerns 'solving problems using creative and critical thinking'. To design activities, teachers have to decide: What problems are important? What problems can be tackled in the context of this class and the school timetable? What problems are the learners trying to solve as part of their lives? What does it mean to be better at 'solving problems' anyway? What content knowledge is required for this problem? Does having a 'tool box' of tried routines and strategies contribute to 'being innovative'? What experiences will help learners develop competence? In Curriculum 2005, the learning areas, specific outcomes, assessment criteria and range statements elaborate the outcomes, but only go part of the way towards a complete framework for curriculum design. The outcomes-based education principle of 'design down' (from outcomes to activities), needs the support of other frameworks.

There are two ways of providing closer guidance and support for teachers as curriculum designers. One is to 'tighten up' the outcomes – with more outcomes written at finer levels. This strategy seems true to the notion of 'government sets outcomes; schools design inputs', and holds on to outcomes as primary devices of curriculum control. The other strategy is to complement outcome statements with guidance on inputs – through policies on learning and school management, frameworks for curriculum design and assessment, syllabuses and illustrative learning materials, and teacher in-service education. This means that inputs are devices of control as well as support. It results in outcomes-based education that also has a focus on inputs!

Concern for inputs does not lessen the importance of outcomes statements, but puts these into the context of overall strategy. This invites different answers to the questions: How specific should outcomes statements be? What purposes (and audiences) do they serve? How are they to be used? Stephens (2000) suggests:

- Outcomes statements help governments to place education within broader plans of national development, and provide clear expectations of schooling for education departments (and other government departments), schools, learners, teachers and parents.
- They enable education departments (and parents) to compare learners, teachers, schools, districts, provinces, even nations, as inputs to management decisions at all levels.
- They provide parents with a sensible and consistent way of reporting learners' progress, regardless of the learners' school or level of schooling.
- They are important parts of a total framework for curriculum design, guiding it, focusing it and providing frameworks for auditing and evaluation.

One challenge of outcomes-based education is to balance these different purposes within the overall framework of 'learner-centred, outcomes-based' education. Another is to decide the roles, within the system, of centrally defined inputs to work alongside outcomes statements. Answers to these questions shape the outcomes statements. For example, instead of

proliferating outcomes and assessment criteria at finer and finer levels of detail (as closer guides to curriculum and assessment), it might be better to have a small number of more general outcomes, and elaborate and support them through other frameworks.

Management, devolution and control

In a conversation with Bill Spady in 1998, he observed that the Australian approach to outcomes-based education would never work in the US: the community would not trust its teachers enough, and teachers would not trust children enough. This is an important idea in the design of an outcomes-based education system.

Education in South Africa has no history of trusting teachers to design curriculum and assessment. Teachers, for their part, have no tradition of trusting children (in the sense of classroom management) or even listening to children's ideas and experiences. As part of a research study in 1998, some colleagues and I (Smith *et al* 1999) asked final-year students in diploma of secondary education courses to interview children aged 5, 10 and 15 about stories the children enjoyed. Many students found themselves amazed at the wisdom and thinking of the children, and excited at their own abilities to allow the children to be 'free' to talk. Little research has been done into the interests, knowledge and learning contexts of South African children, yet such knowledge is central to learner-centred education.

Devolution of control in the education system requires trust in principals and teachers, alongside determination to build their competence over time. Devolution of control in the classroom requires trust in learners, alongside determination to build their competence over time. These are among the characteristics of 'learning organisations'. Learning begins with a challenge to existing knowledge and practice, and builds from there. Roles and procedures are flexible, and open to question. Accountability comes through results more than procedures.

Bureaucratic management and behaviourist learning theories (including mastery learning) are strong on external control and weak on trust. Solutions are presumed to come from the top of the hierarchy, not the bottom. Accountability is defined by job descriptions and procedures more than the quality of the outcomes. Bureaucratic management and behaviourist learning theories work well in situations that are essentially mechanistic, as in assembly-line production, or training in particular skills. They do not work well in the development of complex ideas and performances, or for 'deep learning' (learning that changes the ways learners think about the world).

Behaviourism and the behavioural objectives movement, under pressure in the late 1960s for being too atomistic and too ready to define 'learning' by specific behaviours, evolved into the 'competency' movement of the 1970s, acknowledging the interactions of knowledge, skills, contexts and purposes. The competency movement, in general, remained focused on the technical aspects of performance, and analyses of performance into behaviours. The 'outcomes' movement of the 1980s and 1990s split into two directions: one extended competency-based learning, an approach that has dominated vocational education and training (including the National Qualifications Frameworks in New Zealand and South Africa), while the other direction shifted qualitatively from competency to broader notions of understanding and action, and subtleties of complex performance. This latter approach has predominated in school-level outcomes-based education in Australia and New Zealand,

for example. It has been strongly guided by constructivist views of learning and organic approaches to management.

Curriculum 2005 is equivocal in its support of constructivist or behaviourist learning theories. The Curriculum Framework of 1996 was largely constructivist, but Curriculum 2005, with its discrete Phases and exit levels, and its grade-based Expected Levels of Performance, is more like mastery learning. 'Criterion-based assessment', central to Curriculum 2005, has its roots in mastery learning and competency-based learning. As the term is used in most countries, it calls for a collection of yes/no, achieved/not achieved judgements on a set of criteria. The Australian Profiles talk instead of 'standards-based assessment', with learning as a continuum, and where teachers judge which level in a series best describes a learner's performance. The teachers' assessments are not yes/no decisions, but judgements about position on a scale, made 'on balance', from the available evidence.

In practice, a constructivist framework can permit behaviourist approaches, but not the other way round. With the Australian Profiles, for example, behaviourist teachers (and curriculum designers) can choose to treat the outcome levels as discrete steps, to be mastered one by one. Similarly, in the classroom, constructivist approaches can (and should) incorporate the traditional techniques of stimulus-response-reward, training, drill and practice. In the constructivist classroom, however, the training is not an end in itself: it is preparation for 'the real game' and occurs in that context.

'Learner-centred education' is a central plank of Curriculum 2005. Its meaning is different in a behaviourist perspective compared to a constructivist one. A behaviourist perspective asks teachers to find teaching methods and corrective paths that enable every learner to reach the externally set criteria. A constructivist perspective allows learners to influence not only teaching methods and time, but the contexts in which ideas are set and the very content of the curriculum. Learners shape the outcomes as well as ways of reaching them. They are part of curriculum design.

Research over the last 30 years has made a strong case for constructivist theories of learning and identified the limitations (as well as the usefulness) of behaviourist approaches. The challenge for outcomes-based education is to write the outcomes and levels in ways that support and foster effective learning.

Manageability of assessment

There are a number of reasons why teachers should have the major roles in assessing learners' achievements. Firstly, the desired outcomes emphasise complex performances. Assessment needs sometimes to focus on components of performance, sometimes on complete performances. Traditional measurement approaches to assessment give way to assessment as inference and professional judgement. Secondly, assessment that is diagnostic and formative is a natural and critical part of effective teaching and learning. Such assessments are a sound basis for summative judgements of achievement.

As a framework for assessment, the outcomes, assessment criteria, etc have to be clear, so that teachers interpret them accurately and apply them reliably. Research in Australia and a number of other countries shows that teachers can develop high levels of skill in assessing performance, and this influences their teaching as well as assessment. Strategies for improving their skills include: the use of annotated samples of learners' work; workshops

where teachers analyse samples of learners' work, discuss criteria and compare judgements; and group activities where teachers write descriptive scales or rubrics to go with particular tasks or outcomes (Jenkin 1995).

As well as being clear, the outcomes have to be manageable. The number of them has to be small. A South African teacher working with 66 outcomes, over 200 assessment criteria and 30–80 learners in the class has an impossible task. Written records become essential, but, with so many outcomes, the recording systems are complex. Teaching and learning give way to assessment and recording. Assessment as part of classroom activity gives way to dependence on tests and submitted assignments.

A major challenge for outcomes-based education is to create systems of assessment and recording that are manageable for teachers and focused on learning.

Assessment and accountability

As part of managing assessment and recording, teachers need to be clear about (a) how they (or anyone else) will use the assessment information, and (b) how accurate they need to be. In the context of formative assessment, arguably, high accuracy is not critical. The assessments are used primarily to guide teaching, and as part of teaching. A judgement about level of performance today might be revised tomorrow, in the light of new evidence. Outcomes are achieved over time. However, accuracy becomes important when the assessments are part of accountability, when schools and education departments use them to compare teachers and schools, and as part of staff appraisal, resource allocation and general management.

At the system level, as in the classroom, assessment data can be used formatively (to guide management) or summatively (to rank schools and teachers or provide rewards and punishments). Both of these uses are important, for example, in the UK, Canada and New Zealand. State tests (usually pencil-and-paper tests in multiple-choice format) and the publication of 'league tables' of school performance are part of accountability. The tests, inevitably, have limited validity, because the outcomes concern complex performance. In some Australian states (Victoria, for example), state tests are used, but final decisions about learners' levels of achievement rest with teachers. The tests are viewed as monitoring devices, not final assessments.

Assessment information is a useful tool in system management as well as classroom teaching and reports to learners and parents. It is not yet clear, at the system level, how such information should be collected and used.

Writing outcomes: issues of 'grain size'

Clarke and Stephens (1998) use the metaphor of 'grain size' to describe levels of generality and specificity in outcomes statements. Outcomes statements such as 'learners can solve problems using creative and critical thinking' have coarse grain. A statement such as 'learners can offer many ways of producing the number 16, using addition and subtraction' is fine grain. There are many grades of grain size between these two.

Teachers, when planning classroom activities, must work at the level of fine grain, but see also the coarser grains. Education policies work with coarse grain. Frameworks for

curriculum design have to help teachers get from the coarse grain to the fine, in ways that keep the whole in view. They need guidance on getting to the fine grain.

In assessment, as in curriculum design, teachers have to work back and forth between coarse and fine grain. However, working with grids and checklists at the fine-grain level becomes totally unmanageable. It is also inappropriate, because notions of complex performance and professional judgement are swamped by details and issues of aggregation. The Australian experience (eg Jenkin 1999; Rothman 1999; Hill 1995; Clarke & Stephens 1998) indicates that teachers can make 'on balance' judgements of achievement at the level of coarse grain. In assessment, more easily than in curriculum design, they can move between details and generalisations, performance indicators and outcomes.

Reporting on learners' achievements has its own requirements of grain size. For example, while it might be appropriate for teachers to keep internal records at the level of outcomes and assessment criteria, reporting this detail to parents is inappropriate. Parents prefer some kind of summary. Reporting to education departments on outcomes and assessment criteria might also be too detailed, depending on how the departments intend to use the information.

It is not clear that a single outcomes document can serve all of curriculum design, assessment and reporting. Neither is it clear whether the primary purpose of outcomes statements is as a framework for reporting achievement, planning assessment or designing curriculum.

The place of content

As Spady (1994) observes, school systems can choose outcomes that are more or less traditional, in their orientation to subjects and content, or ones that are highly 'transformational' (derived, for example, from adult roles in society or national futures). The choice of outcomes is a defining moment in educational planning. The critical outcomes of Curriculum 2005, and the specific outcomes in the learning areas, are exciting attempts at looking forward – especially when compared to the outcomes formalised in nations such as the UK, New Zealand and Australia.

In innovative formulations such as South Africa's, the development of conceptual understanding in the disciplines is unclear. For example, research into 'problem-solving' underlines the importance of 'domain-specific knowledge'. A learner can't solve an economics problem without knowing some economic theory. The same arguments apply to levels of competence. Increased competence in 'investigating' in science depends as much on higher levels of knowledge as on generic skills of 'forming hypotheses' etc. What learners know makes a difference to the sorts of hypotheses they suggest!

While the importance of content knowledge – at higher and higher levels of understanding – is readily acknowledged, questions of which content knowledge and how to choose it are totally open. For example, science education has traditionally focused on concepts and conceptual schemes that have wide applicability in nature. Yet interviews with adults in a variety of vocations and situations show that they use few of those ideas, and remember even fewer of them (Fensham 1999). In practice, the disciplines prove to be a limited basis for choosing content. As an alternative, outcomes-based education, especially in association with learner-centred education, suggests that outcomes and patterns of learners' experiences should be the criteria for selecting content. Such research has not yet been done.

One of the challenges of outcomes-based education is not only to integrate content knowledge (and development of conceptual understanding) into the outcomes, but to find ways of choosing content knowledge.

Teachers as curriculum writers

Curriculum can be defined at many levels. At the policy level are principles and guidelines, then frameworks, syllabuses and courses of study. These are interpreted, in turn, through recommended (or illustrative) textbooks and learning programmes. At the school level are the 'formal plans' that the school and teachers have, then the curriculum as teachers present it, and curriculum as learners perceive it. Arguably, the most important levels are the last two. Teachers have always been curriculum designers at these levels. Their classroom actions have always been influenced by personal positions, available resources, features of school culture and the learners themselves. However, they have often worked essentially as technicians or craftsmen, with limited freedom to question and invent.

Learner-centred education shifts teachers' roles from technician or craftsman to 'engineer' or 'story writer' (Malcolm 1999d). Like engineers building bridges, they design systems to suit selected purposes, using materials that are available, within constraints of cost, space and time. Like story writers, they decide what their learning programme will be about, choose a beginning and an end, plan a sequence of events and interactions, all in ways that allow meaning to unfold and problems to be solved, all with a sense of audience. Like engineers, teachers are accountable for the 'success' of their design; like story writers, they are accountable to their audience.

Engineers have to start somewhere when they sit down to design a bridge. They read up on the theory of bridge building, talk with other bridge builders, research the local conditions and foundations. They go back through the filing drawers of their own experience. They borrow designs that others have produced, adopting and adapting as well as creating. And every bridge they build adds new information to their files. Teachers in Australia use all of these strategies. Some work directly with published materials, some borrow, adapt and create. Most work with colleagues to produce learning programmes that they can share in the school, and build a file of outlines and worksheets. Throughout the process, there is a trade-off between the technical quality of the design and the quality of implementation: there can be good stories badly told, bad stories well told. The enactment of the curriculum is as important as its design.

As big an issue is the quality of texts and published learning programmes that teachers can lean on. Almost by definition, textbooks are behaviourist in their learning theory, 'universal' and abstract in their approach, and orientated to content and information. Researchers and authors have not yet conceived a constructivist, learner-centred textbook! They have conceptualised illustrative learning programmes – especially ones written for teachers, and designed at the local level (whether district or province). The design and publication of learner-centred, constructivist 'texts' is a challenge for researchers and publishers around the world.

Processes of change

An outcomes framework cannot be developed independently of plans for how it will be used, how it will be supported, the conditions prevailing in schools and how they can be changed. I have written about these issues elsewhere (Malcolm 1999b).

Devolution of curriculum and school management, according to government guidelines, is necessary in part because it is essential to learner-centred education. Teachers have to be curriculum designers and be supported in those roles.

The structures and processes required for supporting schools and effecting change are quite unclear. Around the world, the technologies of schooling and teaching remain remarkably uniform, old-fashioned and resistant to change, in spite of decades of often costly reforms. This is the situation in developed countries as well as developing ones (van den Akker 1998).

Many models and strategies have been tried. They do not offer ready-made solutions, but they have provided principles – for example (Malcolm 1999b):

- Take a systems approach to planning and development.
- Focus the entire education system on effective learning in schools and the conditions that enable it.
- Devolve curriculum design and management away from the central office to districts and schools, in ways that enable creative solutions in the local context according to government guidelines and accountability frameworks.
- Regard the system – from the national department through provincial departments, districts, schools and classrooms – as a learning organisation made up of learning organisations.
- Achieve coherence through a combination of shared vision, frameworks to guide development, accountability and support.
- Combine professional development of individuals with professional developments of groups, in the context of whole-school development.
- Fit the management to the context and the stage of development of the organisation, being prepared to change the management strategies and structures as conditions change.

The challenge for South Africa is to find effective and cost-efficient ways of expressing these principles.

Lessons for South Africa?

The Australian experience suggests the following:

- Educational change takes time, and must be addressed on many fronts at once, building from what currently exists.
- Outcomes-based education is not as simple as 'governments prescribe outcomes, schools and teachers (with help from education departments) design inputs'. The outcomes statements have to be coupled with policies and frameworks about inputs; control and support have to achieved through a variety of frameworks.
- Outcomes statements have to be written at the 'right' level of generality – to enable a balance of similarity and difference in the curricula of different schools, to be clear, and to be manageable as frameworks for assessment, reporting, and curriculum design. It may

be that different versions are required, with different levels of generality, for assessment, reporting and curriculum design.

