

# DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

PAPERS PRESENTED AT A CONFERENCE  
OF THE EDUCATION POLICY CONSORTIUM

MARCH 2007

EDITORS:

CLIFF MALCOLM • ENVER MOTALA • SHIREEN MOTALA •  
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# FOREWORD

SHIREEN MOTALA

This book presents some of the findings of the Education Policy Consortium's (EPC's) five-year Research Programme on Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education in South Africa. The project was funded by the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), to whom we are extremely grateful. The confidence they have shown in the ability of the EPC to contribute to policy-making and research must be acknowledged. Present at the EPC's March 2007 conference at which these findings were first presented were Ms Kerstin Rosencrantz of SIDA, Dr Wim Hoppers, formerly of RNE and an important initiator of this research programme, and Dr Cornelius Hacking of RNE with whom we continue to have a sound and positive relationship. The research was undertaken by a consortium consisting of the Education Policy Units (EPUs) at the universities of Fort Hare, the Witwatersrand, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD).

In order to understand why such a research programme was established towards the end of 2001, it is important to consider the history of the EPUs and the EPC. Many of the EPUs were set up with the specific aim of providing policy support to the Mass Democratic Movement in the late 1980s and to the newly-elected first democratic government in 1994. Consortium partners have always had a distinct and hybrid identity, marrying social relevance and academic excellence and undertaking policy analysis in order to understand how equity, redress, access and democratization of education were taking place in post-apartheid South Africa. The initiatives to start the EPUs were taken by important leaders in the education sector such as Professor Harold Wolpe, Dr Blade Nzimande, Mr Eric Molobi, Dr Ihron Rensburg, Professor Joe Muller, Mr John Samuel and Mr Enver Motala, among others.

However, it became quite apparent in the late 1990s that shifts were taking place in the enfolding

education scenario, making it necessary for the EPUs and the CEPD to re-assess their role. Some of these shifts included changes in bilateral funding, the movement of some senior leaders in our networks into government, and a growing sense that an opportunity existed for a form of social policy research which was critical, independent and scholarly. There was a need to break the dependence on short-term contract work and to use our skills to contribute to new ideas about policy and implementation. In a developing country context it was necessary also to counter-balance the 'one-world' template which was emerging from powerful international development agencies in defining priorities and research agendas. In addition, a particular challenge was laid down for policy researchers by the then-Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, who wanted better explanations for the 'rampant inequality' that continued to characterize the South African education system.

Against this backdrop, and spearheaded by a long and established relationship with Dutch and Swedish donors, we began to discuss the possibilities of a self-initiated research programme. The agenda was clear: on the one hand, it would contribute to our sustainability, but on the other hand, and more importantly, it would allow us to undertake more in-depth research, make a better contribution to scholarly work, explore a range of methodologies, provide opportunities for tertiary studies and capacity-building and produce multi-disciplinary knowledge through the process of integrating various areas of knowledge into the production of research and scholarship. I must add that the debate on what constitutes intellectual work and scholarship has been the subject of continuous and detailed exploration, both within the EPC and in our various institutional settings, and one of the chapters in this volume deals with these issues in great detail.

What we have, five years later, is a rich and expansive research programme which has dealt with a variety of research areas, including governance and equity, the

right to basic education in South Africa, the effect of social violence on schooling, the relationships between schools and communities, issues of science literacy in poor communities, the nature of the state as a facilitator or constrainer of delivery, the deracialization of academic staff in higher education institutions and the voting patterns of higher education students.

Some forty researchers at various levels participated in this research, and the methodologies ranged from grand surveys of twenty universities across the country to in-depth ethnographic work in a single rural community, and from case studies of governance and equity in several provinces to a large-scale quantitative analysis of finance equity in South African schools. Ongoing peer review of the research took place as the research projects unfolded both within the EPC and through subjecting the research papers coming out of the projects to external review. A Project Oversight Committee (POC) consisting of senior academics provided extensive and rigorous feedback on the initial research proposals.

Detailed conceptual work was also undertaken. One of the most important contributions of this programme has been its commitment to capacity-

building, in terms of research training but also by providing the opportunity for tertiary study. It has also put forward a different model of research where the researched are also active participants in the research process. It has allowed us to build strong collaborative networks across our research entities and regions. It has spoken to policy makers and, at various times, has had a direct influence on the unfolding of education policy.

In conclusion I would like to make special mention of Charlton Koen, a particularly talented researcher and creative intellectual from the EPU at the University of the Western Cape, who led the research project on Student Representative Councils and voting patterns. Charlton, with his incisive mind and quiet but forceful presence, and who many of us got to know very well, passed away in 2004 while we were finalizing the research. I also wish to thank Professor Cliff Malcolm, formerly at the Centre for Education Research, Evaluation and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal but now in Australia, for his significant contribution and strong intellectual leadership and guidance, both in the EPC and in his science education research project.

# INTRODUCTION

ENVER MOTALA

## **Background to the research programme**

Towards the end of 2001, after a vigorous process of discussion and clarification, the Royal Netherlands Embassy and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency agreed to fund a self-initiated long-term research programme to be conducted by the Education Policy Consortium (EPC), a consortium made up of several research entities, viz. the Centre for Education Policy Development, the Education Policy Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand, the Education Policy Unit at the University of Fort Hare, the Centre for Education Research, Evaluation and Policy at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of the Western Cape.

The programme adopted the formal title of The Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education in South Africa Research Programme, and was set out comprehensively in the EPC document entitled Framework for Long-Term Critical Research and Scholarship. Without the support and encouragement of the donors, this project would not have materialized, since it required their agreement to provide sustained long-term support and the expenditure of not inconsiderable resources. It was clearly understood by all concerned that there was a need to strengthen the EPC's ability to conduct a greater proportion of independent and critical research, relative to commissioned work, and to strengthen the quality of its advice to, and engagement with, government and civil society more generally.

Much of the EPC's research conducted after 1994 was in the nature of providing technical support to the national and provincial Departments of Education on issues of policy development and implementation. As a consequence, the work done increasingly shifted towards contract research which, though important, left little time and space for independent, critical research, and had the potential to compromise the ability to contribute new knowledge, critique and scholarly engagement with issues affecting education.

The EPC regarded the almost exclusive focus on user-driven, client-oriented consultancy work as limiting, despite its great value in providing access to information from policy decision-makers and facilitating ongoing discussions with them. Such client-oriented work is less rigorous than scholarly critique, has an immediate short-term nature and is likely to increase the relationship of dependency with the client or user.

The rationale for this programme, therefore, was that scholarly research was important both for the country and more widely, especially since there was a role for the EPC in researching and analysing the difficult and complex issues which face developing nations. It was also felt that the EPC could usefully contribute knowledge as a counter-balance to the 'one-world' template which has been foisted on regions of the world by the authoritative influence of powerful international development agencies over the research agendas and policy priorities of developing nations.

Moreover, scholarly social research was essential to South Africa because it was valuable in its own right. It implied the need to keep abreast of the critical literature, to augment the body of knowledge in specific areas, to develop collaborative networks and produce publications (also for refereed journals), to present and disseminate papers and to engage in debate and discussion about issues of social importance. It required grounding research on a stronger theorization of issues and the devotion of greater attention, time and resources than generally required for client-driven consultancy work. In fact, such research could not be sublimated to the interests of consultancy work because it was essential to strengthen the skills and knowledge of researchers, to think through and further develop research methods, to produce and disseminate high quality research and to make a real contribution to the production of knowledge internationally. It was necessary to provide quantitative and qualitative depth to the nature of both the questions asked and the answers sought,

and to regard quantitative and qualitative analysis as complementary tools of enquiry so that the best analytical outcomes for scholarship are achieved.

In motivating for this research the EPC was aware of the power of research agencies whose orientation to policy analysis is based primarily on their ability to provide 'quick and easy answers' to what are complex problems. Such research is often based on theoretical and ideological assumptions which are unclear and unfounded. Critical social enquiry, on the other hand, required a combination of necessary empirical research, qualitative enquiry, theoretical and conceptual skills, rigorous analysis and critique – all of which imply the use of more and higher quality resources and time. More broadly, the Consortium felt that it had a responsibility to contribute to policy debates by inserting critique and theorization into the discourse of public policy and by adopting a perspective of engaged scholarship. Its thematic focus – the relationship between education, human rights, democracy and social justice – was regarded as an area of great research interest which could, moreover, have serious implications for policy and planning.

### **Programme objectives**

Following this orientation, the objectives of the research programme were to:

- enhance research collaboration within the EPC itself and with its partners;
- provide a critique of social policies nationally and in comparative situations which could stand on its own internationally;
- develop the capacity for such research and scholarship amongst the EPC's members and its partners;
- encourage policy dialogue and influence policy-makers;
- produce multidisciplinary knowledge through the process of integrating various areas of knowledge;
- investigate and use different research methodologies, such as critical and participatory methodologies appropriate to the South African context; and
- publish the products of research in various forms.

### **Research collaboration**

Every project undertaken in the programme has given rise to very important research collaborations amongst the various units in the EPC. Substantial collaborations also took place with other researchers,

educational communities and social movements engaged in educational issues. The collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Foundation and the Human Sciences Research Council in the project relating to rural schooling is a matter of record, and constituted one of the most significant collaborations for the study of rural education seen in the country thus far.<sup>1</sup> The programme was also the precursor to collaborations now underway between the EPC's researchers and researchers in Sweden, and has resulted in the production of a range of papers as well as two research conferences which have given rise to two books.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, collaboration also took place with education NGOs, the National School Governing Body Association, student organizations and trade unions such as the South African Democratic Teachers Union. In addition, there have been engagements with activists and intellectuals in community organizations, with parastatals such as the Human Rights Commission, with the national and some of the provincial Education Portfolio Committees and on many occasions with the Ministry and Department of Education.

Each project report provides a detailed description of the nature and type of the community-based collaborations, and these evince considerable variety and initiative. For example, in the case of the project on Science and Mathematics literacy, the researchers and the community worked closely with an AIDS NGO, Woza Moya, and with a farming NGO, the Heifer Foundation. Woza Moya was already established in the area, while the Heifer Foundation was introduced as a particular initiative of the EPC's project. The Ndwedwe project collaborated with the Department of Agriculture and the Ndwedwe Local Development Committee, via the School Governing Body. In the Cape Flats the project began with a community-outreach team from the University of the Western Cape (the focus of which was careers education), and a variety of government and private businesses participated in the teaching.

### **Research methodologies and capacity development**

A range of research strategies and a variety of modes of research have been developed and used in the programme, from more qualitative literature reviews, multi-disciplinary discourse and document analysis and desk-top studies, through constructivist community participatory research, interviews, case

studies and observations, to more quantitative statistical data analyses and surveys. Complex methodologies seeking to ensure community involvement throughout all stages of the research were used in several projects. Communities participated in framing and conceptualizing research, assisted in mapping out key issues to be investigated, discussed and assessed strategies employed and suggesting ways of improving the nature of the research and its outcomes. Lengthy workshops with communities of people with varying experiences and expectations required considerable management skills to ensure that the range of interests were properly facilitated and mediated, and that competing voices were given space to express themselves without compromising the aims of the research.

