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SARE

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■ Preface

This issue brings together four papers presented at the 14th International Conference on Learning. Since 1989 a learning conference has been held annually in different locations around the world. In June 2007, the School of Education of the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg hosted the 14th International Conference on Learning in collaboration with the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and conference organizers Common Ground, founded and run by the internationally acclaimed educationists, Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis. The conference brought together 1 000 delegates from around the world, including 400 from Africa. The vision and dedication of local organizers, the late Pippa Stein, Denise Newfield and David Andrew, ensured that the conference themes encouraged an input of African concerns and thus the successful insertion of the African continent's 'local' into the 'global'.

The papers by Muthivi and Dixon, Place & Kholowa deal with challenging aspects of language and literacy development in early childhood contexts of rural Southern African schools. Through case studies of two sites, Dixon et al. offer comparative insights into children's failure to become literate in the Kwena Basin in Mpumalanga and the Zomba District of Malawi. The authors also highlight possibilities for change in these contexts, particularly in a more productive use of space. Using the case of a Tshivenda Grade 1 class, Muthivi investigates the relationship between medium of instruction and concept learning and development, focusing on the pedagogical difficulties that arise in this context. He goes on to draw out implications for language in education policy from this research. The papers by Excell & Linington and Ferreira address different aspects of democracy and human rights education in schooling. Excell & Linington look at early childhood teachers' beliefs about democracy as well as their use (and neglect) of democratic practices in their teaching. Ferreira's paper focuses on secondary school learners' multimodal meaning-making practices as the outcome of a successful intervention drawing on reconciliation pedagogy.

The next two papers take up curriculum issues in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Washington Dudu, Jairos Gonye, Rugare Mareva and Jabulani Sibanda explore the gender bias in O level English texts in use in Zimbabwe, showing that despite national and international commitments to ensure gender sensitivity, this is not borne out in practice in the textbooks examined. Lesley Le Grange examines the South African school biology curriculum through an exploration of its underlying philosophy over time. He argues that a *science of life* approach characterized by the aim of achieving academic knowledge through the 'transmission of facts' in a value-neutral manner has been replaced by a *science of living* approach that is characterized by an emphasis on the subject's social and personal features, which might include considerations of the

relationship between science, technology and society and a stronger environmental education focus. The final two papers return us to the contexts of schooling in Namibia, Uganda and South Africa. Godfrey Kleinhans provides an acerbic account of the cost-related reasons for the idea of implementing double-shift schooling in Namibia and Uganda. As a mode of schooling that responds to the gap between the desire for education and paucity of available resources, it is a model that is neither popular nor widely-practised. Shireen Motala and Veerle Dieltens conclude this issue of *SARE* with a consideration of the private schooling sector in South Africa. They argue that the debate about the relative merits of public and private schooling in providing better access and quality is an ‘ideological’ one, given the small size of the private sector overall.

Especially interesting about this set of papers taken as a whole is the diversity of perspectives and approaches they embrace as well as the increasingly comparative and regional focus of many of the articles. *SARE* continues to seek to promote and provide a forum for research that considers issues and challenges in African education that draw on comparative and historically-informed theoretical and methodological tools and insights.

Carolyn McKinney and Linda Chisholm

The editors would like to thank Carolyn McKinney, Ruksana Osman, Elsie Cloete and Mike Kissack, all from the Wits School of Education, for guest-editing the papers from the 14th International Conference on Learning, which appear as the first four articles in this issue of *SARE*.

In(sites): Examining early literacy practices at home and school in rural Malawi and South Africa

Kerryn Dixon, Jean Place and Foster Kholowa

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Abstract

This paper explores some of the insights gained from two early literacy research projects in rural areas in Southern Africa. It focuses on research in Malawian preschools in the Zomba district and primary schools in the Kwena Basin in Mpumalanga, South Africa. There are startling similarities between these two contexts, which are explored by drawing on the work of the New Literacy Studies and Comber et al.'s (2001) work on place, which applies a critical literacy framework. In contexts where children are failing to become literate, as a number of assessment studies show, understanding literate practices in communities is insufficient. Rather, a critical literacy framework provides additional insight into thinking about the conditions under which children live and learn and the impact of pedagogical practices on creating literate subjects. Although there are many lost opportunities for deep literacy learning, some practices already being implemented can be extended.

Keywords: early literacy, in-and-out of school literacy, rural contexts, pedagogy, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical practice

Introduction

This article examines two research projects on early literacy teaching in Southern Africa, one in rural preschools in the Zomba district of southern Malawi, the other in rural primary schools in the Kwena Basin in Mpumalanga, South Africa. Although they are discussed in relation to each other, it is important to note at the outset that they are two separate research projects with differing aims and designs. As such, the findings presented here draw on data that reflects the methods of the individual studies. Despite the different methodological approaches each project utilized, the issues around early literacy teaching are striking in similarity and worth considering

Dixon, K, Place, J and Kholowa, F. (2008) In(sites): Examining early literacy practices at home and school in rural Malawi and South Africa. *Southern African Review of Education*, 14(3): 5-21.

in greater detail. This does not mean that these trends are generalizable across schools in either country or within Southern Africa. However, early literacy learning as a whole is generally under-researched and the issues raised in this article are our attempt to begin to engage with some of the challenges of teaching early literacy in Southern Africa, framed within a rural context, to generate broader discussion and debate with others working in the field of early literacy.

Children are sent to school with the expectation that they will learn to read and write with enough understanding to function in the world. The reality is often quite different. The results of a number of local and international assessments reveal a disturbing picture about general levels of literacy. A comparison of literacy assessments undertaken in Malawi and South Africa reveals a common picture of poor results. The 1999 Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project was a cross-national study assessing Grade 4s. In the literacy component Malawian children scored 35% and South African children 48,1% (Fleisch 2008). In Malawi, the 2001 Improving Education Quality Malawi (IEQ/Malawi) research findings indicated that children had difficulty reading Chichewa. On entering Grade 2 the majority of boys (84%) and girls (94%) were unable to read Chichewa. Moreover 69% of boys and 87% of girls completed Grade 2 without the literacy skills necessary for the following grade (Chilora 2001). The 2004 baseline study by the Malawi Education Support Activity (MESA) (2004), which assessed Standard 3 and 6 pupils, reported that 99% of Standard 3 children could not comprehend what they had read.

In South Africa, the SAQMEQ II findings for Grade 6s reveal that, in the words of Moloï and Strauss, 'more than half the children in South Africa's primary schools are not even reading at a minimal level to allow them to survive' (Fleisch 2008: 19). When these results are divided by province, only 3,7% of Grade 6s in Mpumalanga exhibit a desirable level of reading mastery. The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) results reveal that in a comparison of 45 education systems South African Grade 4s and 5s achieved the lowest score, well below the international average (Howie et al. 2007).

With large numbers of children performing so poorly in these assessment tests the argument can be made that rather than the children failing these tests, it is schooling that is failing children. This article seeks to discover the conditions under which literacy teaching and learning take place and the kinds of literacy practices that are implemented in early classrooms. It asks the following questions:

- What are the physical conditions under which children in rural schools in the Zomba District and the Kwena Basin, Mpumalanga, acquire literacy?
- What are the common pedagogical practices at these sites?

The assessment results make it clear that school practices do not offer children sustained and meaningful engagements with literacy. Our first step is to identify practices and conditions within schools and classrooms. On the basis of contextual

knowledge of these sites, possibilities for extending literacy learning and teaching practices can be explored.

New Literacy Studies

The value of the work of the New Literacy Studies (NLS) (Street 1984, 2001; Barton & Hamilton 1998; Barton, Hamilton & Ivanic 2000) in drawing attention to the socially situated nature of literacy practices in different communities is important as a basis for this article. The NLS's work shows the variety of cultural practices associated with reading and writing in different contexts. They argue that meanings and practices are contested, the technical and cognitive aspects of reading and writing are encapsulated in cultural wholes, literacy and orality can be studied together in context, and there are many types of literacy. Engaging with literacy is always a social act. Studying communities reveals the different ways people use literacy to make meaning and negotiate their lives. Prinsloo & Breier's (1996) Social Uses of Literacy Project (SoUL) examines the many ways in which literacy is used in disadvantaged South African communities by people with limited reading and writing skills.

The inclusion of orality in the work of the New Literacy Studies is also significant. Heath's (1983) seminal study of literacy practices in the African American working class community of Trackton shows the value the community bestows on oral performance and the ensuing linguistic dexterity of these children. The oral tradition is deep-rooted and highly valued in both Zomba and the Kwena Basin. And, as Finnegan (1988) argues, even in communities that have low levels of literacy, the oral can be harnessed to develop children's literacy. Providing children with access to literacy-related activities can be facilitated by individuals who lack literacy skills themselves.

Gee's work with discourses is also relevant. He defines discourse as an 'identity kit' (2001: 526), a 'socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network"' (2001: 537). That discourse goes beyond language into a way of 'being' is based on Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* (Wilson 2004). This definition is not limited to language, but includes bodily dispositions and the construction of particular subjectivities. He argues that one acquires a primary discourse through early socialization in the home. In the move from the home, other discourses are required by social institutions like schools and churches – these are secondary discourses. Literacy for Gee (2001: 529) is 'fluent control of a secondary discourse', which requires meaningful social contexts. This creates a major challenge for teachers who teach children from communities whose primary discourses do not focus on literacy. If there is no transference from the primary discourse to the secondary school discourse, children do not attain fluency in the secondary discourse.

This raises the issue of dominant discourses and powerful forms of literacy that are not always practised in poorer communities. It is not enough to celebrate the richness

of community practices without considering the cultural and social capital children have when they move outside the community. Janks (2006: 133) argues powerfully that

the productive and creative power of diversity has to be balanced against issues of power and access. I believe that educators have a responsibility to give students access to powerful forms, while simultaneously using diversity as a resource for challenging and transforming what counts as powerful.

If this is counterpoised with Gee's (1996: 64) point that 'schools as currently constituted tend to be good places to practice mainstream literacy once you have its foundations, but they are not good places to *acquire* those foundations', then questions can be raised about schooling in Southern Africa. If children do not acquire literacy at home because parents have not mastered secondary discourses, and it is not provided at school and reinforced with quality resources, then schools are failing.

Critical literacy: Power and place

In the Southern African context, recognition of socially situated literacy practices is insufficient because many children's home and school literacy practices do not give them access to local and global literacy practices. It is important to consider literacy practices within the context of power relations and dominant discourses to understand the kind of literacies that are valued. The work of the New Literacy Studies does not always go far enough in considering power and access. In order to think more deeply about social contexts, we argue that understanding the physical environments in which children learn is one way of thinking about the connections between literacy and power. To do this, we draw on some of the work on place that uses a critical literacy framework to explore literacy practices in schools.

The work of Comber, Thomson & Wells (2001) and Kerkham & Comber (2007) in Australia on place is useful in thinking about the impact place has on us. They are influenced by Gruenewald's (2003: 621) premise that place is 'profoundly pedagogical'. The attributes of places shape our subjectivity as they teach us how the world works and our place within it. In doing so, places have an enormous impact on the ways in which we think and 'are' in the world. If literacy practices are socially situated, then these too are influenced by where we are located.

Comber et al. (2001) investigated a Grade 2/3 classroom in a disadvantaged area that became involved in an urban renewal project. For the project, the children explored issues of place and power through their writing and drawing. Underpinning this project is a critical literacy pedagogy. Comber et al. (2001: 453) argue that

young school children can acquire literate practices that combine production, design, and communication in a variety of modes, through a range of media, and further, that such practices can connect them with community members about matters of immediate significance.

The project allowed children to express their concerns about the planned demolition of

a number of their homes. Children learnt literacy practices like letter-writing, faxing and map-reading that deepened their understanding of place but also provided necessary skills required in the world. This work draws on local knowledge but provides access to dominant literacy skills in the wider world. This project has the potential to shift the impact that place has on children's subjectivities. Comber et al. (2001: 461) raise questions about the implications for children who live in places where little care is taken in maintaining them. A danger is that they internalize the message that 'families in this neighbourhood do not deserve, need, or have a right to clean and pleasant surroundings'. This has implications for how children see themselves.

The same questions can be asked about the kinds of messages teachers have internalized about place (both community and school) and how these are transmitted to children, either directly and/or through pedagogical practices. This raises a second point of teacher identity which Kerkham and Comber (2007) explore in their work on literacy and place. They (2007: 136) argue that 'place is a significant dimension of these teachers' professional and personal identities'. This raises questions about teachers' world views. If they are limited to the confines in which they live, where the absence of literacy is normal and naturalized, how is a secondary discourse transferred to children?

Conditions needed for early literacy

The literature on early literacy development notes several important conditions that need to be in place for children's early literacy to emerge. Literacy skills are acquired through immersion in language and print (Gunning 1996). These knowledges and skills develop from shared activities either at home, in the community or in preschool environments (Hill 2006). Hill (2006) argues that children from print-rich environments, who engage in meaningful literacy activities, learn to read more easily than children who come with a paucity of literacy experiences.

When children come from print-poor environments, then preschool and primary classroom environments play a crucial role in literacy growth. A common theme in the literature relates to access to books and other literacy materials (Koskinen et al. 1999; Morrow & Rand 1991; Headley & Dunston 2000). Teachers who create book-rich classrooms for both first and second-language learners enhance comprehension and increase motivation to read. Access to and familiarity with books and writing materials, opportunities for choice of books, teacher modelling, social interactions related to books and shared reading or rereading add value to the classroom environment. Developing phonemic awareness is important in the development of early literacy (Yopp & Yopp 2000). Later phonics instruction builds on this knowledge. Children who engage in playful activities that focus on the sound structure of language use this knowledge in their early writing attempts. Drawings also allow children to represent sensory modes in ways that they cannot do through language

(Kendrick & McKay 2004), as well as to generate ideas that will later be represented as sentences (Clay 1998). This knowledge is a means through which contextually appropriate pedagogies for literacy learning can be applied.

Methodologies utilized

The research project conducted in the Zomba district examined the kind of opportunities provided for early literacy development and their levels of appropriateness in four preschools. They ranged between 8 km and 15 km from Zomba, the nearest town. The preschools formed part of a multiple case study that used qualitative and quantitative methods. Preschools were run by a director and staffed by teachers and community volunteers. Data was gathered through interviews, observation and questionnaires with relevant stakeholders. Some observational data was captured through photographs. Eight caregivers, school directors and administrators, and a random sample of parents were interviewed. Many of the caregivers were not qualified preschool teachers but community volunteers who had received little training. The highest level of education amongst the caregivers was a Standard 6 (six years of schooling) (Kholowa 2007).

The original aim of the Book Box project in the Kwena Basin in Mpumalanga was to provide quality materials and promote recreational reading. It was set up in 2000 with five farm schools. The schools are between 40 km and 65 km from Lydenburg, the nearest large town in Mpumalanga. On implementing the project it was quickly discovered that other basic needs had to be met, which resulted in an expanded focus. For example, no schools had electricity in 2001 and only two had toilets. Most of the schools had three or four teachers, who taught multilevel classes. In the ensuing years, some of these issues have begun to be addressed. Data was collected through participant observation, some of which was also photographed, teacher interviews and formal and informal conversations with the teachers. Sixteen teachers formed part of the sample. They all had 20 to 25 years' teaching experience, although none had received formal training in the teaching of reading.

The key organizing principle used to analyse the data for this article is a comparative one. Comparisons of the data collected from the two projects were drawn in relation to the conditions under which children learn and the types of pedagogical practices observed in early literacy classrooms. The latter was framed by the literature that highlights elements needed in the acquisition of early literacy. To do this, literacy events and practices were identified from the data derived from interviews, observation and photographs. Literacy events are observable, often repeated, routine events, whereas literacy practices can be inferred from events and refer to the 'behaviour and conceptualizations related to the use of reading and/or writing' (Street 1993: 12). General patterns were identified from the data. Photographs from both sites were used to analyse events and practices in more detail. Hamilton's (2000) framework for analysing photographs using setting, participants, artefacts and

activities was applied. Although a useful tool, the framework has some limitations. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts in which literacy is embedded, we extended Hamilton's notion of setting, broadening it so that we could explore the local contexts children find themselves in that cannot be fully captured by photographs. Literacy practices are also embodied practices. We thus added the spatial to Hamilton's framework to help us think about Comber et al.'s (2001) contention that place has a profound impact on us and the impact this has on embodiment.

Insights from the sites

The article now turns to a discussion of the findings from the two sites. If we are to understand the conditions under which children live and learn in Zomba and the Kwena Basin in a meaningful way, it is not enough to understand classroom contexts. It is necessary to locate these sites within the broader Southern African, Malawian and South African contexts and consider the access people have to literacy resources. The first section provides this general contextual overview. The second section narrows the focus by examining the conditions under which children learn at school. The article then explores teacher's pedagogical practices and pedagogical knowledge.

Conditions under which children live

The Zomba District, Southern Malawi

Malawi is one of the least developed countries globally, with 76% of its population living below the poverty line, predominantly in rural areas (Kachala 2007). Benson, Chamberlain & Rinehard (2005) show that despite an emphasis on agriculture, food insecurity is not reduced. There are indications, except in the northern parts of Malawi, that higher levels of general schooling have reduced local incidences of poverty (Benson et al. 2005).

Concerns have been raised about the high levels of illiteracy amongst rural dwellers. Kachala (2007) reports that 24% of rural men and 42% of women are illiterate. The 2004 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey of rural dwellers revealed limited access to the media: only one in five men and one in five women read the newspaper. The most common access to technology was the radio, with 67% of women and 85% of men listening to it. Only 9% of women watched television, compared with 19% of men (Kachala 2007). Although the government instituted free primary education with universal primary education for all in 1994, this has not necessarily meant an increase in the quality of literacy teaching: the move has placed stress on infrastructure through the building of additional schools and employment of underqualified teachers (Kachala 2007).

The Kwena Basin, Mpumalanga, South Africa

In the Mpumalanga province 60% of households reportedly live below the poverty line

and 68% of people receive less than R250 a month (www.environment.gov.za/soer/reports/mpumalanga/overview/ip-pover.pdf). A disturbing trend linked to this is that over the last few years in five of the nine provinces, of which Mpumalanga is one, the number of unschooled people has risen (Aitchison & Hartley 2006). Currently 32% of the South African adult population are believed to be functionally illiterate (Aitchison & Hartley, 2006).

Because of the Kwena Basin's relatively isolated nature and the lack of transport infrastructure for locals, a lot of people do not move out of the area and many of the children have never been to town. There is a complete paucity of environmental print in the area. Presently there is an upsurge in development because of an increase in the number of lodges and a growing eco-tourism industry. This growth presents opportunities for the local community. In order to take advantage of the opportunities, which will provide greater economic stability for community members, they need to master a variety of skills.

As in Malawi, access to resources is of concern. While there is oral contact through the use of radio, no newspapers are available in the Kwena Basin. Of the small percentage of books owned by people, the majority are bibles or old magazines and newspapers sourced from the schools or farm houses.

The high level of poverty at both these sites is worth noting, as is the low level of literacy in adults. This has implications for children and the quality of education they receive at school. A large body of international literature has drawn links between poverty and poor school achievement. The PIRLS Report draws the conclusion that

South African learners with educationally advantaged parents, dual income parents, or parents with more access to literary resources for learners appear to have a better chance at succeeding in achieving literacy than their less resourced peers (2007: 37).

That said, it cannot be argued that parents who are poor do not want their children to succeed educationally. Many families make huge sacrifices to send their children to school. Stein & Slonimsky's (2006) South African case study of Dineo and her unemployed parents show the efforts her parents made at home to support her academic performance. This is the case in both Zomba and the Kwena Basin. Some 80% of parents in the Zomba study expressly stated that they sent their children to preschool to develop their potential to learn. This is offset by challenges where 55,8% of parents said they could not always send their children to school because of a shortage of food, and 20% cited a lack of clothing and washing soap. The situation in the Kwena Basin is different. It is a farming community where families have strong relationships with the farmers and there is no shortage of food. There is a strong desire to support education with an active community forum where everyone has a voice. Parents are involved in initiatives to improve schooling for children, as was indicated in 2005 when parents and older children turned out to help with the painting and whitewashing of classrooms (this will be discussed later).

The conditions under which children live have a major impact on what happens in school. The fact that Zomba children do not always attend school because of a lack of food results in lost learning opportunities for them. Parents are required to send lunch with their children. At one of the preschools, teachers developed a strategy where they use the phrase ‘consider others’. Children with food are encouraged to share with those who have no food so that everyone eats. Parents are encouraged to send their children to school regardless of whether they have food or not, because a culture of sharing has been established. At another preschool, during the morning discussion, children are asked if they have eaten breakfast. This gives the teacher insight into children’s behaviour and ability to learn that day. In addition to the adequate provision of food by farmers in the Kwena Basin, the schools are now part of the government feeding scheme, which provides fairly regular meals for the children.

Conditions under which children learn at school

Despite the presence of schools in both these rural areas, one of the issues that needs to be dealt with is the condition of the buildings used as classrooms and the impact this has on pedagogical practice. Many of the buildings used as classrooms were not originally designed for such use. For example, churches are used as a classroom in a Zomba preschool and Kwena Basin school. Careful attention needs to be paid to the spatial organization of these rooms so that the original spatial layouts do not impede learning. At times, Zomba preschoolers have to sit on immovable concrete pews; the uniformity created from the pews results in obedient, docile subjects. The lack of backrests requires children to sit upright. This space is designed for adults and is not always conducive to the comfort of small children. Many of the children’s feet do not touch the ground. Sitting still on such pews for long periods of time can be a challenge for young children and inhibits active engagement.

The constraints at the school in the Kwena Basin are different but also problematic. In some classrooms, the walls have been fortified with mud. Such construction has two consequences. The first is that, with no electricity, the classroom is dark and dusty. The second is that it is impossible to affix any kind of environmental print to mud walls. The presence of environmental print is important in print-poor environments. A simple solution was to whitewash the walls, increasing the light in the Kwena Basin classroom. Although this was initiated by the Book Box Project team, it was readily embraced by the community, who were actively involved in the whitewashing.

A more concerning problem is the use of partitioning that separates ‘classrooms’. The partitions between classrooms do not reach the ceiling. This means that there is a great deal of noise. With the reliance on the oral mode, this spatial organization is not conducive to learning. Observations indicate that teachers either compete for speaking space, or wait until the noise from the next classroom has decreased, thus losing valuable teaching time.

Pedagogical practices related to literacy learning

While there are many elements to early literacy learning, the four elements discussed here have been chosen because of their striking similarities in implementation. They are the alphabetic principle, access to print, writing and orality. Although discussed separately, they should be seen as interrelated aspects that are essential in creating an environment conducive to literacy learning.

The alphabetic principle

From a developmental perspective, the alphabetic principle refers to a child's knowledge of the letters of the alphabet and their corresponding sounds. There is a correlation between knowledge of the alphabet when children enter school and reading achievement.

Teaching of this principle occurred in all the Zomba preschools, although the methods used were slightly different – some schools used song, others used either a hand-written alphabet chart or a commercially available chart. In the preschool with the commercially available chart, children's attention was drawn to the letters of the alphabet, words and pictures on the chart. But the children were mostly asked to repeat the letter after the teacher:

*A stands for astronaut
B for bear
C for cat*

As is evident from this example some of the terms are foreign and it is unlikely that children in this class understand the concept of an astronaut or have seen a bear. There did not appear to be any mediation of these terms by the caregiver. This is similar to Prinsloo & Stein's (2004) experience of South African early literacy classrooms, where teachers relied on rote learning of the alphabet without mediating meaning of linguistically and culturally unfamiliar words to children.

The teaching of decontextualized sounds continues in Kwena Basin primary schools. Children learn in isiZulu, their mother tongue. In Grade 1, reading instruction begins through the linking of meaningless phonemes. Various consonants are placed in front of one of the five vowel sounds in Zulu. For example if the consonant 'm' is chosen children would chant:

ma me mi mo mu

Teachers combine these strings of sound, which occasionally contain some meaning, with other consonant-vowel combinations. For example, repeating 'ma' twice gives one 'mama', 'mi' and 'na' forms 'mina', meaning 'I'. Or children may chant sounds that are in fact single-syllable words, like 'thi' (says). The exercises do not fully develop children's phonemic awareness or extend their ability to hear the beginning, middle or end sounds of real words. There are also no explicit links made for children as to how the relationship between the letters of the alphabet and their sounds can be placed

together to make meaningful words where the activity of segmenting or blending sounds aids reading.

Access to books

Access to books is crucial for literacy learning. It is here that teachers' understanding of the importance of books in acquiring early literacy is limited. This is demonstrated by an incident in a Zomba classroom and Kwena Basin teachers' beliefs about how books can be used. Only one Zomba classroom was observed as having a small number of books. They were kept in a small office and brought out to fill time (e.g. while the caregiver was making tea during break, or the children were waiting for others to arrive). When children were given access to the books, they received no guidance on book handling skills – which way to turn them, features of books, directionality of print. During one observation session the caregiver had instructed the children to sit quietly and 'learn'. To her consternation, some children rushed over to the books. They were reprimanded with:

Mabukuwo ayi, ndiye kuti simuphunzira bwino...tiyeni bweutsani [Stop tampering with the books because you will not be concentrating on the lesson].

She grabbed the books from the children and packed them away. She continued with a typically highly structured and formal lesson.

This incident indicates two things. First, there is the children's desire and excitement in relation to having access to and handling books, even though they were not children's books written in Chichewa or at the appropriate age level, to the point where they deviated from a behavioural classroom norm. This desire to learn is at odds with the teacher's view that the children were 'tampering' with the books. This construction indicates a view where children are not seen as emerging readers. When resources like books are precious, this is not uncommon; but as access to resources increases, teachers' beliefs about how they can be used often remain limited.

In the Kwena Basin another project had provided some books for the schools before the Book Box project was begun. Thus these schools and classrooms are better resourced than the Zomba preschools and continue to become better resourced environments that are conducive to literacy learning. Nevertheless, teachers exert control over books through their unwillingness to let children take books home. Data indicates that teachers in most of the schools feel that because the children cannot 'read' the words, they cannot take books home. Some also feel that children do not always return the books and they might damage them. This indicates a lack of understanding of the importance of book handling skills and the time required for individual exploration of books for emergent readers. Other teachers feel that books cannot go home because parents cannot read. This is at odds with Finnegan's (1988) claim that literacy can be supported even if people do not have literacy skills themselves.

In another incident, one of the Kwena Basin teachers who did not want the children to

handle books wrote them out by hand on paper. The concept of a book is lost – the pages were stapled in the top corner, the visuals eliminated in favour of the printed word, and it was very difficult for the children to read her handwriting. While this is an attempt to provide additional access to resources, it reveals a lack of understanding of the nature of books and the skills needed to read them. When these teachers have not received any training in teaching reading as mentioned earlier, this teacher's behaviour is unsurprising.

Writing

A contrast exists between the two sites in relation to resources. Relatively speaking, the Kwena Basin schools are better resourced. As such, the teaching of writing/drawing in Zomba can be a challenge because of the resources required for each child to draw and write. This problem was overcome in one preschool where children were taken outside to draw in the sand. Children were asked to draw objects like cars or people. This activity allows children to practise fine motor skills and the develop hand-eye coordination that is necessary for writing. Unfortunately, this activity was not followed up on and extended and thus exists in isolation. Observation notes indicate that one little boy enthusiastically calls to the caregiver *'Ine ndajambula [galimoto] yanga yaikulu aphunzitsi'* [Teacher, I have drawn a very big car']. The teacher remained sitting under a tree and responded with a casual 'Okay'.

The shift from drawing to writing in the Kwena Basin also limits children's creative abilities. For the most part, children are merely scribes copying down lists of letters as a means to practise handwriting. The writing itself is meaningless, and is not used for children to express themselves or take on the position of author. Observation of Grade 3 classroom practice reveals that at the end of the day, if the children have written on loose sheets of paper, these sheets are not marked, they are just thrown away. This practice indicates that the children's writing is viewed as disposable and of lesser value than other texts like books and textbooks, which are retained.

What exists here is a tension between the community practices of writing, and the importance of writing as a middle class practice, and those who operate in global rather than local contexts. In the Kwena Basin, writing is not a practice that is central for people. They can negotiate their lives adequately without it, so it holds little value. As community members, this is true of the teachers themselves, who do little writing and reading at home. In contrast to this, writing is a crucial school literacy practice and learning to write, as well as having access to and mastery over a number of genres, is a means through which children can enter into discourse communities other than their primary one. But if teachers do little or no reading or writing themselves, they have less fluent control over the secondary discourse (Gee 2001) they are meant to be mediating to the children. Children's literacy is then restricted to a narrow view of literacy that is utilized by the community, to which they already have access. The

school does not provide access to literacy practices of dominant and powerful discourse communities.

Orality

The oral holds a crucial position in early literacy learning. It offers a means through which vocabulary is increased and provides an implicit (and explicit) knowledge of speech conventions. Sound language skills are the springboard for literacy development. At both sites the oral mode predominates. This is unsurprising because of the value of the oral mode in these communities as well as the fact that the oral mode does not require additional resources when these are scarce.

Although we pointed out that orality is a deep-rooted and highly valued tradition, the form that it takes in the schools does not convey the richness of the communities' oral practices. It seems that there is a tension between home and school practices. In this case the form orality takes in school may be diluted because of expectations of what is considered appropriate as a school practice. If school is seen as a place to learn and lessons are highly structured and formal, which was illustrated by the Zomba caregiver who took the books away from the children, then there seems to be little place for pleasure. At both sites oral storytelling is for the most part absent, despite some of the teachers being highly skilled storytellers. It seems a huge loss that the oral tradition is not used as a foundation for the development of early literacy skills.

The utilization of the oral mode takes the form of recitation and rote learning, where meaning is not mediated. The use of song is a common way in which children learn the letters of the alphabet and to count. Songs also function as a disciplinary technique and are used to control children's behaviour when they are tired and restless. They are also used to fill time. When used in these ways, the benefits for literacy learning are indirect, and without meaning being mediated the learning potential decreases.

Teachers' history and pedagogical knowledge

These examples point to teachers' and caregivers' lack of knowledge about literacy. Interviews with Zomba teachers revealed that they often could not make the connection between the activities that they were doing and the importance of these activities with regard to early literacy learning. For example, the use of clay to make figures was not seen as a means to develop fine motor coordination.

Battacharya et al. (2007: 484) argue that there are 'traces of teachers' history and identity in the organization of pedagogic space as well as in the individual use of particular pedagogic materials'. We argued earlier that schools are failing children. The same argument can be made that schooling and inadequate training has failed teachers. It is unsurprising that teachers do not extend activities to promote early literacy when the Zomba caregivers' own levels of education are low and they have had

minimal training. In the same way Kwena Basin teachers who have received no training on teaching reading will teach the way that they were taught. In thinking about this, the issue around the production, lack of use or under-utilization of resources becomes clearer. Place (2004) draws the useful distinction that some schools are under-resourced in terms of a basic lack of materials, while others are under-resourced because materials themselves are not utilized.

When this is added to a story one of the Kwena Basin teachers tells about her own school experience, teaching reading well to children becomes a challenge. In an interview she commented that the first time she realized that print had meaning was in Grade 5. This knowledge was gained from the experience of owning a book that was a gift from her father. She still owns this book. This point was corroborated by the other Kwena Basin teachers, who realized that print carried meaning five or six years into their own schooling. This indicates a limited acquisition of the secondary discourse. With this limited foundation, it seems impossible for teachers to develop and use resources effectively so that children can make the transition from the primary to the secondary discourse. This is compounded by fears of the lifespan of precious resources: once they are used up there is no guarantee of new supplies. This provides insight into teachers' fears about letting children play with books and take them home, because they are viewed as finite resources.

Possibilities for extending practice

Analysing literacy practices in classrooms from a spatial perspective provides particular insights into practice. In detailing some of these practices, possibilities emerge for building on what already exists and turning constraints into possibilities for better-quality literacy instruction. For example, although the church pews in the one Zomba preschool are immovable, the classroom can be reconfigured. If the pews were used as desks with children sitting or kneeling on the floor, there would be an immediate transformation of the kind of literate practices that could be implemented, which would result in the construction of a different set of embodied practices. Children can work together or individually to produce texts, count, organize, categorize objects and identify phonemes from objects collected from their environment. The experiential nature of these activities allows children to engage in peer discussion and problem-solving about their learning. If sharing is an important part of community life, then such spatial reconfiguration allows alternative tasks that integrate sound literacy practices with valued community practices.

Spatial reorganization should also be considered in relation to the temporal. For the children who sit in inadequately partitioned classrooms in the Kwena Basin, curriculum time can be reconfigured. One of the issues noted in the Book Box project is the lack of planning and preparation on the part of teachers. Teachers need support in thinking through how their days can be planned in conjunction with one another, so that assessments or tests can take place when other classes are involved with more

silent tasks like writing or silent reading. Joint activities can be timetabled where older and younger children are grouped together. If eco-tourism is on the rise in Mpumalanga and has potential as a sector to employ people, then using children's knowledge of place and expanding on it is an ideal way in which to use a known context and build in appropriate literacy activities. Children need not be inside a classroom the entire day, as the example of the Zomba preschoolers who drew outside indicates.