- Levels of achievement are necessary if the outcomes are to be used as frameworks for assessment, reporting and accountability. Levels also help in curriculum design. Levels can be written to suit mastery learning and criterion-based assessment, or constructivist learning and standards-based assessment. A framework designed to support a constructivist approach can accommodate mastery approaches more than the converse.
- The range of levels of achievement in a typical classroom is large. In any grade, there are in effect five grades. Teachers have to work across levels.
- Teachers can develop high levels of skills in analysing learners' work and making judgements 'on balance' about levels of achievement.
- Teachers can write curriculum. To do it well, they need guiding frameworks, examples and materials to draw from, time and in-service education.

Conclusion

What might be the immediate way forward for Curriculum 2005? The vision is exciting, enthusiasm is generally high, the spirit of experimentation is widespread, infrastructure and systems of support are coming into place. One way forward would be:

- Continue with 'implementation', but shift the attention from outcomes to learner-centred education, focusing on knowledge of learners, methods of teaching and classroom management, and teachers as curriculum design. The existing outcomes (or selections of them) could be the basis of this work.
- In the meantime, rethink the place of the outcomes statements in an overall strategy, rewrite the outcomes, and develop alongside them other frameworks that are necessary.
- Continue to 'build capacity' at all levels of the system, but especially in teaching and school management.

On my desk, I have a large photograph that I purchased from *The Star* newspaper last June to accompany an article I had written for an Australian journal. The journal editors chose to publish my article without the picture. I presumed that meant the picture didn't mean much to an Australian audience. It means a lot in South Africa.

The photograph was taken from the air over Alexandra during the elections held on 2 June 1999. It shows a thousand people in a long winding queue, waiting to vote. To me it is, on the one hand, a symbol of the inefficiencies and resource limitations that are part of South Africa. At the same time, it is a symbol of the faith that ordinary South Africans have in government, leadership, and the future. In a sense, it is a picture of schools.

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CHAPTER 17

Policy analysis capacity in South Africa[1]

Enver Motala

This chapter points to some of the weaknesses in the *analysis* of educational policy and practice in South Africa. An examination of these weaknesses is necessary to enhance our understanding of the long-term implications and effects of the present process of reform and change. Such an understanding is important because:

- It concerns questions about the value of learning in the formation and transformation of this and other societies.
- It would enable analysts to evaluate whether the stated objectives of national policy and of the Constitution of the country itself are being achieved in practice.

Too much of the present education policy analysis is focused on the immediate problems and demands of educational reform, and very little attention is being paid to the possible *long-term* effects of the reforms presently under way.

The view adopted in this chapter, stated briefly, is that the nature of our inquiry into educational policy at this time is bedeviled by two fundamental difficulties. The first concerns the poverty of our theorisation of the nature of the post-apartheid state. The view adopted here is that without such a theorisation it is not possible to appreciate fully the nature and effect of national policies. The second problem arises from the extraordinary influence that neoclassical conceptions of the relationship between education and the economy have achieved over our understanding of the meaning and role of education in society.

Theorising the state

Present conceptions of social policy are not devoid of an underlying concept of the state, even if such a concept is not made explicit[2] and is characterised by a startling lack of any critical discourse about the nature of the post-apartheid state. Such a critical discourse is necessary to understand the limits and possibilities of social policies, the nature of the relationship between the state and markets,[3] the role of national states in the process of globalisation, the deliberate social choices which underlie particular social policies and the interests they represent, and the mediatory role of the state founded on the basis of its consensus-seeking mandate. Such an analysis would explore more fully the nature of the contradictions that the state faces in relation to questions of power and access to national resources.

In South African educational policy research in particular, a great deal of attention has been given to symptomatic complaints about educational issues as these manifest themselves in the weaknesses, failures or breakdown in service delivery. What are some of the most egregious symptomatic issues relating to schooling?:[4]

- The absence of basic school resources including textbooks and other learning materials, basic schooling infrastructure, etc;
- The poor quality of learning outcomes;
- The lack of adequately trained teaching staff, compounded by the process of teacher [and other educational staffing] rationalisation;
- The poor performance of students especially as measured by the matriculation examination results and performance evaluations done in respect of mathematics and science;
- Corruption and profligacy in the use of limited resources; and
- The inadequacy and failings of bureaucrats and other administrators in the system as a whole.

A further problem is that the analysis of policy and the tools of our inquiry relate to particular kinds of evaluations and audits. These include evaluations and audits of:

- The preparedness of teachers in respect of the new curriculum;
- The culture of teaching and learning;
- The weaknesses of classroom practice, community participation in relation to the governance questions, teacher and management performance, the availability of materials, etc;
- The performance of children in maths & science, and of adults in respect of literacy/numeracy poor matriculation results;
- The skills of the management of institutions and of the bureaucracy;
- The availability and quantity of basic infrastructure and other physical needs; and
- The development of performance indicators for equity, quality, democracy and efficiency, etc.

These audits are themselves extremely important and of real value. Basic and accurate information is necessary for a variety of reasons that relate to costing, evaluating the efficiency of resource usage, the administrative needs of a bureaucracy and, most of all, planning. However, these inquiries are limited in their scope and nature and in effect obfuscate a more profound and fundamental structural critique of the reasons for the weaknesses and failures in the educational system. Often they mask more important questions about the reconstruction of the system as a whole, about the nature and content – the limits and possibilities, and particularly the contradictory social interests within which state policies evolve.

Moreover, the criteria and the underlying rationale used to argue the value of much of this research is not purely fortuitous. These criteria lie within a framework of extremely influential and dominant social and cultural conceptions about education. Although a great deal more might be discovered and measured through these inquiries, they have essentially been about the *measurement of outputs relative to investments*. They too are very much a part of the language of outcomes – not only in the field of learning, but also in the public service as a whole. There is little recognition of the fact that most educational policy research continues to rely on, and is a part of, a powerful international discourse about policy research, itself expressing particular ideas and a particular culture regarding educational and public service systems as a whole.

What is germane to the predominant forms of inquiry that form the bedrock of policy research today can be characterised as being largely anti- or a-sociological. Categories of class, gender, rural and urban, poverty and wealth levels, spread of opportunity and even race are largely excluded. What are the effects of these weaknesses on the nature of our research and analysis?

- There is little or no examination of questions about the structural constraints which are objective in nature and which stem from the actual conflict of interest at the heart of the problem of reconstruction. Take the example of school governance. We can ask a number of formal questions about how many school governing committees exist, who is in them, their racial composition, area spread, regularity of meetings, how they function, the key items on their agendas, frequency, etc. But we can also ask much more difficult questions about their setting which relate, for example: to the class and social nature of the community; gender roles in the community and their specific implications for educational decision-making; the levels of income and wealth in the community; levels of organisation and nature of the history and roles of these organisations; the formal and other educational levels of the participants; constraints on the ability to participate actively; powerful interest groups and cliques within particular communities, etc.
- Most of the evaluation and auditing relates only to the observable and quantifiable impediments to delivery. For example, these relate to the need for classrooms and other physical infrastructure, shortages of libraries, laboratories and learning materials, educational qualifications, teacher numbers, etc. These is little or no assessment of the social setting within which these deficits occur, as if to imply that these issues cannot be measured – they are too intractable, time-consuming or abstract – or are unimportant because they may be obvious. The failure to infuse inquiry with a sociological character has meaning because the rectification of infrastructural deficits, for example, cannot be accomplished through the installation of new infrastructure alone. This is obvious to anyone who knows that building a new school adjacent to a large informal settlement requires proper and deliberate consultations. These may even be essential to its continued existence, which would hardly be the case if a school were to be built in the upper-class suburbs of any city.
- Often the false assumption is made that, because of ostensible agreement in the policy arena and the niceties of the consensual statement about the goals to be achieved, there is no likelihood of conflicting interests in regard to the implementation of such policies. In reality, however, the most profound problems of policy change have arisen precisely in the domain of implementation, and these have arisen because of the deeply conflictual nature of many such policies. An example of this relates to the rationalisation of teachers, which, from the point of view of policy decision-makers, was essential to address both the question of fiscal deficits and the need for redistribution and redeployment of teachers. From the point of view of some teachers – despite the actual acquiescence of teacher bodies in the process – rationalisation was no more than a process of teacher retrenchment. For many parents, it was about the loss of the teachers most valuable to the schools, while for students it implied a breakdown in their learning times, etc. This demonstrates that in fact consensus is often not real. It hides the real and objective differences in interpretations which that might imply, especially in regard to the allocation of resources.

- Much of the inquiry evinces an extraordinary capitulation to the determinist influences of the language of technological innovation and diffusion as the only and prime mechanisms for change in the curriculum. The implication of this determinism is to relegate the goals of education to no more than the goals of economic growth without any reference to the broader humanist goals of learning in any society. This is a particularly important in a society that requires the entrenchment of such goals because of its specific and traumatic history.

These failures in the analytical framework are not peculiar to South Africa alone. They represent South Africa's emergence from the protectionist environment of the apartheid state and into the global arena of the post-apartheid era. The apartheid state provided an environment for the growth of powerful conglomerates within a racist framework. Its protectionist policies reinforced a particular relationship between national capital and the state within the international trade and financial order. South Africa is now more open and susceptible to worldwide market forces – that is, the dominant forms of global production, distribution and exchange, trade in commodities and financial system, extending into the provision of services, both public and private.

There is already a clear indication, and every likelihood, that South Africa, like most 'developing countries', will witness the development of greater social differentiation in the delivery of public services, even while the process of reform is in train. It is essential, therefore, to develop a more fundamental theory of the nature of the post-apartheid state during the process of transition. Such a theorisation must of course reckon with a number of matters, which include:

- The decline in the levels of organisation of particular social forms of organisation, and the rise of other strong and articulate – even if minority – social, business and other interest groups in 'civil society';
- The impact of new forms of social stratification on the policies of the state;
- The recasting of states throughout the world due to the pervasive impact of globalisation and markets on national states – and especially on South Africa as an African state – and the decline of alternative conceptions of the state in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet state form.

Any analysis of the state that keeps these factors in mind must also deal with the deeply embedded contradictions which face states in the process of transformation and attempting to mediate conflicting and contradictory interests. A theorisation of the contradictions that are deeply intrinsic to the post-apartheid state would also be necessary to understand such a state more fully.

While analyses of the state in transition could draw on other characterisations of the state – either as 'peripheral' in relation the market, as an instrumentalist state, an 'autonomous' state,[5] etc, such analyses must be inured to the context of actual developments both here and internationally.

Finally, it is also important to understand that analyses in the domain of education cannot be informed by questions about educational issues alone. Understanding educational questions implies a critique of state policies in a number of other domains as they relate to education. Such polices could include fiscal, labour, industrial, scientific, cultural, gender and

other policies within the framework of the Constitution itself. Moreover, the examination must not merely be about short-term policy interventions but the long-term and fundamental changes taking place in many countries at the dawn of the new millennium.

Education, the economy and society

A pervasive and influential proposition about the role of education is stated in the following passage taken from a summary of the World Bank's *Priorities and Strategies for Education*:

> ... investment in education contributes to the accumulation of human capital, which is essential for higher incomes and sustained economic growth. Education – especially basic ... education – helps reduce poverty by increasing the productivity of the poor, by reducing fertility and improving health, and by equipping people with the skills they need to participate fully in the economy and in society.[6,7]

Scarcely a day passes without some or other educationist referring to the importance of education to the economy, and bemoaning the lack of relevance of educational outcomes to economic achievement. These complaints are invariably associated with calls for greater attention to education in mathematics, science and technology and communication. However, this proposition must be subjected to greater scrutiny. Does education really do all these things and, moreover, does it do them for the people in general? A number of issues can be raised in this regard:

- The first and obvious point to make – following the earlier arguments – is that education is not a social policy instrument *in vacuo*. Its effects, whatever they may be, are achieved through a combination of social, political and economic policies which either reinforce, frustrate or mediate the effects of sector-specific policies. The ostensibly beneficial effects of education could easily be nullified by other, contradictory policies.
- Education is not a value-neutral good. Its outcomes are shaped by a combination of state policies and market mechanisms, and the relative power of these influence and shape the nature of education. The broader social goals of education can hardly be assumed merely from their iteration as policy.
- The proposition that education helps to reduce poverty 'by increasing the productivity of the poor' may only be true in certain circumstances. Where, for instance, the benefits of education are uneven and distributed along social and class lines – as is the case in most countries – there are real possibilities of education and other policies producing differentiation. The effect could easily be to increase the poverty of some sections of society because their access to opportunity and incomes has been adversely affected by the differentiated outcomes of education. This scenario is entirely probable where deliberate policy interventions do not exist to effectively redistribute resources in a way that discriminates in favour of the poor.
- The underlying problem with the proposition quoted above on the relationship between education and the economy is that *it treats the relationship between education and the labour market – skills and productivity – in reductionist terms*. It assumes – as is the case in many South African policy documents – that particular forms of education, especially education based on learning outcomes (which are flexible and generic) which prepare learners for lifelong learning, which are in tune with the requirements of modern – post-Fordist – systems of production, and which moreover are closely related to active labour market policies, will increase not only the availability of relevant skills to the market but

will also be directly beneficial to the economy and to society as a whole. The policy documentation in South Africa is replete with these assumptions, which are also germane to much of the South African literature on the labour market and policies concerning it. Yet, it may actually be the case – and research in regard to this is both urgent and necessary – that policies based on the assumptions referred to might actually have the effect of increasing poverty by marginalising the poorest members of society. It may in fact be the case that the labour market is shaped primarily by global and national competition between production systems within the ambit of the relative policy environments provided by specific national states, and that, at best, the role of education is almost incidental to these concerns. The structure of the labour market – and hence of incomes and opportunities – is shaped *less by education and training than by trade and tariff regimes, financial markets and macroeconomic policies.* Moreover the effects of education and training policies are mediated by the existence of particular social conditions, historically determined, which stand in the way of reform. These historical conditions cannot be addressed by economic policies which originate predominantly in neoclassical conceptions of the role of the state and of the labour market alone.

Many labour market analysts have pointed to the relationship between the labour market and other policies, but do so within the framework of neoclassical conceptions of the role of the state and of markets. In other words, they fail to recognise the partial nature of their discourse and the limitations of particular labour market strategies, especially in societies with high levels of differentiation between the formal and non-formal labour markets; high levels of unemployment with continuing declines or relatively no growth in levels of employment over time; production systems based primarily on the export of unbeneficiated raw materials within a predominantly primary economy; and characterised by some of the highest levels of wealth and income disparity in the world. And given these conditions, there would be very little likelihood that such economies would ever catch up with highly developed economies and would in fact increasingly fall behind them.

The power of active labour market policies is best seen in developed economies, with relatively high rates of labour participation, relatively high wages and high skills demand. In conditions where there are massive levels of unemployment/underemployment and markets fail to address this condition, and in the absence of a clear strategy for job creation, labour market interventions are limited at best, and could in fact result in greater differentiation over time. We need to recognise that often labour market analysis overstates the possibilities of active labour market policies in addressing the problems of unemployment in particular historical contexts. Such analysis is often struck by the problem of assuming a particular relationship between economic growth and active labour market policies, a relationship which must yet be proven because higher levels of participation in the labour market cannot be assumed by the economic models of high skill-high wage systems. Indeed, there may well be evidence for precisely the converse relationship between these and higher levels of participation, and consequently a real possibility that particular labour market, education and training polices could well exacerbate the poverty of some of the 'people' at least.

In the same way, the ostensible power of particular forms of education both to enskill members of society and 'increase their participation' in society needs to be interrogated.[8]

This is a claim made as a matter of course in policy documentation on education. The reality could well be different, and would in any event be dependent on what is intended by the concept of 'participation', other than the ability to participate more fully in particular forms of labour.

- This critique of the limitations of active labour market policy also requires analysts to recognise, much more explicitly, the lineage of such ideas, flowing as they do both from neoclassical economic theory and its elaboration in human capital theory. It needs to be reiterated – because it is not unknown – that there is a body of literature which takes issue with human capital theory in particular, and it would be uncritical for South African writers on the subject simply to ignore the implications of these criticisms for national policy.[9] Similarly, the limitations of alternative – to neoclassical – conceptions of labour market and economic policy must also be recognised so that policy choices are not simply made on the basis of dogma but are anchored in the specific history and conditions which prevail in the country at this time.