Central to the EPC's mission and operational plans was the idea of developing the capacity of young, especially black and female, researchers in the field of education policy, and simultaneously ensuring that outputs were scholarly and meaningful. A range of strategies was used, such as:

- formalized mentoring arrangements with established researchers;
- the recruitment of research interns;
- the use of experienced international researchers;
- the development of research networks with other research agencies;
- collaboration in research; and
- enrolment in structured courses on research and research development and post-graduate study.

### **The research projects**

The eight research projects conducted under the EPC's Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education programme are:

1. Investigating Governance and Equity in the South African Schools Act at School Level within the Context of Democracy, Social Justice, and Human Rights.
2. The Effects of Social Violence on Schooling in South Africa.
3. The Right to Basic Education in South Africa.
4. The Deracialization of Academia in South Africa.
5. The Community Education Forum Project.
6. Human Rights, Democracy, and Social Justice: Science and Mathematics Literacy in Disadvantaged Communities.

7. Audit of Student Representative Council Elections at 21 Universities and Technikons in South Africa from 2002 to 2004.

8. Education and the Analysis of the South African State.

Each chapter in this volume represents one of the eight research projects.<sup>3</sup> They attempt to provide both an overarching perspective on the project and extract some of the critical issues emanating from the research.

In the opening chapter, Veerle Dieltiens, with Tsakani Chaka and Sandile Mbokazi, describe the findings from six case studies where school governance practices were investigated. School Governing Bodies (SGBs), as representative forms of democratic governance at school level, are intended to provide a forum for parents to have a voice in the decisions, mission and vision of schools. Assessing whether the six SGBs lived up to rudimentary democratic criteria, the chapter argues that although they all followed the required procedures for their functioning, this tended to advantage parents who were already well known or had some status in the school community. Moreover, although principals continue to 'hold rank' over parents, SGBs represent an important and meaningful forum for school management teams to account for decisions made. The chapter also examines the impact of SGBs on school practice, particularly their effects on the school ethos. The findings show that parents take decisions based on historical precedent, traditional norms and economic rationality, but that they may also be influenced to follow constitutionally agreed upon principles.

Shireen Motala's chapter explicates the patterns and typography of inequality in post-apartheid South Africa, with particular reference to the construct of equity. It examines the application of equity in the context of public schooling through a disaggregated school-level analysis of a key equity indicator, per capita expenditure. Motala quantifies inequity and progress towards equality, and establishes a broader set of variables and correlates by which to understand school finance equity. The significance of the chapter lies in its contribution to the quantification of finance equity and inequity through a better understanding of finance input data. It goes beyond race-based analysis to evaluate system inputs, and provides new and unique understandings of the role of private inputs into public education.

Michael Gardiner's piece explores an 'unclarified intuitive sense that many South African communities have a need to appropriate, assimilate and incorporate into themselves those institutions which, formerly, had been agencies of misery and oppression'. His analysis is situated in the relationship between schools and communities and traces the impact of Community Education Fora on the communities in which they were located. Drawing attention to the theoretical and methodological premises of the CEF project and its effects on, inter alia, the roles of the EPC researchers, he argues that such fora are important and necessary now because schools need to be embraced by and embedded into communities before they can become trustworthy and reliable institutions of the people. These insights into the need for and role of community education fora apply also to other areas of South African social and political life.

Moyra Keane's chapter speaks to a project whose aim was to define and implement a relevant science curriculum that would contribute to well-being in the community; and to do this through a methodology that would itself also contribute to community life. The original research questions – What is relevant science education for this community; and how do community voice and interests shape research? – proved to be of limited relevance to community priorities, which led to a refocusing of the questions along lines suggested by the community itself, namely: how can we lead a better life; and how can we preserve our culture? This interrogation of what was relevant to the community led to the recognition of the importance not only of seeking the 'right' questions for research but also of the inadequacy of the current school science curriculum. Arguing that conventional research paradigms based largely on developments in Western science have little resonance in contexts such as that of rural KwaZulu-Natal, the chapter advocates the direct involvement of researchers, students, teachers, parents, farmers, traditional leaders, education officials and NGOs in the development of a community-based science curriculum. In turn this raises a host of questions about issues such as health care, employment, traditional values, ubuntu, understandings of appropriate science and practical skills development.

For Paul Kgobe and Sandile Mbokazi, violence in the schooling system undermines the constitutional right to education in South Africa. Incidents of bullying, rape, assault, vandalism, gang fights, sexual harassment and other forms of violence persist

in schools despite the existence of programmes and policies intended to prevent or reduce them, particularly those policy initiatives that encourage the establishment of frameworks for partnerships between schools and communities. Their chapter examines the impact of these partnerships on mitigating the effects of violence in schools in South Africa, and suggests that the undoubted benefits of partnerships are often outweighed by local school and community politics. Schools across Kgobe's and Mbokazi's study, it is argued, remain sites of intolerance, discrimination and violence.

Salim Vally's and Samiera Zafar's study critically appraises the broader South African socio-economic and development context and its bearing on the normative and regulatory framework of the right to education beyond policy and legislation. It calls for an evaluation of broader questions of development, democracy and the political economy of rights in post-apartheid South Africa, and the problematization of the role, purpose and content of basic education. Examining school data which shows the persistence of inequalities in education and the violation of basic educational rights, Vally and Zafar argue against the limitations of rights framed only as legal phenomena for effecting redress and equity and also reject an instrumentalist conception of the relationship between education and the economy. They show the importance of understanding the relationship between the structure of the education and training system and the role and possibilities for agency in advancing education rights, reflect on the role of research and researchers in this endeavour, and discuss the use of participatory research methodologies intended to draw on the voices and perspectives of school-community representatives.

John Pampallis and Enver Motala consider the question of the state and its implications for an analysis of social policy in the development of post-apartheid South Africa. Their approach is intended to provide insights into how the relationship between education and other social policies is influenced by the state in the context of the contestations and contradictory impulses which impact on its policies and strategies. They argue that an understanding of the state ought to be central to any attempt at policy analysis and that, in fact, some such understanding of the state, its motivations and the interests it represents is inherent in almost any analysis of policy, whether explicit or not. After all, policy is about politics, that

is, it is a political instrument, and the state is the main arena in or about which political activity takes place. Pampallis and Motala suggest that social justice, freedom and equality will remain unattainable without a political will, and a capacity, to engage in meaningful dialogue, analysis and strategic thinking around the formulation of effective and legitimate social policies.

The chapter by Beverley Thaver examines the complex processes of institutional change amongst universities in South Africa. Arguing against universities' 'abstraction from society', she seeks to locate them properly as institutions in and of society. Her analysis is based on the argument that the apartheid state's modernizing and racially-based narrative is 'organically embedded in institutions', which consequently bear the imprint of a liberal modernizing (though racialized) project. The daily practices that mark the working lives of academics also bear the impact of this. Thaver argues that as the new state's reform process gets underway, much pressure is being brought to bear on this modernizing project, more especially so as institutions are required to open their doors to a cohort of new entrants to the profession. The chapter pays close attention to the dynamics that ensue in the implementation of a specific reform, namely, Employment Equity, at the micro-level, and attempts to understand the implications of these practices for the strengthening of the democratic process.

In the final chapter, 'Engaged Social Policy Research: Some Reflections on the Nature of its Scholarship', Enver Motala reflects on the research programme as a whole and particularly on policy-relevant applied research and the nature of its scholarly enterprise in developing societies. His chapter questions conventional approaches to scholarship and argues the case for a broader range of intellectual commitments associated with the activities of critical social policy analysis. According to Motala, we are 'enjoined by the very nature of our craft to reflect on the social value and uses of knowledge, on the responsibilities of public bodies and intellectuals, and on the relationship between knowledge, power and the dominance of ideological positions in and through research', and all

these issues, and more, are taken up in greater detail by the chapters that follow.

Issues of democracy, human rights and social justice continue to be of importance in the evolution of educational systems in South Africa and other countries because they represent the aspiration to achieve what has not been achieved for the great majority of people in the world. Research conducted in these areas will continue to present theoretical and practical challenges to researchers, policy makers and activists concerned with issues that arise from the relationship between education and development more generally. Its relevance extends beyond the disciplinary boundaries of educational research since many of the issues that arise from this relationship are of importance to the social sciences and indeed to the body of scientific knowledge more generally.

1. See Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005).
2. The first of these books has already been published: Catherine Odora Hoppers, Bernt Gustavsson, Enver Motala and John Pampallis (eds) *Democracy and Human Rights in Education and Society: Explorations from South Africa and Sweden* (Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2007). The second book is scheduled for publication in 2008, with the provisional title of *Dilemmas of Implementing Education Reforms: Explorations from South Africa and Sweden*, edited by Catherine Odora Hoppers, U. Lundgren, John Pampallis, Enver Motala and E. Nihlfors.
3. Chapter One below consists of Enver Motala's keynote address to the EPC conference on Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education (7-8 March 2007, Rosebank Hotel, Johannesburg), which first presented the findings of the individual projects. The first research project is represented by two chapters in this volume, namely, Veerle Dieltiens' 'Changing School Practice: The Role of Democratic School Governance', and Shireen Motala's 'Finance Equity Reforms in Public Schooling: A Gauteng Case Study'. The seventh research project above, 'Audit of Student Representative Council Elections at 21 Universities and Technikons in South Africa from 2002 to 2004', was led by the late Charlton Koen of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of the Western Cape. The findings of this project, not included in the present volume, have been published in Charlton Koen, Mlungisi Cele and Arial Libhaber, 'Student Activism and Student Exclusions in South Africa', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26, 4, 2006.



# CHANGING SCHOOL PRACTICE: THE ROLE OF DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

VEERLE DIELTIENS, WITH TSAKANI CHAKA AND SANDILE MBOKAZI

## **Introduction**

The South African Schools Act (SASA)<sup>1</sup> set about rearranging education in line with two central concepts: democratic governance and equity. Six years after its enactment, the Education Policy Consortium (EPC) investigated progress on SASA's implementation. Had improvements been made towards greater equity and had the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) brought about changes in schools that most matched the hopes of social justice and a human rights-based education? In this chapter, we discuss the findings from the six case study schools where we interviewed stakeholders and sat in on a number of SGB meetings over the course of two years, 2003-2004. The chapter begins by setting the context of democratic school governance in the post-apartheid era and the expectations that the liberation movement and its opponents had of SGBs. We argue that the model of school governance adopted in South Africa is a mix of decentralized and centralized decision-making. It attempts to bridge the goals of both direct and indirect democracy. This is perhaps not unusual in a period of transition, a time likely to show up the ambiguities of demands for greater local participation and for centrally directed transformation. However, this does create interesting dilemmas for school governance and the legitimacy of the decisions SGBs make. The chapter then uses examples from the case study schools to explain how SGBs make decisions and the extent to which these decisions match the ideals of social justice.