The production of texts like alphabet books (Janks 2006), producing class narratives or turning oral stories into written collections works to reinforce and validate children's local knowledge. Tasks in which children have control in design and production, and gain access to a number of genres, is the beginning of gaining access to dominant discourses. In so doing, children also have opportunities to develop their language skills.

Conclusion

This article has discussed some of the similarities between Zomba preschools and Kwena Basin primary schools. Although the level of schooling is different and the schools are located in two different countries, there seem to be dominant practices utilized for literacy teaching as these rural children move through school. What is concerning is that many of these practices are taught discretely and links are not made in ways that make the attainment of literacy skills meaningful. The fact that these practices are repeated in the primary school affirms the findings from the assessment studies that show that children are unable to read for meaning.

It seems that serious attention needs to be paid to the ways in which children's primary discourses can be harnessed to support the transition into the secondary discourse of the school. The dilution of the oral culture in the school sends a message that community knowledge and practices are not valued, and at the same time creates a gap between these and alien school literacy practices. It would also seem that drawing on local knowledge of place does not necessarily require a large amount of resources, but can be a starting point in empowering and validating children's experiences with literacy.

Ultimately the affirmation of community practices that can be used to build foundations for literacy learning can come about only if teachers themselves are able to challenge their assumptions about what counts as learning in schools. This will require them to be given real support and relevant knowledge about teaching early literacy. Alongside this support should be work that deals with teachers' attitudes towards resources and effective ways to work productively and creatively with limited resources. This is a beginning to help teachers transform their practices so that literacy teaching becomes meaningful for them and their children and so that those children have access to a powerful secondary discourse. How this happens is a serious and necessary challenge to teacher trainers and universities that needs to be taken up.

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Language policy, classroom practice and concept learning in a Grade One Tshivenda classroom

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Abstract

The article examines language policy in the new South African curriculum framework, with specific reference to Tshivenda as a language of teaching and learning and its efficacy for classroom learning and development. The study is set against the background of a range of South African studies that have identified pedagogical and policy problems relating to teachers' use of English or indigenous 'mother tongue' instruction, the problems of 'translation' and 'code switching', and the problems associated with 'transition' from 'mother tongue' to English-medium instruction.

The present study, using empirical data from a Tshivenda primary school classroom, provides new knowledge about the unique relationship between language medium and concept learning and development. The study demonstrates, using empirical data, that the problems of language medium, even in situations where indigenous, 'mother-tongue' instruction is used, are inextricably related to the problems of pedagogy. Therefore, the study argues from the Vygotskian theoretical framework that for language policy development in South Africa to contribute to successful classroom practice and learning improvement, such policy needs to be integrated within the overall curriculum development initiatives.

Keywords: language, Venda, South Africa, Vygotsky, scientific concepts, socio-cultural, outcomes-based education

Introduction

This article examines language policy and practice in Venda primary school classrooms, within the context of the post-apartheid South African system of schooling. There is presently a dearth of research on Tshivenda as the language of classroom teaching and learning and the implications that this has on policy development in South Africa. Tshivenda continues to be offered both as a language

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subject or learning area and as a language for classroom teaching and learning (or language of learning and teaching – LOLT) in the Foundation Phase (Grades One to Grade Three), especially in a more linguistically homogenous context of the Venda region in the Limpopo province of South Africa. The language is also used at this level in the few Venda primary schools located in Soweto, Johannesburg.

Although South African school policy encourages the continued use of previously marginalized indigenous languages as the language of learning and teaching, there is little research on the efficient and effective use of these languages for pedagogical purposes, especially at primary school level, where their use is widespread. Most studies on the use of language for classroom teaching and learning in South Africa have focused on teachers' employment of English as a medium of instruction and its associated pedagogical problems. For example, Macdonald (1999: 65) argues that African teachers whom she researched teaching through the medium of English tended to focus on form rather than on the essence of language expressions, and stuck to the formal and technical terms without clarifying them to their learners. Macdonald further reports that she found poor English language skills in the township¹ schools. In these schools, Macdonald reports poor teaching competence and inappropriate teaching methods that did not foster task-based use of English across the curriculum. The language constraints within these 'Black African'² classrooms, according to Macdonald, further impacts on teachers' ability to manage their time effectively, which results in a lack of coverage of the scope of work projected for the year.

Other related studies that have examined problems associated with the use of English as additional language for teaching and learning have found that teachers resort to translating English statements and ideas into the dominant 'home' language spoken by the majority of the learners in class. For example, Adler (2001: 73-93) reports on a number of studies that have found that most teachers in multilingual South African classrooms, in urban and rural contexts, tended to revert to the learners 'home' language or the primary language of learners widely spoken in the community where the school is located. This spontaneous use of the primary language – termed 'code switching', involving translation of meaning embodied in English second or additional language texts into the primary or common language spoken by learners, is viewed as a potentially positive resource for improving classroom teaching and learning of especially mathematics in most contexts within the South African schooling system. It is further suggested that further research on the viability of 'code switching' would be necessary and that policy could be better informed by taking into account the varying

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- 1 This refers to schools in areas formerly reserved for Black urban residence under the apartheid political system and the term contrasted Black urban residential areas during apartheid South Africa to the mostly White urban residential areas.
 - 2 This term is reproduced from the original text referenced and will continue to be so used in the present article for the sake of consistency, to denote mostly indigenous populations during the apartheid political system. However, terminologies such as 'black' and 'African' do not necessarily carry similar meanings in the present; post apartheid, political dispensation in South Africa.

needs of mathematics teachers working in diverse contexts of practice:

Teachers' varying uses of code switching across contexts suggests that language-in-education policy needs to engage more seriously and explicitly with what multilingual practices like code-switching can and do mean in the day-to-day realities of diverse classrooms contexts. In particular, in the context of mathematics education reform, policy research and development needs to embrace the specificity of demands on teachers who work in contexts with limited English language infrastructure. (Adler 2001: 93)

The phenomenon of 'code switching' or resorting to spontaneous translation of English texts into the primary language of the teacher and learners has been noted in several South African bilingual and multilingual classrooms where the LOLT was English and not the primary language spoken by teachers and learners. These practices of 'code switching', 'translation' and 'code mixing' – as the phenomenon is variously referred to – have been criticised for the negative, albeit unintended, consequences on pupils' learning. The practice overstretches the teaching and learning time available to the teacher and his or her learners, usually reduces concepts and ideas from one language context to the other, often misrepresenting the original concepts and essentially engaging learners in learning through one language while assessing them in the other, resulting in a mismatch that further contributes to poor schooling and learning failure (Fleisch 2008: 109).

Muthivhi's (2008) study in rural South Africa found that teachers translated ideas and concepts from English to Tshivenda incorrectly and that their lessons did not facilitate the learning and development of subject matter concepts and knowledge on the part of their learners. The teaching time was almost doubled as a result of translation activities and switching from English to Tshivenda, to say the same thing again. Most of the translation and code switching activities were not motivated by the need to explain difficult concepts to learners and to facilitate their learning and understanding, but by the teacher's lack of proficiency in the LOLT, English, and an inability to explain ideas exclusively in that language. Further, the translation and code switching practices did not facilitate discussion and learner participation in the lessons. More importantly, reverting to the primary language of learners to explain ideas in English texts did not facilitate concept learning and development on the part of learners, but rather impeded it, as concepts were often mistranslated, taking on new and inaccurate meanings.

Fleisch (2008: 104-106) also discusses studies that address the problem of transition from mother tongue to English. It is clear from his discussion that the majority of schools where children start off learning in their indigenous, 'mother tongue' and make the transition to English in the second to third – or fourth – year of schooling seem to experience problems associated with the change of language medium. However this problem seems to be related to the instructional activities carried out in the learners' mother tongue, before the transition is made, as much as it also involves the increased cognitive demands of the subject matter, which learners are expected to master in a language they have scarcely mastered. The problem seems therefore to be

twofold: effective use of the language medium or effective mother-tongue instruction on the one hand and effective pedagogy on the other hand.

This article seeks to contribute to knowledge about the relationship between language, especially the use of the indigenous South African languages as mother-tongue instructional media, and the pedagogical challenges this presents for the teachers. These challenges regarding the use of mother-tongue instruction in South Africa, especially regarding the use of Tshivenda as LOLT in the present study, have far-reaching consequences for curriculum development.

Against the background of the problems and challenges relating to the use of the South African indigenous languages as languages of classroom teaching and learning, the associated problems of transition to English, English-medium instruction and the 'translation' activities outlined above, the article examines how Tshivenda mother-tongue instruction policy may not achieve its intended purposes if it is not systematically integrated within the overall curriculum development initiatives. That is, the present study employs empirical data to demonstrate the theoretical point (derived from the Vygotskian theoretical framework discussed below) that the problems of the language of teaching and learning (LOLT), even when this involves teachers' and learners' mother tongue, are not separable from, and unrelated to, the problems of pedagogy. As a result, language policy development that is not integrated within overall curriculum development initiatives is not likely to produce substantive levels of classroom teaching and learning success.

Conceptual background

The theoretical framework within which the problem is analysed proceeds from the assumption that language is an important part of thinking and that its acquisition in school constitutes a crucial achievement in the development of the child (Vygotsky 1981). As Bruner (1985) states, in his interpretation of Vygotsky's idea about the developmental acquisition of language:

[Language] is mastered at first in collaboration with an adult or more competent peer solely with the objective of communicating. Once mastered sufficiently in this way, it can then become internalized and serve under conscious control as a means of carrying out inner speech dialogues. (Bruner1985: 25)

What Vygotsky and Bruner are arguing for in this quotation is the importance of language both as a means for social communication and as a means for learning, what could be called 'deep-level learning'. The concept of *internalization* in Vygotsky's theory (Vygotsky 1978) is a key concept for understanding children's developmental learning and acquisition of language skills and procedures, which initially were encountered in their relations with their socially significant others, in their own domain of activity. The mode of language use that children encounter in their communities and in their home would, subsequently, be integrated by the child into his or her own mode of using language for communicating with others and, more crucially,

for communicating with herself and controlling her own actions – including the actions of thinking and problem-solving.

Language, from the present theoretical perspective (Vygotsky 1978, 1981) is therefore acquired, first as an external tool for thinking used to influence and regulate the actions of others, that is of children or learners during social relations at home or in classroom teaching and learning. Language, in this sense, is not viewed as only a container of ideas and thoughts but, essentially, as an integral part of the content of human thoughts and ideas. Vygotsky explained the relationship between thought and language (speech) in terms of the unity that their development involves:

The structure of speech is not simply the mirror image of the structure of thought ... Speech does not merely serve as the expression of developed thought. Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed but completed in the word. (Vygotsky 1978: 251)

Language development can therefore be viewed as inextricably related to the development and growth of knowledge and never as a separate process from thought. The development of language for the purpose of classroom teaching and learning can therefore not be viewed as a process that is separate from the development of knowledge itself. That is, school curriculum and language are two aspects of the same process, one of which cannot be complete without the other.

Vygotsky's fundamental distinction between school-specific – scientific – concepts and spontaneous – everyday – concepts relates to the qualitative differences between the content and procedures of knowledge acquired in school on the one hand and the procedures and content of the knowledge acquired during children's spontaneous or everyday situations on the other hand. The language used in these different learning and knowledge acquisition situations is similarly different in fundamental ways. In everyday situations, language acquisition takes place through

[A] process of acquiring something subconsciously by exposure to models and a process of trial and error, without a process of formal teaching. It happens in settings that are meaningful and functional ... (Gee 1987: 4; in McNamee 1990: 289)

This mode of language acquisition follows the same procedure as that involved in the acquisition of concepts in spontaneous, everyday life situations and differs fundamentally from the procedure that should essentially comprise language learning and concept development in school. That is, language development in everyday life situations differs in fundamental ways from when it develops during the activities of formal school teaching and learning. Language in the latter situation is used more deliberately and is mainly a subject for its own reflection. Learners learn to look back, for example, on the validity, accuracy, adequacy or otherwise of their statements and answers to the questions and problems of the learning tasks and, as a result, probe their own thoughts expressed in and through language. Language in everyday spontaneous situations arises not in the deliberate activity of learning associated with the reflective activities of formal schooling, but is spontaneously acquired and generally

lies beyond the child's deliberate control and volitional activities of reflection.

Vygotsky articulated this abstract, reflective and inner-directed regulatory role of language in the course of children's school learning:

1. The child learns word meanings in certain forms of school instruction not as a means of communication but as part of a system of knowledge.
2. This learning occurs not through direct experience with things or phenomena but through words. (Vygotsky 1987: 27)

Methodological approach

The analysis of the Grade One classroom teaching and learning in the present study applies the conceptual system outlined above, to determine the adequacy and effectiveness of the use of Tshivenda for learning and teaching, i.e.:

- Do the practices of classroom teaching and learning through Tshivenda emphasise the everyday, spontaneous modes involving the 'outer-directed' communicative forms of discourse characteristic of everyday language and learning activities?
- Does the use of language during classroom teaching and learning emphasise the everyday modes of learning involving the direct relationship that words have to the concrete phenomena of children's experience in their everyday, spontaneous situations?
- Do the practices of classroom teaching and learning emphasise the school-specific concept relations and 'systematicity' of knowledge (as opposed to its discreteness), embodied in and expressed through language?
- Do the uses of language during classroom teaching and learning emphasise the school-specific modes that emphasise relations among words, making language the subject of its own enquiry and subsuming the subject matter knowledge in a system of concept relations.

The article posits that an adequate use of language for classroom teaching and learning would foster the learning and development of conceptual forms of knowledge and learning and facilitate the transformation of children's spontaneous modes of learning and concepts. The analysis of language and its role in pupils' learning and development is viewed from the perspective of current language practices and curriculum policy, which are in turn the products of societal history and culture. The data used here emanates from a larger study conducted in the two primary schools in Venda, South Africa, during the years 1996 to 2000. These were the early years of the implementation of the new, outcomes-based education curriculum in South Africa. The specific lesson excerpts used here were obtained during the year 1999, three years into the implementation of the new curriculum in Grade One.

Several diverse lessons were observed in the two neighbouring primary schools, in Grade One to Grade Seven. However, the present analysis focuses only on the lesson excerpts from a Grade One lesson. This lesson is representative of the general

approach to teaching and learning in the grades that had already begun implementing the outcomes-based education curriculum framework. However, the Grade One lesson, contrary to the majority of the other similar grades studied, manifests a more advanced level of classroom practice, involving transformation from the former, traditionally teacher-centred approach of apartheid schooling to a more learner-centred and activity-based approach under the new, OBE curriculum.

The lesson observations during the data collection process involved the researcher sitting in class, usually at the back of the classroom, taking as many notes as possible on the teachers' presentation of the lesson, the learners' responses to the teachers' questions and the general classroom interactions. The notes obtained during these observations became the raw data that is interpreted from the theoretical perspective outlined above.

Language as instructional medium in a Grade One literacy lesson

The excerpt from the Grade One literacy lesson below demonstrates problems of classroom teaching and learning that have their origin in both the teaching methods employed and the use of language as an instructional medium. The lesson is particularly relevant for the present discussion in that it involves the teacher teaching her six-year-old Grade One learners about language structure at the same time as she was teaching them to read and write. The teacher teaches word sounds, how to form words that sound differently using different consonants and how words combine into a sentence. Children also learned how to write the sentences involving the use of these words at the same time as they participated in the learning activity. The lesson conforms to the requirements of the new outcomes-based education curriculum, which the teacher applies confidently. The excerpt below, which was preceded by the listing of the different consonants beginning with 'tsh', demonstrates the way in which the teacher uses language during the lesson and the extent to which this has facilitated pupils' learning of the subject matter concepts.

The teacher asks the pupils to give the words that begin with each of the following sounds, 'tshi', 'tsha' and 'tsho', already written on the board:

T: 'Right, give me the words that begin with *tshi*, *tsha* and *tsho*, so we write them on the board.'

Pupils raise hands. The teacher nominates pupils one after the other as they give the requested words. The teacher writes all the words on the board as each of the nominated pupils say them: *Tshinakaho*, *Tshilidzi*, *Tshililo*, *Tshifhiwa*, *tshinoni*, *Tshivhidzo*, *Tshimangadzo*.

The teacher asks the pupils if they can tell her why she begins with a capital letter when writing some of these words on the board. Pupils raise their hands and the teacher nominates one pupil. The nominated pupil answers:

P: 'Because names begin with capital letters'

The teacher agrees to this, expressing an appreciation of the given answer:

T: 'Did you hear what she said? She says, because names begin with capital letters. I really did not realize that she could give the correct answer. Lets proceed.'

This first excerpt shows pupils listing the words correctly as the teacher asked. The teacher did not ask pupils to write these down for her to check their ability to write, although it transpired later on that the majority of the pupils could not write the words correctly. Already the lesson shows an apparent emphasis on the ability to verbalize the words correctly over writing. Pupils did not seem to have difficulty naming the words – nouns – as they were already competent in the language and could think of words in their language to describe them. It should be clarified here that the Tshivenda term for ‘noun’ is ‘name’, thus making no explicit distinction between the formal concept of ‘noun’ and the spontaneous concept of ‘name’. Neither was this distinction clarified to the learners by the teacher during the course of the lesson. The activity whereby learners gave the words that were also nouns seems to involve an appropriate approach where learners’ existing knowledge was engaged. However, whereas learners provided the apparently correct words or nouns, they probably did so without a clear understanding that these were ‘nouns’ and not ‘names’, in the sense in which they understood them from their everyday, spontaneous knowledge perspective.

This conceptual problem began to become clear when the teacher asked the reason why capital letters had been used for some of the words written on the board. The teacher agreed with the learner’s answer that the reason was because ‘names begin with capital letters’ and showed an appreciation of the answer, saying: ‘Did you hear what she said? She says, because names begin with capital letters. I really did not realize that she could give the correct answer ...’ This reveals a possible lack of substantive understanding, on the part of the teacher, of the subject matter concepts that should form the basis of the lesson. The teacher erroneously commended the learner’s answer and acknowledged that she never thought the learner would be able to give a correct answer. This not only shows a lack of adequate mastery of subject matter knowledge by the teacher; it also reveals her low expectations of her learners’ performance. Whereas the conceptual problems that characterize these teaching and learning practices are pedagogical in nature, it is also clear that such problems are not manifested only in situations where the medium of instruction comprises a foreign or additional language such as English. The teacher’s inability to perceive conceptual errors in her teaching and her learners’ learning contributes to the problem, in as much as the pupils continued to offer examples of nouns without realizing that these were supposed to constitute instances of a higher-order category and hence not an extension of their spontaneous concept of ‘name’. The use of the term *dzina* – name – for ‘noun’ in Tshivenda translation does not seem to help in this case, as it further blurs the conceptual distinction (between everyday and scientific concepts) that ‘scientific’ terminologies should highlight.

As the teacher introduced the words, she referred to them as *madzina* (singular, *dzina* – names). The topic was ‘nouns’, which in Tshivenda comes out as ‘name’, a term also used in everyday situations with reference to names of people and objects. As a result,

pupils mainly gave the names of people. The concept of name, in the everyday life experiences of these learners, applies mainly in the naming of people or as names of people and hence there is a reproduction of this process in learners' classroom performance. That is, learners' responses were based on their everyday, spontaneous understanding of the concept 'name', which refers directly to objects and events in their everyday life situations.

The conceptual difficulties continued in subsequent episodes. For example, after some time, as pupils continued to give the words that began with 'tshi', and they came to the word '*tshinoni*' [bird], the teacher asked why it was that this word did not begin with a capital letter. Pupils raised hands and the teacher nominated a pupil who gave the answer:

P: 'Because *tshinoni* [bird] is not a name.'

The teacher agreed and continued to ask more questions. Again the teacher failed to lead her pupils into a correct and accurate understanding of the concept 'noun' or its related concepts such as 'proper noun' and 'common noun', necessary for pupils' effective mastery of the subject matter of the current lesson. That is, the noun *tshinoni* could have been described as a common noun, *dzina-zwalo*, to emphasise the fact that it is a noun, but with specific characteristics that identify it as common noun, which in turn means it does not begin with a capital letter.

The lesson episode that follows demonstrates how pupils learnt through a rote method, which did not take into account the meaningfulness of the task problems. It also reveals the teacher's apparent lack of understanding of the concepts underlying the content of the lesson. The teacher asked pupils to give the number of sound patterns in each of the words written on the blackboard. However, the teacher did not clearly explain the criteria on the basis of which pupils were to determine these patterns. The result was that teaching and learning involved pupils relying on guesswork to give correct answers to the teacher's questions. Meanwhile, the teacher did not seem to be concerned with checking the pupils' understanding of the answers they offered. This point is crucial because it illustrates the underlying disposition of the teacher with regard to the knowledge she teaches. The teachers' approach to teaching would be manifest in, and through, the language of classroom teaching and learning. The more abstract and theoretical the approach, the more abstract and conceptually oriented the language modes would be.

The spontaneous, empirical and everyday approach to classroom teaching and learning is associated with an emphasis on the communicative mode of language, the outer-directed modes of classroom discourse. The scientific and theoretical approach is associated with the deeper, reflective modes of learning that emphasize the conceptual forms of learning. The classroom practices of the Grade One teacher during the present lesson can be related to the former approach. The lesson excerpt below illustrates this point.

The teacher asks pupils to tell her the number of sounds that each of the words on the board has. The teacher reads out each word from the board and asks pupils to say how many sounds it has:

T. 'Let's divide the sounds now. *Tshinakaho*. How many sounds are there?'

Few pupils raise their hands. The teacher nominates three pupils, one after the other, with each pupil giving an incorrect answer to the question. The fourth pupil responds to the answer correctly:

P. 'They are four'.

The teacher agrees and repeats the answer to the whole class before proceeding to the next question.

The teacher sounds another word out as she writes it down on the blackboard:

T. 'Tshililo'

Several pupils raise their hands. The teacher again nominates five pupils, one after the other, with each of these pupils giving incorrect answers. The sixth pupil gives the correct answer:

P. 'Two'.

The teacher repeats the answer aloud. After this the teacher asks for the reason why they say the word *Tshililo* has two sounds:

T. 'Why it is that we say there are two sound patterns in the word *Tshililo*?'

Several pupils raise their hands. The teacher nominates one pupil whose hand was raised to give the answer:

P: 'Because *li* and *lo* are the same'.

The teacher repeats this answer to the whole class, confirming the answer. However, the teacher offers no further explanation or further probing questions.

The teacher goes on to the next word:

T. *tshinoni*.

The teacher says this word at the same time that she is pointing at it on the blackboard with a stick. Several pupils raise their hands to be nominated. The teacher nominates a pupil by calling a name:

T: 'Tshipuliso'.

The nominated pupil answers:

P: 'Four'.

The teacher keeps quiet, not saying anything in response to the pupil's answer. The other pupils realize that the answer might not be correct and begin to raise their hands, competing for the teacher's attention. The teacher nominates several pupils, one after the other, with no one able to provide the correct answer. Some of the pupils nominated guessed that there are four sounds in the word, thus repeating the same error committed by the first pupil. Seven pupils in all are nominated one after the other, all of them giving incorrect answers.

Pupils come to be divided between those who say that there are two sounds and those who say that there are three sounds in the word *tshinoni*. Pupils begin to chant out their differing answers, arguing about which answer is correct. In response, the teacher instructs pupils to decide which of the two answers is correct by casting a vote:

T. 'Lets raise our hands and vote'.

Pupils raise their hands in support of one or the other of the two answers, with the teacher acting as the voting adjudicator.

T. 'Those who say there are two sound patterns are in the majority, which means that there are two sounds'

This episode began with the teacher asking how many sounds are in the noun *Tshililo*, which a learner identified as having two sounds. For the first time – and this may be the result of the new curriculum approach – the teacher asks a probing question as to *why* learners think that there are two sounds in this word. This constitutes a major transformation in the teachers' approach, as teachers rarely asked such questions in the past. However, the conceptual difficulties that characterize the lesson continued, as the teacher failed to clarify the nature of sounds and how to identify them. The teacher agreed with the learner's response that '*li* and *lo* are the same' without probing further as to how this is so and what principles account for this similarity.

The extent of the problem is manifested in the learners' inability to offer a correct answer to the question about the number of sounds the word *tshinoni* has. The teacher was again not able to offer her pupils what could be termed a pedagogically sound explanation to help them engage meaningfully with the problem. As none of the answers offered by the pupils were deemed to be correct, in what essentially appeared to be a trial-and-error answering process, the teacher led them to a voting process to decide on the correct answer. While, the voting activity may have a sound basis in terms of the teacher's interpretation of the OBE curriculum, the action in this instance did not seem to have a sound pedagogic basis: the action of deciding the correctness of opposing views through casting a vote (without further elaboration of the epistemic principles informing such a decision) does not result in pupils acquiring the necessary understanding of the principles that inform such a decision and therefore fails to produce effective learning and concept acquisition on the part of the pupils.

Although implementing a relevant, outcomes-based educational principle of extending classroom learning to include social knowledge and skills, the teacher did not choose what may be considered an appropriate lesson activity to integrate the socially significant knowledge about democratic decision-making processes. The teacher does not use the pupils' already existing language abilities, such as is manifested in their everyday knowledge of 'nouns' as involving the names of people in their real life world, to foster pupils' learning of the skill for determining the different types of nouns and for identifying the different sound patterns in words. As a result, the approach in this lesson does not emphasise the pupils' understanding of the formal properties of language through engaging them in learning activities that include and are based on their existing and spontaneously acquired knowledge of language. On the contrary, the teacher's approach emphasises the concrete and empirical approach to the teaching and learning of the formal properties of language. In this way, the knowledge of language, comprising the properties of the formal language in the curriculum, is assumed to be epistemologically the same as the knowledge of language that learners bring into formal school learning from their everyday, spontaneous activities.

Conclusion

The article has examined the problems of language policy and practice in the current

South African schooling system, with specific focus on the mismatches that seem to characterize policy and practice. The analysis of such possible mismatches reveals that Tshivenda continues to be offered both as a language subject or learning area and as a language for teaching and learning (or language of learning and teaching – LOLT) in the Foundation Phase (first three grades of schooling) in the more linguistically homogenous context of Venda schooling. While this policy seems to make good educational sense, there are contradictions and mismatches in terms of this policy on language and its implementation in practice. Teachers seem to think that an earlier introduction of English, even the use of English as a language of learning and teaching, would be more beneficial for their learners.

However, the analysis of the study has focused on the data that presents an instance of classroom teaching and learning of the language Tshivenda through the medium of the same language. Although it may be assumed that such teaching, making use of the learners' and teachers' mother tongue, would be unproblematic, the data from the present study suggest otherwise. Although this study does not militate against the use of Tshivenda mother-tongue instruction, and would in fact support mother-tongue instruction at the level of schooling at which the lesson was offered, it points to possible areas of serious concern that need urgent policy attention.

The data from the study suggests that there are serious pedagogic and language problems that may require simultaneous attention. The use of mother-tongue instruction to teach formal language as part of the literacy lesson did not foster successful learning and concept development on the part of learners. The teacher did not manifest a sound conceptual understanding of the content of her lesson, neither did she facilitate the learning of the concepts effectively. The fact that the language of instruction was the teacher's, and her learners' mother tongue, did not seem to help in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Rather, this fact seems to have contributed to the problems and difficulties – identified as a more abstract and formal knowledge of language (constituting the content of the subject matter of the Grade One Literacy Learning Area), which was (unintentionally) reduced to a form of knowledge that characterized the learners' everyday, spontaneous form of knowledge and its associated modes of learning.

The problems and difficulties identified in the analysis above suggest that language policy decisions, especially decisions on languages for classroom learning and teaching, cannot easily be made outside of the broader curriculum decisions, as has largely been the case with contemporary South African curriculum development initiatives. Further, these problems suggest that adequate resources need to be allocated for the purpose of developing the nine indigenous (previously marginalized) languages – of which Tshivenda is one – for the purpose of classroom use as languages of learning and teaching. Such development can also not, as suggested by the data above, reasonably occur outside of overall curriculum development initiatives. This includes, but is not restricted to, broad professional teacher development, especially

the 'training' of teachers in the appropriate epistemic methodologies of teaching school-specific, scientific knowledge and concepts.

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Postcards from the edge: Exploring multimodal strategies for reconciliation pedagogy

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Abstract

This article reports on one aspect of a South African research project, which explores ways of teaching reconciliation in post-apartheid secondary school classrooms. In response to researching their communities' memories and attitudes towards South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), students produced a multimodal text in the genre of the postcard. Using a multimodal semiotic analysis, two sets of postcards were analysed: the first uses the South African flag as a prominent semiotic resource; the second uses visual binaries to represent the relationship between the past and the present/future. The aim of the analysis is to explore the discourses on which students draw and to consider what this suggests about how they locate themselves as young people in relation to both history and the contemporary moment. Ultimately it is argued that young people have rich visual repertoires and that enabling them to draw on the visual expands the range of semiotic resources available to them as producers of texts. This provides students with additional ways of accessing broader social discourses as well as additional ways of articulating their own positions.

Keywords: multimodal semiotic analysis, visual semiotic resources, social discourses, youth identity, Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Introduction

This article draws on the work conducted by a South African research circle that was part of an Australian-led international project seeking to explore the idea of 'reconciliation pedagogy'. The research circle, comprising school-based teachers and educational researchers from the disciplines of English, History and Art, undertook qualitative research in the form of classroom-based action research. Two different cycles of activities were implemented, more or less concurrently, in three different secondary

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schools in Johannesburg. This article focuses on one aspect of the second cycle of activities, namely postcards produced by students in response to researching their communities' memories and attitudes towards South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Students used multimodal designs to capture what stood out for them about the TRC's work. The focus of the discussion is therefore on the extent to which the students, as producers of these artefacts, are able to harness the multimodal affordances of the genre of the 'postcard picture'. By analysing the predominantly visual semiotic resources of which students make use, I ask what discourses students draw on and re-design and considers what this suggests about how they locate themselves as young South Africans in relation to both the past and the present.

The article is divided into two sections. The first begins by discussing reconciliation pedagogy, broadly outlining the theoretical vision and the research that is shaping this emerging area (Hattam & Atkinson, in press). It then locates the South African reconciliation pedagogies project against this background, paying particular attention to the postcard activity. The second section of the article first outlines the theoretical framework used to analyse the postcard data, one which draws together key concepts from multimodal social semiotics and aspects of poststructuralist identity theory. It then turns to analysis of a selection of postcards, using Kress's (1993) notion of 'the motivated sign' to examine students' selection of semiotic resources and design choices and the discursive positions these may suggest.

What is 'reconciliation pedagogy'?

There is growing international interest in reconciliation, but as a term 'reconciliation pedagogy' emerged as recently as 2004 from an Australian-led international project that sought to bring into dialogue two distinct discourse communities – 'reconciliation' and 'pedagogy'. These ideas have their most obvious expression in an edited book entitled *Reconciliation/Pedagogy* (Hattam & Atkinson, in press), which gathers work that looks at both the theoretical and practical applications of the term from various international perspectives, such as Israel/Palestine, Cyprus and South Africa. At the heart of this endeavour is an attempt to generate knowledges and processes about how, in the culturally complex global realities of today, we can all 'get along'. Hattam and colleagues acknowledge the optimism of this vision, but assert that to do anything other than attempt to address the factors that are producing the contemporary global climate of conflict and divisiveness – such as global terrorism, forced migration, poverty and the ongoing effects of colonial oppression – would be untenable, hence their provocation for 'rethinking reconciliation and pedagogy in unsettling times'. They maintain that there is a need not only to mobilize reconciliation processes that can heal the effects of past political conflict and trauma and can interrupt cycles of violence, anger and revenge, but also to research the inherently pedagogic nature of these processes in order that they may be harnessed for wider global use.

The work gathered in this edited book illustrates a multidisciplinary approach that is mindful of the various possible readings and renderings of what might count as ‘reconciliation pedagogy’, and foregrounds the continual need for the re-contextualization of the meanings of this term. Hattam and colleagues work with an expanded understanding of pedagogy – one that locates learning both in and beyond institutions of learning and that takes seriously the pedagogic potential of the public domain, including proliferating forms of media. Alongside historically grounded philosophical debates on witnessing and Derridean perspectives on reconciliation and the ‘unforgivable’, examples of what reconciliation pedagogy might look like in action are also offered. One chapter, for example, reports on work being done in an Australian university to promote indigenous practices within mainstream education by designing and implementing an elective for pre-service teachers that requires them to hunt, gather and grow the components of a meal. The pedagogy of this process compels students to engage with issues of food security for indigenous communities and to consider the inextricable relationship between food, land and language.