It needs also to be said that matters relating to education and training cannot be decided by education and training policy alone. Multidisciplinary, collaborative and unfragmented research and inquiry is necessary. All too often, educational policy research is done within the limiting framework of that discipline alone. The trajectory of national developments cannot be properly understood by symptomatic and unidisciplinary analysis alone. The long-term effects of education and other social policies are profoundly mediated by national policies as a whole, themselves constrained by the powerful influences of globalisation on the capacities of nation-states.

Endnotes

1. This chapter was written at the request of the Centre for Science Development (CSD) and the Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management (CEPD). March 1998. The author is indebted to Prem Naidoo and Mala Singh for their comments on an earlier draft.
2. Martin Carnoy, 'Education and the State: From Adam Smith to Perestroika' in Arnove, Altbach & Kelly (eds) *Emergent Issues in Education*, State University of New York Press, 1992:143. Carnoy argues that assumptions about the state pervade analyses but remain hidden in the background of the education debate.
3. A useful article on the subject of such a relationship is 'The role of the state' by Ben Fine and Z. Rustomjee in Nattrass, N. & Ardington, E. (eds) (1996) *The Political Economy of South Africa*, Oxford University Press, p. 52. The authors reject the 'dichotomy between state and market as an analytical starting point. Rather, it sees both the market and the state and their interaction as the complex product of the forces that are exerted on them; most prominent of these are economic interests and imperatives attached to specific fractions of classes'. See also the article by Samuel Bowles, 'What markets can – and cannot – do', *Challenge*, July/August 1991:11. Bowles argues, *inter alia*, that markets not only allocate resources and distribute income, they also shape our culture, foster or thwart desirable forms of human development, and support a well-defined structure of power.
4. Although the examples given here are drawn from the schooling system, the principle could just as easily apply to further or tertiary education. There, too, the complaints relate to symptomatic matters, such as – in the case of tertiary institutions – the lack of finance for delivery, poor management of institutions, weak curricula, poor outcomes relative to the labour market, etc.
5. A lucid exposition of the varieties of state theory for the purposes of educational theory is to be found in Carnoy (ibid:150) where, in concluding, he argues that: 'How the state relates to civil society is

fundamental to interpreting educational structures and processes.' The differences in these interpretations, he argues, come from two opposed theories of the state. One such argument is that the state is independent of civil society and interferes in the workings of the social welfare-maximising free market; the second assumes that the state's behaviour reflects and reinforces power relations that derive from those free market economic relations. As an alternative view, he argues that the state's response is based on the force of social movements in influencing state behaviour.

6 *Priorities and Strategies for Education*, World Bank 1995.

7 See the very opposite view expressed by Hallak and Caillods in their introduction to *A New Scope for Educational Planning*, p. ix. In spite of substantial investment in education and training, poverty is growing in many countries and new environmental and health problems have emerged. Liberalism and free market ideologies have spread, creating considerable pressure to reduce the dominance of the state in all domains, including education.

8 See, for example, Jon Lauglo (1996), 'Banking on education and the uses of research: a critique of World Bank priorities and strategies for education'. *International Journal for Educational Development*, vol. 16, no. 3:221–33. Lauglo refers to the weakened community and kinship ties consequent on mass education, its effects on the alienation [of] young people from their cultural origins, that its selection function serves to legitimate social injustice, and that it can be a toll used to render politically restive populations more docile.

9 See, in particular, Peter Easton and Steven Klees, 'Conceptualising the role of education in the economy', in Arnove *et al* cited above. Here, the authors argue that the view of the linkages between education and the economy which has been dominant has 'turned out to be a dead end' because of its inability to 'deal with a myriad issues.' (p. 123) and 'the dominant view [for the last thirty years] of the role of education in the economy has come from a few particular, and rather narrow, interpretations of human capital theory and its underlying framework, neoclassical economics' (p. 124), and further that 'human capital theory thus gave neoclassical economists a rationale for involving governments in educational investments ... it is this investment connection between education and the labor market that has dominated thinking about the role of education and the economy over the last thirty years ... so strong that education seems to have become no more than a conceptual appendage to the labor market and is automatically blamed for the recurrently perceived "mismatch" between the two.' (p. 128)
See also Keith M. Lewin, *Education and Development: The Issues and Evidence*, O.D.A. 1993.

SECTION 5

Explaining change and non-change in education after apartheid

The editors provide a critical synthesis of the South African experience in policy implementation with the goal of explaining change and continuity (or, 'non-change') in post-apartheid education reforms. Intentionally, two contending explanations are defended – one focused on practical capacity, the other on political symbolism. The debates in this section highlight a recurring theme of all contributions to this volume. That is, that the curious trajectory of South African education reforms in the 1990s can only be understood at the complex intersection of policy, politics and practice.

CHAPTER 18

Post-apartheid educational transformation: policy concerns and approaches

Yusuf Sayed

This chapter reviews post-apartheid educational policy from 1994 until the elections of 1999. It critically examines the various influences that have shaped, and continue to impact on, post-apartheid educational policy. The key objective of the chapter is to interrogate the different concerns, approaches and implications of the various policies that have been formulated in order to fundamentally transform the legacy of the apartheid system. In so doing, the chapter will highlight the conceptual tensions and difficulties that underpin the educational reform process in South Africa.

The chapter takes as its starting point existing critical analyses of educational policy development in South Africa. It highlights what critics point out as the process of 'educational compromise' and the narrowing of the policy agenda. In this respect, it engages with the writings of Chisholm & Fuller (1996), de Clercq (1997) and Tikly (1997) who, in different ways, reflect a growing scepticism regarding educational policy development in South Africa. This scepticism is particularly evident in a special edition of the *Cambridge Journal of Education* in 1998. In their summary of articles in the journal, Enslin and Pendlebury (1998:266–67) indicate that while 'much has been accomplished at the policy level, the real work of transforming practices and institutions has yet to be done. Several of our contributors hail the new policies, while others worry about deep conceptual flaws, implied political betrayals and empty principles.' However, these accounts provide only partial explanatory frameworks for understanding educational change in South Africa. This chapter adopts a meta-policy approach to post-apartheid educational policy development, and, in particular, considers the various influences that have shaped, and continue to shape, educational policy discourses.

This meta-policy analysis discusses policy development in an overarching way, in relation to five different, though interrelated, frameworks:

- *The framework of history*. This focuses on the historical antecedents that have shaped post-apartheid educational policy and the constraints that the new government inherited from the apartheid order.
- *The framework of equity and justice*. Rooted in the past, this framework seeks to locate educational policy in the context of future planning which overcomes a specific history of inequity, imbalance and injustice.
- *The framework of freedom and democracy*. This raises questions about the nature of the state, the nexus between the state and citizens, and the continual battle between individual freedom and collective vision in determining educational policy.
- *The framework of the economy and global order*. This discusses the ways in which the new South African state attempts to make sense of the processes of increasing globalisation and fundamental economic transformation in restructuring the education system.

- *The framework of efficiency, effectiveness and quality.* This considers the extent to which divergent understandings of this new lexicon of educational restructuring construct particular conceptions of educational change and transition in South Africa.

Like all explanatory frameworks, however, these frameworks are limited since they abstract and extrapolate tendencies. Reality is rather more complex, nuanced and diverse, but such frameworks are useful in delineating the broad trajectory of educational reforms in South Africa over the last five years.

Discursive influences on policy

In using the five frameworks to understand educational policy development in South Africa, this chapter is located within the critical tradition of policy sociology (Ball 1990 & Raab 1994), focusing on the analyses of policy rather than the analyses for policy (Parsons 1997).

The historical inheritance and the conditioning of the policy discourse

An understanding of educational policy discourses in South Africa has to be set in a context in which the construction of educational policy narratives was conditioned and constrained by the outcomes of the negotiated settlement between the National Party and opposition groups. The South African transition moment was a negotiated settlement in which both the then ruling state and oppositional forces conceded and compromised on a number of issues.[1] The ability to reconstitute and recompose a new educational system was therefore constrained by a number of factors that predated the elections of April 1994. These included the so-called sunset clause, which protected the employment of officials who had served under the previous system, and consequently made their immediate replacement difficult (Sayed 1997). The new government had not captured control of the important state apparatuses, including the education bureaucracy. Thus, the new government's capacity to act was limited (Offe 1985; Codd 1992).

At the same time, the new education officials who were appointed carried with them the stamp of political legitimacy but often lacked the necessary knowledge base and skills to manage the system. Moreover, the new educational intelligentsia were steeped in oppositional politics and their only recourse to alternative strategies of change were first-generation policy texts, such as the National Education Policy Documents (1992–93), and the ANC's Education and Training Framework (1994) and Implementation Plan (1994). These texts did not fully articulate with the realities of governing (Chisholm & Fuller 1996).

A third constraining condition was the Interim Constitution that emerged from the negotiations process. The Interim Constitution committed the Ministry of Education to centralised strategic control over educational norms and standards but left the control of schooling to nine new provinces (according to Schedule 6). The new political order that emerged was thus a semi-federalist state, a point we will return to later in this chapter.

Perhaps the key constraining feature was the fact that the process of a negotiated settlement was an uneven one. The National Party was both a negotiating group and the government of the day. It thus not only engaged in formulating possibilities and options for education but was also able to effect unilateral changes as it controlled the apparatuses of the

state. An important aspect of its strategy was the unilateral deregulation of state assets. In education, it formulated the Clase Bills (Carrim & Sayed 1991, 1992) which ceded control of formerly whites-only schools to school governing bodies. In the interregnum from negotiation to elections, the National Party government effectively created a market-driven school system, with white schools charging high school fees and gaining control of their physical assets as required by the Constitution. The new government was thus committed to entering into *bona fide* negotiations over any alteration to the formerly whites-only schools. As a result, the National Party stripped the state of considerable assets even before the new government came into being.

The political tenor that was established during the negotiations, and consolidated with the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU), was one of compromise, negotiation and consensual agreement. As a consequence, the African National Congress (ANC), the majority party in the GNU, was reluctant to act decisively in restructuring the education system.

The conjunction of a particular set of elements in the aftermath of the elections made it difficult to act decisively. The government's immediate priority was to deal with the particularities it inherited, and if there were priorities established, these involved creating the necessary conditions for future change. This period of policy change can be characterised as one of 'accommodation and adaptation' as the new Ministry sought to come to terms with its positioning and assert its authority.

But these contextual realities tell only part of the story. They may even excuse the policy actions that followed the elections. The Ministry, however, did have choice, as de Clercq (1997) points out. The choices it made were to engage in a process of developing frameworks in a participatory fashion conducted by review committees, instead of prioritising specific areas for intervention. The range of these committees was wide and tackled every aspect of education. These included a new framework for education (National Education Act), the introduction of a new learner-led, outcomes-based curriculum (Curriculum 2005 and the National Qualifications Framework), the restructuring of the further education sector (the National Commission for Further Education), the reorganisation of the funding and governance of schools (South African Schools Act) and the recognition of the need for new forms of educational management development (National Task Team for Education Management Development report).

Samoff (1996), has critiqued policy change in South Africa, arguing that much of what has been produced is essentially frameworks or symbolic policies with a singular lack of attention to developing strategic priorities and singling out finite areas of intervention. This is a telling criticism, as it was beyond the capacity of the new Ministry in 1994 to deal with all areas of education. Consequently, a focus on one or two areas of educational change might have created greater impact.

Equity, redress and justice as policy concerns

The apartheid education system entrenched gross educational disparities and inequities between different racial groups. The need for rectification and parity in all aspects of education was thus a necessary imperative in a new, democratic education system. The demand for rectification was captured in the commitment to equity and redress as cornerstone

principles of all educational policies. However, there is much confusion about the notions of equity, redress and justice. This section teases out some of the different understandings of equity, redress and justice contained in South African educational policy texts.[2]

Samoff (1996), writing about educational policy development in South Africa, argues that equity should be differentiated from equality. He argues that whereas the former refers to justice, the latter refers to the 'principle of sameness'. Equity, according to Samoff (1996), includes the distribution of educational services so that all may be able to be equal. Equity in this approach can be perceived as a strategy to achieve equality. Equality, on the other hand, implies that in a democratic system no-one should be treated differently.

In contrast, Taylor *et al* (1997) and Codd *et al* (1997) are sceptical about the use of the word equity. Taylor *et al* (1997) maintain that to view 'equity alone is to stress already a particular construction of justice, which is linked more to administrative concerns of how resources ought to be distributed than to cultural and moral concerns'. Equity is thus about how resources might be administratively distributed in society.

Equity and equality are underpinned by competing understandings of the concept of justice in education. The distinction between equity and equality invoked by Samoff's (1996) analysis of educational change in South Africa is similar to Rawls' (1972) two principles of justice. The first Rawlsian principle invokes justice as the equal distribution of goods and services in society. The second principle allows for 'deviation' from the principle of justice as 'fair treatment' on the grounds of ensuring equality and on the basis that unequal distribution might be to the advantage of the least powerful in society. Nozick (1976) modifies the Rawlsian notion of justice by suggesting that people are entitled to what they produce – a theory of justice as entitlement (just desserts).[3]

Both notions of justice, as Taylor *et al* (1997) point out, are underpinned by an individualist, neo-liberal philosophy which foregrounds equality of opportunity for individuals. Justice in this conception is a property possessed by individuals. In contrast, Gewirtz (1998) and Riddell *et al* (1998) forward a relational concept of justice in which justice is not only about the distribution of resources and goods but also implies a concern for the recognition of difference and mutuality, and changing the oppressive conditions in which individuals find themselves.[4]

Writers such as Fraser (1997), Gewirtz (1998), Taylor *et al* (1997), Young (1990) and Apple (1996) highlight the ways in which current policy initiatives construct a narrow view of justice. This view, captured in the writings of Rawls (1972) and Nozick (1976), tends to present a charity-based assumption of equity and justice in which justice is distributed on the basis of the deficits of the needy in society, or in policy parlance, 'targeting the most needy'. In other words, justice is about rectifying individuals' deficiencies so that all may have equal opportunity. Such a conception of equity and justice tends to ignore the relational properties of justice and the ways in which the broader structural features of society produce unequal outcomes. Targeting individuals for corrective action – for example, provision of equal opportunity policies – would thus not necessarily alter the unequal structural arrangements in society. In this argument, the privileging of distributive forms of justice therefore not only fails to recognise difference but it tends to produce ameliorative rather than fundamental approaches to dealing with inequity and injustice.

In the South African context, equity, equality, redress and justice have expressed themselves in policy terms in divergent and often contradictory ways. First, South African

educational policy discourse tends to use equity and redress in the sense of the Rawlsian second principle of justice. Equity and redress are thus programmatic responses, captured in the philosophy of affirmative action or positive discrimination, which is constitutionally enshrined, to provide resources to those who have been most disadvantaged. In the policy context of South Africa, one strand of the discourse of equity and redistribution is thus about distributional justice and is directed towards ratcheting up those who have been marginalised under apartheid.

The policy of achieving equalisation, the 'balance sheet' approach to equity, redress and justice, expresses itself in the policy of rightsizing which the Ministry of Education argued would allow for equitable teacher-pupil ratios in favour of black schools. In funding, this approach finds expression in the notion of 'backlog' and 'redress' funds made available to educational institutions. The clearest example of the second-order Rawlsian principle was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and School Feeding Programme (Kallaway 1995), which made monies available to disadvantaged schools to bring about parity.

Educational policies in South Africa foreground access to educational opportunities (equality of opportunity) and seek to create conditions for facilitating access. The discursive construction of the notions of equity, redress and justice is based on a defence of different treatment in order to equalise opportunity for all. Equity, redress and justice are thus conceived as properties of individuals which need historical rectification so that all could be, sometime in the future, treated the same. The second-order principle of Rawls provides the justification for affirmative action programmes as a short-term strategic initiative to reach this first-order state.

In the South African context, the idea of justice and equality as differential distribution stands in contrast to the notion of equity and equality as uniformity and standardisation across the education system.[5] This conception of equity and equality excludes any consideration of difference as a criterion of provision. For example, it extricates race as a category of provision and policy analysis. The policy subject/target becomes the pupil instead of the black or white or Asian or coloured pupil and consequently ignores how race intersects with gender and class to produce unequal outcomes. In other words, the educational policy discourse, in emphasising uniformity in educational provision, tends to ignore historically situated and developed inequities. The object of policy regulation is, in the language of the White Paper (1995), 'the establishment of uniform norms and standards'. In terms of funding, equity and redress, this approach finds expression in equalised per capita expenditure for all pupils and students.