## **The South African school governance model**

SGBs are one of a number of new and complex mechanisms mediating the relationship between the

state and its citizens. There has been an increasing trend for governments to include citizens in the determination of their social and civil rights. As Eriksen and Weigård explain, there

has been a move away from the perception of those who make use of public services as passive recipients of benefits to a view of these individuals as active users of them. This implies, among other things, that the various groups are allowed to be involved in the process of determining the services, within a given framework and guidelines.<sup>2</sup>

Part of the rationale to include 'users' on committees or boards has been to improve the efficiency of the service provided – in this case, education. It is assumed that those closest to the school can more readily know the specific requirements that would enrich the educational experience. But governing bodies are also important elements in the democratization of education. They purportedly bring into school decision-making processes various stakeholders who previously demurred to principals (or others higher up the chain of command) to make the right educational choices. The assumption is that parents, learners, educators and school managers should have an equal opportunity to influence decisions that affect the school and so should have oversight of a range of policy related functions.

The opportunity to participate is an essential measure of how democratic an institution or state is. Young points out that 'the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in

the decision-making processes and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes'.<sup>3</sup> Thus it is not enough to be included in the decision-making process; one needs also to be able to influence both the process and the decision. Participation by various stakeholders is, furthermore, a potentially important factor in bringing about change in school practice and sustaining improvements in schools. It is not just its normative cogency that compels participatory structures, but also the long-term benefits of having local actors, who are empowered to make decisions, taking the responsibility to see these decisions through.

Participation is, however, only one indicator of democracy in schools. Democracy may also be measured by the representivity of leaders in central government, the contestation over the education budget, the responsiveness of the national Department to SGBs and, even, the degree to which the constitutional right to education has been met. While these various measures may work in tandem, it is possible for them to pull in opposite directions. For example, a fully democratic SGB may be out of sync with national imperatives that may include, among other things, access to education regardless of race or class. The tensions between the local measures of participation and the central measures of democracy are mediated in the legislation over what aspects of authority are decentralized.

There are three common forms of decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution. Deconcentration involves the delegation of responsibility from the state to regional and local sites, but local officials remain accountable to the central authority. Delegation refers to the transfer of decision-making powers to regional or local bodies, but without transferring to these bodies the authority or financial resources to act on their decisions. Finally, devolution involves the transfer of power to autonomous local bodies with both the legislated authority and the financial resources to support localized decisions.<sup>4</sup> Although all three forms of decentralization may have democracy as a stated aim, under the deconcentration and delegation models most of the authority is retained by the centrally elected government. The definition of democracy at work here is one of electoral mandate. While the devolution model values a much more qualitative account of participation in decision-making, Karlsson *et al* note that 'centralized systems do not necessarily

preclude democratic participation. It is quite possible to have widespread participation in making centralized decisions'.<sup>5</sup> Although decentralization can include the state devolving decision-making to other levels such as school communities, and this is how decentralization is often interpreted, it is rare for a central government to emasculate itself by releasing its control over all decision-making – either by devolution or deconcentration. A more common phenomenon internationally is a mix of centralized and decentralized decision-making and control.

In South Africa, school governance is pulled between decentralization and centralization. While centralized decision-making has the advantage of pushing through major reforms with the backing of state apparatuses, in 1994 there was strong pressure from both the liberation movement and the ex-Model C schools to decentralize authority to schools – although they had opposing objectives in mind. For the democratic movement, broad-based participation in schools was essential in changing schools, undermining structural hierarchies and providing a platform for previously unheard voices in making decisions on schooling matters. For the apartheid government, on the other hand, the inclusion of parents on school governing bodies was intended to keep schools much the same, by maintaining the socio-economic status of schools.<sup>6</sup>

In 1996, SASA promulgated a model of school governance that devolved significant powers to SGBs. It stipulated that SGBs must be composed of the school principal and elected representatives of parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and (in secondary schools) learners, and may also co-opt non-voting members. Parents have a majority stake in order to ensure that previously marginalized constituencies have a greater voice. SGBs are juristic persons with the power to enter into contracts and to sue and be sued. They are required to: develop and adopt a constitution and mission statement for the school; determine the admissions policy of the school, subject to certain restrictions; administer and control the school's property, buildings and grounds; recommend to the Department of Education the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff; and develop a budget for the school, which may include schools fees, for approval at a meeting of the parents.<sup>7</sup>

While the intention of SASA is clearly to open up channels for wider participation at school level, it

must be remembered that SGBs fit within a legislative framework that limits and controls what they are able to do. The democratic imperatives are both top down and bottom up, intended to both enforce constitutional obligations and strengthen local community participation. Grant Lewis and Naidoo explain that ‘while promoting local democratic processes and parent/community ownership, the South African Government faces additional challenges of needing to integrate the historically decentralized system, improving the efficiency of the system, and redressing apartheid imbalances.’<sup>8</sup> These obligations

typically require centralized levers of reform. The anticipated outcomes of local school autonomy are therefore set within a broader democratic mandate to transform education. While SGBs have some degree of autonomy to interpret and apply the national transformation agenda to their local conditions, they are constrained by (or, rather, accountable to) national and constitutional policy.

This chapter explores this democratic ‘tension’, that is, whether and how elected local representatives advance or hinder the aims of central government. Do the decisions of local players fit with the imperatives

School	Location	Number of learners	Number of educators	Poverty index	Fees	Matric pass rate 2002
AMZ (ex-Department of Education and Training; black)	Deep rural, Eastern Cape	157 (100% black)	7	Most poor; reliant on pensions and social grants	R136	23%
BHS (ex-House of Representatives; ‘Coloured’)	Peri-urban, Eastern Cape	1256 (60% coloured 30% black)	46 (4 SGB-funded posts)	Middle class/pensioners	R400	78.7%
EHS (ex-Transvaal Education Department, ‘Model C’; white)	Suburban, Gauteng	1060 (70% white, 25% black, 5% Indian)	46 (16 SGB-funded posts)	Middle class	R5700	96%
FHS (ex-Department of Education and Training; black)	Urban township, Gauteng	1672 (100% black)	50	Working class, high unemployment	R400	
KBZ (ex-Department of Education and Training; black)	Rural (Tribal Trust land), KwaZulu-Natal	660 (100% black)	19	Poor, majority unemployed	R180	
ZPT (ex-Department of Education and Training; black)	Urban township, KwaZulu-Natal	929 (100% black)	25	Poor, high unemployment	R160	38%

of social justice, human rights and equity? We draw on the findings of six case studies to describe whether and how SGBs have managed to change school practice (and whether these conform to a human rights and social justice discourse). Our point of departure is to assess whether SGBs have successfully shifted the locus of school decision-making from the School Management Team (SMT) to the governance structure. Because SGBs are a representative form of democracy,<sup>9</sup> the make-up of the stakeholders and their representivity is important in assessing their democratic nature. We begin therefore by looking at which voices were represented in the six case study SGBs. The chapter then offers illustrative examples of SGB decisions and describes the value orientations that appear to underpin them.

The six case studies represent various school types and different geographic locations, (summarized in Table 1 for ease of reference). The fieldwork began with observing the 2003 SGB elections and schools were visited intermittently over the next two years, to observe (when possible) subsequent SGB elections and to interview SGB members, members of Representative Councils of Learners and principals as well as parents, learners and educators.

### **The democratic make-up of SGBs**

One of the essential arguments for broad-based participation in schools was to undermine structural hierarchies and provide a platform for previously unheard voices in schooling matters. In the case studies, we hoped to test the democratic nature of the SGBs, first through observing whether the election process was, to use a phrase from the national elections, 'free and fair', and second through the examination of decision-making processes at each school, and an exploration of where the root of a range of decision-making processes may be found. The specific relationship between the SGB, the principal, the SMT and more informal localities of power in the school and/or the community were also pertinent to the investigation of authority.

SGB elections are the third biggest in the country, after national and municipal elections. In the case of the six schools investigated, the election process was generally a fairly formal procedure, presided over by an electoral officer with voting conducted by means of ballot. Quorum requirements were rarely met, though efforts had been made to encourage parents to attend. Only one school (the ex-Model C school,

EHS) followed the letter of the law on quorum, cancelling the election process when not enough parents turned up and duly holding a second vote within the required time allocation. In all schools – bar the ex-Model C school – nominees addressed voters with electoral promises. In the ex-Model C school, following Gauteng Department of Education election rules, no canvassing was permitted on election night, though the school did hand out a list of nominees with a brief profile of each, mainly describing their professional status.

The reserved tone and formal procedures of SGB elections may favour those who are outspoken, well-known or who already occupy a position of status in the school community. While the expectation is that parents choose to be on SGBs for altruistic reasons, such as to improve the school for the benefit of their children, the role of status and power derived from an elected position cannot be underestimated. As district officials in Gauteng and in KwaZulu-Natal revealed, parents have been known to 'buy' a learner by paying a child's school fees for the sole purpose of standing for SGBs. In a township school in Clermont, KwaZulu-Natal, the chairperson was also the local ANC chair, and traditional leaders were represented on two other SGBs. However, there were as many parents standing for election who were neither prominent community members nor who had significant benefits to gain from their tenure as SGB members. While only a minority of parents voted at most of the case study schools, the elections themselves created opportunities for parents to gather together and raise their concerns – and vote for individuals they hoped would find the solutions. In the township school in Gauteng, for example, the hall was packed to capacity on election day and the meeting took several hours. Presumably, because parents' nominees do lobby for votes, voters can choose their candidates based on whether they represent their interests or not. For principals, the election of governors can create a degree of anxiety: one principal of an ex-Model C school (who declined our request to use the school as a case study) admitted to hand-picking suitable candidates.

The under-representation of women on SGBs is marked. The report by the Ministerial Review Committee on School Governance in South African Public Schools<sup>10</sup> shows that female parents make up 42% of the parents' component of SGBs. In the six case studies, all chairpersons were male (as were all the principals). In the ex-Model C school, one

explanation for why the school had just two female parents' representatives was that SGB work fell into the realm of what men did. Here's how one mother put it: 'Men do all the decision-making and women do all the work. I'm just a plebi mother. The treasurer must be an accountant .... You've got to stand up and sell yourself in front of a crowd – I can't do that'. The deputy head guessed that women 'feel intimidated' by the SGB: 'Initially there were three women elected onto the [previous] SGB but they fell by the wayside. More was demanded of them than they could deliver'. Although women were generally quieter in SGB discussions, one female parent member of the SGB at FHS (where the majority of parents' representatives are women) indicated that one cannot say '*go bowile ntate*' ('a man has spoken') and refrain from making one's views heard. Instead, she felt that each and every member of the SGB is entitled to 'make comments and come up with a way forward'.