Additional research recently published in this area also demonstrates attention to the public domain, theorizing reconciliation pedagogies in relation to museums and shopping malls (Crowley & Matthews 2006); forced migration and refugee studies (Palmer & Matthews 2006); media representation of public protests (Bishop 2006); and media responses to the images of Abu Ghraib (Ahluwalia 2006). Nevertheless, reconciliation pedagogy has particular relevance for the domain of formal education where teachers themselves – in the vein of critical pedagogy – are seen as cultural workers deeply implicated in issues of meaning, power and identity construction. Indeed, reconciliation pedagogy draws strongly on a range of approaches to education that are associated with critical pedagogy initiatives, namely critical multiculturalism (Kanpol & McLaren 1995; May 1999), multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2000) and antiracist education (McCarthy 1998; Ng et al. 1995). In relation to schooling, reconciliation pedagogy ultimately aims to develop ‘resources for reconciling ethnic, racial, and religious differences in ways that foster understanding, social justice and co-existence’ (Hattam et al., in press).

Reconciliation work in South African classrooms

Against this backdrop, the reconciliation pedagogies project carried out by the South African research circle is one illustration of what reconciliation pedagogies could look like in action. In the wake of apartheid, there is an imperative to explore pedagogic strategies that engage with the past by opening up safe spaces for discussion and debate. The members of the South African research circle worked together for over a year conceptualizing approaches to reconciliation and then imagining and implementing two different cycles of classroom research. A comprehensive account of this action research project has been captured in Ferreira et al. (in press). This article focuses only on the postcards produced by students during the course of the second cycle of

activities; however, in order for these student artefacts to be understood as products of situated practice, the discussion that follows briefly contextualizes the postcard activity within the broader project.

The aim of the research circle was to engage young people meaningfully with reconciliation and with their historically constructed identities, but we were mindful of the findings of South African educational research that claimed that young people resisted engaging with South Africa's recent political history and the apartheid past (McKinney 2004a, 2004b; McKinney & van Pletzen 2004; Walker 2005a, 2005b; Wieder 2004), a perception that was shared by the teachers. For this reason the researchers proceeded cautiously and it was only in the second cycle of activities – having found the student work in cycle one to have been largely sociopolitically decontextualized – that they decided to take a more overtly political approach to reconciliation. We thus selected the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa as the core subject matter, hoping that choosing an inherently sociopolitically located example of reconciliation being attempted at a national level would invite students to move beyond apolitical, individualized notions of the self and to consider their positions in relation to their social and historical contexts.

By getting students to research the work of the commission, the TRC was being used as an entry point to South Africa's conflicted past rather than a historical event being studied for its own sake. The research group was, however, mindful of the critiques that had been levelled against the TRC and its work. The students were therefore introduced to the TRC by means of a double-page handout that combined word and image in a non-linear design that foregrounded a multiplicity of views on the commission and its work. Students were then tasked with interviewing adult members of their communities to research memories and attitudes towards the TRC.

Because of the presence and involvement of the mass media in the commission's work, the TRC's televised public hearings captured the nation's attention. Although these televised hearings have been criticised for using 'media-friendly modes of truth-telling [that] were shaped by some of the conventions of televangelism (Posel and Simpson 2002: 9), they have also been credited with enabling 'the hearings [to become] a process of public education' (Enslin 2002: 238). Students were thus able to gather interviews from adults who may have been personally involved in the hearings or otherwise affected by the work of the commission, as well as from those who would have been exposed to the process solely via the media. In this way, a range of social perceptions about the TRC and the apartheid history with which it engaged was sought. The (re)telling of these interview narratives in the classroom space exposed students to multiple discourses on the TRC and provided opportunities for rethinking identity in relation to another (Ferreira & Janks 2007).

The postcard data was generated in response to these interviews. Students were required to design a postcard which encapsulated in word and image what stood out for

them from their work on the TRC. A postcard was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, aspects of the first cycle of classroom activities had prompted the researchers to work with a broader repertoire of literacies, drawing on multiliteracies pedagogy (New London Group 1996; Cope & Kalantzis 2000), particularly with regard to multimodal textual production (Jewitt 2006; Kress 1993, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen 1996). Secondly, it was felt that the spatially condensed genre of the postcard would prompt students to go to the essence of what this work had meant for them. Students had to address their postcards to someone, writing a relevant message of their choice. They were given the option to write it in their own voice, from their positions as students researching the TRC, or to adopt the voice of any one of the people they had encountered or learnt about, placing themselves in that person's shoes to write the message.

Multimodal texts as discursive designs

Through an analysis of the designs on the front of selected postcards, there are two overarching questions that the rest of this article seeks to answer. Firstly, what discourses do students draw on in the construction of these multimodal semiotic texts? Secondly, what does this suggest about how these young people see themselves in relation to South Africa and its recent history? To carry out this analysis, key concepts from multimodality and social semiotics and salient aspects of poststructuralist identity theory are drawn together. Multimodal social semiotics enables an analysis of the ways in which various modes are used to make meaning on the front of the postcard, while poststructuralist identity theory allows theorization of agency and subjectivity, locating this in discursive practices that are socially and historically grounded.

Drawing strongly on earlier work by Hodge & Kress (1988), Kress (1993, 2000) and Kress & van Leeuwen (1996, 2001), Jewitt (2006) argues for the value of a theory of multimodal social semiotics. While social semiotics understands meaning-making as a socially grounded activity, where signs derive their meaning from the culturally shaped uses to which they are put, multimodality offers an approach that extends beyond linguistic texts and attends to 'the prominent role of visual and other "non-linguistic" semiotic resources' (2006: 16). The social semiotic landscape provides students with a range of resources to select from and they therefore 'express meanings through their selection from the semiotic resources that are available to them in a particular moment' (Jewitt 2006: 18). Her argument is based on Kress's notion of the 'motivated sign'. Kress argues that in their use of signs, people's choices are motivated by their interests, maintaining that

[f]rom the point of view of the producer [of the sign or text] it represents his particular 'interest' in the object, an interest which is itself a reflection of his place in the world, physically, cognitively, socially, culturally, conceptually. This 'interest' is not fixed but is the expression of a temporary configuration of socially and culturally produced internal representations (Kress 1993:172).

The process of selecting and using available resources to make meaning is a process of design and re-design and the resulting text is ‘founded on historically and culturally received patterns of meaning [while at] the same time it is the unique product of human agency: a transformed meaning’ (New London Group 1996: 76). And ultimately, as Kress & van Leeuwen remind us, ‘[d]esign stands midway between content and expression ... [and thus] designs are means to realize discourses in the context of a given communication situation’ (2001: 5). Such discourses are articulated not only in the choice of images but also in the selection and use of other design features, e.g. the use of line, colour, texture and size. In particular, it is in the interaction among these various features that meaning is made.

The identity of the sign-maker thus has a bearing on the design process. However, in the analysis of the data under discussion the use of the ‘motivated sign’ is tempered by a poststructuralist conception of identity and discourse. Poststructuralism challenges humanist conceptions of identity as stable, autonomous and essentialized, and instead conceives of identity as fluid, multiple, fragmented and hybrid. Hall explains that

identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves (Hall 1996: 4).

From a poststructuralist perspective, language is thus not viewed as a transparent window-on-the-world that unproblematically reflects reality, but rather as constitutive of what we come to understand as that reality and who we are. Flowing from this, discourse is understood as ‘an institutionalized use of language or language-like sign systems’ (Davies & Harré 1990: 45) which provides different identity positions from which we are invited to view or ‘speak’ the world. Identity is therefore structured through discourse: multiple and contradictory discourses make available multiple and contradictory identity positions. Identity is thus seen as both dynamic and as a site of struggle (Weedon 1997), given that there are always a variety of conflicting identity positions a person could take up. So, while discourses shape identity in powerful ways, they are not fully deterministic since there is room for some agency in the ongoing need to select between multiple available identity positions.

Drawing together multimodal social semiotics and poststructuralist theory for the analysis of this data therefore enables the students’ use of multimodal semiotic resources to be situated within the broader terrain of discursive practices – whether students are selecting linguistic or visual signs, they are selecting from the available linguistic and visual discourses. Students’ ‘interests’ – as articulated through the signs which they choose – are therefore not an expression of unfettered free choice, but an expression of some choice, albeit constrained by the various discursively constructed positions and discourses, visual and otherwise, to which they have access. In analysing students’ postcards, therefore, the aim is not to arrive at an understanding of the ‘intention’ of the individual student but to consider how broader

social discourses are being spoken through the ways in which these students are making meaning.

In keeping with the need to locate discursive practices culturally and historically, a few points need to be made on the identity in relation to the contemporary South African moment before turning to the data analysis. Singh (1997: 120) argues that, for all its contradictions, 'apartheid was a powerful allocator of identity'. The extent to which this allocation was successful is still open to debate, but I would agree with Singh that, in contrast to the exigencies of living under the apartheid state, there is at present in South Africa a more 'fluid and open horizon for identity construction' (1997: 120). A similar view is expressed by Liebenberg and Zegeye (2001: 329) in their discussion of the new social identities that are emerging in post-apartheid South Africa. They understand identities as multiple and shaped by institutional power relations, arguing that at present 'individuals and groups are actively choosing how to express their social identities at the same time as institutions are attempting to shape and construct their existence and options'. This analysis therefore remains sensitive to the radical contingency of identity in this contemporary South African moment.

Analysis of postcards

The postcard data set, totalling 71 postcards across the three sites, has been discussed elsewhere in terms of content analysis, recurring visual tropes and the positions adopted towards the TRC (Ferreira et al, in press). The analysis that follows focuses specifically on the students' use of the space on the front of the postcard, with occasional references to the written message side to demonstrate how the linguistic mode inflects the multimodal meaning of the postcard picture.

A multimodal semiotic analysis of the full set of postcards reveals a number of interesting patterns, including *inter alia* designs that draw on and re-design aspects of the introductory handout on the TRC, postcards where the visual materiality of the writing is dominant and of central significance, and postcards where the culturally-specific meanings of the symbolism of the postcard picture cannot be determined without reference to the linguistic mode. Some postcards were entirely hand-drawn; others used cut-out pictures or words from newspapers and magazines to create a collage effect; still others combined these two techniques; while one or two were designed on computer. While a number of postcards are wholly pictorial, most use a combination of word and image for their design. From this rich set of data, two patterns have been chosen to discuss. The first is a category of postcards that all use the new South African flag as a semiotic resource. The second is a category that sets up a binary relationship between past/present (or past/future). Although the postcards reproduced here are in black and white, the originals all used colour, often in meaningful ways, and colour is therefore an important aspect of the analysis.

The new South African flag as semiotic resource

The new South African flag, first hoisted on 27 April 1994, is synonymous with the birth of democracy in South Africa. As a symbol of national identity and unity, it is closely associated with the image of South Africa as a ‘rainbow nation’, a phrase coined by Bishop Tutu that remains popular, despite its interrogation by academics (e.g. Coetzee 2001; Gqola 2001). The image of the South African flag is therefore an available resource in the national semiotic landscape and is in effect an icon in the sense that it is ‘a supercharged, heavily used sign with powerful stable meanings’ (Alder 2004: 21). Several students used this flag in the design of their postcard. But despite its ostensibly stable meaning, students put the image of the flag to different uses, according to their diverse interests as sign makers, and thus used this image to realize different discourses. See Figures 1 to 4.

In Figure 1, the visual mode predominates and the elements of line, texture and size play significant roles. The postcard shows two flags: the new South African flag is placed centrally on the postcard, occupying the focal point and overlaying the old South African flag, which is visible in the background. Both flags are represented in their authentic colours, although the colour saturation of the new flag appears greater. They are both computer generated images that were separately printed and the new flag has been cut out along its edges and glued over the old one. There are three aspects of this design that contribute to the salience of the new flag and to its dominance over the old. Firstly, the superimposition of the new flag over the old indicates that the old has been superseded by the new. Indeed, the new flag is covering up the three flags in the centre of the old flag – the Union Jack and the flags of the Orange Free State and Transvaal – thereby obliterating the features that gave this flag its distinctive identity. Secondly, while straight lines and a flat, two-dimensional rectangular shape have been used to represent the old flag, the new flag has wavy contours and is presented at a slightly oblique angle, creating the impression of a flag fluttering in the wind. The dynamic quality of the new flag therefore contrasts strongly with the static representation of the old flag. Thirdly, before being glued flat onto the postcard, the paper on which the old flag is printed was tightly scrunched up. This emphasises materiality by giving it a crumpled appearance and rendering texture significant.

All these features pull in the same direction and the discourse seems clear: the undesirable past is being discarded and replaced by a dynamic and compelling present represented by an official symbol of national unity. There is, however, one element that pulls in a different direction. In terms of their relative size, the old flag dominates the new, since it spans the

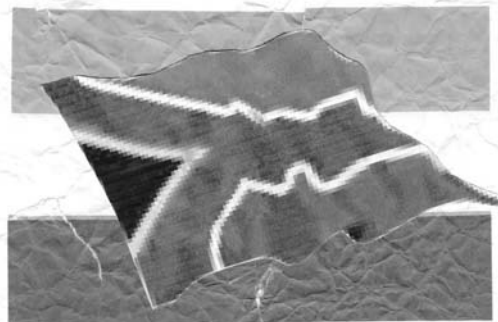


Figure 1

full area of the postcard. Therefore, despite the salience of the new flag, the old flag seems to frame or ‘loom over’ the new. The past seems to contain – or constrain – the present. In this way, this seemingly straight-forward design in fact suggests the tensions between the past and the present, the old and the new. This destabilization of the ascendancy of the new flag seems to be borne out by the linguistic mode. The message is written from the perspective of an observer who attended the TRC hearings, who praises the TRC’s efforts to effect a transition into democracy but ends with the words ‘... but I do think *past prejudices will prove too strong* to achieve a true result’ [author’s emphasis].



Figure 2

Figure 2 also uses the image of a flag, although to quite different visual effect. This postcard is a collage comprising a variety of cut-out words and images that have been glued down closely together, creating quite a busy, asymmetrical composition with no single focal point. Nevertheless, the dominant image is that of a fluttering new South African flag stretching from the left-hand side three-quarters of the way across the top of the postcard. Other images, scattered across the postcard, include other, less clear representations of the South African flag, from a photograph of spectators waving flags at a sporting event and a ‘choose proudly South African’ logo, with slogan, to a medium shot of a cricket player that seems to be Graham Smith, the current captain of the national squad. The dominant word-image – and that term is used because the visual design of the writing contributes to its impact – is ‘with pride’ written in large, lower-case green letters that extend horizontally across the whole postcard. Other words spread across the postcard include ‘Miracle’, ‘South Africa’, ‘celebration’ and ‘healing rapid’.

The design seems overwhelmingly patriotic, drawing on the discourses of national pride, sport as a contributing factor to national unity and the ‘miracle’ of the transition to democracy. And the postcard is saturated in the colours of the flag. Colour therefore acts as the carrier of discourses (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001: 25) about various forms of patriotism and national identity. However, ambiguity is introduced in two ways. First, there are two additional, less visually salient words whose meanings run counter to the positive connotations of the others: ‘help’ and ‘save SA’. Secondly, the entire postcard is covered by strips of masking tape running horizontally from top to bottom. (It is clear that the various bits of the collage have been glued down onto the postcard and therefore the masking tape is not performing an adhesive function.) The materiality of the masking tape produces a texture that is rough to the touch and visually it renders the images and words beneath less clear, creating a blurred effect.

The material effects of the masking tape, along with the words that construct South Africa as being in need of rescuing, therefore unsettle the optimism of the patriotic discourses. It is as if the masking tape is placing the ‘miracle’ of the new South Africa under erasure – subverting its own naïve representation of the new nation and suggesting a present that is less certain than it at first appears.

It is also interesting to note the almost complete absence of the past from this design. Only through verbal signifiers can a past be inferred – it is, after all, in transcending this unspoken past that there is reason for ‘celebration’, that the present is a ‘miracle’; but perhaps even more telling is the intimation that it is precisely from this past that South Africa needs rescuing. The past is thus simultaneously absent and inescapable. The message on the back is a black mother addressing her unborn child, welcoming ‘freedom’ and ‘equality’ and ending in the following way: ‘And remember the past is the past. Learn & move on. Don’t dwell in the past.’ Again it is the seemingly desperate need to be rid of the past that paradoxically, and in sometimes subtle ways, dominates the present.

Two other postcards make use of the new South African flag but disrupt it in ways that convey a critical interrogation of the TRC process and the kind of reconciliation it provides. Figure 3 represents the South African flag in the same flat, two-dimensional rectangular way as Figure 1 uses the old flag. Here the flag is hand-drawn, in full colour and with neat lines. Overlaying the centre of this flag is a torn piece of paper with three thick horizontal stripes in red, white and blue and the word ‘T.R.C.’ handwritten in bold black capital letters. This piece of paper is lying diagonally from bottom left to top right, and thus occupying the focal point, and in contrast to the clean lines of the flag its stripes are smudged and the edges of the paper are irregular and slightly burnt. This postcard is written from the perspective of Chris Hani’s widow, who addresses herself to the TRC, expressing her grief and strongly rejecting ‘the endless apologies’ and the type of reconciliation offered by the commission.

Figure 4 shows Steve Biko ‘raping’ FW de Klerk. The bodies of the two men have been hand-drawn in coloured koki and photographs of close-up head shots of Biko and de

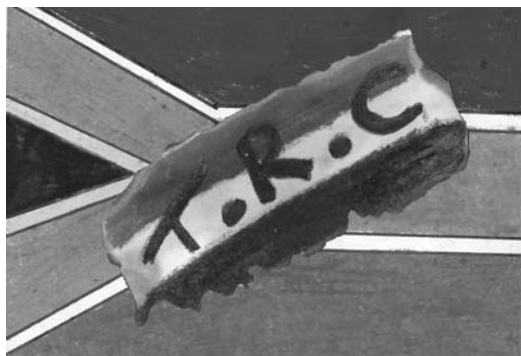


Figure 3



Figure 4

Klerk have been cut out and placed where the heads would be. De Klerk's denigration is emphasised through the gendered position of the sexual assault. This is taking place against the backdrop of the South African flag, with the word 'rape' appearing three times against this backdrop. A medium long shot of a smiling Nelson Mandela, taking up the full height of the postcard, looks on from the right. Although the discourse of the written message is compatible in that it speaks of the TRC as more of 'an instrument for revenge than reconciliation', it does not even begin to approximate the violence and power of the visual discourse. Much of this impact is achieved through taking two icons associated with national unity and reconciliation, the flag and Nelson Mandela respectively, and incorporating them in a design that aggressively subverts their conventional meanings.

These two postcards demonstrate that the same semiotic resource – the South African flag – can be used to serve very different interests for different sign-makers. The overall meaning of a design is made through the interaction of this particular symbol with other elements of the design, so in effect the flag consistently functions as a symbol of national identity in all four postcards. In designing Figure 4, the sign-maker draws on this semiotic resource precisely because its meaning is so widely recognized and so culturally stable – this recognition is necessary for the subversion of the symbol to have the powerful effect that it does. Consequently, in the way that the flag has been incorporated into the designs of these postcards, students have mobilized multiple, sometimes contradictory, discourses and, in the last two cases, have taken up positions of critique in relation to the kind of reconciliation which they perceive the TRC to be offering.

Visual binaries of past/present (or past/future)

The second pattern analysed is one in which the front of the postcards visually construct a clear split between past and present (sometimes expressed as 'future'), setting up the past and the present/future as binary opposites rather than as continuous over time. The four postcards that exemplify this pattern, Figures 5 to 8, all construct this binary using a split-page design, with one or more vertical lines running down the centre dividing the postcard space into two equal sections. This in itself signals that these designs do not exclude the past, since it is represented, neither are they trapped in the past, since the present/future is given equal space. It is therefore the discourses that are evident in the binarism of this representation that are interesting to consider.

Figure 5 works exclusively with the visual mode, and colour and image choice are particularly significant. Two thick vertical stripes separate two panels, each display a number of cut-out photographic images of faces glued down in a collage effect. Although the faces cover most of the available space, the panels seem to share the same light blue sky background, visible near the top edge of the postcard. Despite the absence of lexical markers, it is clear that the left-hand panel represents the past and

the right-hand panel the present/future, as will be shown. All aspects of the two panels seem to be organized in binary terms:

Choice of images:

adults / youth
whites only / multiracial
glum-looking faces / smiling, happy faces

Use of colour:

black & white / full colour

There are additional details that contribute to the binaric representation of past/present. The couple on the left have a fifties look, the man's clothing and the woman's hairstyle functioning as markers of a bygone era. In contrast, the man in the couple on the right is Lucas Radebe who, as former captain of Bafana Bafana, retains his status as a contemporary local celebrity. In this panel, two stars have been cut out and placed among the faces and, coupled with the exuberant body language of the young woman with raised arms, contribute to the celebratory effect. Finally, even the vertical stripes are contrasted: the one to the left is a solid black stripe, while the one on the right is a vibrant cerise stripe.

All of the postcards showing a binary split between past and present/future portray a simplistic and naïve view of transformation, which is discussed later. What is particularly striking about this postcard is the way the past/present binary is mirrored by an adult/youth binary. The past, in all its glumness and monochromatic flatness, belongs to the adults – the 'now', in full colour, belongs to the youth. This perception is reinforced by the choices made in the linguistic mode. This postcard is written in the voice of a young black girl to her Gogo (granny), telling her about democracy, equality and how much has changed – the young teaching the old about the 'now'.

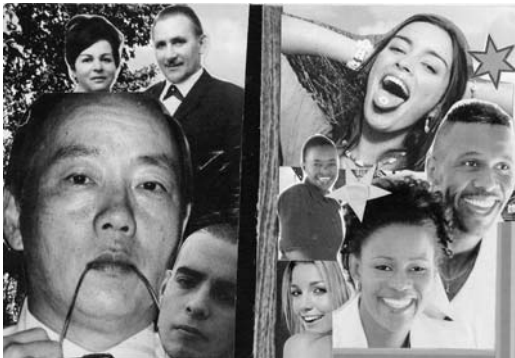


Figure 5

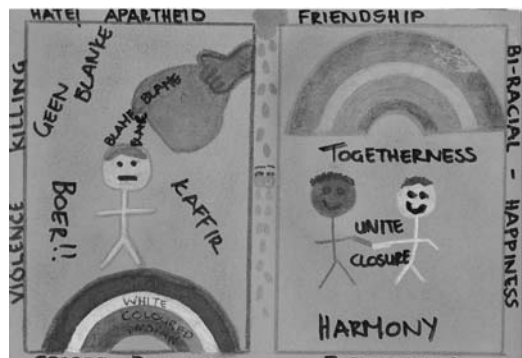


Figure 6

Using a similar split-page format, Figure 6 uses a combination of the visual and linguistic modes comprising hand-written words and hand-drawn images. Each section is contained within its own rectangular border and framed on the three outer sides by words. The left-hand side, representing the past, is framed by terms of aggression associated with apartheid (e.g. 'hate', 'violence', 'secret police') and contains racist insults (i.e. 'boer', 'kaffir'). This is contrasted by terms drawn from the discourse of peace and reconciliation in and around the right-hand panel (e.g. 'friendship', 'happiness', 'togetherness', 'forgiveness', 'closure'). Note that in the attached image 'SECRET POLICE' and 'FORGIVENESS' are cut off on the lower margin of the image. Both panels make use of stick figures and a semi-circular rainbow motif but to quite different effects. In the 'apartheid' panel, there is an image of a hand reaching into the frame and pouring 'blame' (verbally represented) onto a centrally-placed stick figure. The stick figure is white; the hand is brown. In the present or 'friendship' panel, two smiling stick figures are standing together, holding hands; one is brown and the other white. Positioned above and below their linked hands are the words 'unite' and 'closure' – and above and below them, in bigger handwriting, are the words 'togetherness' and 'harmony'.

It is interesting that of all the possible semiotic resources available to depict the apartheid past, this student chooses to use an image that represents white people as passive recipients of guilt – rather than actively acknowledging guilt, for example – thus casting white people as victims. This attention to white experiences of apartheid is reinforced by the insertion of the term 'geen blankes' (no whites) – an apartheid term used to exclude whites from public amenities or services which were reserved for 'non-whites' (which were always inferior to the parallel services reserved for 'whites only').

Discourses of race and racism are therefore present, both in the lexical choices of the linguistic mode and in the choice of images and use of colour. There is, however, an additional image that is used and redesigned in ways that suggest changing discourses of race. Stretched in an arc across the top of the 'friendship' panel is a rainbow displaying its full spectrum of colours. Given all the linguistic and visual markers in this panel, it is quite clearly intended to represent peace and harmony, in keeping with its highly stable cultural meaning. There is nothing innovative about the use of this semiotic resource, at least not in the context of this panel. What is innovative is the presence of a differently designed rainbow in the 'apartheid' panel. The white figure is standing on a 'rainbow' that has four bars of colour, each one with its own linguistic label: an outer black bar ('black'), a white bar ('white'), a blue-red-and-white mottled bar ('coloured'), and a brown bar ('indian'). The transition from this 'apartheid-rainbow' to the full-colour rainbow is indicated by the image in the space between the two panels. A cloud releasing droplets of rain is placed near the top of the page; half-way down there is a pair of eyes and, by implication, the drops of rain are transformed into teardrops. There is a narrative as well as a conceptual process in

these images. Traditionally, after the rain comes the rainbow. Sociopolitically speaking, the rigid racial divisions of the past, which led to much pain and suffering, have been replaced by a united, non-racial society. The tears that represent the transition from one 'rainbow' to the other may be a reference to a traumatic but cathartic TRC process. It is also significant that the colourful rainbow contains no race terms of any kind. It is possible to read the transformation of the 'rainbows' as signalling a shift from a discourse of essentialized and racialized identity (as indicated by the clearly demarcated and labelled race categories of the 'apartheid' rainbow) to one where identity is seen as fluid, multifaceted and able to encompass difference (as suggested by the bright, multicoloured rainbow free of any racialized terminology). But this postcard, even more than most, is complex and multilayered and the various discourses it draws on pull in different directions. The inclusion of the term 'bi-racial' unsettles this positive narrative of progress towards non-essentialism and serves as a reminder that contradictory discourses coexist in texts of all kinds.

Figure 7 is interesting only insofar as it contributes to establishing the pattern. Like Figure 5, it sets up its binary division between past and present/future in simplistic and uncomplicated terms. The two panels are clearly labelled 'Past' and 'Future'. The past is monochromatic in colour and crumpled in texture; whereas the future is in full colour and smooth in texture. Representing the past, the salient image is a smoking handgun which is surrounded by crying faces. The salient image in the 'future' panel is a large red heart with yellow lines radiating from it; it is surrounded by colourful flowers and by two smiling faces, one brown and one pink. While the future is given free reign over its half of the postcard space, the past is strongly framed by a thick black koki, again seeking to contain and seal off the past. Unlike the previous postcard, the various elements in this one all pull in the same direction. The violent and sorrowful past is unproblematically contrasted with the happy, racially diverse and love-filled future.

Figure 8, on the other hand, would be an equally predictable past/future binary representation were it not for two interesting features. Firstly, it depicts a single object, splits it down the middle and represents each half differently in accordance with

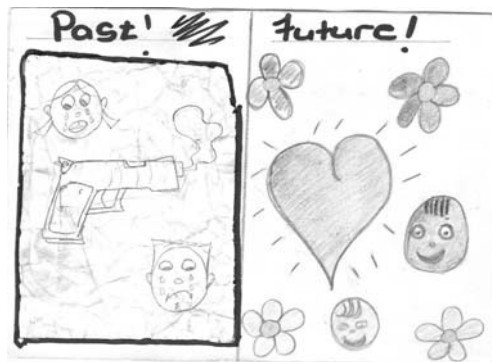


Figure 7

whether it refers to the past or the future. The features of this representation are consonant with the negative past and positive future created by all these postcards: the 'past' half of the tree has bare branches, is surrounded by dry ground and has a wilted plant at its base; the 'future' half is lush and has red apples growing, and is surrounded by thriving colourful flowers and abundant grass. But the fact that this is a single object that is differently repre-

sented draws on discourses that suggest less of a rupture between ‘past’ and ‘future’ than the previous postcards that separate the contents of their panels so definitively. Here this single object, a tree, existed in the past and will continue to exist in the future. This is a suggestion of continuity that was not evident in the previous designs.

Secondly, although the panels are clearly labelled ‘Before’ and ‘After’, the ‘After’ panel is on the left and the ‘Before’ panel on the right. This reverses the conventional left-to-right reading path of Western alphabetical cultures, which usually corresponds to a movement from the given (the known) to the new (the unfamiliar) in terms of visual layout (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996; Kress 2000). The postcards in Figures 5 to 7 followed this convention by placing the ‘past’ on the left and the present/future on the right. In this way the movement forward in time is visually captured through the movement forward in space from left to right in accordance with the reading pathway. Based on that trajectory, it is possible in those postcards to read the past as being ‘left behind’ and the present/future as open to continuation. But by reversing the order of the past and future panels, Figure 8 starts with the future and leaves the reader in the past. The opening sentence of the written message on the back reads ‘I think it’s time to forget the past and [look] to the future’. Again the contrast between the ever-present past of the visual design and the ‘forget-and-move-on’ discourse of the linguistic mode suggest unresolved tensions and ambivalent attitudes towards the past and its relationship to the present.

These postcards taken collectively suggest that, for these particular students, the binary mode is a fundamental way of thinking about the relationship between the past

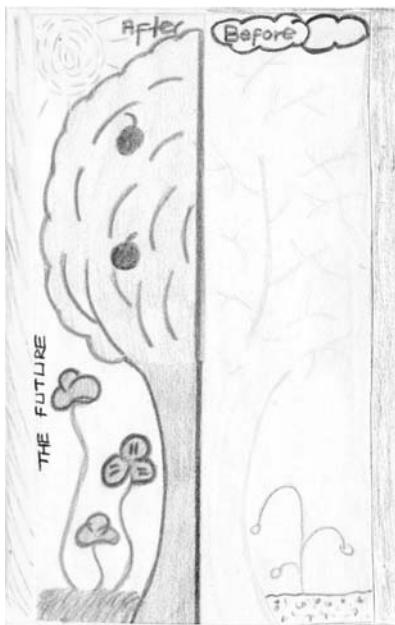


Figure 8

and the present/future. There tends to be a simplistic distinction between the ‘bad’ apartheid past and the ‘good’ democratic present. This impermeable boundary erected between past and present is problematic because it suggests that students’ understandings of the present are not inflected by an understanding of the past. The past is perceived to be distant, closed off – another era, another people. Therefore while ideas of freedom and equality are readily embraced, structural inequalities that persist in the present are rendered invisible.

Conclusion

The postcards analysed in this article represent only a portion of the postcard data collected, which, even in its totality, represents the work of only a handful of students at three suburban, middle-class Johannesburg high schools. It is therefore important that this work not be seen as an attempt to

provide some generalized and essentialized notion of 'current South African youth identity'. However, in analysing how the producers of these postcards make meaning and what kinds of meanings they make, it is possible to make some observations both with regard to the discourses that students draw on and to discerning traces of how these particular young people see themselves in relation to their national and socio-historical context.

Through their multimodal designs – using elements such as choice of image, use of colour, layering, texture, spatial composition and linguistic markers – students express a range of discourses, sometimes simplistic, sometimes multiple and complementary and sometimes multiple and contradictory. Discourses of national identity, pride and unity are often depicted through images of the South African flag, sport or other 'rainbow nation' motifs; however, such images of optimism are sometimes unsettled in ways which suggest that the tensions of the past are not easily resolvable. While some of these young people seem to foreground the optimism associated with a young democracy, others position themselves critically, directing anger or bitterness towards the TRC's efforts at national reconciliation. A number of students draw on discourses that seek unproblematically to contain and close off the past; yet even when representations of the past and present/future fall into simplistic binaries, they enable students to position themselves firmly in a hopeful present/future. Striking among these was the postcard that conflated images of the rainbow nation and the present with youth and contrasted them with images of the apartheid past and adulthood.

Furthermore, the fact that there was little evidence of the expected resistance to dealing with the past suggests that the pedagogy succeeded in engaging students, often in meaningful ways, with a past that does not sit comfortably with them. The multimodal pedagogy of the text design opened up the range of possible semiotic resources for selection and (re)design and, through their choices, students wrote themselves into their multimodal texts. They engaged in complex decision-making processes, thinking seriously about how to make meaning and grappling with issues of representation. If we take seriously the claim that the global semiotic landscape is increasingly dominated by the visual (Kress 2000) – and I believe we should – then we need to acknowledge the possibility that young people today are more likely to be engaging with the discourses of their social environments through the visual mode than through the linguistic mode. Images, like words, are not neutral; their meanings too are culturally shaped and embedded in discursive practices that are themselves culturally and historically located. The variety of ways in which students worked within the visual mode suggests that visual resources feature particularly strongly in their semiotic repertoire. Using a multimodal pedagogy could be an effective way of 'getting at' the discursive practices in which young people participate, and could provide a further way of exploring how young people position themselves in societies with conflicted pasts.