It is important to note that the above distributive conception of equity, redress and justice does not imply redistribution in the sense of taking away from others, specifically the privileged white minority. The negotiated settlement had all but put paid to the possibility of redistribution as a mechanism of justice. The conditioning of distributive justice means bringing everyone up to a certain level (however defined) without taking away from anyone. Previous patterns and consequences of the provision of education are frozen. This notion of equity is, interestingly enough, echoed by O'Dowd (1991:6), Chairman of Anglo American and De Beers Chairman's Fund, who indicated that:

> Unless it is brought about by economic growth, any advantage given to some has got to be taken from others, in the process creating a precedent for others to try to take it for themselves.

The key policy challenge is the way in which such an approach to justice could be effected. A possible solution would be to provide for additional resource inputs, to which the new government is committed, but unable to deliver, as the needs are great. The School Register of Needs (SRN) commissioned by the Ministry of Education indicated that an additional R12 billion would be needed simply to equalise resource distribution across all groups. Thus, it is unlikely that the new government may be able to muster sufficient resources to overcome the legacy of apartheid education. The other option, which is addressed later, is through choice and user fees.

In summary, there are two ways in which equity, redress, equality and justice are expressed in South African educational policy discourse. Firstly, as expressions of historical rectification in order to promote equality of opportunity. It is in this sense that the word redress is used as a signifier in educational policy texts. This notion does not imply redistribution in the form of redistributing substantial positional goods and resources from those who have been previously advantaged. Secondly, redress, equity and justice are located in a discourse of uniformity and standardisation operative according to the principle of sameness. Specific identities are displaced in favour of the essentialised construction of citizens as pupils, teachers, administrators, and so on. Justice is truly blind and equality of sameness prevails.

Democracy and participation as policy concerns

An important influence that underwrites educational policy in South Africa is the commitment to extending citizen democracy and participation in education as expressed in the first White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education 1995) in the context of a new democratic state.

The new democratic state that emerged after 1994 was greeted with multiple and contradictory demands. Firstly, it was expected to deliver a more just and humane society in a climate of rising expectations and hopeful promise. Simultaneously, the state was expected to provide the conditions for economic growth and development. The state was thus positioned as the modernising instrument for advanced capitalist accumulation in a context of increasing globalisation and financial austerity. Badat & Wolpe (1993) refer to this problematic as the equity/development tension. Secondly, it was presumed that the state would unify a divided society without threatening the white population. Restitution was therefore to take a limited form. Thirdly, the state was expected to be responsive to the will of the people, guarantee increased participation and extend democracy in society. In particular, the state was expected to establish a sound and vibrant relationship with organisations in and of civil society. The new South African state was therefore expected to fulfil at least three different functions: namely, ensure distributive justice, provide the conditions for capital accumulation and ensure greater responsiveness and participation in forging unity/nationhood (the rainbow nation/state). These functions capture the contradictory character of the South African state which was expected to meet the dual imperatives of securing for capital the conditions for accumulation, and simultaneously developing a legitimate hegemonic discourse through meeting the needs and expectations of citizens (Offe 1984 & 1996; Gordon *et al* 1997).[6]

Dale (1997) suggests that the modern state can be considered to have undergone a change in the form of a 'hollowing-out', with some state activities taken up by supra-national

(and supra-international agencies) whilst others are lost downwards to sub-national or non-state bodies. He further suggests that this does not necessarily imply a loss of state power or its withdrawal so much as a disaggregation of the state and a redefinition of what the state is.[7] The 'hollowing-out' of the state as an upward and downward loss (or, more accurately, a redefinition of roles) is divergently constituted in post-apartheid South Africa. The new post-apartheid state is, as a conditionality of the negotiated settlement, internally reorganised into a national state at centre and dispersed, decentralised states at sites (provinces).[8] The semi-federalist, decentralised[9] Constitution involves different activities and mechanisms of co-ordination between the centre and the sites. The national centre for education is responsible for the funding of the sites but is not involved in the management and control of schools within the sites. In Dale's (1997) terms, the state funds but does not deliver and provide.

The associative bond between the centre and the sites is created through a process of juridification. This involves the Ministry of Education setting uniform norms and standards through legislation that prevail across all sites. Legislation is thus used as a constraining mechanism to control the actions of internal state actors. The process of juridification (re)sites conflict between the centre and provinces from the political arena to the judiciary. As witnessed in a number of important legal challenges to the powers of the Minster of Education,[10] the battle between the centre and sites is constituted in the legal domain. The legalisation of challenge in turn redefines political battles of control. The only way to overturn legal decisions that run contrary to a particular political group is to muster sufficient political support in general elections to alter the Constitution. Thus, the argument advanced here is that the state is still powerful, albeit differently so.

In the process of juridification, the forms of regulation undergo significant alteration. A key characteristic of state control under apartheid was that it was hands-on, direct and before the 'act'. The apartheid state adopted a style of management that directly intervened in processes of educational provision and delivery. In the post-apartheid state, control is indirect, 'after the fact', and exercised through control of the outcomes rather than the inputs. Control is thus about setting limits and ensuring that goals are ascribed to and achieved. Thus, for example, provincial sites are responsible for achieving the national goals of equitable provision of educational resources and services.

The constraining nature of the semi-federalist South African state is reflected in the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) Bill.[11] The ability of the NNSSF to effect equity and redress in South African education is constrained by two factors. Firstly, as the document acknowledges, 'the National Ministry of Education does not decide on the amounts to be allocated annually for provincial education departments ... Each province determines its own level of spending on education ... it follows that the national norms for funding schools cannot prescribe actual amount in rands per learner' (Department of Education 1998a:11). Thus, the semi-federal structure of education makes direct intervention difficult and instead that state is reliant on the 'provinces to *honour* the state's duty' (Department of Education 1998a:12 – author's emphasis). Secondly, personnel expenditure is a result of agreements with national teacher unions, and as such the state cannot prescribe actual spending. However, it can determine national policy in respect of educator provisioning. The NNSSF thus captures the dilemmas of the new state in its attempt to restructure education in order to effect equity and redress.

In this new context of funding, the national state takes on a monitoring role in which it assesses the 'effects of new budget allocation on the current inequalities in school provision, the levels of fee charging' (Department of Education 1998a:14). The evaluative nature of both the central and provincial governments is most transparent in, for example, the proposal that governing bodies who wish to take on more responsibility for managing aspects of schools (section 21 of the South African Schools Act) will be subject to a 'managerial capacity checklist' devised by provincial education departments (Department of Education 1998a:27).

The internal constitution of the state has a direct impact on the relationships between the state at centre and institutions, and between the state at sites and institutions. The centre in post-apartheid society acts as the guarantor and protector of the needs, rights and privileges of all citizens, as expressed in the Constitution and in national development priorities. The centre is, in the final instance, the arbiter and rectifier of any possible problems in the fulfilment of the needs and wishes of citizens. The state at the provincial level is the key mediating agency between the state at centre and institutions. The sites are responsible for the day-to-day management, governance and organisation of schools. Conflict between the centre and institutions in this context is first felt at the provincial level.

The state at centre further redefines the role between sites and institutions through the South African Schools Act (SASA), and consequently redefines the notion of citizen participation in society. The SASA downloads or trickles down responsibility for day-to-day school management to the institutional site, with the state at sites now taking responsibility for overall monitoring and evaluation of actors' behaviour within a national framework.[12] The institutional site of schooling thus sits at the nexus between juridical regulation and self-management.

In devolving control to schools through the SASA, the post-apartheid state has introduced the key aspects of educational restructuring in the international context, namely, choice and participation.[13] In the South African context, one of the important features of the discursive construction of choice and participation is that it blurs the values of the political left and the right. Thus, the progressive rhetoric of deepening democracy, extending participation and allowing for an active civil society is employed to justify choice. Choice in education underpins the NNSSF document which states that the 'SASA *imposes a responsibility* on all public school governing bodies' to raise additional resources (Department of Education 1998a:12 – author's emphasis).

The naivety of the document is reflected in the assumptions made about the likely behaviour of the new school governing bodies established under the SASA. Thus, the NNSSF expresses surprise at the fact that 'the provision of the Act appears to have worked thus far to the advantage of public schools patronised by middle-class and wealthy parents' (Department of Education 1998a:12). This is not surprising given the structure of the SASA. However, race does not disappear as an issue. Instead, the relationship between race and class continues, albeit in different ways.[14] It is therefore ironic (to borrow a word from the document) that this outcome is blamed on the past and assumed that the NNSSF will counteract this process.

The key contradiction of the discourse of NNSSF is the assumption of the behaviour of the new school governing bodies. The document assumes that new school governing bodies will make information available to all parents, and that predominantly wealthy and middle-class bodies will take into consideration 'the financial circumstances of all parents as a whole

in determining school fees' (Department of Education 1998a:13). The assumption of middle-class benevolence is naive to say the least and presumes that the new power given to school governing bodies will be to the benefit of the common good.[15]

The proposals regarding fee exemption could be argued to be consistent with the desire to grade user fees in relation to parental income. However, the key problem surrounding the proposal is at the level of implementation. Firstly, the conditions for fee exemption do not, in the absence of any monitoring mechanism, prevent schools from 'screening out' those who are unable to pay. Thus, the main beneficiaries are likely to be parents who already have children in high fee-charging schools.[16] Secondly, the NNSSF document shifts the onus for determining who is exempt and who is not to school governing bodies. In so doing, the school bears responsibility for exclusion rather than the state. The state thus recedes as an active interventionist agent and passes the responsibility for ensuring equity and redress to individual school governing bodies. Thirdly, the NNSSF document assumes a high degree of knowledge on the part of parents to apply for exemption. This, as Ball (1994) argues, is likely to benefit the middle classes who possess the necessary cognitive capital to manipulate the system to their advantage.

The proposal concerning fee exemption is based on two assumptions about individual behaviours. Firstly, it assumes that parents will act with honesty and faith in declaring their correct income. Thus, it assumes that parents are able to act for the good of the school community as a whole. Secondly, it assumes that school governing bodies have the skills, resources and capacity to track parents' reported income. For example, how is this to be secured for those who are self-employed?

The SASA and NNSSF texts thus not only reconstitute the basis of citizen choice and participation at the institutional site. They also reduce, at one level, the extent to which the provincial site is able to leverage the school. In this respect, the texts open a possible conflictual relationship between the provincial and institutional sites, which consequently further isolates the state at centre from the effects of struggles. At another level, the SASA, in circumscribing the actions of provincial sites, opens the possibility of conflict within the state between the centre and the provincial sites.

The new relations of control and regulation set in motion by the post-apartheid state redefine the interaction between state at centre and provincial sites and civil society, and the forms of citizen participation espoused. Civil society through the SASA is atomised into discrete individuals who intersect with the state at the institutional site. The atomised individual uses her/his new-found authority and responsibility to leverage maximal benefits from schooling. Further, the post-apartheid state through the SASA displaces conflict about race, gender, ethnicity, religious identities and sexual affiliations to the institutional site of schools.

However, the displacement of conflict does not imply that the state is absent. Instead, as noted earlier, the state fulfils a monitoring and evaluative role. The state creates semi-governmental structures responsible for ensuring compliance with policy goals. The Commission on Gender Equality and the South African Human Rights Commission are two examples of structures that have the right to intervene in order to protect specific policy goals. However, they are often reactive rather than proactive structures. Through such structures, the state acts a guarantor for basic rights, with its key role being evaluative rather than directive.

On the other hand, civil society in its organised form intersects with the state through the endorsement in educational policy texts of the establishment of multiple public fora. The various educational policy texts all make reference to the creation of advisory bodies which would comprise stakeholders and would be involved in consultations around policy development at all levels of the education system. The establishment of multiple fora for policy development is consistent with the ANC's policy commitment in the Education and Training Framework (1994), which stated that the creation of such structures was an important condition for new relationships between the state and civil society in a post-apartheid society. Examples of educational advisory bodies are the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and provincial education fora.[17] The creation of advisory bodies as public fora for civil society participation has elicited diverse commentary. Affirmative critical theorists (see Moja *et al* 1995) see these fora as important connectivity mechanisms in creating new forms of governmentality in the modern state. Sceptical critical theorists see such fora as a weakening of participation by civil society structures and consider them as part of the continued demobilisation of mass-based civil society organisations in South Africa. The creation of multiple public fora represents a restructuring of the state's relationship with individuals in that such fora become the conditions for active collective citizen participation, albeit in diverse and contradictory ways.

However, the process of establishing public advisory bodies ignores the differential capacities of organised civil society structures. Further, they tend to ignore the racial and gender inequities which constrain full and effective participation in such fora. An obvious example of the differential capacities for participation was during the policy development process of the SASA, in which the majority of the 1 700 submissions received came from previously white structures with access to immense resources for policy intervention. Public fora thus differentially distribute democratic resources in society and tend to reflect and reproduce asymmetrical power relations.

Economic and global influences

The influence of the economy and globalisation on education is a subject of intense debate, discussion and speculation (see Brown & Lauder 1997; Smyth 1993; Levin & Kelley 1997; Hicknox & Moore 1992; Avalos 1996). In the South African context, the role of education and its relationship to economic development and globalisation has provoked much concern and anxiety (see, for example, Chisholm & Fuller 1996; Natrass & Ardington 1990; Chisholm *et al* 1998; Osborn 1997; Adalzadeh 1997; Heinz 1997). In general, three different accounts regarding the relationship between education, the economy and globalisation can be discerned in South African educational policy discourses.[18]

The first discursive linking of education and the economy is reflected in the 'social welfarist' project that links economic development and growth to the provision of social services and opportunities for all citizens. The satisficing of citizens' needs is the engine that will ensure commitment and productivity, which will in turn stimulate economic growth and development. The social welfarists posit a strong correlation between social needs and growth. Apartheid in this perspective became dysfunctional to economic growth as it constrained the full potentiality of the nation and consequently resulted in economic stagnation and decline. The South African government's Reconstruction and Development

Programme (RDP), which foregrounded developmental priorities as the key to sustained economic growth, captures this idea. Investment in education is thus projected as a necessary condition for sustained capital accumulation and a solution to the crisis of apartheid. Racial desegregation, equity and justice become linked to economic growth. In other words, desegregation and distributional justice make good business sense.

The second discursive moment emerged from two related processes. First, there was a sharp and growing awareness that the scale of injustice and disparity would require far more investment than the state was able to muster and justify. Second, the post-apartheid dividend of inward growth and external investment was not as huge as expected. In fact, the post-apartheid economic boom was based mainly on speculative trading. Productive investment was slow and not significant. In these changed conditions, macroeconomic stabilisation and an export-led growth strategy were considered key imperatives for change. In this context, the South African state committed itself to the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. The GEAR strategy is a macroeconomic framework that is based on an export-led strategy with reduced tariff barriers to attract foreign investment and stimulate growth. It is aimed at reducing the government's financial deficit and is focused on economic growth with a projected growth figure of 6% per annum. Privatisation of essential state assets and removal of exchange controls are central to the GEAR strategy. Growth is prioritised in this approach and is understood to provide the stability and resources that are a precondition for greater distributive justice.

The third discursive constitution of educational policy is the project of 'left modernisation' (Brown & Lauder 1992 & 1997). Left modernisers seek an approach that recognises the limits and constraints of a solely 'needs-based development' strategy and seeks to avoid the 'trickle down' economics of GEAR. Writing in the developed-world context, Brown & Lauder (1997:178–80) put it as follows:

> At the top of their agenda is a commitment to investment in human capital and strategic investment in the economy as a way of moving towards a high-skilled, high-waged, 'magnet' economy ... Education and training opportunities are therefore pivotal to this vision of a competitive and just society ... Invest in education and training to enable workers to become fully employable. In this account, social justice inheres in providing all individuals with the opportunity to gain access to education that qualifies them for a job.

Education investments thus can produce the kinds of learners and graduates able to cope with the global context and act as agents for economic development.[19]

In each of the three accounts, the global is conceived differently. For social welfarists, the global context is a threat to social justice as it prizes competitiveness above all other concerns. And competition makes local and national economies that are struggling to develop vulnerable, and consequently forces them to abandon concerns of social justice and equity. Social welfarists cite the dire effects on the rest of Africa of the World Bank's structural adjustment programme as a prime example of the decline in social service provision that takes place under regimes of financial austerity.