The influence of traditional leadership was examined in the project, with two rural schools specially selected for the purpose. One school in the Eastern Cape had co-opted a headman onto the SGB and his contribution was seen as positive. In KwaZulu-Natal, however, the traditional leader (who, an ex-principal of the school, was also an *induna* and running a local taxi industry) felt ignored and undermined by the school authorities. He argued that traditional leaders should have the ultimate say on infrastructural development (since the land belonged to the *inkosi*) as well as significant say in the general running of the school.

SGB parents' representatives rarely consciously deliberated with their constituents on school decisions. Representatives were not directly accountable to the school community, except through reports made at annual general parents' meetings. (Re-election is often not an option, since learners graduate). There were few mechanisms in place for parents' representatives to hear concerns from their constituents. At EHS, for example, the woman in charge of the media and publicity portfolio conducted a questionnaire among parents – which had a greater than 90% return rate. SGB decisions were relayed to parents through letters home (at least in the better resourced schools). A parent at the ex-House of Representatives school (where the SGB was quite weak), said:

The school is a corresponding school, we work together, and they send us letters everyday to

inform and asking for input. I've got six children so far from this school. I don't have a problem with the school, even if I got a problem with paying school fees, they invite us to talk the problem out and help make it easy through government which suits us.

The SGB can rally parents around particularly pressing issues, although this is rare (it occurred in only one case study school). At a SGB meeting in AMZ, a discussion on the school's poor matric pass rate led to a decision to bring the matter up at a general parents' meeting. The principal says: 'I fought for the success of the second meeting. I had to publicize it extensively throughout the community as if the community's life depended upon it. The chief helped, as an ex-officio of the SGB, to put his weight to the success of the second calling. They eventually came'.<sup>11</sup>

SGBs in most cases met quarterly, unless an urgent issue came up that needed immediate attention. Parents were often accused by principals of apathy and reluctance to attend meetings. At ZPT, in particular, the SGB appears to be almost non-functional. Meetings rarely formed a quorum. According to the principal, parents resigned for dubious reasons. Confusion over their roles and the costs of travelling may also explain why attendance at meetings tapers off. Similar concerns were raised by the principal of BHS, who noted that SGB meetings rarely made quorum and non-attendance by parents was consistently raised as an issue at meetings.<sup>12</sup> He attributed non-attendance to parents' lack of commitment. The principal of a rural school (AMZ) remarked that some parents arrive for meetings, sign the register and then sleep throughout the discussion.<sup>13</sup>

Parents' ability to make a meaningful contribution may also be hindered by their lack of capacity to engage with the complex legislative requirements attending SGB functions. As the treasurer on one SGB rather quaintly put it, 'I don't know about the budget. I don't know where it is'. Yet parents are nevertheless contributing to discussions. Our research found that a variety of issues were discussed, from school maintenance to functions. On a number of occasions, the SGB had to deal with immediate crises, such as at AMZ, when a vehicle on a school trip to Port Elizabeth was involved in an accident and one learner seriously injured. At FHS, a SGB member explained: 'When proposals are made to the SGB by the school,

we are able to look at them and then we are able to say, ja, give them support, give them a go-ahead with implementation. We say now that they came up with this proposal and they know that side more than us, we support them. We work together all the time’.

The leadership style of the principal was centrally important as to whether decisions had democratic consensus. The principal of AMZ, for example, was described as active and committed to the school, but was also quietly nudging other stakeholders to take responsibility and make decisions in the school. The principal was loved by community and learners alike. In contrast, the SGB at BHS was only barely functional. The school is run autocratically with power centralized in the School Management Team.

Informants in different schools tended to downplay tensions between the SGB and the SMT. However, as one parent at EHS explained: ‘One would expect there to be tension, because principals have been running the school for so long without needing to consult comprehensively with staff and parents on decisions’. Furthermore, ‘The SMT may be extremely competent at teaching but not necessarily at leadership’. The principal of the same school felt that the SGB had over-stepped its mandate on a few occasions – such as the treasurer who queried all purchases (‘His job was to see that the money was spent correctly, not to ask questions’) and the SGB member who called teachers at home and grilled them about their learners’ performance (‘He also encouraged parents to gang up on the Maths department’).

The District Officer (of ZPT) noted that when SGBs were first introduced, parents often intervened in the day-to-day running of the school. In addition, parents saw themselves as making up the SGB entirely: ‘The parents’ component thought they were the governing body. The decisions were mainly to be taken by the parents’ component, whereas this was a team effort’. The district intervened in such cases.

At ZPT there had been ongoing friction between the principal and the (previous) SGB chair. Educators had withdrawn from the SGB in 2000, because of conflict between educators’ and parents’ representatives. The principal accused the chair of overstepping into management functions. Problems erupted during the principal’s short leave to study abroad. The SGB chair, together with the acting principal, ‘changed the school uniform and influenced the RCL [Representative Council of Learners] to defy school authorities’. The District Officer noted that there had been conflict

over allegations of nepotism in the recruitment of educators, as well as around issues of discipline and the code of conduct. Relations with the new SGB appeared to be more amicable, although the structure was barely functional. The principal explained his approach as follows: ‘I encourage working together and harmony between staff and parents, and I am very persuasive in my approach. Some people accuse me of being soft .... I don’t shy away from solving problems, but I confront them’.

In KBZ the principal dismissed parents as illiterates who had little understanding of issues pertaining to governance. Seeing himself as responsible for ensuring that governance decisions were made in the school, he said that parents still needed intensive training on their roles and responsibilities. At no time in any of the meetings observed at this school were the principal’s views openly challenged or questioned. A member of the SMT confirmed the power of the principal (and, by association, the SMT) vis-à-vis the SGB: ‘I don’t think we need to entangle ourselves with the SGB. After all, we don’t take instructions from the SGB. Rather we give direction and we actually advise the SGB. The SGB simply gives us money and we manage it. And that’s it!’.

In summary, our case studies show that SGBs are constituted following formal election procedures and that SGB meetings offer opportunities for holding principals accountable. The procedures, structures and power relations are often far from ideal – and in some cases near collapse – but they do provide a formal forum where school management can both get support from and be questioned by the different stakeholders. As the deputy principal of the ex-Model C school said: ‘The [previous] SGB made us accountable: they asked “why haven’t you done what you said you would do?”’.

### **Decision-making in SGBs**

In what follows, we describe the ways in which SGBs have shaped school practices and the ethos of the school. We argue that there are four possible influences on SGB decisions: first, the school’s historical routines and traditions; second, the traditional values of the community, introduced by parents’ representatives; third, financial constraints; and, finally, national policies and legislation intended to regulate school practice. The school ethos is worked out in the struggles between these value systems, traditions and practices. We provide examples from the case studies

to illustrate how the tensions between these different value systems are worked out.

In some instances the old routines and past practices persist, perhaps because the SGB fears that new ways may not be as effective as old ones. Corporal punishment was reportedly still applied at three of the schools, even though these schools were aware of legislation banning such punishment. As an SGB member at one rural school put it, 'Despite what the policy requires, in this school we used what works for us, in order for these children to put more efforts to their school work and punctuality. They [learners] need some form of punishment and we have tried other forms of punishment and these learners seem to enjoy them because they are not inflicting pain'. One SGB member reportedly beat learners who were found socializing when they were expected to be studying.

Occasionally, new (legislated) structures, such as SGBs and Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs), co-exist with older structures they were meant to replace. At EHS, the ex-Model C school, the old Parent Teacher Association still existed alongside the SGB, although it functioned mainly as a fund-raising unit.<sup>14</sup> The ex-Model C school, and a rural school in KwaZulu-Natal, had both the prefect and RCL systems in place. Prefects (matric learners appointed by the teaching staff mainly as a disciplinary body) clearly had more status conferred on them than RCL members, although, interestingly, the learners we spoke to held the RCL in high regard as a structure which took up learner issues. While principals could be expected to be custodians of the new national values, given that they are accountable for how schools are run, in some cases they are the ones who perpetuate the old ways of doing things. For example, when parents on the SGB of the ex-Model C school argued for revoking a ban on jewellery, the SMT retorted that 'parents do not understand how schools work'.

A second category of decisions made by SGBs were those underpinned by the traditional values or beliefs of the parent body. For example, despite the provision in national policy that all religions should be accommodated, Christianity is the only religion upheld at three of the schools. According to the SGB treasurer of one township school, teachers are expected to arrive in time for the school to start with a meeting and prayer. The school's religious policy explicitly states that 'both learners and educators are expected to attend Religious Worship Assemblies

and start a day with prayer'. SGB meetings, too, are opened and closed with a prayer. An SGB member at the school argued that, while developing a policy on religion would be easy enough ('everybody will come up with their views and we will be guided by the Constitution of South Africa'), implementing the policy would be much more difficult. They elaborated: 'It is a historical policy of education, because in the past, education was dealt with by the missionaries. They did not want to mix up their religions and now they are trying to mix up the religions, which is going to be difficult'.

While provision is made at the ex-House of Representatives school for Muslim students to leave early on a Friday, the school considers itself a 'Christian school'. According to the principal:

Our learners have full freedom of religion, but because the majority are Christian, the Christian policy dominates in practice. We also have Muslim learners who are allowed to go for prayer on Fridays. During their holidays, they are also exempted from school and learning activities are halted for some other remedial times. The Muslim learners in turn accept our Christian morning prayers because we accept theirs. Most of our Muslim learners know Christianity, because they grew up with it.

Christianity also dominated at the rural school, though this was practiced alongside traditional beliefs such as ancestor worship. The feeling was expressed that, if 'true' Christianity was brought back, cultural morality would also be restored.

When asked whether there were tensions between community values and the values promoted by the school, the SMT of KBZ responded:

Not much. The only concern that some parents have is the way we bring awareness about HIV/AIDS. Some parents are very conservative and they think HIV/AIDS materials will prompt children to sexual intercourse. Another thing is the whole problem of religion, as some parents seem to experience some kind of rebellion from children, who for some reason have internalized western culture. But there are no conspicuous or openly expressed frictions. This is simply an indication that there is some discontent in terms of values but not something that would

fundamentally jeopardize the teaching and learning process.

Parents at a rural KwaZulu-Natal school raised a concern that their cultural values clashed with the values that were being promoted during training sessions by the provincial Department of Education. The SGB treasurer pointed out that there were serious disagreements between trainers and trainees about how pregnant learners ought to be handled. Trainers had indicated that the SGBs were barred by law from sending pregnant learners home, and were expected to give them special treatment including administering tests in the comfort of their own homes or in hospital. Most parents and principals who attended the training session disagreed with this approach, feeling that it would promote rather than address teenage pregnancy.