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Children of democracy: Teaching for democracy in early childhood classrooms in South Africa

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Abstract

South Africa's constitution emphasizes the role of human rights in the enhancement of democracy. If these rights are to be both understood and appropriated by citizens, it is essential, the authors argue, that early childhood educators become both targets and agents of change, since attitudes and values that underpin holistic development are forged in this phase. It is the young child of today who will breathe life into our constitution tomorrow. This paper explores a university initiative that spanned the Western Cape, rural Mpumalanga and Gauteng and aimed to explore early childhood educators' knowledge and understanding of democracy and human rights, and the extent to which democratic practice is being realized in early childhood classrooms. The authors' access to preschools in Mpumalanga was facilitated by a partnership with an outreach programme focusing on early childhood teacher development. Through this initiative, their students' understanding of 'lived democracy' is deepened as they are immersed in both rural and urban teaching contexts. Through collaborative, critical reflection with educators they began to identify indicators of democratic practice appropriate to the South African early childhood context. Research findings suggest that further intervention which models a democratic approach should be initiated. This would enable educators to reflect critically on their professional practice and in so doing to mediate age-appropriate democratic principles (such as respect) to children.

Keywords: early childhood development, 'lived democracy', democratic teacher, human rights education, critical reflection, teachers as agents of change, children as critical thinkers

'For much of the 20th century and throughout most of the world, early childhood (from birth through school entry) was largely invisible as a state-policy concern' (Pence, Evans & Garcia 2008: 2). It was only towards the end of the 20th century that the young

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child as an 'individual social entity' with rights and specific concerns began to emerge (Pence et al. 2008: 2). Today early childhood care and education (ECCE) is seen as an international imperative and it is well accepted that the values, attitudes, behaviour and skills acquired during the preschool years may have a 'long-lasting impact in later life' (Samuelsson & Kaga 2008: 9).

ECCE is now, in fact, recognized as an instrument to guarantee children's rights, open the way to the realization of the goals of Unesco's EFA (Education For All) initiative and contribute to reducing poverty and inequality (UNESCO 2007). For the world, including Africa, this presents a multi-faceted challenge because, as Schweinhart and Weikart (1993) and Heckman (2000) argue, only high quality ECCE programmes will optimize human potential. Furthermore, it is suggested in this article, these programmes should be run by specific kinds of teachers, whose practice fosters equality.

Issues relating to equality and redress were prioritized by South Africa's first democratic government elected in 1994. Early childhood development (ECD) was 'identified as a key area in the process of reconstruction and human resource development and in promoting the rights of young children' (Porteus 2004; Biersteker et al. 2008: 229). This identification and subsequent reconceptualization of the role of the preschool phase was warmly welcomed by the ECD sector. It opened the door to new possibilities and spaces of change. Prior to 1994, ECD was generally referred to as pre-primary education and from a formal policy perspective was mainly a Whites-only concern with the focus on the preschool (3–6 years) child.

The advent of democracy presented many exciting possibilities for preschool education. Significant changes included the envisaged provision of ECD services to all South African children, and new schooling phases. ECD was reconceptualized as embracing children from birth to nine years. Furthermore, a 'bridging' or 'reception' year (Grade R) for children entering Grade 1 the following year was introduced. It is envisaged that this 'reception' year will become compulsory by 2010 (Department of Education 1995, 2001).

The implementation of ECD, including Grade R, has, however, proved problematic because of difficulties such as finance, teacher training and qualifications and curriculum design. In terms of curriculum design, South African legal and policy documents¹ set out, both explicitly and implicitly, the notion of a democratic classroom where the ideals of democracy will not only be upheld but will be actively modelled and taught to children. In addition, White Paper 5 on early childhood development acknowledges that intervention 'in the earlier years helps to reduce the social and economic disparities and race and gender inequalities that divide our society' (Department of Education 2001: 13). The focus of this article on the ECD phase as a mediating context for democratization is therefore appropriate, especially since preschool children are particularly open to the ideas, values and norms modelled by their teachers (Gordon & Browne 2004; Spodek, Saracho & Davis 1991; Papalia & Olds 1998). The White Paper on ECD recognizes that the early years are the ideal phase

...for the transmission of the values that are essential for a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. These values include respect for human rights, appreciation of diversity, tolerance, and justice. (Department of Education 2001: 13-14).

This article opens a conversation about what democratic practice is appropriate in the ECD phase and asks how we might prepare teachers for this. In so doing, it addresses a significant but under-researched area in South African education.

It has been argued elsewhere (Colgan, Linington and Excell, 2005) that teaching democratic practices in the context of ECD education will only happen if teachers have an understanding of both democratic principles and how to apply them in a classroom context. To meet this requirement, the authors, as lecturers of early childhood student teachers, designed and implemented a course aimed at preparing tomorrow's teachers to model 'lived democracy'². We found, however, that despite the course and mediation by ourselves in the in-field teaching that followed the course, the students (and their supervising teachers in the schools) had a very limited understanding of 'education for democracy' (EFD), which refers to the study of democracy content such as the constitution and human rights documents, and 'democratic education' (DE), which refers to 'democracy in action' or 'lived democracy', a lived practice. Furthermore, most of the teachers with whom they engaged were also reluctant to enter into even a casual conversation about their democratic practice in the classroom.

This reluctance could be seen in the context of Colgan's (2006) finding that teachers in South Africa have a very superficial understanding of democracy and democratic practice. This superficial understanding could constrain teachers' wishes to engage with an abstract concept like democracy about which many might be ill informed. Actual practice is a far more concrete notion and as such removed this constraint. As Colgan (2006) notes, democracy is a multifaceted and complex concept, which can be alienating to individual teachers and discourage them from engaging actively with it. Certainly, most of our participant teachers were more willing to begin a conversation about professional practice in general than they were to discuss what democratic practices might entail. This warranted further consideration, and led to the research, described in this article, that aimed to explore preschool educators' knowledge and understanding of democracy and human rights and the extent to which democratic practice is being realized in the preschool classroom.

The authors examine the nature of the disjuncture they identified between theory and practice, between teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to education and democracy. This is then located in the field of ECD and the role of critical thinking and reflection in the enactment of democracy is considered. The article concludes by suggesting ways forward.

Framing the research problem

Using a case study approach, this research explored ECD teachers' understanding and practice of democracy. The following research questions guided the observations and

interviews:

- What are the current beliefs and attitudes of ECD teachers about teaching and learning in relation to young children?
- What are these teachers' understandings of democracy and democratic practice?
- How are these beliefs and understandings reflected in their practice?

These questions, it was reasoned, would assist the researchers in trying to understand what democratic practice in early childhood education would look like, which is a complex question inviting systematic research. Three theoretical perspectives framed the research. The first was understandings of democracy and democratic practice in general; the second was developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) in ECD; and the third was the reflective role of the teacher in ensuring that her or his practice is both developmentally appropriate and provides optimal learning opportunities for children to both internalize democratic principles and begin to demonstrate these in their actions. Each of these perspectives will be explored in turn.

Democracy and democratic practice

First, in considering perspectives on democracy and democratic practice, it is important to note that in the current South African context, the notion of democracy is closely aligned with the country's 1996 constitutional vision, which aspires to a culture of democracy through the 'establishment of a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights' (Human Rights Commission 2006: 191). The establishment of such a society calls on every South African to adopt a 'way of being' that embraces respect, anti-bias, critical reflection and proactive participation; to balance rights with responsibilities; and to be prepared to cope with uncertainty in an approach to problem-solving that relinquishes the 'me' in favour of the 'us'. This is closely related to the African notion of 'ubuntu' – I am because we are.

As Waghid (2006: 26) points out, 'democracy is a messy system'. He proposes that it be viewed in terms of three interrelated features: democracy as a political system; democracy as a sphere of debate; and democracy as a set of rules. Writing in the context of higher education, Waghid argues for a reflexive democratic discourse and for an education that 'deepens the capacities of students to understand and practice values of democracy such as freedom, identity, citizenship, rights, diversity, tolerance and non-racism' (2006: 34). Capacities for critical thinking as well as values attuned to shared public life are important aspects of 'education for democracy', as well as 'democratic education'.

As Dewey (in Kohak 1997) argues, democracy should be seen as a way of life that needs to be carefully nurtured in every one of us and in society at large. Only then can it be expected to work as a political system. Cahn (2004) suggests that a democratic society is distinguished by the quality of life inherent in its procedures. The rights of citizens to hold conflicting ideas that they can express freely should be sacrosanct. 'The open

air of democracy invites individuality and variety, thereby enhancing the opportunity for increased self-consciousness and self-fulfilment' (Cahn 2004: 5).

But democracy is also open to abuse if citizens 'cannot distinguish reason from demagoguery, integrity from duplicity and wisdom from folly' (Cahn 2004: 6). Democratic education is one way of enabling citizens to exercise their agency by making reasoned decisions. Reasoned decisions should be able to stand the test of deliberation involving wide participation and challenge by all stakeholders. The notion of willing participation is a key component of the deliberative model³ of democracy adopted by South Africa, and people should be able to conduct deliberation in an open and unforced dialogue with each another.

To achieve this, South Africa as a society needs to acknowledge our past and to consciously build a diverse society identifiable by its shared values and common citizenship. Ongoing critical reflection and informed debate are a vital part of this quest. For, as Weffort (1994) asserts, not only does South Africa face many challenges emanating from a past steeped in racism and division, but if we are not vigilant in observing the specific requirements of a new democracy we could fall back into established, authoritarian habits in both our leadership and our institutions. To counter this possibility, we need consciously to nurture knowledge, skills, attitudes and values related to democracy. These are not innate; they are learnt (Colgan, Linington & Excell 2005). Thus, an important component in the realization of South Africa's constitutional vision is the democratization, through education, of South Africa's children. Educators, therefore, need to be agents and possibly targets of change. And their beliefs, as well as their understanding of democracy, may assist or impede in this task.

The experience of the researchers, as stated, has shown that in preparing pre-service teachers for democratic practice, it is not enough simply to give them a formal understanding of 'education for democracy'. Cognitive understanding does not necessarily address affective factors, which impact on internalization of the concept. The internalization of specific values, it is contended, is crucial if teachers are to mediate a 'lived democracy' effectively.

In short, meaningful transformation in South Africa requires teachers who embrace both notions, EFD and DE, and the principles, beliefs, values and attitudes inherent in them. But this is not sufficient. To complement this, teachers need to be committed to the enactment of democracy. This central role of the teacher is acknowledged by Gutmann (1987: 89), who reminds us that 'a discussion of democratic education must not lose sight of the educators'. Here, the work of Pajares (1992) and Kagan (1992) offers important insights. These authors argue that teachers' belief systems are influenced by affective, social and cultural factors that arise directly and indirectly from the contexts in which they themselves grew up and were trained. These initial contexts may be far removed from the South Africa of today, yet may still affect teachers' professional practice, particularly through their belief systems. Even if beliefs are implicit and unarticulated, they may still shape teacher's perceptions and

actions (Pajares 1992). This suggested that the researchers might begin their conversations with teachers by enquiring about their beliefs and attitudes about young children and their learning. Engaging with teachers about the beliefs underpinning their classroom practices would provide a basis to begin to explore their understanding and implementation of democracy within their teaching environments.

In addition, teacher agency cannot be viewed in isolation from context. It must be considered against the complexities of education in South Africa today, where, for example, overcrowded classrooms, shortages of resources, and language of teaching and learning may all impact upon teacher practices. This point will be returned to later on.

Having considered issues of democracy and democratic practice in general, let us now turn to the context of ECD. What might democracy and democratic practice look like in an ECD context? In answering this, a starting point is to consider developmentally appropriate ECD practice.

Developmentally appropriate ECD and democracy

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) adopts the premise that the early years form the foundation for ongoing holistic development, including physical, intellectual, social and emotional aspects of development. It acknowledges that children are active agents in their own learning, and that learning occurs in a socio-cultural context in which the teacher plays a mediating role (Gordon & Browne 2004, 2008). This mediation, in fact the whole teaching and learning context in which the child develops, must promote holistic development. In this approach, the child should be immersed in classroom interactions that model democratic practice and assisted to acquire learning dispositions that promote reasoned thought. Carr (in Bruce 2004) has identified five dispositions that encourage learning, understanding and knowing. These are courage, trust, perseverance, confidence and responsibility. The authors would argue that these characteristics are an inherent part of a democratic sensibility.

DAP, they would argue, can be a valuable informing perspective for democratic education in the ECD phase provided it is not adopted unquestioningly. Cannella & Viruru (2004) and Muthukrishna, Hall & Ebrahim (2005) argue that DAP is based on Western ways of doing and knowing and does not take sufficient cognisance of issues relating to diversity, identities and culture. Furthermore, Grieshaber & Cannella (2001) suggest that many ECD educators using developmentalist approaches assume the notion of the universal child, or adopt a more formal didactic approach to their work with young children. The authors' observations of a considerable number of ECD classrooms in South Africa concur with these points. The challenge, then, is for DAP to reconceptualize childhood through a number of different lenses, particularly in a country as diverse as South Africa.

One way to approach this would be through ongoing critical reflection by all stake-

holders involved in the education of the young child. Grieshaber & Cannella (2001) also suggest that the child's own voice should be taken into account in the reflective process. In fact, theorists such as Jones & Mules (2001) and MacNaughton & Williams (2004) assert that ECD children can – and must – be encouraged to think critically themselves. As Jones & Mules contend:

Critical thinking by adults *and children* can be seen and heard as they question, think about and explore how things happen and why, contemplate and talk about what's fair and unfair, true and untrue, as they learn to identify stereotypes and question their meaning (2001: 192, emphasis added).

Reardon (1995) also suggests that preschool children are capable of thinking critically about inequality, unfairness and harm. She contends that a focus on these issues or problems enhances the development in the young child of the following core concepts and values: rules, order, respect, fairness, diversity, cooperation and personal responsibility. Reardon's views resonate with the values outlined in the White Paper on ECD, which include respect for human rights and appreciation of diversity. Reardon (1995) further proposes:

As values serve to identify and illuminate human problems, and human rights standards serve to diagnose and overcome 'social wrongs', so particular wrongs can be used as vehicles for learning that will lead students to explore and develop human values and to confront and resolve social problems (1995: 14).

Reardon's (1995) focus on inequality, unfairness and harm would also allow the teacher to focus on responsibility as the reciprocal aspect of rights, as well as on conflict resolution and negotiation. In addition, the five learning dispositions that have already been mentioned as key elements in democratic citizenship may be related to Reardon's notion of critical thinking, in that critical thinking requires the child to have enough courage to ask probing questions and probably to persevere in the quest for an acceptable answer.

The link between critical thinking and human rights education is explored more fully by Tibbitts (1994). Tibbitts argues that human rights education involves the development of skills for making critical judgments, listening to and expressing views, accepting personal differences and participating in group decision-making. She concludes that these skills, which are 'central to the development of a civic-minded, democratic culture in the classroom, are building blocks for society itself, and could begin to be introduced in schools as early as the pre-primary levels' (Tibbitts 1994: 365). Tibbitts (2006) argues further that education for democracy means sensitization to those whose human rights have been severely compromised. In her words, 'creating a sense of shared humanity is not merely a matter of values, but also the promotion of care and empathy, and even an allowance for outrage' (Tibbitts 2006: 1). An ECD practitioner is ideally placed to mediate shared humanity through both the themes she or he presents to children as part of the daily programme, as well as the relationships forged with parents, children, fellow practitioners and all stakeholders in the ECD context. These relationships should be founded on empathy, care and the

constructive expression and resolution of disagreement.

The argument so far has implicitly set out what could be called indicators of democratic practice in the ECD phase. These are well summed up by Dahlberg & Moss's (2005) idea of preschools as 'democratic spaces' where relationships are governed by democratic practice, values and rights. Thus one can envisage the creation of democratic spaces in ECD, where values and rights such as respect and equity are enhanced, where practices and knowledges are discursively contested, and where dialogue, deliberation and critical thinking are actively encouraged in ways that are appropriate to the developmental level of the children involved and their particular contexts. To this, Dahlberg & Moss (2005) add the notion of a pedagogy of listening. In this form of pedagogy, teachers become co-creators of knowledge with the children they teach, rather than merely transmitters of knowledge and culture. This, in turn, requires teachers to act reflectively in their professional practice, which could either fuel or foil 'democracy-in-action'. This leads to consideration of the reflective role of the teacher, which is the third informing perspective.

The reflective role of the teacher

As researchers, the authors asked: 'Are teachers always aware of the influence they exert and the messages they send? Do they, in fact, always behave and teach the way they say they do? And even if they think they do, what understandings do children attach to their teachers' actions and words?'

Argyris & Schön (1974) and Schön (1991) posit that there can be a disparity between what teachers say they do and what they actually do. They distinguish between 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use'. The authors suggest that many ECD teachers may think and say that they are engaging in democratic practices but in reality their 'theory-in-use' does not reflect this.

To effect the transformation envisaged in this article, teachers need to reflect on their practice and on their beliefs. Brookfield (1995) contends that good teachers critically examine core assumptions about why they do what they do in the way that they do it. In so doing, they acquire an organizing vision of what they are trying to accomplish, thus constantly reflecting on their philosophy of education. Campoy (2005: 53) asserts that 'an educational philosophy consists of many parts, but the most important elements are your own deep-rooted beliefs, values and attitudes about children and learning.'

The ECD context presents specific challenges inextricably linked to the developmental level of the child in question. The authors have argued that DAP in South Africa requires of teachers a detailed knowledge of child development that uses different lenses in understanding childhood and takes cognisance of diversity. This requires a critically reflective teacher. This view is supported by Jones & Mules (2001: 197), who assert that 'critical reflection on early childhood practice is an ongoing process that

challenges us to ask ourselves “Why do I do it this way?” and “How might this feel for the children and families?” ‘These theorists strongly support an anti-bias approach⁴ in ECD. Such an approach challenges us to reflect on our professional values, beliefs and practice to uncover just how these have been influenced by bias and stereotyping:

Through this process of questioning and exploration, each of us may well discover how our existing practices advantage some children but disadvantage others, therefore maintaining inequality. Once we recognize such practices, we can develop new ways of teaching and caring in which all children can ‘win’ (Jones & Mules 2001: 197).

In summary, critical thinking in an educational context requires a reflective and questioning approach ‘to expose those values, beliefs and practices that underpin our work and perpetuate inequalities’ (Jones & Mules 2001: 192). This is particularly the case if democratic process and practices are to be enhanced in education.

Research methodology

The case studies outlined in this paper are both descriptive and interpretive. The authors’ aim, as they have stated, was to understand teachers’ meanings of democracy and its implementation in the ECD classroom. However, in the light of teachers’ reluctance to discuss democracy, the focus initially on developing a relationship of trust with the teachers (Denscombe 2003). Instead of talking about democracy, which would have risked alienating teachers, they began by exploring their understandings of practice in general. As researchers, the authors needed to reflect collaboratively with their participants on aspects of teaching and learning that could serve as indicators of democratic practice. They suggest that these indicators should underpin professional practice in any preschool context, regardless of socio-cultural features and social categories such as gender, race and class.

The design of the study was emergent, flexible and responsive to changing conditions of the research process. Questionnaires and unstructured interviews were initially used to discuss the research issues with 15 early childhood development teachers working in Gauteng, rural Mpumalanga and the Western Cape. This research was carried out over a period of six months. The researchers then asked eight of the teachers if they could observe them in their own classroom environment, in a natural setting. These teachers provided a small, purposive sample for further study. This article focuses on three of the teachers in particular, because they help to provide a thick, rich description and reflect the diversity of ECD in South Africa today.

During the observations of these teachers, field notes were made and particular aspects of the observations were recorded on video tape. The video material was then reviewed collaboratively with the teachers and semi-structured interviews were conducted based on findings drawn from the videos, observations and questionnaires. Where appropriate, the researchers were accompanied by an interpreter to ensure that language was a carrier and not a barrier to understanding. A multi-method approach was chosen because it allows findings to be ‘corroborated’ (Denscombe, 2003:

133) and data produced by different methods to be compared.

The researchers consistently bore in mind Maykut & Morehouse's (1994) assertion that qualitative researchers tend to understand the situation as constructed by the participants and took cognizance of MacDonald and Walker's (in Merriam 1998: 43) observation that 'what people *think* they're doing, what they *say* they are doing, what they *appear* to others to be doing, and what in fact they *are* doing, may be sources of considerable discrepancy'. This resonates with Argyris & Schön's (1974) notion of 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use'.

It is acknowledged that this study has limitations because of the small size of the sample. Findings based on interactions with three teachers who represent distinctly different South African contexts cannot be generalized. They could, however, point to similar understandings that may be held by teachers in disparate ECD contexts. As Merriam (1998: 38) points out, descriptive case studies can be useful because they present 'basic information about areas of education where little research has been conducted'. This study provides insights into how 'lived democracy' is being interpreted in the field by teachers in disparate contexts.

Findings from the three participants are discussed in relation to three themes that have already been outlined:

- Perceptions and attitudes relating to young children and their learning
- Understanding of democracy and democratic practice
- How practice reflects participants' understanding of 'democracy-in-action'.

Case study one: John

John is a 50-year-old white male who has been teaching for 25 years. He has an honours degree in teaching and extensive overseas teaching experience. One of his key interests is education on virtues⁵. At present he is teaching a mixed age group class in an urban school in the Western Cape, with children ranging from five to nine years old.

Perceptions and attitudes relating to young children and their learning

John believes that ECD should build a foundation for life. It should enable the young child to develop holistically by providing a balance between physical, cognitive, social, affective, creative and spiritual growth and development. He says:

I wish to ground these children with realistic self-esteem and empower them to be independent people with a knowledge of their human rights, the rights of others and a general love and appreciation of learning.

He believes in setting 'strong and flexible boundaries' within which children can operate, modelling democratic practice and encouraging its development through an emphasis on group work and the qualities inherent in democratic leadership. He uses the children's real-life experiences⁶ against the backdrop of the life experiences of the class community to explore problems and situations. He extends their current know-

ledge through explicitly building on what they bring to, for example, the news ring⁷, and facilitating a strongly interactive, participatory teaching and learning environment. He contends that:

[Children should develop a] constant openness to new learning opportunities based on children's news, and real-life experiences of the class community ... [they should be taught about] resilience, conflict resolution, the range of virtues and appropriate use of them, values as expressed in different cultures, how differences in cultures is a celebration of the diversity of the human spirit ... [they should experience] safe environments and personal boundaries [which] builds confidence and freedom to be. This is done through notions about leadership, teams and group participation. It is the beginning of democracy, for it is about making choices that are fair and good for the group.

John's understanding of democracy and democratic practice

John understands democracy as protecting the rights of people at all levels – physical, emotional, mental and environmental. He also sees democracy as participatory, encompassing various aspects of communication and group work. Education plays an important role in 'enshrining these rights'. He aims to create an environment in which young children feel safe to participate actively as democrats in the classroom. As he states, 'They have practice in speaking their minds, being assertive, participating in choices, voting games'. He believes children should acquire knowledge about 'their rights, others' rights, conflict resolution and a sense of other systems of rule and law.' He sets strong boundaries in relation to, for example, active listening, and uses behaviour modification strategies for inappropriate behaviour related to restlessness and inattentiveness, e.g. 'I think you need a bit of time out. You have to take responsibility for your own thoughts.' and 'That's your first warning' (and he added the child's name). He acknowledged difficulties one child had faced and noted how, through perseverance and determination, these difficulties had been overcome. His discipline techniques were aimed at self-regulation and were not punitive. When mediating conflict between learners, he ensured that ultimately the choice was theirs as to how it was resolved. His teaching was interactive, and he created a learning environment where openness was encouraged and respect, self-respect and independence enhanced.

John's practice reflects his understanding of 'democracy-in-action'

John said he constantly critically reflects on his practice and this was apparent in our interaction with him. In our collaborative reflection with John, he linked each aspect of his practice with a democratic ideal. He spoke, for example, about the role of open-ended questions in the furtherance of critical thinking, which he sees as an inherent part of 'lived democracy'. He said that he expanded the children's thinking by asking open-ended questions that required them to think about their responses and employ problem-solving skills.

Although he said he modelled democratic practice, probably like many teachers he

falls into the trap of saying too much, giving too much information and sometimes answering his own questions. John said this is a feature of his practice that he is aware of and is 'working on'. We found, however, in our observations that this feature of his practice did not detract from his efficacy as a democratic role model.

Case study two: Rachel

Rachel is in her mid-thirties. She came from a disadvantaged background, obtained a matric and taught for a while as an unqualified teacher. She took the opportunity when it arose to study through an in-service programme, and qualified in 2000 with a joint preprimary/junior primary diploma. She has taught for 16 years and is currently teaching a Grade R class⁸ at a private college in a disadvantaged urban area not far from Johannesburg.

Perceptions and attitudes relating to young children and their learning

Rachel believes that ECD should 'mould children for future citizenship' in their country. ECD should also 'help learners about their expectations for the foundation phase, e.g. like following the instructions etc'. Rachel places considerable emphasis on the role of the teacher in instilling responsibility, morals and values in children. 'Let them value themselves, have morals and values, then have responsibility; teaching and learning will just flow.' She believes that children need to know how to behave in the community. This was what she was taught. 'I was raised and taught to respect, share, love and to know that everybody is valuable and unique and to live peacefully with them.' She named the beliefs that guide her everyday practice as patience, respect, punctuality and hard work.

Rachel's understanding of democracy and democratic practice

Rachel understands democracy as 'freedom'. Young children, she said, need to know their rights and to practise their responsibilities. 'I teach learners what they need to know and prepare them for the global world.'

She understands human rights as 'what you need to know and practise as a human of every country. You need to know your limits, what you must and mustn't do.' And lists the rights that she feels are important as 'a right to freedom of speech ... a right to a wage and a salary while employed ... a right to a home/shelter ... a right to medication when ill.'

Rachel introduces the notion of human rights to young children by focusing on rights and responsibilities that 'can be told to them in a theme form and during their special weeks in our calendar [e.g. Heritage Day, Freedom Day].'

Rachel's practice reflects her understanding of 'democracy-in-action'

During our collaborative reflection with Rachel, she often referred to the circum-

stances that motivated her. She said that she was brought up by her grandmother, who did not see education as important – ‘I had to fight for myself’. Now she sees that her duty both as a parent and as a teacher is to ‘mould’ children so that they become ‘better people’. Rachel’s practice, we observed, clearly reflected this belief. She stressed responsibility and respect. She also immersed the children in a wide range of knowledge – generating activities relating to shapes, Bible stories and phonics. She also placed a great emphasis on values. In fact, she even has a drawing of a value tree on her classroom wall with branches named ‘ubuntu’, peace, love and respect. During the researchers’ visit she added the branch ‘responsibility’.

Although Rachel did ask a few open-ended questions and invited participation, her ‘ring’ appeared teacher-dominated, if not autocratic. Most of the talking came from Rachel and some of the concepts she introduced needed more concretization, the researchers felt, to bring them into line with how children learn at this age (Papalia & Olds 1998). The length of her ring, almost an hour, did not take into account the limited attention span of children of this age. Indeed, a number of children appeared towards the end simply to have ‘switched off’ and were not listening. Apart from pedagogical problems, Rachel’s teaching did not enhance democratic practices, as children who were not engaging with the activity on offer did not have an opportunity to enhance the critical thinking skills which are important for democratic education.

Rachel’s management techniques relating to discipline were also problematic, in the researchers’ view, particularly when related to democratic principles. She threatened punishments that were inappropriate and did not allow children to develop their own self-regulation techniques. When asked about this, she acknowledged that her practices were not ideal and said that the principal felt the same way. She believed that frightening children made them compliant, but said that she did not know what else to do. However, she was open to guidance and suggestion about appropriate discipline techniques. And some of the approaches that she used in her general teaching were indeed both affirming and developmentally appropriate. She affirmed children who gave the right answer through a ‘chorusing dance’ and code switched so that all children could be included and understanding enhanced.

During the collaborative reflection on the video, Rachel found it difficult to articulate her practice, or talk about the pedagogical moves that she had made. The comments she made related rather to aspects of her physical self, e.g. ‘I fidgeted too much, I used the word ‘ne’ too much ...’. Though she was open to suggestion, she was unable to identify moments in her practice that opened possibilities for teaching about democracy. Although she felt she stressed the importance of human rights and values such as freedom of speech, these were not evident in her practice. In short, there was a gap between her espoused views on democracy and her practices.

Case study three: Fikile

Fikile is 31 years old. She has a matric, a course in computer literacy and is currently

studying towards an NQF Level 4 ECD qualification. She plans to follow this with further study in ECD. She has been teaching for seven years. At present, she is teaching a Grade R class of between 63 and 70 children. Fikile says she lives far away from her family. She needed a job and was offered a governing body post by the principal of a primary school in rural Mpumalanga. She earns R2 000 a month, which is the government's conditional grant for a Grade R teacher. Fikile's class is attached to the primary school. The classroom is small and there are very few tables and chairs and limited equipment. The school is currently building a second classroom. Fikile teaches collaboratively with another ECD practitioner, who has an NQF Level 1 qualification.

Fikile's perceptions and attitudes relating to young children and their learning

Fikile believes that ECD education lays a foundation for life. 'It changes the life of our children ... it gives a brighter future for these little ones ... and develops the child holistic.' It also prepares them for formal schooling. Fikile says that in the ECD phase children learn to protect themselves, to share and to socialize. She believes that teaching children 'how to share things' and encouraging them to 'work together with each other as a group' will teach them to take responsibility. Fikile put the children into groups of seven or eight, each with a leader, and allocated play areas. Children were not given a choice of which activity they would prefer to go to. The classroom was so crowded that two groups had to sit against the wall, waiting their turn, but they did so quietly and calmly. Fikile appeared to have taught the children to work together as a group, to take turns and to share the limited resources. There appeared to be mutual respect between children and teachers. The children participated enthusiastically. They showed a clear understanding of the classroom rules Fikile and her co-teacher had put in place. Children put up their hands and waited to be invited to contribute during story question time. The questions were mainly closed and there appeared to be few, if any, open-ended questions that would call for higher-order thinking skills. Fikile clearly believes that children learn through play and through interactive contexts such as drama, discussion and story-telling.

Fikile's understanding of democracy and democratic practice

Fikile understands democracy as 'freedom' and 'inclusivity', with a particular emphasis on gender equality. She feels it is important to let children know about their rights, including the right to say no to abuse. 'During this holiday [Woman's Day on August 9] is where we taught our children about the importance of the human rights, including freedom of choice and to be respected,' she said. Fikile was noticeably proactive in relation to children's rights and abuse. We observed her class singing 'This is my body, a very special body, no-one can touch me without my consent'.

In her practice she emphasized that children need to respect and love each other. She says that she follows an anti-bias approach. 'If I give them a basic foundation, they can

be something in the world.’ We must teach children, she asserted, about rules, ‘outside rules, school rules and classroom rules’, and about loyalty.

Fikile’s practice reflects her understanding of ‘democracy-in-action’

The researchers observed a correlation between Fikile’s ‘espoused theory’ and ‘theory-in-use’. Indeed, Fikile modelled principles of democratic practice such as collaboration, cooperation and respect despite an extremely difficult, overcrowded context. However, when reflecting collaboratively on the video of her practice, Fikile did not speak of deliberate links she had made to democracy or democratic practice. It was evident that the principles she espoused in relation to young children, learning and democratic practice were carried through into her practice. Her whole approach was one of calm and cooperation in a context that could have been fraught with tension because of the overcrowding. In her approach to team teaching, she modelled good interpersonal relations and cooperation with her co-teacher in relation to both group management and the activity itself. This, it is suggested, was an excellent example of ‘lived democracy’.

Discussion of findings

Participants in all three case studies expressed a belief in the importance of early childhood education. They all viewed it, amongst other things, as being a preparation for life and an important step on a path to citizenship in a democracy. All the participants were undoubtedly committed to the enactment of ‘lived democracy’, but not all were able to link specific elements of their practice to the enhancement of democracy. They were all, however, able to identify knowledge, attitudes, values and skills they wished to foster in their children and link these aspects to effective ECD practice. The disparity became particularly apparent when the realization of the participants’ beliefs in their classroom practice was considered.

It was apparent that all three participants were influenced by various affective, social and cultural practices from their pasts (as discussed earlier in terms of Pajares, 1992, and Kagan, 1992). This was more noticeable in the latter two participants, who were also far less able to reflect critically on their teaching practices. Indeed, Pajares’ (1992) assertion about the link between beliefs and practice appeared to concretize before our eyes. And this highlighted a particular problem for the researchers: that unless teachers internalize democratic principles and are able to enact them in their professional practice, it will be difficult to achieve ‘lived democracy’ in South Africa. There is a cyclic effect that requires interruption: teachers’ beliefs have been shaped by the context in which they developed and they, in turn, will shape their young charges’ developing minds, a part of which will be the belief and value system the children finally adopt. Only when internalization has occurred and critical reflection is embraced on an ongoing basis are teachers able to work with a deeper understanding of democracy so that their practice explicitly and implicitly enhances ‘lived

democracy’.