The growth advocates share a deterministic and fatalistic reading of globalisation. GEAR advocates would cite the failure of the welfare state and the inevitability of international economic globalisation as necessitating prudent management of the economy. Extensive and expanded social service provision cannot be sustained under conditions of slow economic growth, and an expansion of the state's deficit cannot be condoned. Deregulation

and the market will provide for economic expansion and expanded social service provision without burdening or stretching the state. The state in GEAR concentrates on ways in which it can contain public spending and drive down the consumption of social goods that makes demands on state expenditure. The underlying assumption of GEAR, typified by Crouch (1998a:6), is that no 'country has spent its way to development' and that 'no country with deficits above 3% and high consumption patterns would engender development'.

The left modernisers see globalisation neither as a historical inevitability nor as a uniform linear process. The negative effects of globalisation can be countered by investment in education and a more flexible approach to labour and the economy. They believe that given the economic transformations that have occurred, nation-states will be able to compete only if they have the right human resources. This view is best captured in the following words from the Department of Education regarding the introduction of outcomes-based education (OBE) (cited in Jansen 1998:324):

> Allied to the vision of South Africa as a prosperous ... internationally competitive country, is a vision of its people as literate and productive human beings.

Equally, OBE is argued as facilitating human resources development and potentially contributing to a vibrant economy.

Despite the ideological and political differences between the three discursive positions, they share a commitment to educational advancement and reorganisation. Education is regarded as a 'good thing' and there is a need for educational investment. Every citizen should have access to educational opportunities. The differences stem from the nature and content of the envisaged educational investment. However, Levin & Kelley (1997:340) succinctly point out that 'education is potentially effective in accomplishing much of what is claimed for. Yet, that effectiveness crucially depends on the existence of complementary inputs. In the absence of complementary inputs such as adequate labour market absorptive capacity, education is not likely to be as potent as the promises of its advocates'. The expectations of the education system in a transitional society are, as experience shows elsewhere, overstated, unrealistic and far too ambitious.

In the above account, the educational terrain is interpolated in the economic and global realm. However, education reform in South Africa is also a constitutive factor in the process of globalisation and economic reforms in particular ways. Firstly, education reform projects a vision of the global as the site of high-skilled, high-end, productive employment. The image only accords with a small fraction of the economically productive, with the majority in low/semi-skilled employment. Secondly, educational reform is cast in the framework of a modernising system in harmony with modern global developments. This image is an attempt to accentuate the positive and functionality of post-apartheid educational policy, a process of symbolic policy change. However, Christie (1998) and Jansen (1998) point out the shortcomings of an approach that fails to take into account existing debilitating educational realities. As Jansen (1998:323) notes in relation to OBE:

> ... the language of OBE and its associated structures are simply too complex and inaccessible for most teachers to give these policies meaning through their classroom practices.

Thirdly, as noted earlier, educational reform is projected as the panacea to the challenges of economic reform and globalisation. It is in the modernising educational system, through the

instruments of the various policy texts, that the solutions to South Africa's economic problems are to be found.

In these ways, educational reforms in South Africa mediate the economic and global spheres. They are constituted as progressive and holding the promise of a better future, The fatalism of the social welfarists (RDP advocates) and the inevitablist discourse of the GEAR champions is translated into a message of response to the new era of economic and global transformations. In this particular distillation, the Rainbow Nation takes its place as an active global citizen reconstituting the new economic and global transformations within the South African context.

Efficiency, effectiveness and quality

One of the many changes in educational restructuring has been a new lexicon of efficiency, effectiveness and quality in the organisation, governance and funding of education and schooling. The strength of this focus has been that it has turned attention to the internal dynamics of schooling and has foregrounded the need to move away from the distributional problem of access to considering the question of access (Dunne & Sayed 1999). Crouch and Mabogane's (1998b:28–30) paper is a welcome contribution to discussions of educational policy, as it indicates that:

> Gross lack of access to South African educational institutions appears largely mythical ... The analysis of the indicators thus reveals a deep quality problem, as opposed to a large raw access problem ... The key task is now to better manage the quality of the system that *already* appears to be developing something close to access to compulsory education of at least 12 years' duration. [emphasis in original]

In educational policy discourses, the following meanings of the new lexicon can be found. The notion of quality is understood as the need to ensure that learners have access to educational opportunities and resources that they were denied under apartheid. Quality, thus used, signifies an attempt to secure distributional justice and equality. Quality is also used in many policy texts (see SASA 1997 as an example) to signify a desirable goal for education. The new education system, the argument goes, is designed to ensure quality learning and teaching. In this respect, quality is used as value-orientation alongside principles such as nonracism. The notion of quality is also used as a justification for the reorganisation and restructuring of education. As Lawton (1992) and Caldwell (1993) point out, quality is advanced as a justification for fundamental restructuring in that the previous systems of education are perceived to be of low quality.

One of the aspects that is ignored in understanding the notion of quality in educational policy in the South African context is the way in which it serves to legitimise new forms of subtle class-based, rather than race-based, inequities. In the SASA, where user fees are justified on the grounds that parents who want to maintain or better the quality of education for their children are prepared to pay for it, the concept of quality implies more than raw access. It crucially involves an issue of to what and where you get educational access and opportunity. Thus, the new defining source of inequity is not only between those who are educated and those who are not, but also between those who obtain particular kinds of education. In other words, the notion of quality implies a grading of an individual's educational experiences, with the middle class obtaining education in privileged and well-

resourced institutions. For example, in the UK, the quality of higher education depends on *where* the qualification is obtained.

The notion of quality discussed above relates directly to the notion of effectiveness. In an international restructuring context, the impetus for new forms of educational organisation is rooted in the perceived failings and ineffectiveness of systems. For example, the *Nation at Risk* text in the US highlights the ways in which the American education system is failing to prepare learners for the 21st century and the ways in which the system is performing badly, compared to other countries, in subjects such as science. Lawton (1992:142–3) states that 'ineffective educational systems, in short, were indicted, for failing in the role of developing human capital for the benefit of individuals and society'. In the South African context, effective education is about creating a structure of education that was able to deliver on the new educational values of equity, redress, and so on. The clearest expression of the notion of educational effectiveness is found in human resource development programmes, where it is argued that the system of education needs to be restructured so that it can develop the potential of all.

The concept of efficiency is one that has concerned many analyses of education (see Woodhall 1997; Lawton 1992). In the South African context, the concept of efficiency was first introduced in the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) policy discourses, and its roots were primarily in the private sector education think-tanks such as the Urban Foundation. Efficiency in the NEPI discourse was considered an important value and principle in the articulation of alternative progressive educational policy options.[20] More recently, Crouch (1997) and Crouch and Magobane (1998a, 1998b) have written extensively on efficiency in education. There are a number of differing conceptualisations of efficiency and inefficiency in South African educational policy discourses.

Firstly, efficiency is constituted in relation to the system of apartheid education. Apartheid education was considered inefficient to the extent that it entailed multiple, fragmented education departments. In an administrative sense, inefficiency arose from wasteful duplication and an over-bureaucratised system. The post-apartheid education dividend was conceived as an outflow of monies resulting from the creation of a single, unified and streamlined education system. The reality is that, whilst a unified education system has been established, the massive inward administrative savings have not materialised, for a number of reasons.[21] Apartheid education was also beset by internal allocative inefficiency in that huge resources were devoted to the white system with neglect and underfunding of black education. White education and coloured education were higher in terms of input allocation due to higher teacher remuneration costs. The higher salary costs were related to the differentials in experience and qualifications of white and coloured teachers and lower pupil-teacher ratios (Crouch 1997, Kallaway 1995).

Secondly, efficiency in post-apartheid education policy constitutes a reversal of apartheid education policies. Efficiency is thus about equally distributing resources to all students and equalising administrative capacity across the system.

The most important aspect of post-apartheid educational policy's efficiency drive is in relation to the teaching profession. Teacher costs in South Africa, as in other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, are extremely high. Most provinces spend between 80 and 90% of their budgets on teacher salaries. Thus, the majority of the budget is tied to recurrent committed expenditure, leaving very little for spending on resources such as books and equipment. This

is perhaps a result of the constraining overall education budget. However, the overall spending on education in South Africa is about 6% of GDP, which is relatively high compared to most countries. Overall budgetary increases are unlikely in a context in which the state is committed to curbing expenditure and in which only 'very small real increases in public spending' are anticipated over the next few years (Department of Education 1998:9). Consequently, teacher remuneration will continue to consume a substantial proportion of the budget for the foreseeable future (Department of Education 1998b). The NNSSF document therefore refers to 'managing down' teacher personnel costs to 85% of overall costs. The emphasis of educational policy in relation to the teaching force is thus, as the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) report indicates (Department of Education 1998b), focused on the need to enhance the productivity of teachers as a way of improving efficiency.

A key aspect of teacher efficiency is to lower unit costs by various measures, including increasing teacher-pupil ratios (teacher-pupil ratios of 1:41 over a few years in secondary schools have been proposed); increasing teacher workload (the MTEF proposes 1 800 hours of teacher work per year); decreasing the number of substitutes used in teaching; and redeploying staff. As the MTEF report (Department of Education 1998b:42) puts it:

> The personnel chapter indicated that it is not realistic to decrease the cost of qualified teachers. What is required is an increase in productivity of teachers and other inputs in the education system.

Improving teacher productivity is thus considered to be, as the tone of the MTEF report suggests, perhaps the key efficiency gain in education. The suggestions regarding teacher productivity, which form a substantial part of the MTEF report, are similar to what Whitty (1997) refers to as the intensification of teacher work – increased workloads, increased surveillance and monitoring and the pitting of school communities against professionals under the guise of accountability and public responsiveness.

A third sense of efficiency that permeates educational discourse is that of wastage, and the relationship between input cost and performance outcomes and improvements. Indicators of wastage cite the low matric pass rates of African pupils (only about 25% of African students obtain a matric pass), the high number of African pupils who repeat – particularly at the primary level – and the number of pupil-years African students invest for a 12-year matric certificate. Crouch and Magobane (1988b) indicate that the system expends 30–40 years of African pupil-years for a 12-year matric pass. This measure of efficiency is one of ensuring successful outcomes in terms of investment of time and input costs for learning. Efficiency is understood to include similar or improved levels of performance with lower unit costs, improved performance without adding new resources, and redress to the extent that efficiency savings can be used for redress purposes. However, as the EPU (1997) points out: 'there is little empirically based research which establishes the relationships between changing inputs and costs with improved performance'.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the key discursive concerns that have shaped, and will continue to shape, post-apartheid education policy. Five principal concerns have been discussed, namely, the historical legacy of apartheid education; equity and justice; democracy

and participation; economy and globalisation; and efficiency, quality and effectiveness. These concerns are indelibly stamped on all the policy texts that have been issued by the Ministry of Education since 1994.

The concerns are shared by most countries undergoing educational change and renewal. However, they take on particular and specific inflections in the South African context. They thus represent a continual mediation between the concerns of nation-states and those of the emerging global order.

In tracing a path for educational policy change in South Africa, this chapter has not sought to engage in the analysis for policy. It does not seek to 'problem solve'. Instead, it has charted some of the conceptual shifts in South African educational policy, highlighting the continuities and discontinuities, the process of mediation, the conceptual tensions and the different sets of interests that influence the process. This conceptual exploration indicates the potent symbolism of contemporary educational policy development in South Africa. In doing so, it highlights the spaces educational reform in South African opens, and those it closes, in the field of practice, which, as Jansen (1998) argues, have largely been ignored.

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Endnotes

1 See Badat, S. (1995) 'Educational policies in the transition period.' *Comparative Education*, 31(2):141–60, for a comprehensive review of the context of transition. Badat argues that the new state was constrained by a number of factors that emerge from the particular path to change taken in the South African context. This section focuses on those that directly impinge on education.

2 A selected review of the literature in the *Journal of Education Policy* over the last 10 years, for example, indicates that implicit in much of the criticism of the influence of markets in education are different notions of equity, redress, equality and justice (as examples, see Gewirtz *et al* 1995; Ball *et al* 1995; Ball 1994). However, there have been few attempts to theorise these concepts explicitly. Notable exceptions include Grace (1994) and Ranson *et al* (1997) who argue that understanding educational policy in the current context requires an explicit understanding of these notions. Grace (1994) suggests that what is required in policy is a strategy of 'democratic counter-advocacy' which stands in opposition to the narrow economic sciences approach which invokes policy strategies under the guise of neutrality

3 See Gewirtz (1998), Hatcher (1998) and Riddle (1998) in a special edition of the *Journal of Education Policy* for a comprehensive review of the different and contrasting notions of social justice and equality.

4 There is much debate and writing about the differences and linkages between distributive and relational justice in various works. See Gewirtz (1998) for a comprehensive review. For the purpose of this chapter, the key issue is the simple point that a concern with distributional justice in the South Africa context may obscure a need to restructure fundamentally the conditions of oppression.

5 This notion of equity and justice echoes Rawls' first principle of justice as sameness.

6 These contradictory demands lead Gordon *et al* (1997) to argue that states in capitalist societies are both constrained and enabled vis-à-vis capital.

7 Similar analyses of the role of the state can be found in articles about the market in education (see, for example, Whitty 1997; Ranson *et al* 1997; Gewirtz *et al* 1995; Ball 1994; Lauder & Brown 1988) wherein

it is suggested that the modern state redefines its role with respect to the funding, regulation and provision of education.

8 The notion of the state at centre and state at sites is used in the descriptive sense of specifying the relationships of government set up by the Constitution, which has carved up South Africa into nine provinces. A fuller exploration of the notion of the state and civil society is developed in an earlier paper by Carrim and Sayed (1992).

9 See Sayed (1995 & 1999a) for a discussion on the discourses of educational decentralisation in South African education.

10 An important challenge was brought against the Minister of Education by the Democratic Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party, which argued that the National Education Act – which specified the powers of the Minister – undermined provincial autonomy as set out in the Constitution. The Constitutional Court ruled in favour of the Minister. Sayed (1999a) provides a fuller discussion of this struggle.

11 Following the SASA, the Ministry of Education issued the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) Bill in October 1998. The NNSSF (Department of Education 1998:5–6) is designed to establish 'the national norms and minimum standards in terms of the South African Schools Act (no. 84 of 1996), and came into effect on April 1999. The NNSSF covers the ways in which provinces should fund schools (both public and independent) and provides guidelines for fee exemption.

12 In earlier papers (Sayed 1999a & 1999b and Sayed & Carrim 1998), a strong critique is developed of the SASA in respect of the implications of user fees for the goals of equity, justice and redress

13 The review of notions of choice and participation in a market (see, for example, Ball 1993; Ball 1994; Ball *et al* 1995; Gewirtz *et al* 1995; Munn [ed.] 1993; Vincent 1996; Wells 1997; Fine 1997; Brown 1997) reveal two dimensions of the debate. The first is the advocacy, elaboration and critiques by researchers of either market or democratic egalitarian approaches to educational choice and provisions. See Chubb and Moe (1990) for an elaborate account of the virtues of choice, whilst the works of Ball and colleagues (Ball 1994; Gewirtz *et al* 1995) and Hatcher (1998) highlight the critique of choice and its effect on further stratification and inequity in society. The latter are researchers working in the empirical tradition (both qualitative and quantitative) who are engaged in determining issues such as how choice occurs, whether more choice results from greater deregulation through markets and whether markets result in the privileging of some and greater inequity. See works by researchers such as Gewirtz *et al* (1995) and Fitz (1998).

14 See Sayed (1999a). However, as the Grove saga reveals, middle-class schools are keen to project an image of nonracism and concern for the poor. They would therefore encourage children from the poor and other 'races', as stated by Grove governing body members. However, this is a question of political survival and ensuring that the school projects an image of nonracism so that it can attract middle-class parents. See Jansen, J.D. (1999) 'Grove Primary: power, privilege and the law in South African education'. *Journal of Education*, 23(1):5–30.

15 The NNSSF (Department of Education 1998a:40) proposes the following basis of fee-charging and exemption:

- If the combined annual gross income of parents is less than 10 times the annual fee, then full exemption is granted.
- If the combined annual gross income of parents is less than 30 times the annual fee, then partial exemption is granted.
- If the combined annual gross income of parents is more than 30 times the annual fee, then no exemption is granted.

16 See Sayed (1999a & 1999b) for a more developed critique of this point.

17 See an earlier paper by Carrim and Sayed (1998) for a critical discussion of the forms and understandings of participation in post-apartheid educational policy.