The generation gap led to differences of opinion in schools with strong traditional influences. Besides several pressing issues, including the poor condition of school buildings, the inability of parents to pay fees, and vandalism, the SGB in KBZ appeared more concerned with learners not wearing the proper school uniform and defying rules about properly styling their hair ('proper' styling being described by the SGB chair in an SGB meeting as '*ukuluka isikholwa*', or 'the Christian way').

It is worth quoting in full the views of the *induna*, another SGB member of KBZ high school:

You find that children live a dichotomous life: on the one hand they must belong to a family, which takes care of their daily needs and guidance in terms of socialization process. On the other hand the school has its own way of dealing with social issues of learners.

Having been a school principal myself, in our days a pupil should not be a trouble that defeats the system. With us we dealt with the father. Nowadays fathers have been disempowered. When the school cannot deal with a naughty learner, parents are scarcely notified. In other words, the schools are no longer compatible with community values. Once a boy becomes a monster at school, teachers are terrorized, the community is terrorized, parents are terrorized, etc. Since the school has alienated parents from the beginning, it is difficult to involve parents when troubles ensue.

So you see, methods, which were used to deal with recalcitrant elements, have been eroded in the name of modern education. The fruits are obvious: children are raping other children, children smoking dagga, children carrying deadly weapons (firearms), children vandalizing schools, children drinking in public, etc.

[Interviewer: 'But aren't parents involved in school through the SGB?']

That's a facile way of saying things. SGB is a legislated body, which means its methods are a prescription from the top. Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying they shouldn't be there, but I think the approach is not that clear in terms of do's and don'ts. You see, an SGB procedure, for example, would take you weeks if not months to solve an obvious problem that Zulu methods can resolve efficiently.

*Thina sazi ukuthi ingane ehluphayo iyaphehlwa* [roughly translated: a troublesome kid must be cracked to cause a slight bleeding in order for bad genes or bad blood to be cast out]. Not that I am a conservative traditionalist . . . *Into yesiZulu idinga ukusonjululwa ngesiZulu; hhayi isilungu.*

Similar opinions were expressed at ZPT. According to the principal:

Children, traditionally, they were told how to respect, but when democracy came, it overrode all that African respect. There is no parent who is comfortable with this kind of situation, but we need to live with it. We've got to be up to date because we cannot change the situation. Children say they have democratic rights and they want to override the rights of parents. What got us into this situation was the 1976 political situation. Children got too much confidence and were empowered somehow. They were told by politicians to turn against their own parents. This is detrimental to African culture.

In at least two case studies, the SGB felt it should concentrate on restoring '*ubuntu*'. At AMZ, the community is generally traditional and upholds the values of *ubuntu* and respect for elders. These values were encouraged at the school and teachers felt that teaching indigenous knowledge would restore good morality. According to the SGB chair at one urban township school, there was a need 'to restore the

culture of *ubuntu* among educators, learners and parents. In that way, we will be able to resolve problems encountered at the school. The SGB pointed to their self-financed feeding scheme, providing meals to 187 learners, as an example of *ubuntu* in practice.

A third cluster of decisions concerned the collection of school fees. Fund-raising and, in particular, the setting of school fees, were often heatedly contested issues at our case study schools, particularly where parents' representatives on SGBs were forced by the pressure of financial constraints to press for the payment of fees, even where their 'constituents' were unable to afford them. It has been suggested that SGBs are in an 'invidious situation':

to protect the revenue-raising power of the school, it is in their interest to minimize the enrolment of non-paying pupils. For schools serving impoverished communities, the burden of establishing, retrieving, and exempting parents from paying fees is particularly onerous. SGBs have become cost and budgeting centres. Many parents on these bodies view their role as co-opted and glorified fund-raisers rather than as co-decision makers in educational matters.<sup>15</sup>

With the tightening up of state funding, most schools rely on these additional funds as top-up fees, and SGB energy is more often focused on the budgeting and administration of school fees than on the culture and mores of the school.

Schools are under a great deal of pressure to collect fees, though directives from the Department of Education are often confusing. The chairperson of FHS's SGB stated:

The announcement in the newspaper by the Minister saying no child should be turned away from school ... and then he comes to you and says, "why don't you collect school fees?". One lady [from the Department] was here, saying "why don't you raise school fees?". That is the same Department that says "no child must be turned away". She even said, "some schools are above the inflation rate, you are still crawling on R400, why? Why don't you raise school fees?". Well, I said to her that parents haven't got the means to pay more. We are still pushing the acceptance of the current fees.

In our case study schools, there seemed to be a general lack of sympathy for parents unable (or unwilling) to pay fees. Schools often resort to illegal strategies, such as sending learners home until they return with their parents, or withholding reports until full payment is made. Some parents have been threatened with legal action.

The SGB of ZPT planned to tackle those parents known to be affluent but who had yet to pay fees. Concerns were raised regarding Grade 12 learners who had not paid the school fees. A segment of parents felt that school-leaving learners should have their certificates withheld until they had paid the money they owed in full. An SGB meeting at KBZ considered a number of options of getting parents to pay fees, and finally settled on the principal's idea that learners with unpaid fees would be sent home to call their parents.

The fee exemption policy became a particularly heated issue in the Eastern Cape after two separate incidents where learners, following publicity around the policy, burnt down classrooms and took educators hostage, demanding that their fees be returned. The SGB at the poorest of our schools, AMZ in the Eastern Cape, where fees amounted to only R136 per learner per year, was apprehensive of parents getting wind of the exemption policy. Since the school relied heavily on fees for the watchman's wages, extra-mural activities, stationery, some textbooks and teachers' travel costs to and from school workshops (the school has no water or electricity), the SGB is strict on payment. Exemption forms are available at the school, but are not used. Referring to the exemption clause, the principal of AMZ said: 'you know, because there are no trainings conducted for the SGBs to unpack some of these clauses ... we end up sweeping it under the carpet for our school's sake [so as] not to discourage parents who could not afford to pay (maybe they can). Letting them know would be opening a can of worms. Realistically speaking, in this school we depend entirely on school fees for us to function'.

At the ex-Model C school, EHS, the difficulties with fee collection had resulted in the school appointing a 'bursar' whose sole duty was to collect outstanding fees. The only black SGB member had become directly involved in collecting fees. She mentioned that: '[the bursar] has called me if someone is not paying fees and I have spoken to the families. Sometimes I know the parents even before I talk to them about fees. I talk to them confidentially: "Why have you got a new

car, but your fees aren't paid?'"

The exemption policy gives SGBs an extraordinary degree of power to police parents. The means test is both difficult and humiliating. In some schools, such as BHS and FHS, parents unable to afford the fees are asked to render services at the school in lieu of fees. 'Volunteering', however, is often a condition for exemption from fees. In addition, it has the rather unfortunate effect of conflating parental involvement in the school with rendering services in return for exemptions.

While the weight of our examples from the case studies show that SGBs tend to make their decisions based on their intuitive ideas on how schools should function – that is, based on past practices, traditional values or economic imperatives – there are a few examples of parents choosing to follow national Department of Education regulations based on human rights, social justice and equity. The use of alternative ways of disciplining learners (such as picking up litter after school) at the township school was encouraging. In the case of the rural AMZ, pregnant learners continue to attend school as per policy requirements, and despite educators' opposing views. Here it is parents who feel that pregnant learners cannot be required to stay away from school, unlike past practices where pregnant girls were expelled while boys continue attending. There is also evidence from the case studies that parents can influence the amount of fees charged: at FHS, for example, parents opposed raising school fees at a parents' meeting, preferring instead to use fundraising strategies, and the SGB appears to have been fairly successful in seeking donations from companies.<sup>16</sup>

## Conclusion

Being judgmental about SGBs is a bit like throwing stones at the good citizen's parade. Parents who put themselves up for election may not do so entirely for altruistic reasons, but they risk losing public face if they are not elected and, if they are, they offer up hours of their time in meetings and by doing voluntary work on school activities. To expect SGBs to transform schools – and to do so with a human rights agenda – is perhaps unfair. We should even shy away from being too judgmental about how high they score on some scale of democracy. SGBs are democratic in so far as they are elected through formal procedures, but they are not forums where issues get deliberated in some idealistic participatory and democratic way.

Once elected, the representatives stand in for parents, teachers and learners as governors with all the constraints that go with such a legislated role. Their interest is in the improvement of the school – and the means they adopt are sometimes a burden on the parents they represent. Their weight of numbers does not always tip the scale of power away from the principal, who has day-to-day knowledge of school affairs and often a better grasp of the legislation.

This chapter has therefore set itself a humbler task than a critical analysis of the democratic nature of SGBs and their ability to transform schools along a human rights trajectory. It is a description of how SGBs in six case study schools were elected, functioned and how they came to make decisions. While six schools do not constitute much of a positive quantitative trend, the advantage of the case studies is that they offer a deeper understanding of how SGBs work through decision-making. The examples illustrate that parents often bring common sense ideas to decision-making processes, based on past precedent, their cultural and religious ideas and the immediate need for finance. Sometimes, too, these parents' decisions coincide with the human rights agenda of the state.

1. Republic of South Africa, *South African Schools Act*, Act no.84 of 1996. Pretoria.
2. Erik Eriksen and Jarle Weigård, 'The End of Citizenship? New Roles Challenging the Political Order', in McKinnon, C. and Hampsher-Monk, I. (eds) *The Demands of Citizenship* (London: Continuum, 2000), p.22.
3. Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.5.
4. Jenni Karlsson, Gregory McPherson and John Pampallis, 'A Critical Examination of the Development of School Governance Policy and its Implications for Achieving Equity', in Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *Education and Equity: The Impact of State Policies on South African Education* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2001), p.141.
5. Karlsson, McPherson and Pampallis, 'A Critical Examination of the Development of School Governance Policy', p.144.
6. Ibid.
7. In addition to their basic functions, SGBs may also apply to their provincial Department of Education, under Section 21 of the South African Schools Act, to be allocated additional functions, including the right to maintain and improve the school's property, to determine extra-curricular activities, to choose the subject options offered at the school, and to purchase textbooks and other material and equipment.
8. Suzanne Grant Lewis and Jordan Naidoo, 'Whose Theory of Participation? School Governance Policy and Practice in South Africa', *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 6, 2, 2004.
9. A critical question (which this chapter does not address) is whether SGBs as representative structures measure up to

more demanding democratic requirements such as those related to inclusivity and participation.