Conclusion

The research discussed here showed that what teachers identified as democratic practice is similar to the indicators set out internationally in current ECD literature. The literature suggests that good ECD practice is inherently compatible with democracy. The authors agree but would add that good ECD practice that fosters democratic citizenship requires a particular kind of teacher – teachers who not only understand but have internalized the notion of ‘lived democracy’ and have the commitment and ability to enact it in their classrooms. Crucial to this is the desire – and the ability – consistently to reflect critically on their practice. It is the understanding, internalization and commitment that will allow the teacher to make both explicit and implicit South Africa’s vision of democratic action. This suggests that the concept of democracy, the practice of ‘lived democracy’ and the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills that serve both should be an overt focus of ECD teacher education programmes. Both explicit and implicit intervention strategies, which include modelling and the mediation of ‘lived democracy’, should be put in place. These strategies would enable pre and in-service teachers to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the enactment of democracy and the symbiotic relationship between the concept and its realization. Without this, South Africa’s vision of a democratic culture of learning and teaching may remain a statutory hope.

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Endnotes

- 1 The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), the South African Schools Act (South African Government, 1996) and the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) (Department of Education, 2002).
- 2 'Lived democracy' is a term used in this article to describe a teaching and learning context that is clearly informed by the principles underlying democracy, e.g. respect and equality.
- 3 Deliberative democracy is a contested notion, but it is a form of democracy that involves genuine discussion. The term deliberative has been used to emphasize the importance of communication and public discussion.
- 4 Anti-bias refers to an attitude that actively challenges prejudice, stereotyping and unfair treatment of an individual or group of individuals (Jackman, 2001: 343).
- 5 Virtues education, according to Popov (2000), is not about the practices or beliefs of any particular religion. It's about living the best within us. Virtues are the content of our character, the elements of the human spirit. They exist within each child in potential. Examples of virtues are unity, responsibility, respect, integrity, purposefulness, truthfulness, tolerance, flexibility and creativity.
- 6 This is in line with DAP, which suggests that teaching should be anchored in the child's own experience.
- 7 A ring is the term used for a whole group teacher-guided activity. The children traditionally sit in a ring. In the USA it is known as circle time.
- 8 Learners in Grade R are between the ages of four-and-a-half and six years old. Grade R is the year before learners go to primary school for formal education.

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The gender sensitivity of Zimbabwean secondary school textbooks

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Abstract

This article examines the extent to which four O-level English textbooks currently used in Zimbabwean schools are gender sensitive. The article begins with a review of the literature on the different manifestations of gender stereotypes as exhibited by the representation of female characters in texts. Using feminist theory and content analysis of four textbooks, the article shows that women are largely invisible in the texts, as manifested by the titles of passages, pictures and illustrations, extracts of passages and poems, in all of which a male perspective was dominant. Where women featured, they were, in most cases, portrayed negatively.

Keywords: gender-sensitive textbooks, sexist textbook content, gender stereotypes, female representation, power relations, Zimbabwean education

Introduction

The period of the 1960s and onwards was marked by a virtual explosion of research into gender issues, with scholars exploring the subject from different angles. Some work has been done in Southern Africa, but one area has been glossed over or given a superficial examination: gender stereotypes as depicted in students' textbooks. The article focuses specifically on Zimbabwe, where the discrimination and marginalization of women was recognized in the National Gender Policy for the Republic of Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe 2002). The Gender Department of the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation observed in 2002 that '[d]espite the fact that 52% of our population are women, men continue to have a higher human development index as compared to their female counterparts' (Government of Zimbabwe 2002: 1). This 52% of women translates to 7 280 000 of a population of approximately 14 million Zimbabweans. The secondary school population is unfortunately not reflective of this demographic profile, with male students outnumbering female students. This anomaly persists despite Zimbabwe having sign-

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ed, ratified and acceded to several declarations, conventions and protocols the sole aim of which is the creation of an enabling environment for the realization of equity and equality between the sexes. According to the National Gender Policy (Government of Zimbabwe 2002), the adult literacy rate is 86% and the second-highest in the region, and yet women constitute 60% of the illiterate adult population.

The United Nations, UNICEF, SIDA and the Zimbabwean Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture have made attempts to ensure gender sensitivity. Whether the textbook industry has taken a cue from this growing concern on gender issues is what this article addresses. It seeks to interrogate the claim made by the then Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture that the Curriculum Development Unit ‘... is now more conscious of gender issues regarding materials they produce and textbooks they recommend for use in the schools’ (Dorsey 1996: 36).

The research was conducted within a feminist theoretical framework. Feminist theory has many variants: liberal, radical, socialist, cultural, womanist and Marxian feminism. Unger and Crawford (2004) regard these as different lenses through which women’s experiences can be viewed. Despite the plurality of perspectives, a common feature of the viewpoints is their women-centeredness. Feminism values women’s worth as human beings and recognizes the need for social change if women are to realize their true potentials. Locks (1984) in Unger and Crawford (2004: 8) defines feminism as a ‘... movement to end sexism and sexist oppression’. This article is largely informed by feminist theory, since it seeks to unearth and challenge sexist tendencies in English texts that Zimbabwean O-level students currently use. The article is more inclined towards liberal feminism, which is a theory of gender inequality stemming from a patriarchal and sexist patterning of the division of labour (Unger and Crawford 2004). It views inequalities between the sexes as social constructions, which have no basis in nature. From this perspective, the reduction of bias in language is a prerequisite for the reduction of discrimination and inequality of the sexes.

The focus here is on textbooks as basic carriers of sexist content. Two important aspects that merit detailed scrutiny are raised. The first is the issue of representation or invisibility of female characters in texts. The second is the negative portrayal of the few female characters in the few situations involving them. Feminist theory posits that men and women are situated in society not only differently, but also unequally. Specifically, women get less of the material resources, social status, power and opportunities for self-actualization than their male counterparts sharing their location, whether based on class, race, ethnicity, religion, education, nationality or any intersection of these factors (O’Connell 1994; Gerda 1986). They are, therefore, situationally less empowered than men intellectually, conceptually, institutionally and at almost every other level. Men in patriarchy tend to be depicted in a wider range of social roles than women. Desirable attributes that bring with them success in life are assigned more to men than women. These include decisiveness, confidence, ambling, leadership

and rationality, whereas emotionality, passivity, dependence and submissiveness are the preserve of the women (Strong et al. 1983). Another manifestation of these unequal power relations is where women are made to serve men as sex objects, hotel receptionists, secretaries or flight attendants. This reduces women to subordinate positions in relation to men, which justifies Weiner's (1990: 46) conclusion that '... the masculine stereotype is almost always regarded as superior, desirable or normal'. These, among other forms of negative portrayal, should be identified in our textbooks. It is also important to review literature showing various forms in which female invisibility in textbooks can be made manifest if one is to establish the extent of female representation in the O-level English textbooks currently in use.

Female representation in texts and language use

There is a small body of literature on representation of females in textbooks in Africa and in Zimbabwe. All agree that women are represented from a male perspective, that they are generally under-represented and that there is a preponderance of male characters, an imbalance that is not reflective of the numbers of females in the world vis-à-vis their male counterparts (Eichler 1988: 5). In a related article, Chitsike (1995) observes that most textbooks used in Zimbabwe's schools are biased towards male pupils because they contain messages, depictions and illustrations that tend to favour boys by highlighting men's achievements and ignoring women's. Gaidzanwa (1985) focuses on characters found in textbooks in Zimbabwe and observes that not only are textbooks dominated by male characters, but also that where women feature, they are mainly in the domestic sphere, where they appear to be serving men. Marira's (1991) article, which also concerns textbooks, concludes that women are underrepresented and that textbooks reflect a male gender bias, with schoolchildren in Zimbabwe getting a very high dose of that male gender bias. Brickhill et al. (1996: 10) have this to say on Zimbabwean textbooks:

Books do not represent the reality of the diversity of male and female headed households, women in professional, entrepreneurial or cultural pursuits, or males in a domestic role or taking responsibility for children...

Commenting on the gender sensitivity of textbooks elsewhere in Africa, Brickhill et al. (1996) observe that in Mozambique's textbooks, the visibility of women is generally poor, with the use of masculine pronouns being standard. In Nigeria, Oyedeji (1996) finds, Mathematics textbooks in use in schools contain higher percentages of male-related tasks than female-related ones. The researcher notes that

Most of the items that are male-related are observed to present men in engineering, big businesses, architecture, navigation, surveying, and piloting, while most of the items that are female-related showed women in the market or supermarkets or interacting with children at home. (Oyedeji 1996: 50)

In Kenya, Abagi (1998) observes that education is being used to perpetuate gender inequity and patriarchy through a gender-stereotyped curriculum and gender-biased

teaching methods, with textbooks appearing to have been written from a man's perspective. The researcher notes that, for example, women are generally portrayed as not owning property, dependent and homemakers, while men are seen as independent breadwinners, superior, owners of property and decision-makers.

McKinney (2005) analysed textbooks in use in South African primary schools. Selected textbooks included Grade 1 reading schemes (51 readers, 111 stories) and ten Grade 7 Language and Natural Science books. The analysis revealed inequity in gender representation among the Grade 1 readers under scrutiny. In addition, Grade 7 Language textbooks also manifested gender inequity, with males generally over-represented. Representation in relation to gender among other aspects was generally better in the Grade 7 Natural Sciences texts than in Language texts. Stromquist (1997: 40) observes that the issue of gender insensitivity in textbooks is a global phenomenon common in both industrialized and developing countries and laments that

School textbooks transmit messages and illustrations that present women in predicable situations: playing domestic roles and being passive, emotional, weak, fearful, and not being intelligent. Men by contrast are portrayed as assertive and intelligent, and as taking on leadership roles and being open to multiple occupational roles.

Despite our article not taking a comparative approach based on subject areas, such findings merit attention, since they provide insights on what has been established elsewhere in the region and abroad. Our work intends to cast further light on these issues by examining a relatively under-researched area, that of Zimbabwean textbooks. For the purpose of this article, texts by authors of both sexes will be investigated. The English language itself needs to be investigated for sexism, since aspects may be manipulated in ways that circumscribe women.

Another important body of literature to consider is that which examines language that promotes gender stereotypes. As Eichler (1988) has argued, the English language itself can denigrate and debase women – this is especially the case when it treats them as exceptions. For instance, a male is a 'real' poet, whereas a female is a poetess, thereby trivialising female gender forms. This equally applies to 'hero' and 'heroine', where the former suggests a greater measure of courage and contribution than does its female equivalent. Deriving the feminine form from the masculine suggests women are mere extensions and appendages of men. This extends even to names like Georgina, Francisca, Henrietta, Josephine and others, which are derivations from George, Francis, Henry and Joseph. Unger and Crawford (1992: 21) present another anomaly when they allege that '... there is a tendency for words referring to females to acquire negative or debased meanings while their counterparts referring to males retain their original meaning'. They go on to authenticate their assertion using the words governor/governess and lady/lord as examples. A 'governor' wields immense power in political administration, whereas a 'governess' cares for small children while she is employed by their wealthy parents. 'Lord' on one hand refers '... to the deity and a few Englishmen, but anyone may call herself a lady' (Crawford and Unger; 2004: 54).

‘Sir’ and ‘madam’ are both respectable, but ‘madam’ can also refer to a brothel-keeper, whereas one can never call a pimp ‘sir’. This shows how much female terms have been debased to assume sexual connotations. The same is applicable to pairs like master/mistress, bachelor/spinster and king/queen, among others.

Eichler (1988: 137) states that ‘[a]nother form of sexism in language occurs when males and females are referred to by non-parallel terms in parallel situations, such as in the expression ‘a man and his wife’. ‘Man’ parallels ‘wife’. The order of the combination should be reversible without upsetting the meaning. Gender marking is another form of stereotype, where terms like ‘female doctor’ and ‘male nurse’ are used. This suggests that the prototype doctor must be male, hence the specification of sex for the female. Asymmetry is also a manifestation of gender stereotypes, as in the case where people are quick to refer to unwed mothers but not unwed fathers. On a similar note, Hudson (1996: 102) also finds fault with ‘... the English distinction between Mrs and Miss which is not paralleled by a pair of male titles showing whether or not the bearer is married’.

A minor but irritating form of sexism observed by Eichler (1988: 137) ‘... occurs when one sex is consistently named before the other, and when such sequencing takes on the characteristic of a grammatical rule’. Examples, which easily come to mind, are ‘ladies and gentlemen’ or ‘boys and girls’. These and other biases point to the need to revolutionize the language and as textbooks are a major embodiment of the language, the need for a gender-sensitive textbook industry cannot be overemphasized. This explains why a content analysis of the English texts was undertaken in this article.

Research design

The methodological orientation employed in the analysis of the selected textbooks was both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative data was collected in the exploration of the portrayal of female characters in texts, which was then used to generate quantitative data with a view to extending and validating the qualitative findings. The actual technique used was content analysis, which enabled the examination of gender-bias in O-level English textbooks. Content analysis was employed because it allowed the systematic analysis of the four selected texts. The term ‘content analysis’ refers to a more sophisticated level of investigation, concerned with the identification of the more significant dimensions into which a given phenomenon can be analysed (Mouly 1978: 213).

Content analysis operates from the premise that reducing a text to its smaller components and systematically analysing it enables one to understand inter-relationships within the text and their underlying implications. As Kabira & Masinjila (1997) point out, the aim of the systematic analysis is to bring out as objectively as possible the gender dynamics in a text so as to draw conclusions. Content analysis was quantitatively used in analysing female representation through counting the number of

illustrations/pictures, words, authorship of poems/letters/passages, known personalities according to sex, and occupations by gender. Content analysis was also qualitatively used in identifying and discussing the negative and positive portrayal of males and females through determining the gender perspective of selected poems, passages, their register, use of gender-insensitive language, use of male generic terms and word order where both sexes are mentioned. The portrayal of the sexes is quantified in different analytical categories. Quantitative data is used alongside qualitative analysis that seeks to explain the phenomenon under discussion. Data collected was initially categorized into its constituent sections mostly in tabular form before an analysis of the facts and figures was made.

The selection procedures employed considered the population of all seven Form 4 textbooks recommended for use in schools by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in Zimbabwe. English textbooks were selected because of the potential of English as a carrier of gender stereotypes. Only O-level Form 4 textbooks were used, as this is the level at which the majority of students leave school and make career choices on the basis of, among other things, the socialization they would have got from the textbooks. From this population, only four textbooks were purposively sampled and put to the test. Selection was purposive in the sense that only current textbooks were considered. Realizing the fluidity of the term current, it was operationalized to mean those textbooks published from 1990 to date.

The understanding was that these might exhibit more gender sensitivity than their predecessors, since gender issues have been increasingly debated over the years. This eliminated two of the seven possible texts, which had earlier publication dates, leaving five texts, three by male authors and two by female authors. One text by a male author was dropped to strike a balance between texts by male and female authors, at the same time analysing texts by two different publishers. This was meant to ascertain whether gender bias or sensitivity was characteristic of certain authors, sex or publishing houses. The criterion used for dropping the fifth text was date of publication, which was earlier than the other three. Using this criterion, the following texts were studied.

- Chinodya, S. (1993). *Step Ahead 4*. Harare: Longman.
- Dawson, D. (1990). *Structures and Skills in English 4*. Harare: College Press.
- Pfende, E. (1997). *Focus on Communication and Register*. Harare: College Press.
- Nineham, J. (2000) *Focus on English*. Harare: College Press.

The main questions asked were whether titles of passages in the textbooks were gender sensitive or biased, whether pictures, illustrations, occupation titles and the general use of language reflect gender sensitivity, whether the amount and the nature of portrayal of male and female characters were similar in the textbooks and whether extracts of passages and poems were taken equally from both male and female authors.

Data collected was coded and categorized into themes. A qualitative data analysis method, typology, which is a classification system using patterns, themes or groups of data, was used. Categories of data were presented in tabular form making use of descriptive statistics. The data was then analysed by descriptive means. For the purpose of this article, a visibility scale was used to determine whether female visibility in a particular aspect is high, moderate or low. The scale is as follows:

- Very high* Female portrayal exceeds male portrayal by 80-100%
- High* Female portrayal exceeds male portrayal by 55-79%
- Moderate* The difference between female or male portrayal is 46-54%
- Low* Female portrayal is lower than male portrayal by 31-45%
- Very low* Female portrayal is lower than male portrayal by 16-30%
- Overshadowed* Female portrayal is lower than male portrayal by 0-15%

The visibility scale was applied through a painstaking count of the variables under scrutiny, whether pictures, words, number of passages, poems or others. The figures were converted to percentages, by counting female portrayal over the possible total multiplied by 100. Percentages were calculated to three significant figures.

Pictures in textbooks

The study looked at illustrations, pictures and any other representations in the form of drawings within a text. This is because they tell a story on their own and also in conjunction with the written text. Illustrations also present in pictorial form a powerful image of what may be contained in words. In most cases the learners’ opinions and attitudes are shaped by illustrations even before reading or being introduced to a text, hence their indispensability in an article such as this. Only pictures depicting human beings were used. The percentage of female representation over the possible total excludes pictures depicting both sexes. The representation of pictures according to sex for each text is indicated in Table 1.

In terms of female representation in pictures, only in one textbook did female portrayal exceed male portrayal, with the other three registering low female visibility.

Table 1: Pictures in textbooks

<i>Text</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Pictures depicting both sexes</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Female visibility</i>
Focus on English	18	10	28	19	35,7	Low
Step Ahead	17	10	27	25	37,0	Low
Focus on Communication and Register	4	6	10	12	60,0	High
Structures and skills	13	11	24	14	45,8	Low

Ironically, the text that has high female representation devotes three pages to illustrating females asking for directions while males show the way. This is despite the author being female. This depiction of females in subservient roles runs through all four texts. In most instances, males are doing things and females either watching or helping and the activities that bring with them prominence and status are almost always assigned to males. Another anomaly is that where pictures depict both sexes, males are always in the majority and are the centre of attraction.

Poems and passages: Authorship

This component focused on who tells the story in an extract or poem, in other words who vocalizes and whether they are male or female. Extracts whose authors' sex could not be established were not included. Of the 35 passages and eight poems in *Step Ahead*, 24 were used. From the 28 passages and one poem in *Structures and Skills*, ten were used. Of the 19 passages and five poems in *Focus on English* 17 were used. *Focus on Communication and Register* had no extracts or poems.

All three texts that had extracts showed a gross under-representation of works by female authors. This has two implications; it suggests either that women are not accomplished writers or their works do not merit consideration. Either way, their visibility is diminished or their worth compromised.

Poems, letters, passages: Male or female perspective

The actors' perspective in passages, poems or letters is important in determining the gender responsiveness of a text. The increase in the totals for these passages is accounted for by the fact that all passages with a notable perspective are included, unlike in Table 2. As in the preceding table, *Focus on Communication and Register* has no passages or poems, as shown in Table 3.

In all three texts, passages, poems and letters are written more from a male point of view than from a female viewpoint, which goes to show how trivialized women are. For the few passages and poems with a female perspective, a common trend was that the

Table 2: Poems and passages: Authorship

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	14	3	17	17,6	Very low
Step Ahead	20	4	24	16,7	Very low
Focus on Communication and Register	–	–	–	–	–
Structures and skills	8	2	10	20,0	Very low

Table 3: Poems, letters, passages: Male or female perspective

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	14	10	24	41,7	Low
Step Ahead	24	8	32	25,0	Very low
Focus on Communication and Register	–	–	–	–	–
Structures and skills	11	4	15	26,7	Very low

locus was usually the home setting, which gives the impression that women's roles are confined within the domestic domain.

Known personalities according to sex

Inclusion of known personalities is instrumental in shaping our attitudes towards characters in a text. In the study, the influential characters that were named are identified. These included statesmen (itself a male generic term), sports personalities, musicians, authors, actors, politicians and those who have made names for themselves in other fields. Table 4 shows the findings made in regard to this aspect.

Three texts had very low female representation, with *Focus on English* having a slightly better visibility, although it still fell within the low range of the scale. Prominent female personalities are fewer than their male counterparts, which gives the erroneous implication that not many women have distinguished themselves significantly enough to merit any consideration. The identified female personalities included Doris Lessing, Miriam Makeba, Madonna and Mother Theresa. Few local personalities whom the students could take for the role models were used. A balance between international and local celebrities and personalities could have been made.

Examples from register and language items according to sex

Step Ahead has 216 pages of material from which examples relating to register and

Table 4: Known personalities according to sex

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	6	5	11	45,4	Low
Step Ahead	17	4	21	19,0	Very low
Focus on Communication and Register	3	1	4	25,0	Very low
Structures and skills	10	3	13	23,0	Very low

Table 5: Examples from register and language items according to sex

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male perspective</i>	<i>Female perspective</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	152	139	291	47,8	Moderate
Step Ahead	111	66	177	37,0	Low
Focus on Communication and Register	135	152	287	53,0	Moderate
Structures and skills	57	14	68	19,7	Very low

language items were taken. *Structures and Skills* has 184 pages from which examples were taken. *Focus on English* has 201 pages and *Focus on Communication & Register* has 139 pages. From these volumes of pages, the data in Table 5 was established.

It is only in *Focus on Communication and Register* that female visibility exceeds male visibility, although *Focus on English* has moderate representation of females in terms of visibility. Examples from the other two texts show language and register items more from the male than the female perspective. This constant reference to males has the effect of implanting males uppermost in the young readers' minds, at the same time relegating females to the background.

Occupations held by males and females

This aspect shows the differential power relations of the sexes. Gender social relations are sustained by the prevailing power structures, which are clearly manifested in texts. An insight into such relations was noted in the portrayal of the occupations held by males and females, as shown in Table 6.

The figures in the table do not include the frequency with which a particular occupation was assigned to a specific sex. Had the frequency been considered, the figures would have been overwhelming in favour of males. The figures in Table 6 give the impression that working women are the exception, except for *Focus on Communication and Register*, where a balance was struck between male and female

Table 6: Occupations held by males and females

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	33	15	48	31,2	Low
Step Ahead	59	14	73	19,1	Very low
Focus on Communication and Register	15	15	30	50,0	Moderate
Structures and skills	26	12	38	31,6	Low

occupations. Another bias that was noted was that the prestigious occupations were assigned more to men than women in all the texts. This demonstrates the aspect of power relations alluded to above. The visible power has to do with decision-making and ability to influence the actions of others which an occupation-holder possesses. Language is one of the most important and subtle ways of portraying gender biases, which are seen through conventions of speaking and writing. Its influence is wide-reaching, since everyone grows up and is socialized within a language tradition. This language use was analysed in terms of word order, use of male generic terms and the use of neutral terms.

Word order where both sexes are named

In analysing word order, where feminine and masculine terms were used together, the order of their occurrence was noted and counted. The frequency with which a particular occurrence was noted was considered, but entered as one occurrence. Had frequency been considered, it would have weighed heavily against the female-first occurrences. The outcome of the analysis is given in Table 7.

In all texts, there is bias towards the male-female order rather than vice versa. Only *Focus on English* has moderate representation according to the visibility scale, although in actual counts male-first occurrences outnumber female-first. There is also greater interchange of word order in *Focus on English* than in the other texts, for instance occurrences like ‘boys and girls’ and ‘girls and boys’ are both found, as is use of he/she and she/he. Having the masculine form always preceding the feminine gives the impression of males being primary and more important than females. Closely related to the aspect of word order is the use of male generic terms.

Use of male generic terms

Generics are meant to be gender neutral. The reason for analysing their use in a text is to establish whether they are used to achieve neutrality. Some generics compromise their neutrality by having a clear male stamp in other forms of speech. Examples that

Table 7: Word order where both sexes are named

<i>Text</i>	<i>Male first</i>	<i>Female first</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percentage of female representation</i>	<i>Visibility</i>
Focus on English	7	6	13	46,2	Moderate
Step Ahead	9	3	12	25,0	Very low
Focus on Communication and Register	15	6	21	28,6	Very low
Structures and skills	6	2	7	28,6	Very low

quickly come to mind are ‘mankind’ and ‘manpower’. These refer to men only in their gendered form but include women in their neutral usage to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to determine in what sense they are being used.

The figures in Table 8 do not include the frequency of occurrence of each term in a text. Envisaging humanity from a male perspective denigrates the value of women. *Focus on Communication and Register* should be applauded for sometimes using the singular ‘they’ instead of the generic ‘he’. Despite the overwhelming presence of male generic terms, one should not lose sight of the neutral terms occasionally employed in the text.

Neutral terms

These are terms with no gender marking, like ‘officer’, ‘person’ and singular ‘they’, among others. These help pupils to appreciate people of both sexes as equals. The frequency of occurrence of each was not taken account of.

Step Ahead lags far behind in appreciating the need for gender-neutral terms, as indicated in Table 9. Although the attempts by the other three texts to introduce neutral terms are commendable, it was disturbing to note for example that a single text that uses the term ‘school head’ would later revert to ‘headmaster’ as a generic term. This shows how deeply ingrained stereotypes can be.

Before concluding, it is important to establish how the women characters presented in the texts were portrayed in relation to their male counterparts.

Positive portrayal of both sexes

The portrayal of the sexes was grouped according to various attributes, for example their contribution, knowledge and skill, and ratios established as indicated in Table 10. The portrayal is also based on what the characters do and say, what others say about them, and their attitudes and beliefs.

All the texts portray males in a more positive light than they do female characters. Females supposedly lack the attributes of a positive nature as far as the texts are concerned, whereas males seem to have positive attributes generously bestowed upon them.

Table 8: Use of male generic terms

Focus on English	8
Step Ahead	16
Focus on Communication and Register	4
Structures and skills	17

Table 9: Neutral terms

Focus on English	8
Step Ahead	0
Focus on Communication and Register	7
Structures and skills	6

Table 10: Positive portrayal of both sexes

Text	Male:female ratio
Focus on English	7:4
Step Ahead	10:5
Focus on Communication and Register	3:2
Structures and skills	4:3

Table 11: Negative portrayal of both sexes

Text	Male:female ratio
Focus on English	4:1
Step Ahead	9:22
Focus on Communication and Register	2:17
Structures and skills	8:7

Negative portrayal of both sexes

The same pattern as in Table 10 emerged when attributes were categorized and converted into male: female ratio as shown below.

All the texts portray females in a more negative light than their male counterparts although *Structures and Skills* attempts to strike a balance in the negative portrayal of the sexes. Had the trend for positive portrayal remained consistent in the negative portrayal, a balance would have been maintained. This is not so, however, as, in an unprecedented U-turn, all the texts portray females in more negative ways than males.

Discussion

The results above indicate a lack of gender balance in the portrayal of the sexes in the texts under consideration. Even illustrations in pictorial form rendered females invisible. The few women pictured in the texts do not take central roles. Despite there being sufficient literature by women writers from which to extract poems and passages for use in the texts, there is a greater focus on works by male writers and poets. The same is true of passages, poems and letters, all of which have males as central characters and females as auxiliary, subordinate figures who watch things happen while men make them happen.

Prominent and well-known female personalities who have made history by becoming the first Zimbabwean women or first black women in particular fields like medicine, aviation and politics abound in Zimbabwe. However, they are outnumbered and overshadowed by prominent male personalities. Even where authors wanted to exemplify a particular language structure, they did so from a male rather than female perspective.

The fact that women have risen to prominence over the years through occupying high positions and occupations is not reflected in the textbooks, which seem to suggest that the lot of women is in the home, in childbearing and rearing. There are an abundance of generic terms the frequency of which was best left unconsidered. This is in sharp contrast with gender-neutral terms, which are lacking in the texts. Women are neg-

actively portrayed when they are incorporated into the texts. Examples that come to mind are how females are portrayed as witches, prostitutes, feeble, dependent, insecure and needing men more than men need them, among a host of other negative portrayals.

Conclusion

The data presented, analysed and discussed points to the absence of gender sensitivity in the textbooks under investigations, which could be reflective of all the textbooks used in the schools across the school levels and subject areas. There is a heavy bias towards males, despite some of the texts having been authored by females. These findings agree with those of other researchers on the subject, whose studies focus on Zimbabwe, other African countries and the world, such as Chitsike (1995), Gaidzanwa (1985), Brickhill et al. (1996), Oyedeji (1996), Abaji (1998), McKinney (2005) and Stromquist (1997). The irony that female authors are no different in their representation of gendered roles suggests their compliance with the dominant power relations that have persisted over the years. Differences of publishers do not affect gender sensitivity at all, as there are no marked differences between the different publishers. Marira (1991: 118) is justified in concluding that '[t]he Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture through its Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) which approves all textbooks used in the primary and secondary schools, has not sufficiently used its role to influence publishers to reflect a gender balance in these texts'. Texts thus continue to pigeonhole women and men into separate domains.

In view of the foregoing, it is possible to concur with Bellany (1999: 56), who observed that '[a] gender aware approach must, therefore, inform decision making at every level of the system'. Following Stromquist (1997: 41), we propose the identification of sexual stereotypes in stories, arguments, examples and illustrations and removing them from textbooks, such as is being done in Chile and Guatemala, 'where the governments intend to eliminate sexist content in textbooks and have developed guidelines for editorial houses to be considered in the production of textbooks'. Authors should be encouraged to avoid sex stereotyping and promote gender sensitivity in their texts. Authors should be conversant with the manifestations of gender stereotypes. Publishers could produce bias guidelines listing words, phrases and images that should be avoided and to which authors would conform prior to the publication of their works. This would compel authors to produce gender-sensitive materials. Before publication, all the manifestations of gender stereotypes noted in this article and many others should be scrutinized. Texts found wanting should be revised. Specifically, the Curriculum Development Unit's (CDU's) role in the adoption of textbooks in schools is pivotal. No texts should be recommended for use in schools unless they have been censored and rid of sexist attributes. Had this been practised, current texts would have no or fewer manifestations of gender stereotypes than they currently have. Considerations of cost should be subordinated to those of gender

neutrality in the selection of core texts at particular schools. The coinage of new words is a step in the right direction as a way of breaking male control of language, which inevitably leads to the unlearning of patriarchal ways of thinking.

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The history of biology as a school subject and developments in the subject in contemporary South Africa

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Abstract

This article traces the history of biology as a school subject and discusses some of the developments in the subject in post-apartheid South Africa. A debate that has characterized the history of the subject is whether it should be a *science of life* or a *science of living*. Over the years biology as a school subject has been influenced by political, social, economic and religious factors as well as developments in science and technology. The article shows that the *science of life/science of living* distinction remains useful for mapping shifts in emphasis in school biology over time and is an appropriate lens for viewing changes in school biology in contemporary South Africa. From the year 2006 a new curriculum for senior high school biology has been phased into South African schools, signalling a departure from the old curriculum. This article will show that the introduction of this new curriculum marks a shift to a stronger emphasis on a *science of living* approach. Several implementation challenges remain in relation to the new Life Sciences curriculum for Further Education and Training (FET), however, some of which will be pointed out in the article.

Keywords: apartheid education, curriculum change, further education and training, history of education, national curriculum statement, outcomes-based education, school biology

Introduction

Biology emerged as a school subject in Britain in the nineteenth century following the introduction of scientific subjects in secondary school curricula in the early nineteenth century. Physics and chemistry were the leading subjects, followed by botany and zoology. Goodson (1983: 43) notes that biology hardly existed as an identifiable discipline at the time. As botany declined as a school subject, biology began to emerge in the curricula of some schools. But, Goodson (1983: 43) argues, the growth of biology in

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schools was slow in the late nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth century for two reasons: the utilitarian and applied aspects of biology remained substantially underdeveloped; biological science in the nineteenth century was still immature.

In nineteenth-century Britain, the formation and growth of school science subjects depended on the extent to which they could fulfil a dual purpose, i.e. their intrinsic value in providing disciplinary training and their utilitarian potential. The role of the latter should not be underestimated. For example, Tracey (1962: 429) suggests that achievements of the sciences during the Industrial Revolution as evidenced by inventions such as the steam engine, the telegraph, the internal combustion engine and the aeroplane all pointed to the utilitarian value of knowledge of physics and chemistry – the reason for the growth of these subjects and not that of biology. However, Biology's image changed because of work done by scientists in specialist fields that developed both the utilitarian potential of the subject and its claim to disciplinary rigour. As Goodson (1983: 44) writes:

... following the work of Louis Pasteur, the branch of medicine and biology called bacteriology was developed; marine biology developed through studies of the nutrient bases of marine life and the biological characteristics of marine animals, particularly fishes, that are used as human food; agricultural biology developed, focusing on soils studies, crop cultivation research and studies of the animal and plant breeding the establishment of the subject's utilitarian potential was an important factor determining its early progress.