18 It may be argued that the threefold distinction is not sufficiently nuanced and distorts the similarities between the positions. The contention of the chapter is that these three tendencies can be discerned in educational policy, and that at the level of recommendation and practice, they offer divergent and contradictory options. Nonetheless, the chapter does recognise some similarities between the three positions.

[19] Also, see Reich (1997) for an account of the economic changes under conditions of globalisation and the kinds of knowledge needed and prioritised.

[20] The chapter alludes to one of the more interesting aspects of educational policy discourses in South Africa: namely, how concepts associated with neo-liberal, free-market ideologies get subsumed in progressive discourses (the forms of policy borrowing). Efficiency is one such concept. A charitable interpretation of this process would be to suggest that this is part of the hegemonic struggle for the reappropriation of concepts to progressive ends. True as this might be, the appeal of the new educational discourse, and the difficulties of struggle against, show how potentially inequitable ideas can be cloaked with left rhetoric. The outcomes-based education (OBE) and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) debate is one such example.

[21] These included the fact that the present system is still bureaucracy-heavy due to the constitutional agreement to create nine provincial departments and that 'rightsizing' the education public sector is not an easy political process.

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CHAPTER 19

Explaining non-change in education reform after apartheid: political symbolism and the problem of policy implementation

Jonathan D. Jansen

In postcolonial states, the lack of fit between education policy and education practice is commonly explained in terms of the lack of resources, the legacy of inequality and the dearth of capacity to translate official vision into contextual reality. This is a powerful view that is difficult to refute, for three reasons. Firstly, because it is lodged in a deeply held sense that government means what it says, ie that what education policy claims, it intends to happen within the schools and classrooms of that country. Secondly, because it assumes a simple linear logic between policy and practice, ie policy moves logically and naturally from intention to realisation. Thirdly, because it is based on a commonsense conception of policy as official documents or ideal statements made by government. This is a view of policy devoid of politics and of power, of competing interests and conflicting struggles.

This chapter challenges this simple view of policy by posing a potentially disturbing question: what if the policy stated was not in the first instance intended to change practice? In other words, what if other primary motivations lay behind the generation of new policies rather than transforming realities of teaching and learning in classrooms?

In challenging the conventional view of policy, I described and evaluated seven case studies of education reform in South Africa following the democratic elections of 1994.[1] Reading deeply and widely across these case studies, I sought *theoretical explanations of quality*, ie explanations that were coherent, contextualised, resonant, nuanced, plausible, parsimonious and comprehensive in both scope and depth. After careful interrogation of the seven case studies[2] as a collective data set on education politics in the transition, the following theoretical position is offered to explain the trajectory of policy development after the 1994 elections. Rather than repeat the evidence in detail in this theoretical account, readers are directed to the larger study, *Framing Education Policy After Apartheid: On the Politics of Non-reform in South African Education, 1990–2000*. This chapter is therefore limited to the theoretical explanation distilled from the case study data.

The chapter is organised in two parts. The first part is concerned with the evidence for and elaboration of the theory of political symbolism as explanation for non-implementation in South African education reform after apartheid. The second part is a response to the critics of political symbolism. These critics consist of a group of persons who read the original Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) report in which I expounded for the first time the case for an alternative explanation for the lack of change in education despite considerable political investment in changing apartheid schooling.

Political symbolism: evidence and explanation

What evidence for political symbolism as policy craft?

On the basis of the case study evidence, I wish to claim that the making of education policy in South Africa is best described as a struggle for the achievement of a broad political symbolism to mark the shift from apartheid to post-apartheid society. We search in vain for a logic in policy-making connected to any serious intention to change the practice of education 'on the ground'. A focus, therefore, on the details of implementation will not be fruitful since it will miss the broader political intentions which underpin policy-making after apartheid. Every single case of education policy-making demonstrates, in different ways, the preoccupation of the state with settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in the realm of practice. This theoretical postulation is important since it enables candid reassessment not only of the purposes of policy-making, but also of the pace and direction of educational change. How has this position been arrived at?

Firstly, by examining closely the relatively few unguarded statements of senior bureaucrats and politicians themselves in their explanations for the failure of education policy to connect to the lives of teachers and learners in schools and classrooms. The most clear and remarkable concession in this regard was provided by the senior, and arguably the most influential, policy-maker in the education bureaucracy, Dr Ihron Rensburg (Deputy Director-General, Education). The occasion was the National Policy Review Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) and allied movements in October 1998. According to Dr Rensburg:

> I am suggesting that we consider a typology which speaks of an overtly ideological-political period (1994–99) [which] reflected the shift from an apartheid ideology and politics, replete with its minority rule, balkanised, racially defined and resourced organisations, institutions and governance, to a democratic order marked in particular by non-racialism. (Rensburg 1998:50)

This period should be distinguished, according to Rensburg, from the next period (1999–2004) which concerns 'consolidation and deep transformation' (Rensburg 1998:50). The first period, therefore, was simply about establishing the ideological and political credentials of the new government.

> Naturally, this period could not but focus on the establishment of new organisations, institutions and governance, as well as new resourcing patterns. During this period ... many successes were recorded. These are reflected in the many policy papers, legislation, regulations and norms and standards which have been developed and announced. (Rensburg 1998:50)

This remarkable paper, in which the periodisation coincides neatly with election years, could be cynically dismissed as political opportunism, except that this understanding was not limited to the state and its officials. In one of two responding papers, Aubrey Mathole, a senior official of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) (1998), confirms Rensburg's summing-up of the past four years with an insertion pertinent to the theoretical position of this paper:

> In his characterisation of the two periods (1994–99 and 1999–2004), we would like to add the word 'symbolic' to the first period because our government had to practically display a rapid departure from the apartheid education system. (Mathole 1998:66)

But Mathole immediately seizes on this opportunistic typology: 'The impression given by this chronology is that delivery will only come after the elections. Is there any guarantee?' (Mathole 1998:60).

Chisholm and Fuller (1996:693) rightly conclude their analysis on 'the centering and narrowing of educational policy agenda' by acknowledging the prominence of the symbolic:

> ... national and provincial policy makers display a rich tapestry of policy symbols signalling mass opportunity, but they are stitched together with a thin thread. In the first two years of the GNU this has involved the NQF, a promise of 'lifelong learning', expansion of adult literacy programmes and renovated buildings in townships. But the effectiveness of local schools will not magically increase if the policy agenda remains centred on symbols of opportunity. (Chisholm & Fuller 1996:714)

Unfortunately, their analysis does not expand on or explain the ways in which such a policy orientation (political symbolism) emerges, for what reasons and with what consequences for educational practice and politics. In fact, their theory of policy-making and change resides in a forced marriage of two competing explanations: international political economy (the ways global economic and political changes influence policy choice) and institution theory (the processes which define how 'fragile states' position themselves to appear modern and gain broad legitimacy). There is too much incoherence in this explanation of which policies 'rise to the top', a fact perhaps explained by the differing ideological positions and backgrounds of the authors. My point, however, is the recognition at least of a politics of symbolism at play in policy development, which is disconnected from serious concerns about educational practice.

Secondly, the prominence assigned to the symbolic value of policy is revealed by the way that politicians and the public lend credence and support to the production of policy itself, rather than its implementation. This symbolic value of policy was not lost on the second Minister of Education, who took office with considerable public confidence based on his track record in the Water Affairs and Forestry portfolio. In Kader Asmal's 'Call to Action', a comprehensive policy statement issued after five weeks of what his officials called 'a listening campaign', he claims the following:

> I was told by everyone I met that we have created a set of policies and laws in education and training that are at least equal to the best in the world ... I am proud that our young democratic government, after inclusive and genuine consultation, has built a national consensus around the main education policy positions of the mass democratic movement ... The most important thing about building consensus for a policy or a law is that people own it and want to make it work. *Implementation takes time* ... . (Asmal 1999:2 – author's emphasis)

In forum after forum, South Africans have been praised for the promulgation of policy, its sophistication and its quality (see Cloete & Muller 1998:534). A striking, though not uncommon, example is the comment in the *Higher Education Review* (1996) on the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE):

> International experts have described the NCHE proposals for reform as one of the best tertiary education policy documents ever written, *but have questioned the government's ability to implement them.* (1996:1 – author's emphasis)

It is this hailing of written or declared policy, albeit with a footnote of scepticism about implementation, that has reinforced the notion of the political importance of the formal statement of policy in South Africa.

This political investment in the production of policy was especially important to politicians in selling their advantage to the broad democratic alliance. At the National Policy Review Conference on Education and Training (1998), Minister Bengu held forth the following line to comrades:

> The ANC-led government of national unity came into office with a substantial set of policies which outweighed everything put to the electorate by all the ANC's opponents collectively. These policies grew out of the work of the NECC, the EPUs, the NEPI reports, the National Education Conference, the 'Ready to Govern' Policy Conference of the ANC, the COSATU-led National Training Policy Initiative, and CEPD under the direction of the ANC education desk ... we must ask ourselves whether the ANC alliance, or a broader alliance of democratic forces could undertake anything comparable in 1998 or 1999? An equally important question is whether we need to do so? (p. 31)

Thirdly, the symbolic role of policy is displayed by the ways in which policy pronouncements make reference to issues of implementation. Where policy and planning are strongly connected, we would expect a government bureaucracy to outline concrete steps that would be taken to implement such policies. Such implementation plans need not accompany the immediate policy announcement, but would typically follow soon thereafter. This has seldom happened in the seven case studies around which this theory of political symbolism is built. In reflecting on the clear non-implementation of outcomes-based education (OBE), Asmal's explanation is also a concession:

> It was unfortunate in the extreme that the inaugural year of Curriculum 2005 (1998) coincided with the crisis in provincial budget management, with the result that the preparation of most provincial education departments was seriously compromised, or even disrupted. In both 1998 and 1999, new materials in support of the curriculum reached the schools late in the year, despite President Mandela's directive. (Asmal 1999:13)

Yet this explanation simply shifts blame to the provinces and publishers, without giving insight into the national policy-making and planning processes which enabled non-implementation of the new curriculum.

This may be a tradition in policy-making that will continue into the next century. South Africa's fascination with new policy statements, rather than their implementation, may continue to constitute the dominant mode of policy engagement in education. The development of the ANC's Yellow Book (the Policy Framework on Education and Training) in 1994 was heavily criticised for lacking an implementation plan. This criticism led to the Implementation Plan for Education and Training (IPET), which was largely ignored by the first post-apartheid government. Little has changed. Dramatic policy announcements and sophisticated policy documents continue to make no or little reference to the modalities of implementation.

Furthermore, when policy implementation does appear on the agenda, it is often as a last-minute concession or as a way of muddling through difficulties experienced in practice within a new policy. In the case of Curriculum 2005, the last-minute concession to offer each Grade 1 teacher five days of training (or information) on the new curriculum was not accompanied by any detailed sense of how these teachers would actually implement radical new ideas in under-resourced classrooms. These sessions therefore became the opposite of the pedagogy they espoused: 'telling sessions' rather than 'learning by doing' workshops. The late introduction of the cascade model, ie that a small group of trainers would train

facilitators who would train teachers who carry these messages down to the classroom with other teachers, was poorly conceptualised. The assumption that a curriculum message (or any information) passes in an unproblematic manner down a cascade in which people have varying levels of capacity and experience, was flawed from the beginning. In short, implementation was not an advanced planning tool, but something improvised even as policy was being introduced to teachers.

The most dramatic illustration of policy implementation being constructed through crisis is the case of the teacher redeployment scheme as encountered by Grove Primary School in Cape Town. At national and provincial level, there was simply no coherent, thought-out policy implementation apparatus for the teacher redeployment scheme. With the first legal challenge, the flaws in the policy were seriously exposed, despite an elegant and highly symbolic policy proposal to shift teachers from privileged schools to disadvantaged institutions. The costs and chaos which erupted are now a matter of public record.

In most cases, however, implementation was never on the policy agenda at all. The syllabus revision process was simply about achieving a symbolic and visible purging of the apartheid curriculum in order to establish legitimacy for an ANC-led government under unprecedented criticism for its failure to deliver in education. There was no implementation plan. How would schools receive the revised syllabi? To this day, most schools in South Africa do not have access to the revised syllabi. In addition, many of the syllabi had not changed at all. And there was no reference to the syllabus revision process since 1994–95.

Fourthly, the symbolic prominence of education policy is evidenced in the lack of integration of various national policy statements. There is very little policy coherence across the different White Papers and other official policy documents produced since 1994. One manifestation of this problem is that each policy process had its own agenda, actors and focus. At some point, each document had to address the provisions of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act and the central issue of linkage to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). But since the NQF came into being long after the other policy processes were being deliberated, it became a forced integration in many instances. The processes initiating OBE and the corresponding documents do not, in earlier versions, make any reference to the NQF. For this reason, the application of the NQF to schools, training institutions and the workplace has been completely incoherent. Similarly, key players in the development of the NCHE experienced a compulsion, under heavy political pressure, to introduce the tenets of the NQF into their document when it was already near completion. There is no reference to the provisions of the NQF in the syllabus revision process. Indeed, the link between OBE and the NQF is simply not made explicit in any government documents. One reason for this state of affairs is the fact that labour was pushing its own set of policies for the training sphere while education was generating separate policies for the school sector.

The most bizarre manifestation of this problem of policy incoherence is the way in which the populist premises of people's education (foregrounding educational processes) came to constitute Curriculum 2005 while the regulatory language of competencies defined OBE (foregrounding educational outcomes). This phenomenon has been described as:

> ... a hybrid educational methodology which politically has sought to go beyond the narrow confines of competency models by incorporating the progressive pedagogic principles of people's education. This has created a learning methodology that is simultaneously radical in discursive practice yet behaviouralist in assessment technology. (Kraak 1998:22)

Where the emphasis in policy is simply on getting out the next set of legitimating documents, one cannot expect substantive coherence in these different documents.

Fifthly, the symbolic investment in policy is given credence by the way policy invokes international precedent and participants in the development of the various education policies. There are few countries in postcolonial Africa that have drawn more heavily on international consultants in its first few years of 'independence'.[3] The prominent role of international consultants within South Africa – and its validation at Salzburg, where international experts in higher education met to comment on the NCHE work – is well documented (Cloete & Muller 1998). The role of consultants from Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, New Zealand and other countries in the development of various phases of outcomes-based education has also been documented (Jansen & Christie 1999). As Diphofa and his colleagues at the Joint Education Trust recall:

> With the reforming zeal and energy of a movement which had been in exile for almost half a century, the new government has seized upon progressive models in other countries and embodied these in Curriculum 2005, the national curriculum to be followed in all the country's schools. This is a bold experiment indeed: nothing of its kind has ever been tried, on anywhere near this kind of scale, anywhere in the world. (1999:9)

In this regard, the role of William G. Spady, the so-called father of OBE, cannot be underestimated in providing to the Department of Education a neat and elegant language for making the consumption of OBE accessible to practitioners. Overseas consultants played a crucial role in developing the fourth option (even though the Hunter Commission only produced three such options) for the financing of public education. The role of this group of consultants is particularly revealing of how international specialists come to influence local policy. An example is that of finance specialists Christopher Colclough and Paul Bennell and their influence on school funding policy. The following was constructed from an interview with Colclough (11 March 1999), parts of which I subsequently confirmed with Blade Nzimande (September 1999):

> I was at first invited by John Samuel via the Centre for Education Policy Development in 1992–93 to be involved in education finance and policy discussions. I later played a role in the assessment of existing government positions, including an analysis of conservative reasoning behind budgets emanating from apartheid officials (like Gert Steyn). This was the period of 'strategic management teams' during the early transition. I later engaged with the Department of Finance which I experienced as conservative and heavily influenced by World Bank thinking, especially among those responsible for social sector projects. I did play a role in influencing the governance debate leading to the White Paper by arguing that we needed to keep whites and articulate blacks within the public sector as an arena for state influence. Hence, the soft option in financing alternatives that did not force the rather strong redistributive thrust of the Task Team. This I presented to Blade Nzimande in his capacity as Chair of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee. The Committee was sceptical at first, but later realised that this matter affected not only white children but children of civil servants working in government. The notion was that there was a need to keep the black middle class involved in and as advocates for the public school sector.