10. *Ministerial Review Committee Report to the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, M.P.: Review of School Governance in South African Public Schools* (Pretoria: Department of Education, 2004).
11. At this meeting, the following decisions were made: 1. They would meet four times a year; 2. Parents would be fully involved in all school activities and decisions (and that effective discipline rests with the parents); 3. Parents would help enforce school attendance; and 4. Parents would be called to the school to motivate their failing child (with an educator's involvement).
12. An SGB meeting at BHS which was to be observed by the researchers was cancelled when just six (of sixteen) members arrived.
13. However, SGB meetings observed here showed that all stakeholders participated, including the learner representatives.
15. This Parent Teacher Association was made up of 20 volunteers, all women, who acted mainly as a fundraising committee, as well as organizing 'teas and coffee'.
15. Salim Vally, 'Reassessing Policy and Reviewing Implementation: A Maligned or Misaligned System?', *Quarterly Review of Education and Training in South Africa*, 7, 2, 2002.
16. Educators revealed, however, that there was some resistance to fund-raising strategies. Some parents expected to be remunerated when assisting with fundraising. An educator at FHS explains: 'Some parents are going to ask for something for having assisted. They'll say, "but we did help, how much are we getting?" Where money is involved, it's problematic. It's difficult explaining these things, but that is what we normally get. Ask them to come and help; after helping [they say] "what are you giving me?"'.

# FINANCE EQUITY REFORMS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLING: A GAUTENG CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

SHIREEN MOTALA

## **Introduction**

Since 1994 South Africa has undertaken the major task of transforming the inequitable political, economic and social system that characterized the apartheid era into a democratic society which aims to equalize opportunities for all its citizens. Central to this transformation is the establishment of a quality, equitable and democratic education system. While discrimination in social spending, a major feature of apartheid fiscal policy, has been considerably reduced since the 1980s,<sup>2</sup> spending inequalities remain because of the high costs required to achieve fiscal parity in education.

The first democratic government, elected in 1994, committed itself to eliminating educational discrimination.<sup>3</sup> A major emphasis in the immediate post-apartheid period was on redistributing resource inputs at inter-provincial level through policy and legislation based on equity and redress criteria. Concern about equity and redress took on an increased urgency after the second democratic elections in 1999, with the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, pronouncing that ‘rampant inequality’ characterized the education system.<sup>4</sup> Under particular scrutiny was whether the gap between rich and poor schools in the public schooling system was closing or, in fact, increasing.

Post-apartheid education finance reforms have emphasized the importance of distributional equity, and progress has been made towards a fairer distribution of public funds across provinces.<sup>5</sup> However, there are still substantial differences in intra-provincial funding – that is, across schools within a province – in terms of finance resource bases, learner: educator ratios and educator profiles. Relatively little

research has been carried out on these intra-provincial disparities,<sup>6</sup> and little is known about the impact of equity indicators and their correlates. In particular, our understanding of per capita expenditure – a key equity indicator – is limited.

Historically, per capita expenditure has been one of the key indicators of education inequality in South Africa. In 1972, per capita expenditure on white schooling was seven times more than on black schooling; in 1992, it was still twice as much.<sup>7</sup> This chapter attempts to address the overarching question of education change: whether post-1994 policies for funding equity have equalized access to resources among all schools and learners, and what the scale and direction of this shift has been. Simply put, what is the typography of inequality in education in democratic South Africa and what has been the progress towards equity of access to resource allocation?

Clarity is necessary on the concepts of equity and equality, and the debates on them are vast. For the purpose of this chapter, equality has to do with sameness or, in public policy terms, non-discrimination.<sup>8</sup> In utilizing the concept of equity, the study draws on Rawls’ and Van der Berg’s distinction between discrimination and inequality,<sup>9</sup> Samoff’s differentiation between equity and equality,<sup>10</sup> Sayed’s work on distributional justice,<sup>11</sup> and Secada’s view that equality helps us to define the specificity of equity.<sup>12</sup> The study uses a definition of equity which encompasses that which is socially just and which advocates a process of differential distribution to achieve its goals.<sup>13</sup>

This chapter draws on a larger research project which attempted to understand the construct of equity by using the key indicator of per capita

expenditure as derived from disaggregated school-level data.<sup>14</sup> It utilizes a broader set of variables – race, socio-economic status and educator qualifications – to understand the construct. Whereas the standard approach, when calculating inputs into public schooling, is to focus on state expenditure, this chapter also analyses the impact of private contributions on formal basic schooling.

The major finding of this chapter is that eight years of post-apartheid education have achieved equalization or ‘sameness’ in state expenditure, but not differential distribution, a notion of equity which includes what is socially just. While discrimination in resource allocation has been removed, inequalities persist for a number of reasons, including the ability (or inability) of parents to pay fees, the greater availability of qualified educators in some schools, and unfavourable learner: educator ratios. Historical backlogs have been difficult to redress and the gains of increased expenditure have been eroded by inflation. Private expenditure in the form of fund-raising and school fees changes the picture of equalization to one of substantial differentiation within the public schooling sector. This puts into sharp focus the role of user fees and school choice, and introduces ‘social capital’ into the funding equation. An emerging feature is greater differentiation within race groups, with empirical evidence showing that the post-apartheid education system has favoured a deracialized middle class, despite a policy intention which promotes redress for the poor.

### **Methodology**

In the past there have been serious limitations regarding the availability, reliability and consistency of data across the education sector. For this study, data from the years 1999 and 2002 was used, because of the greater reliability of data after 1998 when education management and management information systems became more established.

The study used a method which recreated actual per capita costs at the school level. It drew on cost analysis models which utilize a measurement technique that has a micro perspective and uses an ingredient method which aims to arrive at a unit cost by combining specific ingredients – in this instance, personnel costs, private contributions and non-personnel costs.<sup>15</sup> This is unique in the South African context since the majority of previous studies have utilized a macro perspective which derived unit costs

by aggregating the amount spent on education by all contributors and then dividing the result by the number of learners.<sup>16</sup>

Using these methodological tools, the study establishes the pattern and typography of inequality and equity at the school level in Gauteng province in South Africa, as well as the primacy of particular indicators. Information was gathered from all schools in the province, by merging three very large databases: the Education Management Information System, the Annual School Survey and School Funding Norms Study, and PERSAL<sup>17</sup> data for 1999 and 2002. Since the focus of the study is on expenditure information, the key indicators of personnel expenditure data, non-personnel expenditure data and private expenditure data, the three main cost drivers in schooling, were extracted from these datasets. Per capita data was calculated by disaggregating state and private expenditure (school fees and fund-raising) and arriving at actual costs for each individual school in Gauteng.

The three main variables used to explain inequality and equity are race, socio-economic status and educator qualifications. Race is categorized according to pre-1994 education departments,<sup>18</sup> on the grounds that, eight years after the demise of apartheid, the majority of learners continue to be in schools formerly allocated to their race group. Socio-economic status is derived from the School Funding Norms dataset which calculates it in terms of the poverty of the school and of the community.<sup>19</sup> The PERSAL dataset provided the information on educator qualifications. Descriptive statistical measures were used to undertake the analysis, including means, medians, standard deviations, quartiles and percentages.

The number of schools used for 1999 was 1 853 (79.9% of all schools in the province); for 2002 the number of schools was 1 979 (85.2%). The size of the sample meets the requirement for validity and reliability. Schools in 1999 and 2002 were matched to ensure that the sample consisted largely of the same schools; there is a match of 95%.

### **Descriptive overview of public schooling in Gauteng, 1999 and 2002**

The province of Gauteng, one of the smallest provinces, has the highest GDP in the country.<sup>20</sup> The Gauteng Department of Education is structured into twelve districts which are located within local government boundaries. Its 2 323 schools are largely urban-based,

with few learners in typically rural areas. Many schools are located in informal settlements characterized by ad hoc planning and poor infrastructure.

Demographic shifts have been significant since 1999, resulting in an increasing number of learners of all races attending former House of Assembly (HOA) schools, a small decline of learners in former Department of Education and Training (DET) schools, and an increasing number of African children in former HOA schools (21%), House of Delegates (HOD) schools (23%) and House of Representatives (HOR) schools (5%). The increase in attendance at former HOA schools can be attributed to learners moving to better-resourced schools that are perceived to provide a higher quality education. While the deracialization of schools and the migration of learners occupy much attention, on the whole learner enrolments in township (black) schools have not decreased.<sup>21</sup>

The cross-tabulation of learners by former department and quintile shows that race and social inequality patterns have not shifted significantly in the four-year period under review. The largest proportion of former HOA schools and learners is in quintile 0.25 (best off) and the largest number of learners in former DET schools is in quintile 1.75 (worst off). The distribution of learners continues to reflect social inequality patterns inherited from apartheid.

### Per capita expenditure: an overview

As noted earlier, per capita expenditure – that is, average spending per learner in an individual

school – is one of the key indicators of inequality in education used in this study. In this section, analysis is undertaken across former departments (proxy for race) and quintile (proxy for socio-economic status). In order to reflect the Gauteng Department of Education's total resources more reliably, the time-series data used in the study has been adjusted to counter the effects of inflation, with 1998/1999 as the base year. The CPIX deflator applied to the values in 2002 is 94.9/115.4.

State per capita expenditure did not increase significantly over the four-year period, after adjustment for inflation (see Table 1). However, in 2002, there continues to be important variation in state per capita expenditure across the first (R2 636) and last quartiles (R3 775); this could reflect outliers or data exceptions. The overall pattern suggests that there is greater clustering around the mean in state expenditure in 2002 than in 1999.

There have been relatively small increases in personnel per capita expenditure, and relatively small decreases in the 75th and 90th percentiles, together with an improvement in educator qualifications. The reduction in educator expenditure could relate to a small but significant outflow of more qualified and experienced educators from the education system. More persuasive, however, is the argument that the small increases are related to a stricter implementation of learner: educator ratios, an important equity driver across schools. Another important equity mechanism is the implementation of the Norms and Standards

Variable	Expenditure in SA Rands											
	Mean		Standard Deviation		25th percentile		50th percentile		75th percentile		90th percentile	
	1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002
PPC	2,755	2,846	791	871	2,274	2,398	2,651	2,709	3,082	3,052	3,641	3,581
NPPC	197	219	346	112	118	137	178	219	214	282	329	378
Priv PC	441	732	813	1,804	24	50	55	206	591	812	1,373	2,043
P and NP PC	2,952	3,065	868	868	2,498	2,636	2,827	2,910	3,220	3,253	3,764	3,775
All PC	3,393	3,797	1,330	2,035	2,562	2,829	2,997	3,250	3,930	4,214	5,070	5,462

PPC = Personnel per capita expenditure; NPPC = Non-personnel per capita expenditure; Priv PC = Private per capita expenditure; P and NP PC = State per capita expenditure; All PC = State and private per capita expenditure. Inflation adjusted: constant South African Rands

for School Funding, which allocates non-personnel expenditure through a poverty-targeting mechanism. All schools have experienced increases in non-personnel expenditure, illustrated by the reduction in the spread of non-personnel spending. Overall, however, the research shows that non-personnel expenditure continues to be a small component of total state expenditure – in the ratio of about 90:10 for personnel to non-personnel expenditure.

The standard deviation for private per capita expenditure is much larger in 2002 than in 1999; this illustrates the increase and variation in private contributions to schools, particularly as seen in the difference between the median and the 90th percentile. This is reinforced by the data for combined state and private expenditure, which shows significant variation in spread at the 25th, 75th and 90th percentiles. Private contributions thus contribute significantly to the large variation in expenditure in the public schooling sector.