In the United States of America biology emerged as a school subject as the consequence of a combination of historical, intellectual and social developments of the late nineteenth century (Rosenthal & Bybee 1984: 140). The main historical event was the Industrial Revolution and its associated effects on population growth in secondary schools. The growth in secondary school students also followed the first compulsory schooling law passed in the USA in 1852 (see Rosenthal & Bybee 1984: 133). The important point here is that for many non-college-bound students entering high schools botany, zoology and human physiology would not have served a primary purpose, since these were offerings that gave entrance to universities. The principal intellectual movement was the fusion of botany and zoology into general biology by Thomas Huxley and his emphasis on the importance of laboratory work. The chief social development was the wave of immigrants that reached the USA in the late nineteenth century and migration that took place from rural to urban areas. Consequently, more children entered schools in urban areas and biology as a subject served to cater for the personal needs of learners, such as developing their knowledge about protection against diseases. In the USA, there were also other influences such as that of religion that involved, for example, the inclusion or exclusion of evolution in school biology.

From the brief description of the emergence of biology as a school subject in Britain and the USA it is evident that the formation and growth of biology in these countries

were influenced by the knowledge aim of the subject (biology as a *science of life*) and the personal/social aim of the subject (biology as a *science of living*). Bybee (1977) argues that the history of biology education has been characterized by changing emphasis among three primary aims: the knowledge aim, the methods aim and the personal/social aim. Biology as a *science of life* entails the theoretical, conceptual and procedural understanding of life, whereas Biology as a *science of living* would have a stronger human-centred approach, focusing on how biological issues impact on human life. Also evident in the cases of both Britain and the USA is the fact that the utilitarian value/potential of the subject played a prominent role in its birth and growth, although in the USA mainly for personal/social relevance whereas in Britain also for economic utility.

According to Rosenthal & Bybee (1984: 124), the question of whether school biology should be a *science of life* or a *science of living* is an unresolved question that continues to be the extremes of swings of the pendulum in school biology. This debate therefore remains relevant today. However, the aim of this article is not to resolve the question, quite simply because school biology would and should always comprise elements of both approaches. The interest here is rather in using the distinction *science of life/science of living* as a lens through which to view and interpret swings of the pendulum in school biology over time. The use of the distinction is not to put forward a simplistic dichotomy between *science of life* and *science of living*, but to use it as a lens for viewing shifts in emphasis in school biology. Moreover, in South Africa it would be useful to ascertain whether there has been a significant shift in emphasis of the intended curricula post-1994, given the strong criticism levelled against an emphasis on academic biology in syllabuses which existed prior to 1994 (see Watson 1990, Schreuder 1991, Doidge 1996).

The discussion of aspects of the history of biology as a school subject in Britain and the USA serves several purposes in this article. Firstly, this history had an influence on the development of biology education in South Africa. Secondly, it reminds one that the *science of life/science of living* question is not new, but a perennial one that has characterized school biology since its inception. Thirdly, it helps one to appreciate that school biology has been and will continue to be shaped by socio-historical factors, and not only by developments in the field of science. Fourthly, tracing some of the history of school biology helps us to understand and interpret present developments in school biology. Against this background the article critically discusses the development of school biology in South Africa prior to and during the apartheid era, school biology in a post-apartheid era and some challenges for school biology in South Africa. It is important to note that the focus of this article is mainly on the curriculum intended (national policy on school biology) and not on the curriculum-in-use (how the subject is enacted in school classrooms). It is acknowledged that even when policy prescriptions focus on academic biology, for example, creative and innovative teachers can make the subject relevant to the lives of learners.

At the outset it should be clarified that the focus of this article is on biology as a school subject and not on biology as a field of study or discipline. The extent to which the nature of the discipline should be mirrored in school biology has been a key debate in biology education over the past decades. Those who hold that school biology should mirror the structure of the discipline biology would argue for what is termed a *science of life* approach. Those that argue that school biology should focus on personal and societal needs would argue for a *science of living* approach.

Biology education prior to and during apartheid

Not much has been written about the history of biology education in South Africa. Biology was introduced into South African schools largely because of the overseas influences – the subject had become established in Europe and the USA and textbooks were available from these countries. Overseas influences should be understood in the context of South African schooling, which was shaped very strongly by colonial influences of the nineteenth century. Educational developments of the nineteenth century obviously impacted on schooling in the twentieth century. Prior to 1930 school textbooks were available in English, Dutch (mainly imported) and Afrikaans, but after the year 1930 textbooks were published only in Afrikaans and English.

Preller's (1953) research provides evidence that biology existed as a school subject in the Cape Province prior to 1935, but was introduced in the Transvaal province for the first time in 1935. (After the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, the country had four provinces: the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and Transvaal provinces. The last two were the former Boer republics.) Prior to the introduction of biology, botany seemed to be the biology-related subject taught by most schools. Preller's (1953: 41) study indicates that although biology replaced botany as a school subject in the Transvaal in 1935, the subject still had strong components of botany (plant morphology, plant systematics and plant physiology) when first introduced. Over time, the study of animal physiology and classification was also included. Human physiology and hygiene were offered as a separate subject at the time. Importantly, from the time biology was first introduced in South Africa it focused mainly on the study of plant and animal life, i.e. it was presented (taught and learned) as a *science of life*. Matters relating to *living* were addressed chiefly in the subject of physiology and hygiene, which focused narrowly on personal hygiene.

The subject of biology expanded to include molecular biology (after the work of Crick and Watson in the 1950s), ecology, genetics and so on. It also grew to become the largest subject offering (besides English) in South Africa, i.e. taken by more matriculation candidates than any other subject. During the apartheid era the academic orientation to biology became further entrenched and largely epitomized what could be described as an extreme end of the pendulum – biology as purely a *science of life*. This academic orientation to the subject was not unique to South Africa,

but also found elsewhere in world. The USA may be an exception here. From the time the Russians launched Sputnik in 1957, great emphasis was placed on the utility of school science in the USA. Most notable was the introduction of the science-technology-society (STS) approach. As recently as a decade ago, Lock (1996: 3) still expressed concern about the strong emphasis of the knowledge aim of biology in Britain, what he describes as a content-dominated curriculum that lacks relevance to learners' lives.

There are several factors that gave rise to the more academic orientation to biology. The following are a few: biology had matured as a school science subject in the second half of the twentieth century; there were significant scientific discoveries in biology, most notably the DNA helix; the legacy of positivism, which reached its pinnacle in the 1930s/1940s, significantly influenced school science. Writing in Australia in the 1980s, Robottom (1983) raises concern about the neglect of the qualitative dimensions in school science curricula because of the artificial separation of fact and value, leading to the privileging of factual knowledge over values under the influence of positivism. The logic of experimentation and value neutrality of positivism resulted in greater emphasis being placed on laboratory work in school biology and an exorcising of matters of personal and social relevance. However, there were factors endemic to South Africa that contributed to the *science of life* approach becoming dominant in South African school biology over the last 50 years.

One of the strong influences on South African education during apartheid was the philosophy or science of fundamental pedagogics. Fundamental pedagogics can be traced historically to CJ Langeveld's publication *Beknopte Theoretische Pedagogiek* in the Netherlands in 1944. The first publication in South Africa was CK Oberholzer's *Inleiding in die Prinsipiële Opvoedkunde*, published in 1954. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s fundamental pedagogics was a powerful doctrine in Afrikaans-medium universities. It was also powerful in black colleges of education and in education faculties of historically black universities that were dominated by Afrikaner lecturers. Fundamental pedagogicians argued that the 'scientific method' was the only authentic method of studying education. For them, the scientific method that was most appropriate for studying education was the phenomenological method (see Landman & Gous 1969, Viljoen & Pienaar 1971, Gunter 1974). Enslin (1984: 141-142) points out that it was believed that through this method the fundamental pedagogician would learn to know the phenomenon of education by undertaking 'radical reflection' on the educational situation. In so doing the pedagogician brackets extrinsic aims and beliefs so that the political becomes forbidden speech, as it has no legitimate place in the realm of science. Furthermore, Enslin (1990: 78) writes:

Fundamental Pedagogics ... provides little illumination of the present social and educational order, of possible alternatives to that order or how teachers might contribute to transformation. By excluding the political as a legitimate dimension of theoretical discourse, Fundamental Pedagogics offers neither a language of critique nor a language of possibility.

Under the influence of positivist approaches to science generally, and fundamental pedagogics more specifically, South African school curricula were framed in value-neutral terms. Very little reference was made to personal and social relevance in the biology syllabuses, presumably to avoid discussions on the ills of apartheid in South African classrooms. Biology syllabuses required students to learn chunks of biological facts that they had to regurgitate in tests and examinations. We shall return to this later when discussing resistant voices to state curricula and pedagogy. In short, during apartheid biology curricula were highly academic and mainly involved the teaching/learning of ‘value-neutral’ facts – *a science of life*.

However, after the Soweto uprisings of 1976 we witnessed marginalized voices strengthening in resistance to the disabling rules of fundamental pedagogics. One discourse constructed in opposition to the debilitating discourse of fundamental pedagogics was ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’. Levin (1991: 117) points out that the slogan ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ represents a strategic shift in the education struggle in SA, involving a departure from the education boycott as a tactic of struggle in favour of a longer-term strategy of reconstruction through the development of alternative education. People’s education was an attempt co-ordinated by the then National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), advocating that parents, teachers, students and other community members (the people) should be involved in the governance of education. Mkatshwa (1985: 14) notes that People’s Education emphasized the links between education, politics and social transformation. However, in the late 1980s People’s Education plunged into crisis owing to state repression as well as a lack of clarity over what, precisely, it meant (see Levin 1991, Walker 1991, Johnson 1991, Gultig & Hart 1991 for more detail).

It is in this period that we hear voices of resistance to the biology taught in South African schools. One student expresses his/her discontent with state schooling articulately, and with insight:

They decide what we are taught. Our history is written according to their ideas. Biology and physics are taught in our schools but which cannot apply to our everyday lives. We are not told that most diseases of the workers stem from the fact that they are undernourished and overworked. We are taught biology, but not biology of liberation, where we can tackle the concept of ‘race’ to prove that there is no such thing as ‘race’. (quoted in Maurice 1983, emphasis in original).

A biology teacher of the 1980s and early 1990s reflects:

I questioned why I was force-feeding an unrelenting diet of irrelevant biology content to learners by way of transmission modes of teaching. I thought deeply for the first time about my undemocratic pedagogical practices and how I had acquired them. This caused me to listen to learners more attentively and to consider their critical questions more carefully – questions such as what was the relevance to their future lives of learning the osmoregulation process in a tiny organism like the Amoeba? I realized that prescribed syllabi were a mechanism of the state aimed at controlling teachers’ work. Syllabi were loaded with content to keep teachers and learners busy, so that there was very little time to question the social ills of apartheid (Le Grange 2001: 11).

During the period in which biology as a *science of life* dominated, several criticisms were raised about the relevance of biology to lives of learners and that of South African society as a whole. Furthermore, as human awareness of environmental destruction grew, serious questions were raised by authors about the role that biology might play in addressing environmental concerns. In the 1990s, three key works – Watson (1990), Schreuder (1991) and Doidge (1996) – were produced that questioned the relevance of school biology education in South Africa.

Although biology syllabuses underwent revisions during the apartheid era, the changes were merely cut-and-paste ones based on the assumption that what went before remained suitable. Beside some modifications and updating, syllabus revisions mainly involved shifting content among different grades. For example, in the early 1980s ecology formed part of the Grade 12 syllabus but was shifted to Grade 10 in the mid-1990s. Because syllabus revisions were superficial, biology education in South Africa remained highly academic, that is, a *science life approach* remained dominant despite syllabus revisions that took place during the apartheid era.

The three authors mentioned critique South African biology syllabuses for being highly academic and for being irrelevant to the needs of the majority of South Africans. They point out that syllabuses of the 1990s catered for less than one per cent of school-leavers, who go on to study science at South African higher education institutions. Doidge (1996: 46) neatly captures the sentiments of the three authors when she writes:

A glimpse into the lives of secondary school biology pupils finds them struggling through the complexities of the Krebs cycle, osmotic potential, striated muscle structure and the development of the female prothallus in the megaspore on the ovuliferous scale of an alien plant. 'Vital' information such as the position of the female opening on the ventral surface of the earth worm, leaf shapes, cell types in Hydra and the life-cycle of the frog is force-fed to pupils who are exhausted and struggle to concentrate because of pregnancy, tuberculosis, chronic bilharzias and other parasitic infections such as roundworms and hookworms, and under-nutrition because crops will no longer grow on barren lands.

Doidge (1996: 46) goes on and pertinently asks whether teaching an endless catalogue of facts to learners is more important than issues such as *human health and disease, world hunger and food resources, scarce water resources, population growth* and so on? To introduce more relevance into the biology curriculum, Watson (1990: 51) suggests that the following themes be incorporated into biology syllabuses: *population size, sustainable yield, pollution control, health and diversity of ecosystems/conservation*. Schreuder (1991: 25) posits that relevance might be introduced into biology education by using *environmental education as a unifying concept*. Doidge (1996: 47) advocates the use of the *science-technology-society* theme (STS), with an issue-based focus, as the approach for introducing relevance into biology education.

In summary, the utilitarian value and personal relevance of biology was important in its emergence as a school subject in both Britain and the USA. In South Africa, however, school biology has been characterized largely by a *science of life* approach, domi-

nated by the 'knowledge aim', i.e. the transmission of factual knowledge. The dominance of the *science of life* approach to South African biology education may be understood as the consequence of influences such as developments in the field of biological science, the maturation of biology as a school subject and positivism/empiricism. In South Africa apartheid policies and the educational philosophy/science of fundamental pedagogics encouraged a value-neutral approach to school science and provided no language of critique or possibility. Additionally, the strong focus on the transmission of factual knowledge in school biology might also be understood as a backwash effect of national/provincial school-leaving examinations, which traditionally test content knowledge.

However, there were contradictions in the predominantly *science of life* approach to school biology during apartheid. This relates to the exclusion of evolution from the explicit curriculum of school biology. Information on evolution often appeared in additional sections of textbooks with headings such as 'for enrichment'. Evolution was excluded because of religious beliefs based on Calvinism and more specifically on the ideology of Christian National Education of the apartheid state. For current proponents of a *science of life* approach (i.e. those who believe that school biology should mirror biology as a field of study) such as Dempster & Hugo (2006), the omission of evolution from school biology was a serious flaw. Their argument is that 'evolution is the highest ordering principle in biology, dealing with questions about ultimate causation of form and functioning at all levels of life'. Like many others before, they suggest that evolution should be an important unifying theme in school biology.

During the apartheid era several criticisms were levelled against the biology taught in schools. These centred mainly on the relevance of South African school biology to the lives of the majority of South African learners. In short, the critiques were aimed at questioning the dominance of a *science of life* approach to biology education and argued for greater inclusion of elements of a *science of living* approach. In the next section we consider the extent to which the pendulum swings in the direction of a *science of living* approach in post-apartheid school biology.

Biology education in a post-apartheid era

In the immediate years following South Africa's first democratic elections in 1994, curriculum change in respect of biology education was not necessarily substantive. Jansen (1999: 57) goes so far as to argue that syllabus alterations that took place during this period had very little to do with the school curriculum and were more concerned with an uncertain state seeking legitimacy following the national elections. In the main, curriculum revision involved exorcising of racial content as well as outdated and inaccurate subject matter from school syllabuses. Jansen (1999: 57) points out that the haste with which the South African state pursued what he terms 'a superficial cleansing of the inherited curriculum' needs to be understood in terms of a

set of pressures faced by a South African state in transition. He indicates (Jansen 1999: 64-65) that syllabus alterations immediately after South Africa's first democratic elections might be understood in four ways: in the context of the constitutional and bureaucratic constraints of political transition under a Government of National Unity; as a process that emerged in the context of weak political leadership in the then Ministry of Education; as a process propelled by mounting pressure on the Minister of Education from the media; as a process made possible by a weak political challenge from the education community to the educational terms of the project.

Worth noting is that syllabus alterations of this early period in South Africa's democracy had symbolic rather than substantive significance. However, despite the prominence of the symbolic over the substantive, there were 'real' struggles that took place in syllabus committees and one such struggle concerned school biology. Jansen (1999: 62) notes that in the Science Committee there was a lengthy debate as to whether the 'Creator Clause' should be removed or not. Briefly, this clause refers to one of the objectives stated in science syllabuses of the apartheid era, which in essence states that science should instil in learners 'a sense of awe and reverence for the Creator'. Those who argued that the clause should be removed felt that its presence would interfere with the teaching of evolution and that it had been placed there to further the aims of the conservative Christian National Education ideology.

The 'superficial cleansing' of the apartheid curriculum meant that the biology curriculum did not change significantly in the years immediately following the legal dismantling of apartheid. However, this position might be overstated, because the interim syllabus document does state in its objectives that school biology should discourage rote-learning in favour of active learning and that learners should develop attitudes and values such as 'respect for living things' and 'love and appreciation' of South African biodiversity. However, the guidelines or prescriptions of the interim syllabus document are clearly in the mould of a *science of life* approach and it is these prescriptions that are assessed in national/provincial examinations rather than the objectives of the syllabus. The criticisms levelled against the biology syllabuses of the apartheid era therefore also had applicability to biology syllabuses of the first decade of the post-apartheid era. Syllabuses remained highly academic and did not serve the needs of the majority of South African learners, who were non-university-bound.

However, in March 1997 the National Education Ministry launched the new curriculum, entitled Curriculum 2005. Curriculum 2005 was the first comprehensive curriculum framework produced by the post-apartheid government. It was launched in 1997 and introduced into Grade 1 in 1998. The curriculum focused on general education and training (GET) and after revision was called the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) for GET. This curriculum was envisaged to replace content-based education with outcomes-based education and teacher-centred pedagogies with more learner-centred pedagogies. Another change was the replacement of the 42 school subjects offered to learners in South African primary schools by eight learning areas.

The learning areas combine the old subjects, in a sense, ostensibly to promote a more holistic and integrated approach. Each learning area has curriculum-linked outcomes that learners should attain through engaging with learning activities.

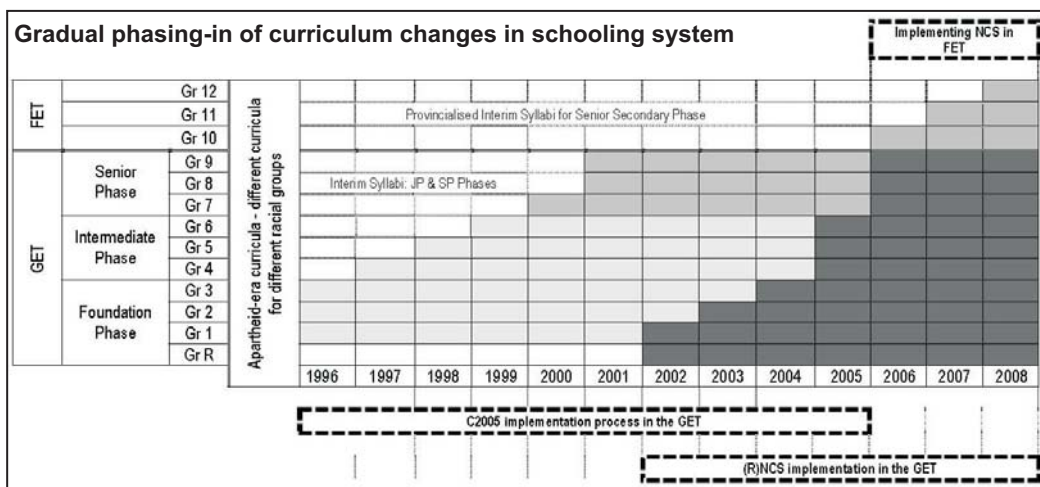
Since the gradual phasing-in of the new curriculum, the curriculum has undergone revision. The curriculum revision process followed a period of vociferous debate and fierce contestation as to the merits of outcomes-based education (OBE) (see, for example, Jansen & Christie, 1999). There were also other concerns, such as difficulties with implementation of the new curriculum in resource-poor contexts. For example, authors of the report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 observed that historically disadvantaged schools did not have the resources (reference and textbooks, stationery, photocopying facilities and other technologies of teaching) to implement Curriculum 2005 effectively (Chisholm et al. 2000). This finding is corroborated by empirical studies done by, among others, Jansen (1999) and Le Grange & Reddy (2000). In response to some criticisms levelled against Curriculum 2005, South Africa's second post-apartheid Minister of Education commissioned a committee to review Curriculum 2005. The review committee made several recommendations based on visits to schools by its members, a review of published literature on Curriculum 2005, a review of submissions made by organizations and individuals, and further investigation (for detail, see Chisholm et al. 2000). The developments that have just been discussed here have relevance to the General Education and Training (GET) band. South Africa's National Qualifications Framework (NQF) has three bands: General Education and Training (GET), Further Education and Training (FET) and Higher Education and Training (HET). In short, the GET band comprises pre-school, primary school and junior high school (Grades 0–9), the FET band senior high school (Grades 10–12) and the HET band university education (degrees/diplomas and higher degrees/diplomas).

As in the case of GET in the late 1990s, the South African Further Education and Training (FET) band is currently undergoing a process of transformation aimed at freeing it from the legacies of apartheid education. The FET process benefited greatly from experiences gained during the revision of the GET. Life Sciences (Biology) is one of 29 subjects that will be offered in the FET band. These 29 subjects are derived from six learning fields: Languages; Arts and Culture; Human and Social Studies and Languages; Physical, Mathematical, Computer, Life and Agricultural Sciences; Business, Commerce, Management and Service Studies; and Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology (Department of Education 2003: 7). The figure overleaf represents a time-line of curriculum implementation in South African over the past decade.

The subject Life Sciences is located within the Physical, Mathematical, Computer, Life and Agricultural Sciences learning field and can be offered as a core or elective subject. Three learning outcomes for Life Sciences have been identified:

Learning outcome 1: Scientific inquiry and problem-solving skills

The learner is able to confidently explore and investigate phenomena relevant to Life



Sciences by using inquiry, problem-solving, critical and other skills.

Learning outcome 2: Construction and application of Life Sciences knowledge

The learner is able to access, interpret, construct and use Life Sciences concepts to explain phenomena relevant to Life Sciences.

Learning outcome 3: Life Sciences, technology, environment and society

The learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of the nature of science, the influence of ethics and biases in the Life Sciences, and the interrelationships of science, technology, indigenous knowledge, the environment and society.

In the NCS policy document for Life Sciences, each of the learning outcomes is accompanied by associated assessment standards and content areas. According to the policy document, assessment standards are vehicles of knowledge, skills and values through which the learning outcomes can be achieved. Although content is not specified in detail, broad content areas are outlined in the policy document. An analysis of the stated purpose of the Life Sciences, learning outcomes, assessment standards and content areas sheds light on the extent to which the *science of living* orientation features in South Africa’s new curriculum framework for Biology (now called Life Sciences).

Under the heading *Purpose*, the document explicitly states that scientific knowledge should have relevance to learners’ personal lives and that the interrelationship between science, technology and society should be understood. This is captured in the document as follows:

[Learners] will be able to apply scientific knowledge in their personal lives and as responsible citizens in ways that will contribute to a healthy lifestyle and the sustainable management of resources. Through the study of the Life Sciences, learners can develop an understanding of the nature of science, the influence of ethics and biases, and the interrelationship of science, technology, indigenous knowledge, environment and society (Department of Education 2003: 9)

The latter is also clearly captured in learning outcome 3. Moreover, there are several places in the policy document where assessment standards associated with learning outcomes 1 and 2 are elaborated to emphasize social and personal relevance. For

example, one of the assessment standards linked to learning outcome 2 for Grade 11 learners is elaborated as follows:

We know this when the learner is able to:
Analyze and evaluate the costs and benefits of applied Life Sciences knowledge.

Attainment is evident when the learner, for example:

- Writes a report on the impact of HIV/AIDS on the health and lifestyle of peers;
- Makes suggestions and comes up with solutions for the HIV/AIDS problem
(Department of Education 2003: 27)

A clear shift in emphasis is evident when one compares the NCS for Life Sciences with that of the interim syllabus and syllabuses that preceded it. In the case of the interim syllabus and its antecedents viruses were taught in an academic way, where the focus was on their structure and reproductive abilities rather than on how viruses have an influence on human health and disease.

An analysis of the content areas specified for the three learning outcomes provide evidence of content pertinent to learners' personal lives and societal needs. The following content areas serve as examples:

Content area: Tissues, cells and molecular studies

Learning outcome 1: Scientific inquiry and problem-solving skills

The learner is able to confidently explore and investigate phenomena relevant to the Life Sciences by using inquiry, problem-solving, critical thinking and other skills.

Grades 10-12

- Research in a field of biotechnology (e.g. chemotherapy)
- Microscopic skills or other comparative methods and resources
- Investigation of (community) diseases: conduct surveys, collect data (e.g. on fungal, viral, animal and plant diseases, genetic diseases)
- Collection of latest research information on diseases (e.g. malaria resistance, TB incidence in South Africa (Department of Education, 2003: 34)

Learning outcome 2: Construction and application of Life Sciences knowledge

The learner is able to access, interpret, construct and use Life Sciences concepts to explain phenomena relevant to Life Sciences.

Grade 11

Micro-organisms (viruses, bacteria, protists and fungi):

- Diseases (e.g. rust, blight, rabies, HIV/AIDS, cholera, tuberculosis, malaria, thrush)
- Immunity

Other content specifications that emphasize personal and social relevance include cloning, genetic engineering, DNA, fingerprinting and forensics, sperm banks, abortion, eco-tourism, cradle of mankind, sustainable development, beliefs about creation and evolution.

From the extracts of the NCS policy document for Life Sciences it is clear that several references are made to matters that are relevant to the personal lives of learners and

to societal needs more generally. It may be reasonable to conclude that the pendulum has swung in the direction of biology as a *science of living*. Needless to say, elements of the *science of life* approach still remain part of the new Life Sciences curriculum. However, the framework for Life Sciences education provided in the policy document represents a departure from both apartheid syllabuses and the interim syllabuses (which were extensions of apartheid syllabuses), which were dominated by a *science of life* approach. Many of the shortcomings of South African biology syllabuses that were pointed out by Watson (1990), Schreuder (1991) and Doidge (1996) have been addressed and personally/social relevant content has been included in the NCS for Life Sciences. However, some challenges remain, which we shall now consider.

Some challenges for Biology (Life Sciences) education in South Africa

Firstly, although efforts have been made to introduce outcomes, assessment standards and topics that are socially/personally relevant, some of the topics may not be relevant to all South African learners. For example, topics such as chemotherapy and DNA forensics might not be personally relevant to learners who live in deep rural areas.

Secondly, Fullan (1991) argues that educational change depends on what teachers do and think and not simply on what is declared in policy. Post-1994 we have witnessed a proliferation of education policies in South Africa, but there remains what Sayed & Jansen (2001) have termed a 'policy-practice gap'. Research into the implementation of Curriculum 2005 showed that policy intentions were not reflected in South African classrooms (see Chisholm 2000 et al; Jansen & Christie 1999). Short stints of teacher in-service training provided by provincial education departments proved to be inadequate for successful implementation in classrooms. It may be inferred that experiences of the GET band could also be encountered by the FET band. The inclusion of socially relevant content in the NCS for Life Sciences therefore provides no guarantee that such concerns will form part of learning programmes and classroom practice. Much depends on how teachers respond to policy formulations. With reference to the prominence given to evolution in the NCS for Life Sciences, Bower (2006: 15) expresses a concern that teachers may avoid teaching the topic. He argues that there are plenty of examples of teachers subverting uncomfortable curriculum change. In a similar way, teachers may subvert the teaching of socially relevant content. Because the elaborations of assessment standards serve as guides for teachers and not prescriptions they can avoid teaching certain topics and teach what is familiar (content of the old syllabuses). Much also depends on what will be included in or excluded from textbooks, because these remain the primary source used by teachers.

Thirdly, a national curriculum framework might have the best intentions but if it is not delivered in a way that engages learners so that deep learning occurs then very little will be achieved. Allen & Tanner (2005) suggest that curriculum change requires active learner participation and discovery-based laboratory tasks. Thornton & Sokoloff (1998) point out that student learning and knowledge acquisition are en-

hanced with an interactive approach to teaching. Therefore, the challenge is how best to provide teachers with the required support and education so that they can effectively facilitate learning, to the extent that learners can take responsibility for their own learning.

Finally, factors that affect policy implementation are complex. Without suggesting that classroom practice should simply reflect policy, one might expect that some policy imperatives should trickle down to the chalk-face. The extent to which this will happen depends on a sustained programme of teacher professional development in which teachers are participants with policy-makers/departmental officials in determining what knowledge is most worth including in learning/teaching programmes. Given that the year 2006 was the first year of implementation of the NCS for Life Sciences, whether the pendulum swings to a *science of living* will be witnessed in South African classrooms is still an open question. What can be said is that the NCS policy document for Life Sciences is an enabling framework for a swing of the pendulum in the direction of a *science of living*, should teachers take up the challenge.

Conclusion

The history of school biology in North America, Europe and South Africa is marked by oscillations between two ends of a pendulum, *science of life* and *science of living*. The distinction between *science of life* and *science of living* is useful as a lens through which to view the development of the subject over time. Swings in the pendulum of biology education have been influenced by intrinsic factors (developments in the field of biological science) and extrinsic factors (economic, political, religious). Much of the history of biological education in South Africa has been characterized by a *science of life* approach. This was a consequence of new developments in biological science, the rise of positivism in the 1930s and 1940s and the science/philosophy of fundamental pedagogics, which reached its pinnacle in South Africa during the apartheid era. School curricula were also strongly influenced by universities through a structure called the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB). The JMB has since been superseded by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). Efforts to include more relevant biology in schools by communities struggling against apartheid curricula were thwarted, for example 'People's Education' sank into crisis in the late 1980s owing to state repression and a lack of clarity as to what it entailed.

The *science of life* approach to school biology remained dominant in the early years of post-apartheid South Africa, because of the superficial cleansing of apartheid curricula by a weak state seeking legitimacy in a period of transition – curriculum alterations of this period might be understood in terms of political symbolism rather than substantive change. However, the new South African curriculum for Life Sciences displays a swing in the direction of a *science of living* approach. This swing might be understood in terms of pressing challenges faced by South Africa such as the

HIV/AIDS pandemic and older diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis, among a host of other biologically oriented problems. Also, the National Curriculum Statements were developed through a process of much broader participation than was the case with apartheid curricula. Education, which was a primary site of contestation during apartheid, now is a primary site of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. If school biology is to contribute to addressing South Africa's challenges, then a *science of living* approach might be as important as a *science of life* approach. The NCS for Life Sciences provides an enabling framework for integrating both these approaches so that the subject is more relevant to learners' lives but at the same time not biased towards social aspects to the extent that the foundation (the discipline structure) of biology, which is important for further studies, becomes eroded. The extent to which the implementation of the NCS for Life Sciences will be successful will depend largely on how teachers respond to these challenges and what opportunities they provide for active learning in classrooms – much depends on what teachers will do and think.

The *science of life* and *science of living* debate will continue, however, perhaps couched in different terms. Dempster & Hugo (2006), for example, argue that the new curriculum frameworks in South Africa do not deal with evolution comprehensively enough – they hold a strong *science of life* view. This may be in tension with the inclusion of alternative ways of knowing that are recognized in the new curriculum frameworks, such as faith-based and indigenous knowledge systems. Or the Dempster & Hugo position might be in tension with the view of Schreuder, Le Grange & Reddy (1998), who argue that given the current state of planet Earth, sustainability might be a much more appropriate unifying theme for school biology in a contemporary South Africa than evolution or structure and function.

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Double-shift schooling: Motives for implementation – the cases of Namibia and Uganda

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Abstract

The double-shift school system has been implemented in a range of developing countries to address the increasing demand for education amidst decreasing budgets. This article explores the motives for the implementation of this mode of schooling in the republics of Namibia and Uganda. Both countries were former colonies in which access to primary and secondary education was restricted to certain segments of their respective communities. The implementation of double-shift schooling in pre-independence Namibia was closely related to apartheid education policies and discriminatory budgets. In Uganda it was identified as one strategy to help with over-stocked classrooms after the implementation of Universal Primary Education. Significant lessons are to be learned from the experiences of these two countries.

Keywords: double-shift schooling, cost-effective intervention, Education For All, Universal Primary Education, primary education, enrolment, school facilities

Introduction

Many developing countries, after achieving their independence or after the establishment of democratic governments, were faced with huge increases in the demand for education. Governments in these countries in most cases embarked on quantitative expansions of their education systems to meet the aspirations and demands of their people or simply to honour their pre-election promises. Huge enrolment rates in school systems were accompanied by negative economic growth rates in most African countries (UNESCO 1998). This was especially the case after the adoption of the Jomtien resolution on Education for All in 1990, as will be discussed later. Primary education increased more than four times in most African countries and more than doubled in Asia (Bray 1997:108). The problem developing countries encountered was

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that the population of school-going children grew faster than they (the countries) could cope with. Unrealistic portions of national budgets and gross domestic product (GDP) were needed to get and keep children in school. There is much truth in the conclusion that ‘school retention has become an economic struggle’ (Kleinhans 2002: 13).