This shows how international thinking came to influence a national policy decision spanning two government departments (Education and Finance) and Parliament itself. My point here has less to do with the mechanics of policy but with the ways in which policy claims can then

be justified through a set of international referents. Halpin and Troyna, in their thesis on education policy borrowing as legitimation, correctly note that:

> elected officials and politicians are more likely to be interested in a borrowed policy's political symbolism than its details. (1995:307)

And again, that

> the particularities of education policies are often less significant than their role in political discourse. (1995:307)

Similarly, Dale observes from his attempt at specifying globalisation effects on national policy, that

> The nature of its [globalisation] effects on education could be expected to be direct and they would tend to be restricted to ... the level of education politics. (1999:10)

This legitimating of education policy through external referencing is further invoked through the preambles to every single White Paper in education. It is stated that education is required to deal with the reality of globalisation, international technologies and expanding economic markets. The new citizen therefore is a global citizen, and the role of education is to induct learners into a world of expanding horizons. It is a vision of education that is forward-looking, competitive and global in its implications. This orientation of policy towards external legitimation is what Fuller, especially, calls 'institutional processes':

> How fragile governments must act to look modern and to gain wider legitimacy ... mimicking Western ways of doing defining policy problems and organising technocratic remedies ... the processes described and analysed are simultaneously material and symbolic. (Chisholm & Fuller 1996:694)

Sixthly, the political symbolism of policy is not restricted to the international participants and processes in policy. The very substance of policy itself validates the presence of South Africa as an actor within international education. In a short period of time, the South African state adopted a discourse of education that was intimately and directly linked to current developments elsewhere in the international environment. So, for example, the crucial first White Paper on Education and Training (March 1995) locates South Africa among achieving global states:

> *Successful modern economies and societies* require the elimination of artificial hierarchies, in social organisation, in the organisation and management of work, and in the way learning is organised. They require citizens with a strong foundation of general education, the desire and ability to continue to learn, to adapt to and develop new knowledge, skills and technologies ... In response to such structural changes in social and economic organisation and technological development, integrated approaches toward education and training are now *a major international trend* in curriculum development and the reform of qualification structures ... (Department of Education 1995a: pp. 15, 21 – author's emphasis)

Consequently, the issues of lifelong learning, competency and outcomes-based education, the integration of education and training, national qualifications frameworks, unit standards, authentic and continuous assessment, quality assurance, etc are prominent signals of international location (Christie 1996; Hartshorne 1998:105–23). There is little chance of

South Africa ever attaining or moving towards a lifelong learning system (though it appears in every policy document) and there will certainly not be an integration of education and training in any meaningful way. The 'unit standards' approach has been discarded within universities, and a serious review of OBE has been undertaken merely two years after its introduction into schools. All of this authenticates the earlier claim that the implementation of a set of policies is of much less concern than its social validation.

Seventhly, the emphasis of the South African state on the political symbolism of policy is expressed through the heavy attention paid to formal participation in the policy process irrespective of its final outcomes. Apart from the constitution-making process, this quality may have been pursued more aggressively in education than any other sector. Lodge (undated), in his review of 'policy processes within the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance' concludes that:

> Policy-making within the Tripartite Alliance was participatory and even democratic in character up to the election. Since then, macroeconomic policy making has become an increasingly circumscribed undertaking though in other areas consultation continues to play an important role in the development of policies: education is a case in point and represents a field in which the ANC's own policy generating arrangements have remained quite effective. (Lodge n.d.:42)

Lodge is correct. In every single process leading to the production of policy papers, and throughout the 1990s, there was an exceptional preoccupation with inclusivity and representivity in the make-up of working groups.[4] In ANC and CEPD working groups, we spent an inordinate amount of time ensuring that there were enough representatives from the provinces, rural areas, women, black scholars, representation based on expertise and constituency, non-university contributors, and so on. It is this faith in process itself that granted legitimacy to policy, irrespective of the final outcome. It allowed bold public claims to be made back to loyal constituencies:

> It would be invidious to single out the names of the comrades who contributed so much to all these efforts. There are too many. Some of them are here, and you know who you are. But, the policy drive of the democratic moment, and specifically the alliance, involved hundreds, if not thousands of women and men across the country (Bengu 1999:31).

Hundreds of teachers participated in the refinement of OBE and the development of learning programmes. Throughout South Africa, representative groups constituted the syllabus committees. The Hunter Commission dedicates a separate chapter in its final report to 'The Committees Process' (Chapter 2) recording in some detail the many visits, colloquia, workshops and seminars across the country, including 200 written submissions. This commission itself consisted of representatives that included conservative and right-wing teacher bodies and political organisations. It was called 'process'.

One important arena in which participation in policy-making became a public spectacle was through the public hearings convened by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education. The chair of that committee, Blade Nzimande (1999), described in an interview the significance of this institution:

> One of the most exciting aspects of our work was the Public Hearings which we convened when new policies were being developed. These hearings not only engaged the broad public on matters of education policy but it also prevented Parliament from simply becoming a rubber-stamp of government policies. This was no doubt the most exciting and innovative aspect of the new committee system. I found it very fulfilling, this process of critiquing government education policy. One example

> of where this worked very effectively was in the deliberations on the South African Schools Bill, later the Schools Act of 1996. The Public Hearings therefore gave the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee considerable power to impact on policy through effective public participation in the process. It should be remembered that this function (the Public Hearings) was something that the Department of Education did not necessarily have the capacity to conduct themselves, and so the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee became an important vehicle through which to secure this kind of public participation in policy ... The one thing that I know my successor will continue is to keep the education proceedings and processes of parliament open to public scrutiny and input. That may in fact be the most important contribution of the first post-apartheid parliament to our emerging democracy.

An established tradition in political science is concerned with the relationship between participation and legitimacy. Among the few concerned with this matter in the politics of education, Weiler observes that:

> Participation is increasingly seen as a crucial source of legitimacy for policy decisions, especially in educational policy ... The basic argument is that if those likely to be affected by its results are involved in the policy-making process, the legitimacy of the process and its results will be enhanced. (1985:188–9)

The concept of participation is desperately in need of problematisation in South African education. The following points, drawn from the cases in question, represent observations about the limitations of participation in South African education policy-making:

- While groups are invited to participate, this does not mean that the views of the participants prevail, as was the case in the Hunter Commission report, where external consultants had the final say on scenario funding for public schools.
- 'Even where participation in the initial debates has been very broad, the policies finally adopted may not have been widely discussed and criticised' (Samoff 1996:12). A good example is the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) which, as it moved from 'discussion document' status, to Green Paper, to Draft White Paper, to White Paper, became less and less open to participatory and consultative inputs as a government document. This may reflect the changes in and micro-politics among key officials coming into the Department of Education since the publication of the report. And it almost certainly reflects the demise of the NCHE as an organisation following the release of its report.
- Participating groups have unequal power and expertise in different policy forums, leading to different kinds of emphases in policy outcomes. The role of students has consistently been marginalised in several of the cases under review, eg the syllabus revision process. As a consequence, while students may appear as an invited constituency on these policy-making forums, they seldom show up to participate in such bodies. A similar observation was made about the undue influence of apartheid bureaucrats in the syllabus revision process in citing existing legislation and procedures which extra-parliamentary and non-governmental groups could hardly contest given their historical alienation from the political and legal processes that shaped education.
- Participation sometimes emerges at a point where the policy framework is already decided. For example, no teachers were involved in the decision to adopt outcomes-based education as the preferred policy approach for a post-apartheid curriculum. But teachers *were* called on to become involved in the elaboration and implementation of OBE, the decision to proceed having already been made.

- Participation is sometimes confused with consultation, the latter being a process of simply securing approval for final plans which may or may not be modified based on the consultative inputs received. The Grove Primary case represents an instance of consultations with parent bodies on a framework for school governance already established.

At some point, even participation becomes a threat to central authority. Under advice that the provinces constitute a problem with respect to the implementation of government policy, the new Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, spoke openly about this dilemma and his strategy to deal with it:

> I will invoke 'co-operative governance' as the means for dealing with provinces, as provided by Section 100 of the Constitution. I will not ask for a constitutional amendment; that opens up other debates. But if I am responsible for norms and standards, then I am also responsible for the implementation of norms and standards. I will use political means to address this problem and seek legal advice.[5]

The point is that participation in policy-making and policy implementation invariably generates questions about the scope of authority of central government in relation to other authorities and constituencies. This principle holds both within the policy-making apparatus of government as well as outside it. For this reason, the first White Paper is at pains to distinguish the difference between the Ministry of Education (as political authority) and the Department of Education (as implementer of government policy). It also explains the caution with which Minister Bengu viewed competing, albeit allied, policy structures in the democratic movement:

> From the perspective of government, I can say with assurance that we must not downgrade or undermine the policy capacity of the executive or legislative branch. But I can say with equal certainty, as political head of the ministry of education, that we need a strong, comradely, analytical, critical and advisory capacity within the heart of the movement itself, linked organically to the alliance structures. (1998:31)

The boundaries between authority and participation were clearly laid down.

The next question that needs to be addressed in this theorisation about the politics of policy is why the South African state would over-invest in the symbolism of policy and the policy-making process. There were important economic, political and legal or constitutional reasons for this stance towards policy-making in the years leading up to and since the first national democratic elections of 1994.

Why the prominence of political symbolism?

The economic environment

The macroeconomic environment within which the state had to operate was inimical to the kinds of redistributive policies declared in formal education policies. The adoption of GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) in June 1996 as macroeconomic policy effectively put a cap on government spending. The reduction in state expenditure was one of the recurring themes of state departments, led by the Finance portfolio, in an effort to ensure 'fiscal discipline'. Despite the claims that GEAR was also about equity and redistribution, in

practice the goal of macroeconomic policy after apartheid was principally to ensure that 'the fundamentals are in place'. In the case of education, this meant that no *significant* levels of new funding would be allocated to this portfolio. There was therefore very little room to manoeuvre in putting 'policies into practice' in the years following the election. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), in this explanation, could therefore not be sustained since it quickly infused large amounts of new monies into education (as was demonstrated in the Culture of Learning evaluation which was simply not sustainable in the inherited economic environment. Not surprisingly, the RDP office was shut down and the Minister redeployed into another portfolio. Even so, both post-apartheid Presidents still refer to the RDP in opening Parliament or addressing the alliance partners! In the absence of fiscal capacity to enact new policies in education, the state has no alternative but to resort to *playing up the symbolic value of policy*: that is, that the policies displayed rely heavily on stated claims to address inequalities, confront the apartheid legacy and to promise equity, redress, democracy, transformation, quality, lifelong education and training, and access for all.

The political environment

The political environment in which the state had to operate, especially in the years before the National Party withdrew from the Government of National Unity (GNU), militated against any radical or redistributive thrust in policy-making. The case studies of policy-making show a clear distinction between those policies generated during early transition (the report of the Hunter Commission, leading to the Schools Act of 1996) and those emanating from late transition (outcomes-based education). Policies of early transition consciously attempted to reconcile white and middle-class elements of post-apartheid society with government reform. The missive to 'consult as widely as possible' in the Hunter report and the allowance of unlimited fee-generation within Model 'C' schools were part of a political agenda of 'toenadering' which found similar expression in other spheres of politics, the 1995 Rugby World Cup being perhaps the most dramatic example. Gradually, the imperatives of reconciliation gave way to a policy environment in which the state, at least politically, had more options with regard to radical and redistributive policy choices. Widespread public resistance, such as accompanied the launching of OBE, could therefore be ignored and vilified by 1998 – a very different orientation from the 1994–95 period. What is clear, therefore, is that the discursive and symbolic value of policy held high currency in the immediate post-apartheid period, and this set strictures on the kinds of policy enactment which the state could launch in early transition.

Constitutional limitations

The symbolic value of policy also gained capital as a consequence of the constitutional limitations imposed by the negotiated settlement with respect to the nine provinces. One of the most debilitating problems for the Ministry of Education during the transition was the circumscription of its power to setting 'norms and standards' for policy while the actual implementation of those policies was left to the nine provinces. Education policy implementation, in the discourse of the times, was a provincial competency. This meant that the central government was really impotent to change the speed and direction of policy implementation in the provinces, since it would require stepping over the fine line,

negotiated in the Constitution, between national powers and provincial competencies. To be sure, this dividing line was (and remains) a subject of contestation within government. Ahmed Essop, a senior government official in the Department of Education, maintained that the problem was self-imposed. According to Essop (1997), by taking a conservative interpretation of the Constitution, the Ministry of Education had in fact declared itself out of the game of provincial regulation. This created problems for the ANC-led government on two fronts: the bureaucratic incapacity of most provinces to implement policy, and the political resistance of at least two provinces (governed by opposition parties) to any ANC-inspired radicalism in education policy. A consequence of this standoff on provincial competencies was the constant rivalry over policy and its implementation between the central government (led by the ANC) and the provincial government of KwaZulu-Natal (led by the Inkatha Freedom Party). Minister Bengu and MEC Zulu found themselves in regular and consistent public brawls, the most prominent concerning the implementation of COL (see earlier case study).

The one area in which government did intervene was in the making of the post-apartheid budget. Withholding or setting limits on budgetary disbursements from central government to the provinces, the Ministry of Education (working in concert with the Minister of Finance), was able to extract some concessions from unwilling or incapacitated provinces. However, there was little leverage through this route on policy implementation. In sum, the inability of the central government to leverage change in educational practice simply added value to a policy regime reliant on symbolic representations of what could or should be achieved in the educational domain.

The transition to governing party

There is little evidence that the ANC, moving into government, was able to change the rhetorical and militant positioning of policy into the kinds of technical and political skills required for changing the complex educational landscape inherited from apartheid. The reliance on symbols works well within liberation movements (see Seekings 2000:23) but can undermine effective policy generation and implementation when such movements run real governments with real local and global constraints (Friedman 1992). The unrealistic promises in the prefaces and substance of each of the policy documents governing the seven case studies is evidence of such unreality within the post-apartheid state. The lack of material support for articulated policy positions (such as OBE) has been extensively described in the case studies. And the ongoing rhetoric about change, even in the face of demonstrated setbacks (as in the case of the RDP and the corresponding COL programme), is further evidence of a historical conditioning that relies on symbolic politics among the new governing elite. Indeed, 'because symbolic politics is so powerful, it still sets the parameters in which the key actors move' (Friedman 1992:612).

What are the consequences of a symbolic approach to education policy?

The investiture of political symbolism in education policy has both practical and political consequences for the post-apartheid state. In practical terms, the continuation of such an approach effectively means that one should expect little of the grand-scale changes within schools that defined educational struggles under apartheid or that were encapsulated in

education policies after apartheid. The sheer scale of backlogs left by the apartheid legacy, combined with very modest economic growth forecasts, foreclose any revolutionary or radical reform of the status quo as far as education is concerned. In other words, we should expect an increasingly divided schooling system more evident in class terms though still distinguishable in racial terms. This does not prohibit the further proclamations of educational or curricular reforms in the future. In fact, one of the consequences of symbolic legitimation is that it demands more and more symbolic initiatives in the policy domain (Weiler 1988) precisely because of the fact that little can be delivered within the domain of practice.

There are, however, signs of an increasingly interventionist position by the state that overrides the strictures of reconciliation and redistribution demanded in early transition. Two examples should suffice. The new 'norms and standards' for the funding of public schools effectively applies a redistributive logic that, on the basis of a 'socioeconomic mean', will shift government funding from well-resourced schools (normally white and urban) to under-resourced schools (normally rural and black). This is a very significant shift in policy, since the state risks two consequences. Firstly, that white public schools will significantly increase the fees levied on middle-class parents so that the fee structure for 2000 and beyond could effectively place such schools outside the reach of lower-class white and black families. Secondly, that in response to yet another fee hike, middle-class parents (white and black) might in fact abandon the public school system – a fear that granted such schools important policy concessions (eg uncapped fee levels) discussed before in the context of early transition.

But such a shift in policy thinking does not mean that funds saved in one part of the school system flow directly and smoothly into another part of the system. If the teacher redeployment scheme yielded an important lesson, it was this: that equity is not achieved through mathematical calculations about shifts in resources. Important political, bureaucratic and budgetary priorities effectively intervene to determine whether, if at all, resources flow from privileged to under-resourced contexts. That is why the logic of the new finance norms is misleading for those who expect a linear flow of resources from situation X to context Y. In short, it remains to be seen whether poor schools benefit at all from the application of the new financing norms. Precedent suggests that these schools will not see the benefits at all.