#### State expenditure: understanding sameness and difference

Has state expenditure equalized across former department and socio-economic quintiles, as was the policy intention? If so, is there any pattern to the distribution of expenditure? This section probes these questions in greater detail.

Table 2 illustrates shifts in state expenditure by former racially designated departments and socio-economic quintiles over the years under review, and illustrates the spread of this expenditure. The most significant gains in state per capita expenditure from an equity perspective have been for former DET schools (mostly African learners), which show real increases from R2 790 in 1999 to R3 073 in 2002. This has been driven largely by more favourable learner: educator ratios and increasing educator qualifications. Inflation-related adjustments illustrate that, in real terms, increases are much lower than anticipated. The former HOA schools (mostly white learners) still enjoy the highest state per capita expenditure (R3 162), although they have experienced a 6% drop since 1999. Personnel per capita expenditure continues to be the highest in former HOA schools (R3 074). However, the gap in personnel expenditure

**Table 2: Variation in spread for state per capita expenditure by former department and by quintile, 1999 and 2002**

Variable	Former Department	Expenditure in SA Rands						Quintile	Expenditure in SA Rands					
		Mean		Standard Deviation		Upper Quartile			Mean		Standard Deviation		Upper Quartile	
		1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002		1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002
A	DET	2535	2791	684	981	2799	2975	0.25	3315	3046	742	554	3630	3321
B		255	283	415	78	306	349		51	54	55	13	51	64
C		2790	3074	848	987	3023	3229		3366	3100	755	556	3680	3372
A	HOA	3285	3074	725	654	3598	3312	0.75	3042	2919	798	781	3387	3112
B		76	89	59	50	113	131		138	159	141	31	148	188
C		3362	3162	730	663	3680	3386		3180	3078	839	782	3503	3262
A	HOD	2660	2628	256	322	2842	2765	1	2723	2805	758	683	2990	3013
B		126	146	34	48	150	190		180	215	61	17	185	230
C		2786	2774	254	326	2957	2924		2902	3019	762	685	3162	3218
A	HOR	2561	2548	372	305	2749	2753	1.25	2490	2697	481	743	2733	2872
B		183	233	50	53	195	263		208	267	37	17	213	280
C		2744	2781	370	305	2934	2998		2697	2964	482	743	2940	3143
A								1.75	2282	2784	625	1317	2534	2885
B									396	383	694	41	356	410
C									2679	3167	1109	1323	2872	3268

Personnel per capita expenditure; B = Non-personnel per capita expenditure; C = State per capita expenditure. Inflation adjusted: constant South African Rands.

between former DET and former HOA schools has been greatly reduced.

Two interesting features emerge. On the one hand, there appears to be a reduction of inequality in expenditure across former departments and more clustering around the mean. Better resource targeting has led to increases in non-personnel expenditure across all former departments. From a policy perspective, this illustrates a commitment to moving towards the nationally prescribed ratio of personnel to non-personnel expenditure. In keeping with policy intent, there have been greater increases in non-personnel per capita expenditure for former DET schools. On the other hand, though, the increase in spread in former DET state per capita expenditure illustrates the greater internal differentiation among poor black learners. In the upper quartile there is a group of former DET schools (R3 229) and former HOA schools (R3 372) that has per capita expenditure considerably above the provincial norm. This suggests that the racial distribution in the pattern of state expenditure is beginning to be eroded.

Overall, state expenditure by socio-economic status – measured in this study by quintile – does not vary greatly. The poorest schools (quintile 1.75) have a per capita expenditure of R3 167, as opposed to the least poor schools (quintile 0.25) which have a per capita expenditure of R3 100. However, the better-off quintiles (0.25 and 0.75) have experienced significant reductions in state expenditure since 1999 (8% and 3% respectively). Overall state expenditure from the highest to the lowest quintile does not show significant difference, which calls into question the policy intention of redress and differential redistribution to the poor. However, shifts in socio-economic status illustrate targeting of equity gains in financial resourcing more accurately than former department categories.

In non-personnel per capita expenditure, the greatest improvement has been for schools in the two poorest quintiles. The actual level of non-personnel expenditure is highly differentiated from least to most poor schools. Concurring with Wildeman,<sup>22</sup> the study found that schools in the middle quintiles, whose socio-economic status may not be very different from poorer schools, may be disadvantaged by their quintile status.

In attempting to understand the distribution of inequity and the shifts towards greater equity, socio-economic indicators provide an interesting picture.

The standard deviation in quintile 0.25 – that is, the better-off schools – has been reduced due to the small decline in educator numbers and the implementation of the specified learner: educator ratio. At the same time, contrasting sharply with quintile 0.25, the standard deviation in the poorest schools has increased, illustrating a greater spread in relation to educator expenditure. This suggests that inequality has not been reduced over the last few years, but rather that there is a movement within inequality patterns with the same levels remaining – a ‘stability’ of inequality.

Finally, after eight years of democratic governance, and despite the positive gains in racial equity, the relationship between race and socio-economic status remains entrenched. 61% of former DET schools in quintile 1.75 continue to be located in the category  $\leq$ R3 000, whereas 68% of former HOA schools in quintile 0.25 are in the  $\geq$ R3 000 category. Poverty, unemployment and limited social spending do not provide an enabling socio-economic context for the gains in racial equity in funding at the school level.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Personnel and non-personnel expenditure: detailing the components of sameness**

What has contributed to the sameness in state expenditure in relation to former departments and to the variation in relation to socio-economic status? In this section, the components of personnel expenditure are disaggregated in order to better understand what is driving these shifts. The main equity drivers in personnel expenditure are educator expenditure and learner: educator ratios. This is followed by a discussion of the shifts in non-personnel expenditure.

There is a growing body of research that examines the resource characteristics of educators.<sup>24</sup> In 2002 regulations on the distribution of educator posts in schools were formally amended to extend the redress principle to personnel expenditure.<sup>25</sup> According to the new regulations, redress teaching posts were to be distributed to schools based on their relative poverty. This principle of redress and its extension into the distribution of educator posts is important.

This research found that the equitable funding within a province has been driven mainly by equalization of learner: educator ratios, rather than by redistribution of educators. From an equity point of view, then, the equalization of learner: educator ratios had an important effect on the distribution of

resources among schools. To a lesser extent, the model for the allocation of educators within provinces also seems to have narrowed the differences across schools grouped by former departments. However, continuing inequities are visible once the schools are grouped according to socio-economic quintile.

As shown in Table 3 below, in former DET schools there has been a decline in REQV 13 teachers and an upward shift in the number of teachers at REQV 14 and 15.<sup>26</sup> In former HOA schools there is a small movement of highly qualified educators (REQV 14, 15 and 16) out of the state system. This could be a function of the right-sizing process or of educators seeking opportunities elsewhere in the labour market.

Qualifications by quintile more accurately reflect the departure of educators from the least poor schools and the concentration of better-qualified educators in the upper quintiles. While the better-off schools have educators mainly in REQV 14 and 15, the poorest schools have a concentration in REQV 13. However, some real gains have occurred in poor schools, with the increase in the poorest quintile of educators at REQV 14 level from 64 to 136.

Concurring with the work of Nattrass and Seekings,<sup>27</sup> the study found that the removal of discrimination in educator salaries, the provision of additional educators and convergence of learner: educator ratios have greatly benefited spending in

former African schools. As noted above, at least 40% of educators in those schools have moved into higher brackets, and as a result salaries have risen by 12% to 15%. The better-paid educators have benefited the least from these efforts. The redistribution of numbers may not necessarily mean that there is a redistribution of quality.

Learner: educator ratios continue to be used as a key indicator of equality and inequality in post-apartheid education.<sup>28</sup> While learner: educator ratios should have remained constant or been reduced, schools from all former departments, including former HOA schools, continue to be worse off with regard to state-paid educators (see Figure 1a). The learner: educator ratios of former HOA schools, in particular, drop significantly after including educators employed, utilizing private contributions from parents, by the school governing body, but schools from all former departments show the impact of privately-paid educators in reducing learner: educator ratios.

Learner: educator ratios by socio-economic status (that is, by quintile and state-paid educators) more accurately reflect the gains for poorer schools. The least poor schools all experienced a large gain in learner: educator ratios, which also reveal the impact of educator redistribution (see Figure 1b). Overall, however, the picture for the poorer schools is not very different from that of the better-off schools, all having an average learner: educator ratio of 37:1. The picture

**Table 3: Count of schools by former department, quintile and educator qualification level, 1999 and 2002**

Former Department												
Qualification	DET			HOA			HOD			HOR		
	1999	2002	% shift									
REQV 13	695	530	-24	4	5	25	1	2	100	42	33	-21
REQV 14	308	494	60	404	420	4	51	57	12	30	40	33
REQV 15	3	16	433	105	93	-11						
REQV 16				2		-100						
Total	1071	1069	0	515	518	1	52	59	13	72	73	1
Quintile												
Qualification	0.25			0.75			1			1.25		
REQV 13	3	1	-67	65	38	-42	206	144	-30	226	204	-10
REQV 14	286	280	-2	225	261	16	116	193	66	109	150	38
REQV 15	68	54	-21	36	43	19	3	4	33	1	4	300
REQV 16	2	0	-100									
Total	359	335	-7	331	343	4	335	347		350	360	3

changes dramatically when privately paid educators are included, dropping to 29:1 for the better-off schools. In attempting to explain what provides the enabling conditions for the achievement of equity, Case and Deaton conclude that learner: educator ratios in disadvantaged areas are an important input in encouraging education attainment.<sup>29</sup> Figure 1b clearly shows that poor schools (quintile 1.75) continue to be worse off in relation to learner: educator ratios.

So, what is driving sameness in expenditure? Learner: educator ratios evidently have greater influence in the convergence of expenditure across former departments than the redistribution of educators through the post provisioning model. From an equity point of view, the equalization of learner: educator ratios has had a more important effect on the redistribution of resources among schools, particularly former DET schools, than the model for the allocation of educators across schools within provinces. Shifts in personnel per capita expenditure are driven by learner: educator ratios in former DET schools and by better qualifications in former HOA schools.

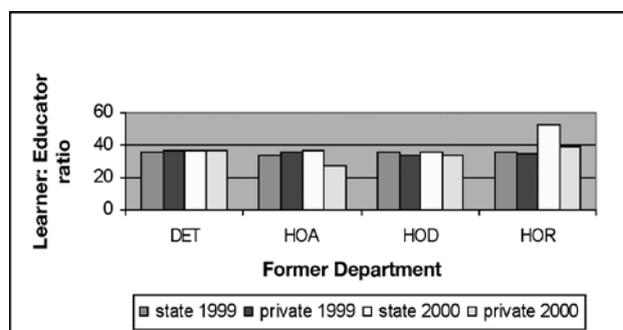
Non-personnel per capita expenditure, while an important redistribution mechanism, has had little impact on overall state expenditure. There are two reasons for this. First, non-personnel expenditure continues to be a very small proportion of overall state expenditure (about 10%), and second, much of the equity gains from this type of expenditure had already been achieved by 1999.