The majority of these countries had to halt or abandon their expansion plans owing to fiscal problems (London 1991: 1). They simply did not have the means to sustain such voluminous quantitative expansions. Secondly, post-independence education planning was not only diverted by economic determinants but also by international influences. Development agencies started to demand adjustments in exchange for assistance. Adjustments, especially in the form of the scaling-up of cost-effective interventions, became imperative. Curbing of spending on education was thus in the first place the result of resource inadequacy and in the second place because of influences exerted by international development agencies (London 1991: 2). One area targeted for adjustment was (and still is) education and one of such adjustments was (and still is) the implementation of the double-shift school system.

Double-shift schooling is in essence a 20th century cost-effective intervention, mainly employed by countries with expanding education systems to match enrolment rates with those of classroom construction (Kleinhans 2002: 1). This mode of schooling is basically about time and space in education. The rearrangement of daily school schedules results in increased classroom space, which makes it possible for school systems to meet the demands of expanding enrolments amidst decreasing budgets. The utilization of school facilities, equipment and the services of teachers can in this way be doubled or even trebled. It is based on the economic principle of cost sharing and can help to minimize the tension between equity (the promotion of formal access) and efficiency (cost-effectiveness). The subsequent result is a saving in construction costs, which impacts favourably on unit costs. Any possible savings could for instance be used for qualitative improvement. It could be used for the procurement of teaching and learning materials or for capacity-building programmes. It is an intervention to be considered for reasons of economy and equity (Kleinhans 2002: 96). This supports the notion by London (1993: 357) that it is necessary to investigate such interventions ‘in an age of cost-effectiveness and rational resource deployment’.

Double-shift schooling is best understood in its relation to the concept of Education for All (EFA). EFA in its simplest terms implies the removal of barriers to allow all children of school-going age access to education. The multiple uses of school facilities can assist in bringing implementing countries nearer to the achievement of that objective. Secondly, the cost-cutting impact of implementing double-shift schooling helps to free funds, which can be used to expand the education system further.

The double-shift school goes under different names in implementing countries (Kleinhans 2002: 10). They are known as double-session, shared-time, shift- and multiple-shift schools in the United States of America; bi-session schools in Hong Kong; double-

shift, double-session and platoon schools in Africa; and alternative or double-schedule schools in South America. They are simply referred to as 'shifting schools' in Trinidad and Tobago and teachers are said to be 'on shift' (London 1993: 354). Nomenclature is not always without humour (Bray 2000: 11). They are called 'hot seating schools' in Zimbabwe since there is not time for school chairs or benches to cool down before the commencement of the next shift. The teachers in Mexico have been dubbed 'taxi teachers', since they have to jump in a taxi after the first shift at one school to be in time for the second shift at another.

An interesting development took place in Uganda (Kleinhans 2004: 35). The schools, especially in the district of Mbale, started to distinguish between double-shift and double-session schools. Teachers at double-shift schools normally do duty in both sessions, morning and afternoon. Two teachers who are for instance responsible for Primary 1(a) and 1(b) in the morning will also take charge of Primary 1(c) and 1(d) in the afternoon at a *double-shift school*. Two teachers who are responsible for Primary 1 and 2 in the morning will also teach Primary 3 and 4 in a *double-session school* in the afternoon.*

Education authorities in various countries started to implement double-shift schooling during the closing years of the first half of the 20th century. Martin Mutschman, a Nazi official during World War II, ordered the burgomeisters to organize the enrolment of evacuated children and their teachers within the existing systems (Parsons 1998). The result was overcrowded schools. The German education authorities, as in the United Kingdom, had to make use of double-shift schooling in the affected areas.

Double-shift schooling was implemented for various reasons but mostly as a temporary measure (Kleinhans 2002:17) in the developed world. The objective sometimes was to align educational programmes with state regulations (Carriedo & Goren 1986) in the USA. The objective in other settings was to increase enrolment through increased facility utilization. The Tewksbury High School in Massachusetts, USA, pushed its enrolment up to 1 296 and almost doubled its subject offerings (De Gregorio 1973: 15). It is still implemented in the districts of Assam and Padresh in India (Batra 1998) and at various settings in Asia and in the Caribbean (Bray 2000; London 1991; London 1993). It is very much in use in Namibia and South Africa (called platoon schools) and in other parts of Africa. Almost 5 000 primary and secondary schools in Turkey are running on more than one shift, while 93% of the UNRWA schools in the Jordan camps are double-shift (UNRWA Services 2003).

Limited classroom space coupled with limited funds in the development budgets of education ministries seems to be the most pressing motive for the implementation of double-shift schooling. The list does not end there, however. Clermont and Thomas (1985: 4565-4567) add the following:

* It should be noted that it is expected of double-shift school teachers to work in both sessions or shifts in Uganda. An allowance is added to their salaries for these extra duties.

- The need to accommodate sub-groups
- Study opportunities for senior primary and secondary school learners
- Adjusting the time-table to meet the needs of the teachers and learners
- Shortage or over-supply teachers
- Providing work and study opportunities for senior learners
- Providing facilities for special occasions
- As an emergency measure

Research shows that double-shift schooling does not necessarily appeal to those in need of access to education. It drew sharp criticism from some quarters. Hartwell (1994: 45) cites Fuller and Habte who listed 'double-shifts' as one of the modes of schooling that is normally resisted by communities and teachers (also see Bassa-Quansah 1970). Fowkes (1969) claims that the education losses are not worth the savings. The Moses Commission (London 1991: 4) doubted whether it is capable of delivering quality education, while the St Claire King Committee on education came right out and called it the 'villain of the piece' (London 1993: 359). Both the Moses Commission and the St Claire King Committee were commissioned by the Trinidad and Tobago government to investigate and report on double-shift schooling in the country.

It is not written in the stars that double-shift schooling will be without negative impact and there is no guarantee that its operation will be trouble-free. What implementing countries seldom realize is that interventions such as double-shift schooling have the tendency to prevent other educational objectives from materializing if not properly implemented, organized and managed. Education ministries give little consideration to the practical implication of policies and it becomes very difficult to escape the pitfalls experienced by the island state of Trinidad and Tobago (London 1991, 1993).

The implementation of the double-shift school system in a number of countries highlights the gap between the aspirations of some communities in need of education and what they are offered by their respective governments. This is clearly illustrated in Trinidad and Tobago (London 1991, 1993), where it was made available to low-income groups in low-performing schools. It was implemented in the San Diego School System in California in less affluent communities where facilities were limited (Carriedo and Goren 1986) and offered to 'predominantly poorer students' in Zambia (Linden 2001). In South West Africa (Namibia) it was implemented in politically and economically neglected communities to expand participation in education. It still carries with it this stigma in a new, independent and democratic Namibia where primary education is guaranteed by the constitution.

The literature also illustrates an inability by some implementing countries to deal with the paradox of double-shift schooling (Kleinhans 2002: 144). The main aim of this mode of schooling is to broaden access to schooling and by so doing make education

more equitable. It is in many cases found to be far too under-resourced to operate effectively and is consequently perceived by many to offer inferior education, exacerbating inequities. Harper (1987) found that the learner-teacher ratio was much higher in the second shift in South West African (Namibian) schools. It was 36,43:1 for the second session as opposed to 29,4:1 for the first shift in 1987. The same phenomenon was found in a case study school in Namibia in 2002 (Kleinhans 2002). Second-shift learners are also, in many instances, deprived of important elements of education. Research shows that in many cases they have to make do with less teaching and learning time, non-core subjects are simply ignored and co-curricular activities are offered once or twice per year. Jansen (1998: 1) links the failure of education policy to the 'over-investment of the state in political symbolism'. The practical implications of implementation are seldom considered.

There is also a strong indication that policy implementation lacks effective directives. It was reported in the Leon County School System that the education policy does not 'directly address single or double-shift schools' (Center for Architecture and Education 1995: 5). Batra (1998: 45) reported a lack of clearly defined policies in the districts of Assam and Madhya Pradesh in India. The same trend was found in Namibia and Uganda (Kleinhans 2002, 2004).

However, it is important not only to portray school enrolments against available physical facilities, but also to investigate the motives that led to the classroom shortages. These are the over-arching motives, which could be found in political and socio-economic developments, decisions and policies. Uganda and Namibia provide the ideal settings to investigate these motives. Both countries were colonized and operated education systems that could be described as elitist and narrow. The pre-election political manifestos of politicians in both countries carried the themes of open education systems characterized by equal opportunity. In both countries the reality of limited resources dawned on the political leadership soon after the election contests. It became clear that the success of education provision in an independent country hinges more on what the economy of a nation can provide and less on manifesto declarations. The post-independence language moved from the emotional politics of the struggle era to that of less emotional educational economics. Limited resources in both countries called for the implementation of cost-effective interventions such as double-shift schooling.

This article will therefore focus on the motives for the implementation of double-shift schooling in the republics of Namibia and Uganda.

Namibia

It is not an easy task to trace the beginnings of the double-shift school in Namibia. Only two large unpublished studies have appeared to date, namely one by WG Harper (1987), a former education officer of the old South West Africa National Education

Department, and a second in 2002 by the author, at the time an education planner in the Ministry of Education in the Republic of Namibia. Harper's observation (1987: 91) about the paucity of research on the double-shift school system concurs with the later observations of Caillods & Postlethwaite in 1989 and that of the Hong Kong professor, Mark Bray, in 1990. The earliest official policy statement on double-shift schooling in Namibia is contained in *Circular Minute 32* of 1987 of the then Bantu Education Department. The instruction, which provided for the termination of the double-session schooling and the implementation of the platoon system reads, 'A double-session with only one teacher will be converted into two single-sessions, each with its own teacher'. Directors of the previous ethnic education authorities were advised to give 'consideration ... to ways in which extended use can be made of existing classrooms by introducing a platoon system'.

Double-session and platoon schooling were two variants of the double-shift school system in Namibia. Teachers who worked in the double-session school system taught during two school sessions, while the platoon school teachers were (and still are) only allowed to teach during one school session or shift. This resulted in the maximum utilization of classrooms, but additional money had to be found to foot the salary bill. This budget vote increased by 20%. On the one hand this was a drive for greater cost-effectiveness in the school system; on the other, as will be shown later, it was part and parcel of racially motivated education policies (also see Harper 1987: 7). Double-shift schooling was 'closely associated with a discriminatory and an unequally funded education system' (Kleinhans 2002: 43)

In order for one to identify and understand the motives for the implementation of double-shift schooling in Namibia one has to make an analysis of the historical development of education from the early years of the first foreign occupation. Namibia became a German colony in 1884, which lasted until 1915. The German and Finnish missionaries were the main providers of education for blacks during the pre-colonial period (Diescho 1987: 153). The German colonizers divided the country into two large parts, namely the Police Zone and the area that fell outside the Police Zone (Unin 1986: 30). The Police Zone comprised the southern and central parts, which contained all the 'known economic resources and agricultural land', while the north and north-east, which fell outside the borders of the Police Zone, were made up mainly of Ovamboland and Kavango. All colonial policies and practices were directed from the Police Zone. White communities were resident in the Police Zone, while blacks were restricted to the reserves and homelands. This demarcation is significant for an understanding of the development of education in the country. Two education systems developed, each with its own structures for control, administration and financing (Cohen 1994: 92). The colonial government accepted fiscal and administrative responsibility for the education of white children in the Police Zone, while education in the reserves and homelands was left in the hands of the missionaries. The discrepancies were glaring: one system for whites with the necessary infrastructure,

equipment and teachers in the Police Zone and one for Blacks with schools described by Ndilula (1988: 398) as 'little nothings, poor and unsupervised'.

The year 1915 not only marked the end of the German occupation; it also introduced a segregated education system in the then South West Africa (SWA), which lasted until the independence of the country in 1990. Aligning the education system with the policies and practices of the South African segregationist regime started in all earnest. The whole process was initiated with Education Proclamation 50 of 1921 and Proclamation 16 of 1926 (Cohen 1994: 83-85). The purposes of these pieces of legislation were to establish a state-funded education system for whites and to bring education for blacks under state control. Education for black children, which was mainly funded and directed by the missionaries at that stage, was considered far too 'loose'. The objective of the Educational Conference of 1927 (Cohen 1994: 84) was, therefore, nothing more than to achieve the objectives of the said proclamations. The conference also advised the colonial authorities to tighten control over the missionaries. Missionaries who wanted to continue their involvement in education in SWA had to subscribe to the policies of and pledge loyalty to the colonial government. The missionaries' curricula also had to please the colonial masters. 'The colonial education administrators on the one hand determined the content and direction of the education for Black children, but on the other hand denied fiscal responsibility' (Kleinhans 2002:45).

The declaration that 'South Africa belongs to us once more' by the newly elected prime minister DF Malan in his victory speech after the 1948 elections in that country (Sisulu 2004: 136) was a clear indication of the mood, intentions and direction of the victorious new government. No message could have been more explicit, none could have been clearer. The Nationalist government 'rushed through a plethora of laws' to honour its pre-election promises of a segregated state. Sisulu (*ibid.*) echoes the eloquent phrasing of Brian Bunting (1986), who said that the Nationalists planned to 'unmix what has already been mixed, to separate one section from another, to enforce isolation and difference, to establish a rigid caste system backed with the force of the law'. SWA was not excluded from these political events and constitutional developments. The take-over by the National Party after the all-white election was hastily followed by the implementation of Bantu Education in SWA (Angula and Grant Lewis 1997). The Eiselen Commission of Inquiry in 1949 (Cohen 1994: 90) not only recommended the establishment of Bantu Education in SWA but also a reduction in state aid to black education. This end was achieved through the adoption of the Bantu Education Act in 1953. A strong, centrally controlled segregationist system of education was now ensured. The Van Zyl Commission (Ndilula 1988: 390) went further and advocated a separate education system for coloureds. The commission also insisted that an educational levy be placed on black communities. The recommendations of the Van Zyl Commission were implemented through the adoption of Education Ordinance 27 of 1962 (Cohen 1994: 104). The education department now

had the final say in curriculum issues, teacher training, the appointment of teachers and the provision of physical facilities. This development minimized not only the number of missionary schools, but also their influence.

The completion of the work started by the Van Zyl Commission and its predecessors was left to the Odendaal Commission of 1962/63. The provision of education for coloured, Nama and Rehoboth Baster children now became the responsibility of the Department of Coloured Affairs in South Africa, while the legal authority to provide education for blacks was vested in the Department of Bantu Education in Pretoria. (South African Government 1963, 1968). The jurisdiction over education for whites remained with the Department of Education and the White Legislative Assembly in SWA. This arrangement fitted nicely with the apartheid ideology.

The dream of the Van Zyl Commission of a rigid, demarcated, segregated education system came true in the 1970s with the establishment of the homelands in SWA. The South African homeland policy, which was extended over the borders of the colonial power, created ethnic authorities in SWA. The anomaly was that while the authority over formal education was placed in the hands of the homeland or ethnic authorities, their capacity to deal with policy, standards and fiscal issues was extremely limited. Furthermore, the Cape Education Department was put in charge of curricula and external examinations without consideration of ‘the distribution of textbooks, training of teachers and added administrative demands’ (Cohen 1994: 129).

This brief discussion of historical events was necessary to illustrate the link between the implementation of the double-shift school system in SWA and the inadequate provision of classroom spaces. The inadequacy was the direct result of a segregationist education system, which was characterized by racial discrimination. This is evident from school data and information captured at that time.

The colonial government in 1955 funded 66 schools, 55 of which (83,3%) were exclusively for white children. The per capita expenditure in the same year (Kleinhans 2002: 50) was

Whites	N\$134,00	Expenditure here is expressed in Namibian dollars, which are equal to the rand (South African currency). One needed approximately 6,5 South African rand to buy one US dollar at the time of writing.
Coloureds	N\$72,00	
Blacks	N\$20,00	

The construction rate for black and coloured education increased by 151,9% and 106% respectively between 1962 and 1979. The rate for white education was a mere 7,2% over the same period. One should not think that the colonial government suddenly decided to abandon its discriminatory policies and invested huge amounts in the education of neglected communities. A significant number of schools for blacks and coloureds that were registered as government or government-aided schools were constructed by churches and communities. The new Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture inherited 5 832 classrooms constructed with traditional materials (mud and stick schools) and 4 066 without ablution facilities for teachers and learners

(MBESC 1992-2002). All these institutions were registered either as government (public) or government-aided (private) schools.

The per capita expenditure for whites in 1975 was N\$614,94, while coloureds and blacks had to do with N\$163,00 and N\$68,38 respectively (Kleinhans 2002: 51). Learner:teacher ratio is another quantitative indicator of education spending. The ratio in white schools on the eve of the independence of Namibia was 12,1:1, while that for coloureds and blacks was 22:1 and 34:1 respectively.

The only survey on double-shift schools during the pre-independence years was done in 1987 by Harper, who was an employee of the Department of National Education. (The Department of National Education was established to provide educational services for ethnic authorities that did not have the capacity to establish these. The majority of schools under the jurisdiction of National Education were black, with a few government-aided schools for coloured and white children.) It should be mentioned that the variable (double-shift schooling) was never included in the official database system of the education authorities. The apartheid strategists were in command of the Information Management and Geographical Information Systems. There seems to be sufficient grounds to agree with Unin (1986: 512) that certain facts about the school system were concealed.

Harper's (1987) study shows that 35 of the 72 primary schools under the jurisdiction of National Education operated on more than one shift. Twenty-eight of the 35 were schools funded by government, while the remaining seven were state-aided private schools. The total enrolment of these institutions totalled 21 707 and comprised 671 class groups. More than 8 000 children attended the afternoon shift. It is doubtful whether a single white child was enrolled at any of the double-shift schools; the department responsible for the education of white children had no double-shift schools.

The new education ministry established after the independence of Namibia immediately set up an Educational Management System (Emis), which is a sub-directorate in the Directorate of Planning and Development. The Emis was responsible, among other things, for setting up a geographical information system (GIS) and capturing, processing and disseminating school data. The situation was as reflected in Table 1 in 1992 (Kleinhans 2002: 59).

Double-shift schooling within the South West African (Namibian) and pre-democratic South African context is a racially motivated school system. The schools were found in the socially, economically and politically neglected areas, where people of colour lived. It was part of Bantu Education and was looked upon by many as providing gutter education. It was tolerated, but never liked.

However, despite this and despite pre-election agendas, the then Ministry of Education and Culture could do nothing other than continue with this mode of schooling. Society was opened up by the announcement of democracy in Namibia, freedom of

Table 1: School data for Namibia in 1992

	<i>Single-shift schooling</i>	<i>Multiple-shift schooling</i>	<i>Totals</i>	<i>Multiple-shift percentage</i>
No. of schools	1 232	93	1 325	7,54
Learners	387 637	51 688	43 9325	13,33
Teachers	13 471	1 786	15 257	13,29
Ancillary staff	2 049	231	2 280	11,27
Grade groups	11 303	1 673	12 976	14,80
Classrooms	11 531	1 297	12 828	11,25

movement was guaranteed and school enrolments rose by 14,87% between 1990 and 1992 alone. The number of classrooms increased by a mere 3,1%. The enrolment rate outstripped the construction rate and it was clear that equalization would take somewhat longer to achieve. This happened amidst decreasing availability of funds. The education sector's portion of GDP dropped from 8,25% in 1995/06 to 7,22% in 2000/01 and the budget share from 24,15% in 1995/96 to 20,33% in 2000/01. The GDP portion currently stands at 7,5% and the budget share at 21,7%. The improvement in education's share could be attributed to a growing economy and a very positive inflation rate of 2,2%.

The gap between the aspirations of the people, which were so eloquently articulated by the politicians, and available resources became clear after the establishment of the new ministry of education. Government funding was in no way adequate to meet the influx of learners. The newly established ministry had to – whether it wanted to or not – continue with a school system closely associated with apartheid educational policies and practice.

Uganda

Uganda, a landlocked African country of 236 040 square kilometres, has a population of 26,4 million people, with an estimated population growth of 2,77%. The population density is 97 people per square kilometre, with approximately 13% of the population urbanized. It was estimated in 2000 that there are 89 deaths out of every 1 000 births and that the country has a literacy rate of 67%. (Microsoft Encarta 2001; also see www.geohive.com on Uganda). The Education Act of 1970 regulates education in Uganda. The education system is decentralized and the education ministry, municipalities and district education authorities maintain education out of public funds. Ugandan schoolchildren receive primary and secondary education in government, government-aided and non-government (private) schools (Kleinhans 2004: 3). Schools data recorded in a 2003 educational census (Ministry of Education and Sports 2003) is reflected in Table 2.

The education system prior to the independence of this central Africa country in 1962

Table 2: Schools data from Uganda, 2003

<i>Type</i>	<i>Primary education</i>	<i>Secondary education</i>	<i>Total</i>
Government & government-aided	10 652	751	11 403
Non-government	4 164	2 148	6 312
Total	14 816	2 899	17 715

excluded the majority of Ugandans (Ministry of Education and Sports 2000: 1). It is estimated that not more than 50% of children of school-going age attended school. The democratization and opening-up of the system was a long and uphill process. However, the government of the newly established independent country felt the need to review education system. This task was given to the EB Castle Commission in 1963 (Ibid.: 3). The Castle Commission in its recommendations focused on the development needs of the country. The Commission advocated the expansion of the primary education sector as a prerequisite for meeting the country's manpower needs necessary for economic development. However, this long-term goal was overridden by a short-term objective, which focused on secondary and post-primary education. Proponents were of the view that more emphasis should be placed on the immediate manpower needed for economic development. Little was therefore done to overcome the deficiencies in primary education. The Education Policy Review Commission (EPRC), established in 1997 (ibid.), made similar recommendations, but these never progressed to the policy and implementation stages. The economic decline and political instability of the 1970s and 1980s left no room for this type of development. Kirungi (2000: 1) cites Sam Onek, at that time Acting Commissioner for Education, who claimed that everything virtually collapsed under Idi Amin and owing to war with Tanzania. Education received only 15,6% of the national wealth during the reign of Milton Obote – indeed a sad period for the primary education sector in Uganda.

The EPRC, which was reappointed ten years later, again emphasized the importance of primary education and the need to increase participation (Ministry of Education and Sports 2000: 4). It in fact recommended wide-ranging reforms for the entire education sector, from primary right through to tertiary.

Efforts towards the expansion and improvement of the primary education sector gained some momentum after the reappointment of the EPRC (Ministry of Education and Sports 2000: 10-11). The government's acceptance of the 1987 recommendations of the EPRC (although non-binding) was embodied in a White Paper on Education in 1992. The envisaged reform of the education system as advocated by the EPRC was taken up in the Primary Education Reform Programme (PERP) of 1993. The objective of the PERP was to improve access to schooling and equity through the provision of the necessary facilities and quality through the strengthening of capacity for education training and management. A training and capacity-building programme for teachers (Primary Education and Teacher Development Programme) was therefore designed to

support and strengthen the PERP. These developments were reinforced by the constitutional dictate (article 30) that gives all persons the right to education in Uganda and article 38 of 1996, which gives the state the right to engage in international negotiations to achieve this end. Government was now under constitutional obligation to provide the necessary resources for the expansion of education. It is notable that the initiatives of the early 1990s did not lead to an increased government commitment to primary education (Stavage 2003: 7). A proposal for free primary education was rejected by the Constituent Assembly in 1994. Even the World Bank was not very enthusiastic and suggested that decisions on education be left to the inhabitants of Uganda. Museveni himself favoured increased spending on road-building and defence over education. It is notable that impetus for change did not come only from commissions, White Papers and constitutional dictates, but also (and more intensely) from the political arena. It is here that the stage was finally set for Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Stavage (2003) establishes a link between electoral competition and public service provision. He argues that there is a link between promises contained in pre-election party competition and an increased commitment to the education sector after such elections. This is especially true where the maker of the promise is victorious. Museveni, prior to the elections, promised the Ugandan electorate free primary education for every four children per family. The improvement of education was never a salient factor in Museveni's manifesto until this declaration. However, the promise of free education 'struck a chord with the Ugandan electorate' (Stavage 2003: 9), with the result that more emphasis was put on UPE at consequent political rallies and meetings. Stavage (2003: 16) also holds that UPE received a further boost through the availability of information. The newspapers *The Monitor* and *The New Vision* gave coverage of UPE issues on a daily basis. Museveni was voted to office in December 1996, whereafter he announced the abolishment of school fees as from January 1997. It is interesting to note that 'four children' quickly became 'all children', as explained by Assistant Commissioner Bulondo: 'When the President said *Bana* (meaning four) the people said *Bonna* (meaning all)' (Kleinhans 2004: 9).

Uganda, despite its years of political turmoil and economic instability in the 1970s and 1980s, was not precluded from educational development on the international stage. The United Nations General Assembly proposed the right to education in 1948 and reaffirmed it at the Education for All conference held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 and again reaffirmed it in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 (Kleinhans 2004: 8). The Jomtien Declaration stipulated the 'educational opportunities to be designed', 'basic education to be promoted' and 'national, regional and local' obligations (Ministry of Education and Culture 1993: 4). The focus of the UPE programme in Uganda is the enhancement of access, equity and quality of education (Ministry of Education and Sports 2000: 7). The key areas are:

- providing and maintaining quality education that is affordable;

- providing the necessary facilities and resources to improve school access and retention;
- providing basic education that is accessible and relevant;
- providing an equitable education to eliminate the disparities; and
- eradicating illiteracy.

Government clearly committed itself to improve education and was now willing to devote significantly more of the nation's resources to education. The impact was dramatic and caused some authors to dub it the 'big bang approach'. Enrolment jumped to 5,3 million after the announcement of UPE in 1997 and to 6,6 million in 1999. It went up to 6,8 million in 2003. The gross enrolment leaped from 69% in 1990 to 80% in 1996 and 124% in 1997. The average growth in Primary 1, which stood at a negative -2% for the period 1993 to 1996 shot up to a positive 4% for the period 1997 to 2003. The impact on the available resources was just as dramatic (Kleinhans 2004: 9-10). More teachers, classrooms, latrines, school furniture, textbooks and other school equipment were needed. The 'negative' side of UPE was swift to show that proper planning was seriously lacking in most areas. The Ministry, in an attempt to deal with the increases in enrolment, altered the staff establishment formula. The overall pupil:teacher ratio jumped from 38:1 to 60:1 and even to 110:1 in Primary 1 and 2. Large disparities continued to exist between schools despite the national pupil-teacher ratio of 52:1. School construction rates did not keep pace with school enrolment rates. The number of classrooms under construction in 2003 stood at 393, while primary education needed 1 075.

It was clear that the Ministry did not have the funds or the 'luxury of time' at that point to provide school communities in Uganda with sufficient classrooms (Kleinhans 2004: 8). The targets set and aspirations for the education of the Ugandan children could never be met by the available resources. In its endeavour to make do with existing funds and to deal with the high levels of access and to maintain the quality of education in Uganda, the education authorities decided to implement double-shift schooling as a temporary measure in selected schools as from January 1999. This mode of schooling was implemented in 68 primary schools in eight districts.

Conclusion

There are some important lessons to be learned from the cases discussed. Developing countries soon after their triumph over colonization or after their first democratic elections were faced with education systems that were totally inadequate to meet their economic aspirations. Education was in many cases a salient issue on freedom struggle agendas and pre-election manifestos. New governments were set to rid their countries of elitist and exclusive education systems and to free their peoples from illiteracy and ignorance. Such developing countries also adopted the Jomtien declaration, which held promises of Education for All. Unrestricted access to under-resourced education systems led to an imbalance between what these governments

aspired to achieve and what they could afford. It immediately became clear, also to international development partners, that such high tension between equity and efficiency blocked the path to a quality of education so sorely needed for economic development. Double-shift schooling was in many instances chosen as one strategy to restore the balance between equity and efficiency and thus reduce the tension.

Double-shift schooling in Namibia and Uganda also stemmed from the conflict between the desire to expand education to all (equity) and the available resources (economic efficiency). UPE became the trump card in the elections in Uganda, while scores of children knocked at the door for education after the desegregation of the education system in Namibia. Neither country had the fiscal capacity to meet the increased demands. Double-shift schooling was one cost-effective intervention that held the promise of allowing them to continue expanding their education systems within the limits of available resources.

Double-shift schooling was used as an instrument of state to further the aims of the apartheid philosophy and to entrench Bantu Education in the old South West Africa. This mode of schooling, as I have noted in the context of Namibia, was closely associated with apartheid education policies and their ignoble offspring. The colonial authorities expanded the primary education sector to prepare a cheap and readily available labour force for a growing economy. The equalization of the provision of facilities to white, black and coloured communities was never part of the agenda. Double-shift schooling was established in the neglected and politically oppressed communities as a strategy to address the shortage rather than to bring provision on an equal footing.

Policies on double-shift schooling in Ugandan and Namibian are nothing more than pieces of advice to schools with large enrolments and limited facilities. Schools in the case study countries were never compelled to introduce double-shift schooling. Policies are not purposefully designed for scaling-up. A limited number of schools in Uganda opted for double-shift schooling after the democratization of the education system. Not many schools joined the cluster of double-shift schools after the desegregation of the education system in Namibia. The Kampala city education authorities showed very little interest in implementing double-shift schooling up to 2004. The Nakasera Primary and Kishwa Primary Schools in Kampala recorded learner-classroom ratios of 85,93:1 and 119,05:1 respectively in that year. This poses the danger of intensifying the conflict between equity and quality. Educational equality is often eroded by unlimited access to schools. This refers not only to learner performance but also to the quality of resources such as textbooks, school furniture and equipment and the maintenance of the facilities.

It is in the final instance common knowledge that double-shift schooling is not really liked by those to whom it is offered. In Namibia it is associated with an education of inferior quality, while it is seen as a 'quick fix' for the deficiencies of UPE in Uganda.

However, it should be noted that one case study, one survey to test the attitudes of the stakeholders and one national seminar were held in Uganda. Two guidelines were compiled. Nothing of the sort was done in Namibia. The fact that very little was done to allay the fears of the communities and to explain the concept to them explains to some extent why so few schools in both countries opted for double-shift schooling.

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Caught in ideological crossfire: Private schooling in South Africa

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Abstract

In developing countries, private schools – particularly at secondary level – have grown phenomenally to meet the demand for education. In South Africa, while independent schooling has also increased steadily, it remains a fairly small sector. Some argue that private schools are no longer dominated by elite institutions and offer access to quality education to learners even in poor communities where public schools are either unavailable or of poor quality. Others claim that such schools cater to a privileged few, lead to greater class inequalities and work against the nation-building project. This article draws on empirical research to show that there is little evidence to support either side of this argument. Private provision of education in South Africa is driven more by differentiated demand than by the excess demand, with widespread public schooling available. The debate is, in the end, an ideological one.

Keywords: private, independent schooling, non-government sector, equality, user fees, differentiated access, quality education

Introduction

The last decade has witnessed a phenomenal growth in private schooling in developing countries. Sub-Saharan African countries have all seen large increases in enrolment in various kinds of *non-government* secondary schools – Uganda (more than 60% in the early years of this decade), Malawi (25%) and Tanzania (40%) (Lewin 2003; Lewin and Sayed 2005) – though there has been stagnation and slower growth in *government* school enrolments. There are various reasons attributed to this growth. These include excess demand, differential demand, increased competition in domestic and internationally portable qualifications, and liberalisation of economic activity, which creates opportunities for entrepreneurial activity and profits (James 1993; Sayed, with Rose 2001). Moreover, the priority attached to Education for All and the Millen-

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nium Development Goals (MDGs) that relate most closely to education has resulted in much public investment and external support being directed towards universalising primary schooling. The growth of the school age population and the abolition of primary school fees (Malawi, Lesotho, Tanzania and Uganda) have resulted in the high growth rates that far outstrip the places being provided in public secondary schools. Budgetary provision for secondary schooling has stayed the same or declined. International debates about states and markets in general, and on education in particular, have focused attention on increased liberalisation in the educator sector, where the emphasis is on creating an enabling environment for non-government provision (Colclough 1996).

The South African case differs markedly from the experience of other developing countries – while there has been a small and incremental growth, there has not been a burgeoning of the non-government sector in secondary schooling. Currently the private or independent (as it is defined in the South African Schools Act (DoE 1996) schooling sector constitutes about 2% of the entire schooling population. This article investigates the developments within the private/independent school sector in South Africa in the decade after democracy. During the tenure of Minister Asmal significant shifts took place in the domain of education and in particular in the private schooling sector. There was much greater emphasis on regulation, ensuring equity in the distribution of resources and subsidies to poorer independent schools and active debate about the role of independent religious schools in terms of the broader goals of nation building. In the late 1990s and early years of the 21st century positions on independent schools tended to coalesce into opposing sides. For analysts critical of private schools, the expansion of these schools in a context of poverty was seen as a threat to the state's function in redistributing educational goods and in ensuring equal access for all (Vally 1998). In addition, private schools were regarded by some as an obstacle to nation building. On the other hand, advocates of independent schools argued that such schools offered alternative choices to the state's standardized educational package, that they were necessary to realize the right of citizens to access non-government schools, and that as long as there were inefficiencies and under-performance in public education in terms of access and quality, independent schools could act as a pressure valve and help to plug gaps left by state provision. In addition, in an attempt to shake off a stereotype of independent schools as elitist, it was contended that they increasingly drew clientele from across the social classes and race groups (Du Toit 2004; Hofmeyr and Lee 2004).