Changes in the terms of policy not only affect white middle-class parents. Black parents are also increasingly at risk through a more interventionist policy regime. The most important initiative in this regard is the insistence by the state that in the year 2000, only learners who turn seven in the year of admission should be allowed to enrol in Grade 1. The professed logic is that in allowing very young children to stream into schools, the public school system faces collapse in the early grades; moreover, failure rates are then unacceptably high, as young children (5 and younger) who should not be in school fall at the first hurdle.

There are several problems with this argument. Firstly, many schools are actually under-subscribed in the first grades, ie the problem is more likely to be that enrolment is not planned to ensure a more rational dispersion of Grade 1 learners across the education system. Secondly, there is no hard evidence of the extent to which over-enrolment is actually a problem, and if so, in which areas of the country. Anecdote or statistical speculation is not a sufficient basis for large-scale reforms of this kind. Thirdly, this move effectively displaces six-year olds from the

schooling system, ie learners who turn six in the year of enrolment. For example, imagine a child who turns six on 1 January 2000. That child now has to wait another year before he or she qualifies to enrol in a public school. Fourthly, this logic flies in the face of international trends which allows children to participate in formal education earlier rather than later given the demonstrated benefits of early education. Fifthly, this logic threatens to increase the distance between white and middle-class learners and black and poor children. The former group will still enjoy access to high-quality preschool education simply by virtue of the fact that such educational centres are available to the elite. On the other hand, the decimation of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) offering educare in the townships – principally because government rerouted foreign aid through its own coffers – effectively dooms black and poor children to an extended year of non-education. In other words, the levels of preparedness by age cohort are now further apart for white and black children as a group.

The only way to explain this dramatic move in policy is the inability of government to effectively reduce the wage bill of the teaching profession through redeployment and retrenchment (see the Grove case). Such a move, consistent with GEAR, will directly lower the number of teachers required, since manipulating class size has been the instrument of choice in reducing personnel expenditure. The point is that a new, more interventionist policy regime cuts two ways: affecting both white parents, for whom reconciliation was a premium during early transition, and black parents, as the natural constituency of the dominant political party.

Another consequence of a symbolic political stance, with instances of state intervention designed to further reduce government expenditure in public education, is that the blame for non-delivery will increasingly shift to the participants in the education process. That is, policy and planning failures are exempt from scrutiny; the problem is teachers who are incompetent and lazy, learners who are armed and undisciplined, principals who run spaza shops and own taxis, parents who are disinterested and disengaged from the schools, and so on. A case in point was the dressing-down of SADTU teachers by the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, at the Durban congress of the union. But more broadly, the decision by the Mbeki government to stand its ground with public sector unions on wage negotiations simply forms part of a broader strategy to portray workers as hostile and unreasonable.

There are correlates for this policy stance in higher education. As I have shown elsewhere (Jansen 1999), there is an attitude emerging in Cabinet that higher education managers are corrupt and inefficient, and that the crisis of historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) – both universities and technikons – is largely a function of mismanagement of students, finances and academic performance. As a consequence, there is an unprecedented number of vice chancellors who are either under investigation or have effectively been dismissed. The signal term is 'corruption' and, time after time, politicians headed by Minister Asmal are at pains to disclose corrupt and undemocratic behaviour in HDIs. Now, the observation that institutions are mismanaged is not in dispute. My point is that errant government policies are not implicated as part of the explanation, and that the focus for non-delivery has shifted to the participants in the education process. Citing 'accountability', this strategy then constitutes the pretext for greater state involvement in higher education, as suggested by the education amendments presented to Parliament in November 1999.

In sum, the continued reliance on political symbolism as the overarching framework for education policy effectively rules out any major transformation of education in South

Africa's future. Policy strategy will change, with greater emphasis placed on reducing expenditure under cover of those all-consuming discourses of 'efficiency' and 'accountability'. But schools will not change, and education quality will not improve. For to transform schools not only requires more efficient use of existing resources (of that there can be no doubt), but also more significant injections of substantially new and well-targeted resources. And that is unlikely to happen without a political decision to rethink the underlying logic that governs our macroeconomic policy.

Engaging challenges to a theory of political symbolism

In this section I wish to respond to the challenges to the theoretical experiment explaining the policy of transition in terms of an over-investment in the political symbolism of educational change. I am grateful to the 'critical readers' deployed by the CDE to provide systematic feedback on an early draft of this chapter. Following these written comments, I do not believe that the essence of the theoretical argument requires fundamental revision. However, they do merit an engaging response, since the quality of several of the responses can only assist in testing and modifying the proposed theoretical stance on 'policy as political symbolism'.

None of the six critical readers dismiss outright the theoretical position of 'policy as political symbolism'. In fact, they all agree that political symbolism has played some role in education policy-making after apartheid. The points of difference, it seems, mainly revolve around the weight assigned to political symbolism as explanation for policy inaction since the 1994 democratic elections. One of the critical readers puts the case this way:

> I do agree that the political symbolism has been an important element of policy-making in South Africa. It is probably an important element anywhere, and this is not surprising that it has played an important part in South Africa over the last five years given the political context. But the implication in the paper is that the Education Ministry has chosen to (resorted to?) use education policy *primarily* as a political symbol as a result of certain constraints; these constraints have resulted in the government substituting political symbolism for real 'delivery' ... [emphasis in the original]

Let me start by repeating what appears in the main text of the CDE paper. All policies have symbolic value. As I have demonstrated in studies of Namibia and Zimbabwe, this is particularly evident in the sphere of curriculum policy, where national values and ambitions are encapsulated through representations of society in school subjects such as history, religion, geography, biology, and so forth. I do not wish to argue, therefore, that South Africa is exceptional in its use of political symbolism as the vehicle for policy generation and dissemination. The wide-scale science curriculum reforms in the US in response to a perceived national crisis following the Soviet launch of the first Sputnik satellite in 1957; the rapid withdrawal of the national socialist curriculum in newly independent Zimbabwe following public protests led by the Catholic Church; the tensions in Israel following the introduction of a revisionist Palestinian history into schools – all of these represent singular examples of international crises which result from the powerful role of curriculum policy as grounds for both projecting and contesting important political values, which I referred to as 'symbols'. Whether conscious of it or not, nation states invest policy with important political symbolism.

What I did argue, however, was that the over-investment in political symbolism at the expense of practical considerations largely explained the lack of change in South African education six years after the end of legal apartheid. I made this argument on the basis of what I think is fairly solid empirical data:

- The public claims by politicians and education bureaucrats concerning the primacy of symbolic politics in education policy-making between 1994 and 1999;
- The prominence assigned by politicians to policy production – the making of policy – rather than its implementation;
- The inordinate amount of attention paid to formal participation in policy processes irrespective of their final outcomes;
- The lack of attention to 'implementation' in official policy discourses on educational change;
- The way in which policy-makers invoke international precedent in the development of national education policies as part of an external legitimation of local change processes;
- The way in which international participants (mainly in the form of foreign-paid consultants) are drawn into and influence the development of national policy-making as an extension of the legimitation role of post-apartheid education policies;
- The way in which national policy positions are validated through claims to South African incorporation within the globalisation of modern economies.

Extracting these seven empirical claims from the case studies of education policy-making, I linked the argument to sporadic theoretical efforts in the literature to elucidate the symbolic power of policy in the politics of transition states.

I should note, however, that the literature on this particular topic is scant given the weight of literature favouring technical analyses of education policy-making. Sabatier's authoritative *Theories of the Policy Process* (2000) completely ignores the symbolic power of policy-making. In comparative education, another recent and authoritative account of policy processes in education by Hargreaves (1998) and his colleagues, completely ignores Third World transitions as a site for investigating the politics of education policy-making. It is this under-exploration of a potentially powerful theoretical construct that led to this particular framework being applied to education policy-making after apartheid.

I am not surprised, therefore, that the bent of the reviewer positions is towards practical solutions and alternative strategies. This was not the aim of the original paper. While reviewers can (and did) provide trenchant critiques of the position paper, they cannot ask for a different paper to be written. This does not mean that I dismiss the practical; indeed, in other works I have spent considerable space and time thinking about policy strategy given the constraints encountered by Third World states (see Jansen 2000). However, I believe that the rush towards solutions is often unproductive because of the lack of attention to understanding the factors that undermine policy change in the first place. The original paper argues therefore for a reflective 'standing back' from the daily grind of policy-making to ask what should be a fundamental question in the policy sciences: 'what's going on here?'

From a theoretical point of view, it could further be argued that a commitment to the practical at the expense of a deeper understanding of policy inertia is itself a preferred theory of change; that is to say, a theory (often implicit) that social problems can be fixed through technical solutions applied in a thoughtful manner. My own view is that this assumption

needs to be tested, not taken for granted. The argument that 'if only there were enough resources' or 'if only there was enough capacity' then implementation would have been 'successful,' is not at all supported by the extensive literature on education policy change in well-resourced contexts (McLauglin 1998; and the general contributions in Hargreaves *et al* 1998). In other words, there is much more going on in policy development and implementation than resources or capacity. All the more reason for a 'standing back' approach which assumes that there is more to the dilemma of non-reform in the policy-making process.

Perhaps the most comprehensive and recent evidence supporting the view of 'policy as political symbolism' emerged from a study by Hess, insightfully titled 'Initiation without implementation: policy churn and the plight of urban school reform' (1997). From a sophisticated study of reform initiatives in 57 urban school districts in the United States, Hess concludes that:

> ... the status quo in urban school systems is largely due to political incentives which produce a surfeit of reform and insufficient attention to implementation. In fact, the continuing initiation of reform efforts is the status quo. The result is that successive generations of partially implemented reforms produce instability, waste resources, and alienate faculty. (1997:i)

What is striking about the Hess study is the fact that the lack of implementation occurred not because of a lack of resources; that the evidence for non-implementation was spread across 57 large school districts; that the data was collected on the basis of at least five different kinds of school reform; and that the data was collected through intensive methods, including 342 interviews. Against this background, Hess argues that 'reforms tend to be symbolically attractive but not to impose the costs required by significant change' (1997:7) and 'the result is that policy-makers have worked more diligently on appearing to improve schooling than on actually doing so' (1997:9).

The reason for this extensive referencing of the Hess study (which I discovered after the CDE submission) is that it represents one of the very few empirical studies to make a case similar to that which I presented, in a context where resources and capacity are not the prime explanatory variables for non-implementation. My contention is that unless policy evaluation in South Africa provides greater weight to the symbolic functions of education policy, then there is the real danger of social expectations being frustrated and theoretical progress being undermined in explaining education transition after apartheid.

To return to the question: how much weight, then, should be assigned to policy symbolism? On the evidence harnessed through the case studies, I would argue that during early transition (1994–99) the primary explanation for non-change lies in the symbolic arena. Now I should be clear: this does not mean that policy formulation was 'mere words'. The notion of policy as 'mere words' has little theoretical or practical value. As Buenfil-Burgos (2000) stridently argues:

> In spite of the fact that educational policies (eg globalising policies) do not reach schools and other educational environments exactly as they were proposed, they nevertheless leave a trace in day-to-day local educational practices. This is a position [that] ... challenges the ordinary idea that policies are discourses (ie just words) which have nothing to do with everyday practices (ie reality). (2000:1)

Words, as Edelman (1972) has shown, have a purpose. Discourses have political intent. To dismiss the theoretical position of policy as political symbolism to mean the simple issuing of words is to miss the point of my thesis.

In addition, I would be remiss not to recognise the real hazards of 'practical constraints'. Another critical reader makes the point emphatically:

> In his final sentence the writer introduces the KEY to educational change ... which I would like to have seen stressed at regular intervals throughout the text. It is not only because of stressing SYMBOLIC POLICY changes that the educational system has not been able to really change in a more widespread and generally beneficial manner, but because, *inter alia*, of the financial constraints on all sides. [emphasis in the original]

My argument has *not* been that financial constraints are irrelevant. Rather, I have made the case for a different interpretation of the role of constraints in relation to policy choices. I have argued that it is precisely because of material constraints on policy that the state has been inclined to play up the symbolic role of policy rather than its practical consequences. However, the converse is not necessarily true: that if there were no material constraints, policy would be implemented as planned. Rich accounts of policy reform (see Hargreaves *et al* 1998) over a century of effort have put paid to the idea of searching for fidelity between policy and practice. Nevertheless, the room to manoeuvre in policy reform is substantially constrained by the extent to which material resources are available to educational planners.

Having said all of this, the original point of departure for my thesis on political symbolism is that politicians do not always invent policy in order to change practice. It often represents a search for legitimacy. In this regard, another critical reader (Morphet), in an insightful set of comments, makes the point that

> ... the central policy issue which the new government inherited from its predecessor was the illegitimacy of the system as a whole. The establishment of legitimacy was no easy matter – even at the level of symbolic manipulations ... Certainly part of the contestation was about gaining influence and power but the currency of exchange was educational vision and the policy arena was thronged with gatekeepers and 'analysts' who were ready to block and discredit the attempts to construct any sort of comprehensive policy.

While I might disagree with Morphet as to whether legitimacy was the 'central policy issue' (especially for the ANC, with its overwhelming electoral mandate), I would certainly share the view that establishing the credentials of the new system required an overarching symbolic discourse about transformation (captured in key words like equity, nonracialism, democracy and redress). But this modification proposed by Morphet (which I accept) merely extends the argument that policy formulation was not always about changing practice, but was weighted towards important symbolic considerations which Rensburg (in the first section) considered strategic for the early period.

Now, this does not mean that the planning apparatus in the Department of Education did not entrench themselves within a daily grind of policy formation. The policy mechanics, as Fuller calls them, have the task of giving implementation substance to official policy – whether they agree with such policy or not; whether they think it is implementable or otherwise. Within the sphere of curriculum policy, I have closely observed the incredible pace and stressful working conditions faced by departmental officials as they scramble to meet imposed deadlines for producing successive drafts of OBE policy and planning manuals. In this regard, it is useful to distinguish policy formulation goals (the Ministry as a political office) from planning implementation goals (the Department as a bureaucratic office). This distinction between political and bureaucratic functions is not, of course, absolute, especially

when senior bureaucrats in government project their role as political, eg the activists hired into senior positions in government. But the distinction does identify two different orientations towards policy: one that has in mind the broader political arena within which policy is contested (Parliament, Cabinet, business and industry, civil society more broadly); and another that works more narrowly with the practitioners (teachers and principals) who are required to give expression to national policy within their classrooms. In my view, the critical readers have not always made such distinctions between the political and bureaucratic functions of policy, which partly explains the different weightings assigned to 'political symbolism' as explanation for non-reform in education.

Finally, the theory of political symbolism does not discount the possibility that education policies have resulted in some degree of positive change within the education system. Policies leave a trace in practice, as Buenfil-Burgos (2000) correctly argues. So I cannot but agree with yet another critical reader that 'I have seen little miracles of change, of new life ... though the success stories are not the work only of government.' If anything, the introduction of OBE may have been successful only to the extent that it generated a wide public debate about curriculum and pedagogy. Furthermore, well-resourced schools were able to respond to the new curriculum through innovative changes in classroom pedagogy. But as our research has demonstrated elsewhere, these effects may have been unintended and worked largely (though not exclusively) to the benefit of schools already privileged with well-qualified teachers and a stock of inherited material resources (Maqutu, Khumalo, Jairam & Jansen 1999). But these uneven, unexpected and small-site changes do not discount the observation that at a system-wide level, education remains steeped in crisis and inequality despite the flurry of policy in the six years since the first democratic elections. This acknowledgment of crisis was made, significantly, by the Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, in his 'call to action' in late 1999. And it is this reality that cannot be explained away by the useful but limited anecdotes about 'success stories'.

A different theoretical perspective is required.

Endnotes

1 Once again, I acknowledge the funding and support of the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) in making possible the broader study which led to this theoretical position. This chapter is an amended version of my report to the CDE during my tenure as Research Associate of this organisation.

2 The case studies in question include the syllabus revision process, the White Paper on Education and Training, the Hunter report and the White Paper on the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools, the teacher redeployment process, higher education reforms and the Presidential Lead Project, the Culture of Learning Programme.

3 I realise that, of course, 'independence' is a contested term in reference to South Africa. In this context, I simply refer to the formal end of white political rule in 1994.

4 The one possible exception was the work of the NCHE. As Samoff (1996) notes, 'the commission was diverse but not fully inclusive. None of the commissioners, for example, was a student' (p. 14). This may explain the 'minor revolt' by student constituencies on the release of the report while it was being feted in Salzburg (Cloete & Muller 1998).

5 Discussion during the so-called 'listening campaign' with the Education Policy Units, July 1999.

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