This article considers these debates through an analysis of statistics from secondary sources as well as primary data collected through a national survey of 282 schools as part of a collaborative study between the Centre for International Education (CIE) at Sussex University, the Wits Education Policy Unit (EPU) and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). The Private Education and Development Project (PRISED) 2001-2002 explored the policy context within which non-govern-

ment providers operate, their range and coverage at secondary level, the implications for equity and access, and their contribution to the development of skills and competencies. The PRISED project also included a structural map and ten in-depth case studies. A survey of 282 schools conducted in 2001 (posted and then followed up telephonically) requested data on ownership, fee levels, funding sources, religious affiliation, learner enrolment and teacher data and matric performance results (amongst others). This article explains how the independent school sector fared in the post-apartheid years, particularly in relation to its contribution to equity and quality. It is argued that the independent school sector remained small and therefore had not appreciably opened up access to quality education to poorer learners. But while it may not have sopped up excess demand for secondary schooling, independent schools did provide differentiated access to learners and were not immune to government policies encouraging greater equity. While changes have taken place in terms of the size and scope of the independent schooling sector, many of the conclusions in this article are relevant today. In this regard it highlights the role of the state in providing a regulatory environment for the operation of non-state provision in secondary schooling. Government policy must strike a balance between allowing an unfettered private sector to grow without regard for issues of equity or quality and so tightly regulating it that it offers no choice outside of the public schooling mainstream. The article concludes with some thoughts on policy. For those interested, shortened descriptive findings from the PRISED report appeared in the *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, a journal of the Wits EPU (Dieltiens 2003).

Sizing up independent schooling in post-apartheid South Africa

In developing countries, the most pervasive reason for increased non-government provision at secondary level is that private providers are seen as able to fill the gap resulting from excess demand. And unlike primary education, post-basic schooling is less likely to be viewed as a right that the state must provide. With international pressure to meet targets on universalising basic education, sub-Saharan countries have seen a phenomenal increase in secondary independent private schooling. The picture is somewhat different in South Africa.

Although the number of independent schools grew moderately (and even considerably in Gauteng and the Western Cape) in the decade following democracy, the sector remains relatively small. In 1992, there were just 392 private schools nationally (Gotkin 1993), increasing to a total of 984 schools in 2001, but still only representing 3,6% of schools in the country and just 2,1% of total enrolment (DoE 2003). Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) disputed these figures as conservative. They claimed that by the year 2000 there were more than 2 000 independent schools, making up 7% of schools and 3% of learners nationally. These figures were, however, mere speculation. A survey by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) estimated that there were 1 300 independent schools (Grades 1 to 12), though this larger number included very small

Percentage of independent schools as percentage of all schools in each province in 2001

Province	Percentage of provincial total
Eastern Cape	0,5
Free State	2,6
Gauteng	14,1
KwaZulu-Natal	2,5
Limpopo	4,0
Mpumalanga	3,2
Northern Cape	4,0
North West	1,7
Western Cape	8,0

Source: DoE 2003

schools, with fewer than 20 learners (Du Toit 2002: 5). The international experience is similar to the South African finding that reliable national and cross-national statistics are simply not available. This arises from classification problems, widely differing data collection systems, and under-counting unregistered schools (Lewin and Sayed 2005; Rose 2002).

Independent schools, therefore, did not account for extensive educational access. The question then is: Why did private/independent schooling *not* grow rapidly in the post-apartheid decade? Part of the explanation, the authors suggest, lies in the partial privatisation of public school funding (Fleisch and Woolman 2006; Motala 2006). Policy after 1996 required parental contributions to public school financing. The South African Schools Act (DoE 1996) gave school governing bodies (SGBs) authority to charge school fees and decentralized wide-ranging functions and powers to SGBs, such as adopting a constitution and mission statement for the school, determining the admissions policy of the school, subject to certain restrictions, and developing a budget for the school. The government reasoned that if middle-class (formerly white) public schools were prevented from raising funds to supplement state funding, the quality of public schooling would fall and middle-class learners would flee to independent schools. This exodus would deprive the public schooling system of an influential core of parents (Karlsson et al. 2001: 158). The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE 1998) allowed for parents to be exempted from paying fees if they were unable to afford them and stipulated that schools were not allowed to expel learners for non-payment. However, SGBs could take legal action against parents for outstanding fees if they considered that those parents were able to pay. Many of the former white schools were able to charge relatively high fees, which enabled them to continue offering high quality education. Arguably, this explains why there was not a flood of middle-class white learners exiting the public school system and pouring into independent schools.

Probably the best evidence for the relatively modest growth of independent schools was the availability of public schooling. In South Africa the public schooling system has fairly wide coverage. Enrolment figures for public schooling show substantial increases from approximately 10,1 million learners in 1991 to 12 million learners in 1999, representing an annual average growth rate since 1991 of 2,8% (DoE 2000: 29).

If there was excess demand in relation to public schooling, stronger growth might have been expected in independent secondary schools in those provinces with low gross enrolment rates. The opposite, however, appeared to have been the case. A review of

Gross enrolment ratio by province, 1997 and 2000

	<i>GER 1997</i>	<i>GER 2000</i>	
Province	Secondary	Secondary	% change
Eastern Cape	85	73	-12
Free State	98	91	-7
Gauteng	88	93	5
KwaZulu-Natal	92	88	-4
Mpumalanga	89	95	6
Northern Cape	63	66	3
Northern Province	105	97	-8
North West	90	83	-7
Western Cape	77	84	7
Total	90	87	-3

Source: Enrolment data from Department of Education 2002; population data from Statistics SA

provincial enrolment statistics showed that provinces with fairly high gross enrolment rates also had a greater proportion of independent schools. According to the 2000 SNAP Survey, three provinces (Gauteng, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) accounted for 78% of learner enrolment in independent secondary schools. KwaZulu-Natal had a gross enrolment rate in secondary schools of 88% in 2000, Gauteng 93% and Western Cape 84% (the national average was 87%) (DoE 2002: 6). Conversely, the Eastern Cape had the lowest proportion of independent learner enrolment, just 0,5% of the provincial total, but the province had the second lowest gross enrolment rate in secondary schools in 2000 at 73%.

Geographical distribution does impact on enrolment. According to the 1996 census, most of the 1,2 million out-of-school learners (12% of those aged between 7 and 18) were in rural areas (DoE 2000: 15). However, in the largely rural provinces with most demand for schooling, the number of independent schools was negligible. In the Northern Cape, independent provision of secondary schools made up just 0,8%, in the Northern Province 0,8% and in Mpumalanga, 1,3%.

The extent of poverty is another explanation for independent schools not burgeoning in the rural provinces with the largest numbers of out-of-school youth. A United Nations Development Programme report (2000) assessed the poverty rate at 45% – that is, some 18-20 million South Africans were living in poverty; between 25% and 30% lived in extreme poverty, with an income of less than R194 per adult per month (UNDP 2000). Since independent schools tend to rely on fees, they were unlikely to provide access to out-of-school youth, especially if poverty accounted for their exclusion from public schools.

The independent sector's character

Although its small size meant that independent schools sector did not have a significant impact on increasing access to education, the follow-up policy question is to what extent did the sector contribute to the goals of equity and quality. That is, who did it serve and how?

Market trade in education has often been blamed for creating inequalities, at worst creating islands of privilege in a sea of mass-based education. The simple premise is that private schools' reliance on user fees means that only learners whose parents are able to afford such fees can gain access, thus creating a privileged social class. Since education is viewed as a public good, it is argued that the state should ensure that everyone has equal access to educational opportunities. Sentiments against private schooling hinge on constitutional promises of free education and the primacy of the state in ensuring that education addresses issues such as poverty and equity. In terms of this argument, the public education system constitutes a critical platform on which to build and ensure effective redistribution of social opportunity in the country. The independent schools sector is considered antipathetic to this more pressing national need. As Salim Vally put it: 'Privatising schools reduces the public effort to improve schooling since it relies on the free market to increase achievement. The only realistic solution is to improve public education' (1998: 3).

Analysts critical of the growing influence of independent schools view their expansion as the state's shirking its responsibility to redress past inequalities. Katerina Nicolaou (1999) argued that the reliance on private funding diminished the state's potential to redistribute. In her words (1999: 75): 'Private provision is costly and drives greater inequality between races, gender, communities, provinces and schools. The result in the long term is an elitist educated society that will earn high salaries accompanied by low skills and poorer households. Thus the schism in society will become more prominent'. Similarly, Hassen Lorgat (2001: 4) of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union wrote:

SADTU believes that the under-resourcing of public education will lead to a racialising or entrenchment of racism since the elites will leave public schools and leave the poor, largely black and coloured and the working class communities of all races, in poorer quality government schools. Far from privatisation bringing in quality and increased services, it exacerbates the division in society and promotes social conflict.

However, there is no necessary connection between independent schools and elite institutions. Private schools can (and do) offer education to the poor (especially where philanthropic support is available). Where excess demand does exist, such as in the informal settlement of Orange Farm, independent schools may be the only option available to learners. Private schools may also open up access to marginalized immigrant learners. One of the PRISED case study inner-city schools had a large core of learners from African countries, mainly the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique and Angola. For many of these learners access was made easier because, unlike public schools, no documentation was required other than a birth certificate.

Some analysts suggested that the elite schools that dominated the landscape before 1990 have been displaced by schools that serve the lower end of the market. The HSRC study (Du Toit 2002), for example, found that 'there has also been a greater increase of schools charging fees within the lowest fee category since 1990' (Du Toit 2002: 10). The HSRC's definition of 'lowest fee category' was, however, quite high (from R0 to R6 000). The PRISED survey (in 2001) of secondary schools took the lowest fee category as schools charging below R1 000 per annum and found this segment to be negligible (4% of schools). Although the PRISED survey had a bias to top-end schools, it appeared that independent schools generally served an urban middle class. Most schools charged between R1 000 and R5 999 per annum and as many as 38% of the schools charged fees in excess of R12 000 per annum. Interestingly, 33% of schools with fees over R20 000 per annum were established (between 1991 and 2001). Although these schools made up only 15% of schools established in this time, the market for elite schools clearly grew in the 1990s.

In addition, in an effort to shake off the stereotype of independent schools as white, elitist institutions, some analysts have argued that private schooling saw fundamental change in the post-apartheid period, and increasingly reflected the broader make-up of South African society. According to Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 171): '[the independent schools sector] changed from a set of schools serving predominantly wealthy, white learners to a more diverse sector, catering for all races and socio-economic categories, with the majority of learners now being drawn from black middle- and working-class and informal-sector families'. The PRISED survey finding, however, was that the racial profile of independent schools did not appear to have changed significantly. Department of Education Statistics in 1992 show that whites made up 46% of enrolments, Africans 43%, coloureds 6% and Indians 4% (quoted in Gotkin 1993: 112). The PRISED survey revealed that white learners continued to make up the greatest proportion of enrolments (45%); African learners constituted 39%, Indian learners 7% and coloured learners 4% of overall enrolment figures. It must be noted, however, that this survey was biased towards top-end schools, so that the proportion of African learners is probably higher. According to the HSRC study, growth was found to be strongest in schools (primary and secondary) with a majority of African and coloured learners between 1990 and 1994, and in schools with a majority of white and Indian learners since 1994.

Despite some growth, then, the independent schooling sector was small by international standards and the shift in racial and socio-economic profile had not been as significant as claimed by the sector's advocates. But because the South African schooling system is highly differentiated, with a part of it that is well resourced, the debates on independent schooling and inequality has to be located in this context. The point is that there is inequality across the schooling sector, both public and independent. This relates to socio-economic status and better-resourced schools, both public and independent, are perceived to produce a better quality education. Edu-

cation outcomes continue to be vastly differentiated in independent and public schools, with the former Model C schools and fee-paying schools producing matriculation results that are in line with the best of the independent schooling sector. Independent schools are mainly reliant on fees to cover costs, but so are many public schools. As in other developing countries, public education in some schools relies heavily on private contributions, which can be as much as those charged by private institutions and may account for half or more of the total costs (Bray 1996; Colclough et al. 2003). Most former Model C schools charge fees well above what the average South African is able to afford. The problem with the argument that independent schools exacerbate inequality is that it is churned together with the argument against user fees in public schools. In so doing, it fails to take into account the practical reality that inequality is more significant within the public sector.

In addition, redistribution mechanisms in favour of poor learners are as legitimate and justified in the private sector as they are in the public. As Crouch (1998: 76) explains:

Public subsidisation (without, necessarily, public provision) is key to redistribution ... what matters ultimately is equity in the acquisition of skills, not equity in access to schooling inputs. Aside from resources, accountability for quality and sufficient control methods to make sure that schools provide good education, are key.

Furthermore, public funding of independent schools is fairly limited. Although the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE 1998, Section 56) diplomatically noted that independent schools are cost-efficient for the state, subsidies were capped at 60% of the average per learner cost in state schools, and schools that charged 2,5 times the provincial average cost per learner received no state support. In line with the state's intention to redress past inequalities and backlogs in public education, subsidies were aimed at 'serv[ing] explicit social purposes'. Subsidy allocations gave preference to independent schools that were well-managed, provided a good education, served poor communities and individuals and were not operated for profit (DoE 1998, Section 64). Other considerations were: a school's proven track record; not competing with nearby overcrowded public schools of equivalent quality; having a matric pass rate above 50% (in the case of secondary schools); having a repetition rate in Grades 11 and 12 not above 20%; and not engaging in practices that artificially increased the Grade 12 pass rate (DoE 1998: Sections 146 and 147). Such strong regulation of the sector could be seen as discouraging independent schooling.

It is necessary to reflect on where the growth within the independent sector in South Africa has taken place. Prior to the 1990s, private schools were largely denominational (predominantly Catholic schools, which accounted for approximately one-third of the sector), with a scattering of ethnic schools (German, Chinese and Japanese), Waldorf schools and schools run as private businesses (Gotkin 1993: 54). According to data collected in the PRISED survey in 2001, the increase in independent schooling shifted the ownership patterns from church to individuals and companies. Although the

biggest proportion of schools were still owned by churches (31%), a surprisingly high number of schools (25%) were owned by an individual or family. (Other categories included trusts and companies, both with 21%.) Despite this shift in ownership, the majority of schools remained denominational: up to 71% Christian, 5% Muslim, 3% Jewish and 0,5% Hindu. Notably, the number of Christian interdenominational schools had swelled (making up 53% of schools). In all, 80% of schools established in the 25 years before 2001 were religiously affiliated, suggesting that individual/family owners were motivated to set up religious schools. There also appeared to have been a growing demand for independent schools from the Afrikaans community. The 62 *Christelike Volkseie Onderwys (CVO)* schools surveyed by PRISED were all set up between 1992 and 2002 with the aim of providing excellent education to pupils from an Afrikaans background.

Another area of growth in the South African case has been the growth of schools that are high-cost and often for profit, which strive to provide an education oriented to international labour markets. In the South African case, however, despite the economic liberalisation that has occurred, these for-profit schools have not been encouraged by the government and according to the PRISED survey constituted just 3,5% of independent schools in 2001. However, they have entered the market place and provide educational services.

The South African case, then, supports the proposition that even if the state provides sufficient places in public schools, there continue to be demands generated by the preferences of specific groups.

Quality and skills for development

While high-cost independent schooling is often equated with high quality, in the developing world context if private schools are to advocate for a share of government resources, they would need to show that they can offer quality education cost-effectively. South Africa's poor showing in international benchmark tests (such as TIMSS and SACMEQ) may tempt parents into low-cost independent schools, but if their performance is less than mediocre the state would have little reason to divert public money into propping them up. This does leave independent schools in a catch-22 situation – having to prove that they can offer quality education cost-effectively in order to acquire state funds, which may help them to do just that.

It has been argued that where schools have to compete for learners – and do so within tight budget frames – cost efficiencies can be made without compromising quality. Hofmeyr et al. (2001: 10) note: 'Independent schools are perceived to have a strong value base, a productive work ethic and smaller classes. In addition, they tend to have a more stable corps of teachers who are less affected by policy changes in the public sector and are generally not members of militant teacher unions.' But this perception may only hold for high-cost independent schools. The low-cost independent schools in

Orange Farm informal settlement, studied as part of PRISED, tended to downplay or hide their non-governmental status from parents because of the association between private schools and 'fly-by-night', low-quality institutions.

It is difficult to calculate the cost of quality. Independent schools often have diverse funding, philanthropic donations and a lack of transparent accountancy (Lewin and Sayed 2005: 31). Learner-to-educator ratios hint at the quality of education that independent schools offer, since generally the lower the learner-to-educator ratio, the more individual contact an educator can provide for each learner. The average national learner-to-educator ratio at independent schools in 2000 was 17:1, almost half the ratio for ordinary public schools (DoE 2002: 5). The report on the School Register of Needs 2000 Survey indicates that learner-educator ratios in independent schools (both primary and secondary) dropped from 25:1 in 1996 to 15:1 in 2000 (DoE 2000: 27). These learner-teacher ratios compare favourably with the national ratio in 2000 of 38:1. Small classes are, however, often correlated with high fees, since these contributions are used to pay additional educators. In addition, as the PRISED case studies found, independent schools were rarely able to match educator salaries in public schools, with one school claiming that teachers worked on a 'salary sacrifice'.

Matriculation examination results act as an important indicator of the performance of the South African education system. Unfortunately, the DoE does not break down results by public and independent schools, but a count from newspaper reports of schools with the best academic results in 2001 showed that 27 of the 60 schools were independent (45%). Socio-economic advantage is clearly an explanatory factor, since the average fees at these 27 schools was R17 040.

While private schools were clearly achieving at this upper end, a substantial number were under-achieving. One fifth of Gauteng Department of Education-subsidized schools had their subsidies cut in 2002 for performing below 50% in the 2001 matriculation exams. A PRISED finding was that, nationally, independent schools made up 20% of all schools with a pass rate of less than 20%.

While the results of the matriculation examinations are often used by the public as a measure of a school's performance, a better assessment of quality would be the extent to which independent schools are able to prepare learners for higher education or for the world of work. The PRISED case studies revealed that there was generally little innovation to push the educational boundaries beyond the national core curriculum. In fact, most of the case study schools had had to catch up with government's OBE programme and there was very little initiative to improve teaching practices. The principal of a Christian school gave a candid assessment of quality in his school: 'I am very hesitant to say independent schools offer anything more than public schools – we have the same teacher training, use the same teaching techniques and the same textbooks as [the neighbouring ex-Model C school].' There were exceptions, but these tended to depend on the availability of finances, either from fees or funded projects.

The elite schools, for example, made extensive use of computer technology, which made a substantial difference to the learning opportunities they could provide.

A definition of quality education in South Africa also has bound into it a notion of the purpose of education – and specifically whether graduates of the schooling system can function effectively as citizens. The former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, used ‘nation-building’ as the basis for introducing a single national examination for all Grade 12 learners. This effectively made examinations conducted by private examining bodies (such as the Independent Examinations Board) redundant. As Asmal (2001) put it:

The Department of Education’s ability to monitor and exert influence on the promotion of values and approach in question papers by private examination bodies is limited ... Our aim is not to outlaw other matriculation examinations ... but rather to ensure that we have a single examination that is suitable for our nation-building process and which conforms with our curriculum.

The notion that schools should endorse a common national identity mitigates against the contention (by advocates of private schooling) that parents should have the ‘right to choose’ schools on moral, cultural or religious preference. As Henning noted (1993: 13), ‘The strength of private schooling is that it rests upon such values, attitudes and beliefs that groups of people have in common’. There is little empirical evidence to suggest that independent schools are in tension with the aims of nation-building. This may be the result of state policy, which is careful to keep independent schools in line with broader transformation imperatives. Along with the conditions set by the Constitution that guard against inferior quality education and racism in independent schools, the South African Schools Act (DoE 1996) also prescribed that these schools had to follow national curriculum guidelines. Therefore, although the term ‘independent schooling’ suggests that these schools have a large degree of autonomy from government interventions, the degree of freedom that independent schools have is constrained. The overall nature of South African policy is such that it treads a fine line between providing choice and at the same time ensuring national values are promoted.

Conclusion

In sum, then, the PRISED study found that the differences in equity and quality between independent schools and public schools should not be exaggerated. Where independent schools had been able to achieve better results, this was because they were able to muster resources that only a few can afford. This situation also pertains in some public schools. The former Model C schools continue to capitalize on the resources they accumulated under apartheid and their ability to charge relatively high fees. One of the greatest differences in post-apartheid education in terms of quality is therefore not between private and public, but between well-resourced schools and those less advantaged (Crouch 1998: 76).

The South African case is interesting because in some respects it mirrors the experiences of other developing countries, though it also differs. It shares the common problem of consistent and reliable information to define the sector. Recent expansion also appears to have been by default rather than by design. Rose (2002) described a three-tier pyramid that has evolved in developing countries: first, there is a base of low-quality private schools that are increasingly prevalent to fill the gaps created by excess demand; second, there are well-funded non-government institutions and government schools; and third, at the highest level of performance, high-cost non-government schools compete with a core of selected government schools known to have high standards.

The main difference between South Africa and other countries such as Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia is that there are sufficient places at secondary school level. Where South Africa shares some similarities is that the growth has come from parents and students dissatisfied with government schooling. Distinct preferences have also emerged for faith-based schooling. South Africa has also moved rapidly towards modernising its labour market, which has increasingly required secondary and higher-level qualifications. Other Southern African countries are moving towards this. Perhaps the most striking feature differentiating South Africa from other countries in the region, e.g. Malawi, is that policy in some countries anticipates that non-state providers will contribute directly to achieving high participation rates. In South Africa this facilitation has been 'permissive and on the margin' (Lewin and Sayed 2005) rather than a feature of mainstream policy on access.

South Africa appears to be moving in the three-tier direction, with differentiated demand accounting for the growth in the middle level. In terms of equity, it is evident that despite claims by Du Toit (2002, 2004), Hofmeyr & Lee (2004) and Hofmeyr et al. (2001) that developments in South Africa are beneficial to the poor, the sector is far too small to have any real impact. It is clear that these pro-poor approaches will not succeed without being subsidized. The question of school choice evident in developed countries, with voucher systems and other incentives for public schools, is less likely to be successful in developing countries such as South Africa. Choice is often constrained by cost and location, and the payment of fees for non-government schools is likely to be an option of last resort rather than choice.

Levels of poverty and inequality in developing countries, including South Africa, suggest that household incomes are inadequate to support the costs of private schools. What needs to be reviewed is the fact that secondary schooling has a greater potential for private contributions in the public sector, which may encourage others to move out of the sector – particularly as the further education and training phase develops. Cost subsidies to non-government providers in the South African context will always be contentious in the context of scarce resources. However, if private providers are able to provide an equivalent service at similar fee levels, then this option is likely to be considered.

Lewin and Sayed (2005: 136) usefully differentiate between the facilitating and regulating role of the state. Policy regarding independent schooling has so far tried to mediate between the arguments for and against the expansion of private education by allowing for the establishment of non-government educational institutions while at the same time attaching conditions to their operation. Policy on independent schooling in South Africa is more regulative than facilitative, in that the policy incentives are nominal. The South African policy framework on independent schooling has established a highly developed system for registering, regulating and subsidising non-government education provision. Current government policy appears to discourage the rapid growth of the sector. Independent schools are provided for in policy on reasons of principle – they offer citizens the freedom to practise the education of their choice and thereby allow for diversity of schooling. Independent schools are stringently monitored to ensure that they deliver quality education and that they do not discriminate on the basis of race. Other requirements for the registration of private schools include a commitment to following the national curriculum, ensuring that buildings and resources are adequate for teaching and learning, ensuring that the school will exist for a year, and compliance with the Employment Equity Act if their staff complement exceeds 50. The subsidy to private schools is also weighted in relation to equity criteria, the fee level of the schools and their matriculation pass rate.

Importantly, then, policy on independent schools steers the sector to meet broader social development imperatives. Crucially, state subsidies are directed at schools that serve poorer communities and conform to national curriculum guidelines. Whilst the current regulatory framework is consistent with the overall development trajectory of the country, future challenges in secondary schooling may require greater policy dialogue and more flexible and responsive solutions. New challenges include high rates of urban migration, cross-border immigration, the demographic, social and economic impact of HIV/Aids, and changes in the labour market. Many independent schools may be well placed to adapt to these changes. It is less clear whether low-cost independent providers will have a role and what it might be. Nor is it clear to what extent real partnerships between the public and private sectors can contribute. These are issues that need careful consideration and active policy dialogue.

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Human Resources Development Review 2008: Education, Employment and Skills in South Africa

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Reviewed by George Makubalo

The *Human Resources Development Review 2008* edited by Andre Kraak and Karen Press is a collection of monumental proportions on the subject of human resources development in South Africa. The *Review* is produced by the Research Programme on Education, Science and Skills Development (ESSD) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). This is a very important collection at a time in South Africa when there is constant critical debate about the availability of high-level skills, intermediate-level skills and lower-level skills to drive the expanding economy. Though primarily focused on South Africa, the issues the *Review* deals with are not limited to South Africa and the book will no doubt be an invaluable resource for researchers, academics, policy-makers, journalists, business, NGOs and students in South Africa and further afield.

The book is divided into five sections and has 25 chapters on various aspects of human resources development from the supply side to the demand side.

Perhaps the greatest significance of the *Human Resources Development Review 2008* (henceforth *HRD Review 2008*) lies in its outlook on South Africa's human resources development (HRD). The book in its extensive coverage of the subject successfully presents the complexity of any HRD endeavour by presenting it as an interdependent cross-sectoral enterprise. It also avoids many quick-fix remedies such as imagining elementary education as a panacea for poverty and unemployment. However, a common strand that runs through various chapters is the dearth of data in the various components of HRD identified in the review, such as detailed information on provisioning and delivery of education at levels from early childhood development to higher education.

Section one (chapters 1–7) presents the South African socio-economic context that sets the scene for the discussions on HRD that follow. It provides among others an overview of the South African economy and economic policies, employment shifts, the informal economy and the science and technology policy. Among the strengths of the *HRD Review 2008* lies its incisive evidence-driven analysis of South Africa's HRD landscape. Haroon Borhat and Morné Oosthuizen's contribution in chapter 3 is a fascinating and informative piece of scholarship on the subject of employment shifts

and the 'jobless growth' thesis in South Africa. In this chapter Borat and Oosthuizen contend that the jobless growth depiction of the South African economy has no empirical basis.

Section two (chapters 8–15) of the *HRD Review 2008* focuses on the supply side of human resource development, with a specific focus on education and training. This section, which includes chapters on public expenditure on education, early childhood development (ECD), adult basic education and training (ABET) and higher education (HE), is interesting not only for the comprehensive review of education and training but also for including chapters on ECD and ABET that would otherwise not appear in many conceptualizations of HRD.

The chapter by Jennifer Shindler (chapter 11), which looks at public schooling, reveals some of the concerns mentioned above relating to the quality of data and extrapolations that can be made from that data. In discussing learning achievement, the writer uses data emanating from a number of international assessments in which South Africa participated, such as TIMSS 2003 and SACMEQ II. While it is laudable to find other ways of measuring learning achievement in school apart from the Senior Certificate Examination (SCE), it is doubtful whether these international assessments could successfully measure achievement within the South African context. What seems to be very revealing in the results presented is how poorly South Africa performed rather than the level of achievement. The writer herself concedes that as a result of a high sampling error in the case of South Africa in relation to these international assessments caution is needed when the results are interpreted.

The absence of ample data on HRD presents an opportunity for researchers to conduct the research necessary in developing a comprehensive response to the HRD challenge South Africa faces. However, one should not underestimate why these gaps exist in the first place. It must be recognized that the research gap has a lot to do with the availability of resources to conduct research. Further, it is also clear that without a comprehensive research agenda in various sectors of HRD gaps in information will continue. There is need, therefore, to encourage a culture of research in various sectors impacting on the country's HRD, from government, institutions of higher learning and NGOs to business and industry. While it is true that not every sector has as explicit a research agenda as universities, there is nonetheless a need to emphasize the importance of the archive for any institution; not only does it enhance management through the availability of accurate and reliable information for planning and evaluation purposes, but an archive may also support future researchers in their research.

Section three (chapters 16–21) focuses on 'high skills and the professions', discussing issues of supply and demand in relation to the much sought-after 'high skills'. The chapter by Lorentzen and Wildschut, which considers high-skill requirements in advanced manufacturing, argues for a more nuanced and rigorous study of the South

African skills landscape. This analysis argues that while a shortage of skills may be manifest in future as a result of growth in certain sectors, there is no evidence that South Africa currently has a high-level skills crisis (also see Anna McCord's similar argument in chapter 25). Lorentzen and Wildschut report after reviewing reports that focus on the supply and demand of skills that some extrapolations of skills shortages lack 'analytical and quantitative depth' (page 358) and that not enough differentiation is made between low, medium and high-level skills. On the other hand, the authors observe, in reporting categories of skills there is a lumping together of qualifications at different levels to mean high-level skills when a degree of specificity such as master's and doctoral qualifications could most appropriately denote high-level skills, as their chapter does.

The chapter on the financial services profession by Elize van Zyl (Chapter 17) points out how among other factors economic growth has contributed to the demand for financial services professionals. This chapter, like other chapters on high-level skills such as veterinary skills (Chapter 18), reveals how black people continue to be under-represented in the high-skill professions 14 years after the end of apartheid and its accompanying racist policies. Also significant in the chapter on the financial services profession is what the authors call the 'hidden demand'. This is an interesting aspect when thinking of skill shortages in certain professions, as it points to those professionals who have been drawn into other fields of work adjacent to their professions. It would be revealing to investigate how many accountants or engineers are not performing core functions of their specializations because they have been appointed to managerial positions.

After a focus on 'high skills', section four (chapters 22–24) discusses what is referred to as 'intermediate skills and the middle occupations'. Andre Kraak's contribution (chapter 22) on pathways to intermediate skilling is an important chapter in the book, with such theoretical depth and analysis of the problem of unemployment rare in scholarship on skills and employment in South Africa. Kraak argues that the current skilling pathways to intermediate artisan professions in South Africa are out of sync with present employment realities.

Crucial in Kraak's chapter firstly is recognition of the importance of skilled labour at the intermediate level. Frequently discussions of skills shortages tend to focus on the so-called high skills and the tendency is to minimize the significance of other levels of skilling. Secondly, Kraak's chapter in this collection is satisfying in its theoretically sound engagement with what is evidently a very complex subject. Drawing on labour market theory, Kraak discusses notions of 'internal' and 'external' labour markets that are used to explain the structured and unstructured pathways toward employment in intermediate professions. Kraak's contribution is also important for its recognition of the racialized character of the South African education, training and employment landscape, a fact that many commentators shy away from.

Section five pays particular attention to entry-level skills and is composed solely of Anna McCord's chapter (chapter 25) on training within the South African national public works programme. She explores the effectiveness of government's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), which seeks to reduce poverty and unemployment among the low-skilled and unskilled sections of society. McCord's analysis finds limited success in the much-heralded EPWP in improving the labour market performance of low-skilled and unskilled people who have gone through the programme.

One observation that can be made about the *HRD Review 2008* relates to the use of acronyms and tables and graphs, which do not make easy reading for non-specialist readers. Most chapters are laden with acronyms that are too numerous for readers who do not work in the area to remember. Constant reference to the acronyms and abbreviations page does not make the reading effortless. A further issue concerning ease of reading relates to tables and figures that always seem to come up a page or so ahead of one's reading. At certain stages in the reading one also gets the feeling that some tables and figures could have been omitted without losing much detail. However, perhaps the urge to use a quantitative analysis, which may have been the brief to the contributors, necessitated the inclusion of these products of a quantitative analysis.

Notwithstanding the issues highlighted in this review, such as the paucity of data in many areas covered in the review, the *HRD Review 2008* is a document of great ambition and reach, and undoubtedly provides a sophisticated understanding of the HRD landscape in South Africa. Perhaps the greatest contribution of this review apart from being an invaluable resource to policy-makers is its potential to stimulate research in many of the areas identified. The collection clearly shows that there are many 'gaps' that research could fill in improving the overall statistical base of a comprehensive HRD that may better inform policy development and implementation.

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Southern African Review of Education (SARE)

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

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Contributions should be submitted electronically, double spaced and with a wide margin on all four sides. All pages should be numbered. Authors should not use programs like EndNotes to generate lists of references automatically, as these do not transfer for typesetting purposes.

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NOTES

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

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