**Private per capita expenditure: from sameness to differentiation in public schooling**

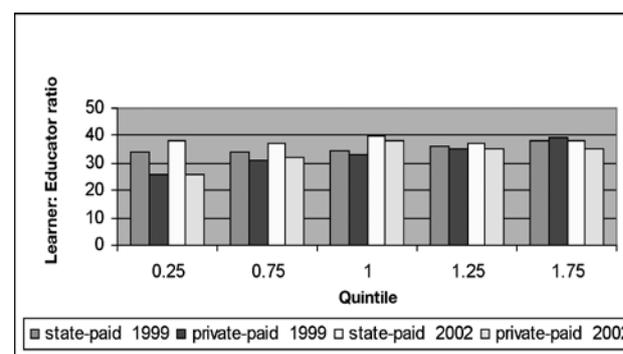
In South Africa, as in many developing countries, the government has tried to expand access to basic education by requiring families to share an ever greater portion of the costs. Private resources are relatively more plentiful for schools that serve higher income families. The international literature makes two important observations, relevant to South Africa, regarding the private costs of schooling in developing countries: they are a source of education inequity, and they are an important financing source for quality-related inputs.<sup>30</sup> The findings in South Africa on the role of private inputs largely concur with international experience.

The most interesting shift between 1999 and 2002 is in private per capita expenditure (see Table 4 below). Surprisingly, the highest increase is in former

**Figure 1a: Learner: educator ratios for state-paid and privately paid educators by former department, 1999 and 2002**



**Figure 1b: Learner: educator ratios for state-paid and privately paid educators by quintile, 1999 and 2002**



DET schools. This suggests that school fees in poor communities are important, particularly since they are associated with parental contributions to improving quality. The level of fees in 2002 is extremely variable. The largest private per capita contribution is, as might be expected, in former HOA schools – nearly eight times the amount paid in former DET schools. The level of private funding supplementing state expenditure continues to be the main determinant of the huge variation of per capita expenditure in the public schooling sector.

The greatest change in relation to overall per capita expenditure from 1999 to 2002 as a factor of combined private and public expenditure is in DET schools (17%). The greatest level of expenditure is in former HOA schools, with a combined state and private expenditure of R5 055.

The spread across both former DET and former HOA schools shows that there is a much greater variation in the range of fees being paid in 2002

than in 1999. This is best illustrated by looking at the 90th percentile in 2002, which is R3 415 in former DET schools and R5 611 in former HOA schools (Table 4). The huge increase in the spread of private expenditure in former DET schools (from R245 to R1 051) illustrates the pressure that parents in poorer schools are under to contribute to their children’s schooling in their quest for quality schools. However, the level of private income in former DET schools is still significantly lower than the provincial norm. The majority of children in former DET schools pay around R222 at the 75th percentile, while the provincial norm is R591 in the upper quartile.

Clearly, private expenditure by quintile is highest for the richest schools, which spend 570 times more on private support than poorer schools. Significantly, the proportion of the increase continues to be the highest for poorer schools. In actual money terms, poorest schools appear to pay even more than the quintile 1 and quintile 1.25 categories. This trend is worrying, particularly if one assesses the proportion of overall family income that is used for school fees.

In terms of combined state and private expenditure, overall per capita expenditure is higher by 50% for the quintile 0.25 category than for the poorer

schools. Private contributions coming into the system dramatically privilege schools in the two highest socio-economic quintiles. Private expenditure reflected in school fees and other private contributions is a significant input in the top two quintiles and a negligible input in the bottom three quintiles.

In terms of teacher qualifications, the per capita expenditure of combined state and private resources (R4 018 in REQV 15 and R5 198 in REQV 16) demonstrates that the concentration of greatest resources, both in terms of funding and qualification, has not shifted considerably. Better-qualified educators tend to be found in schools that have the highest per capita expenditure, supported mainly through school fees. This is most probably in alignment with socio-economic status. Also very striking is the large concentration of highly qualified educators who are being employed through private expenditure; this indicates significant growth in the sector and points to the high proportion of private expenditure that is spent to accommodate these educators.

The history of why school fees were introduced in South Africa is well documented.<sup>31</sup> User fees have kept middle-class families within the public schooling system, as was the policy intention. However, it

**Table 4: Variation in spread for private per capita expenditure by former department and quintile, 1999 and 2002**

Variable	Former Department	Mean		Standard Deviation		Upper Quartile		Quintile	Mean		Standard Deviation		Upper Quartile	
		1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002		1999	2002	1999	2002	1999	2002
A	DET	56	251	245	1,501	54	222	0.25	1469	2119	1055	2310	1876	2623
B		2,790	3,074	848	987	3,023	3,229		3366	3100	755	556	3680	3372
C		2,845	3,325	882	1,790	3,070	3,415		4835	5219	1360	2444	5457	5798
A	HOA	1,348	1,892	952	2,122	1,626	2,259	0.75	570	916	684	1521	940	1236
B		3,362	3,162	730	663	3,680	3,386		3180	3078	839	782	3503	3262
C		4,709	5,055	1,252	2,261	5,287	5,611		3750	3994	1209	1743	4372	4445
A	HOD	191	363	104	208	265	521	1	100	210	410	823	71	223
B		2,786	2,774	254	326	2,957	2,924		2902	3019	762	685	3162	3218
C		2,977	3,136	304	449	3,169	3,398		3002	3229	864	1105	3241	3415
A	HOR	107	238	72	228	141	315	1.25	71	225	325	1019	54	234
B		2,744	2,781	370	305	2,934	2,998		2697	2964	482	743	2940	3143
C		2,851	3,019	392	407	3,080	3,244		2769	3189	532	1271	3011	3329
A								1.75	34	316	37	2134	44	251
B									2679	3167	1109	1323	2872	3268
C									2713	3483	1110	2507	2913	3423

A = Private per capita expenditure; B = Personnel and non-personnel per capita expenditure; C = State and private per capita expenditure. Inflation adjusted: constant South African Rands.

has not prevented the establishment of a highly differentiated public schooling system, with small pockets of privilege and large areas of disadvantage. It has been very clear – and is also apparent from this research – that the fee policy has done little to help the historically disadvantaged schools. Private contributions have been used to employ more educators and to drastically reduce learner: educator ratios in more privileged schools. In poorer schools, by contrast, the low level of private contributions has supplemented school resources to improve the learning environment and to provide greater equity in the conditions of learning attainment.<sup>32</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The disaggregation of data in this research provides a more detailed picture of the nature, extent and location of inequalities in post-apartheid South Africa. It also provides evidence on the extent and direction of the equalization of per capita expenditure in public schooling.

The findings contribute to a new picture of school finance equity and provide a more complex and nuanced picture of the typography of inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. Racial equity has been addressed to some extent; however, the poor continue to be the worst off. Socio-economic indicators provide a more unchanging picture when the school cohort is divided into poverty quintiles.

The presence of private contributions has led to a group of learners across races who are beginning to be much more like each other, supporting the thesis of a deracialized middle class. However, at either end of the spectrum there continue to be learners who are vastly worse off (supporting the view of greater internal differentiation within the poor) or much better off. The pervasiveness of socio-economic factors and inequalities means that the poor continue to be disadvantaged from the point of view of having equal opportunity to a meaningful quality education.

### **Do resources matter?**

A vigorous debate continues about whether ‘resources matter’, and strong arguments are made that equity must be measured against equitable outcomes.<sup>33</sup> This research takes issue with such arguments; it suggests that resources and inputs continue to be very significant in explaining equity shifts at the school level.<sup>34</sup> Much of the discussion about inputs and resource allocation has been about the redistributive

aspects of the inter-provincial funding formula rather than about intra-provincial mechanisms that could achieve equity. Missing from the debate has been a comprehensive picture of how complex compensatory funding mechanisms have translated into actual resource inputs into former black schools at an intra-provincial level. The methodological approach undertaken here, which offers a disaggregated analysis of the distribution of equity inputs, suggests that the nature of resource redistribution does matter in the current conjuncture in South Africa.

### **Nuancing the nature of change**

Intra-provincial equity across former departments has increased from 1999 to 2002, demonstrating the success of equity measures. Across socio-economic quintiles, however, inequality has been reduced to a lesser extent. The spread of expenditure has increased between schools in former departments such as the DET, suggesting much greater internal differentiation among poor black learners. Within former DET and HOA schools, the main equity driver is the learner: educator ratio, which has had differing impacts.

The level of per capita expenditure, particularly when inflation is taken into account, is insufficient to accommodate historical backlogs. Despite the increases in former DET schools, the overall level of state expenditure continues to be the same as for former HOA schools. Quintile ranking shows that poor schools continue to be worse off in terms of personnel per capita expenditure. A significant finding of the study is that, since 1999, socio-economic status rather than race has been a more accurate predictor of equity gains.

While discrimination in financial resource allocation has been removed, inequalities and inequity have not. Though some<sup>35</sup> have argued that racial equity as ‘race blindness’ has been achieved, this research finds that the nature of this racial equity is complex. Despite greater convergence of expenditure, racial patterns of equity still persist. Moreover, equity defined as equal educational opportunity is yet to be put in place.<sup>36</sup>

### **Socio-economic indicators and per capita expenditure**

While much research has used race as the key indicator of inequality, this research argues that detailed analysis based on socio-economic indicators provides a much better explanatory frame for social change in post-apartheid South Africa. It reaffirms

some of the earliest work on schools<sup>37</sup> and on the role of socio-economic conditions in explaining inequality. When schools are disaggregated by socio-economic quintiles, poor schools continue to be worse off despite moves to racial equalization. An emerging view in the post-apartheid context is that there continue to be strong correlations between class, income and schooling,<sup>38</sup> and that education attainment continues to be affected both by race and socio-economic differentials.<sup>39</sup> This research found that the main mechanism for redress – the poverty targeting mechanism – has managed to accurately identify the poorer schools. However, the overall level of such non-personnel expenditure is very low and therefore does not make a significant difference to resourcing. It also appears that schools in quintiles just above the most poor have not substantially benefited from the poverty-ranking exercise.

#### **A deracialized mixed middle class and internal differentiation within the poor**

Following on the work of Daniel, Habib and Southall,<sup>40</sup> the study finds that education development and the emerging system have favoured the expanding deracialized middle class. This is illustrated in this research by the demographic shifts that have taken place and the exercise of school choice by parents, with the increase of African and Indian children in former white schools in their quest for quality education. As Chisholm points out, favouring the middle class was not the intention of policy; in fact, the intention was the opposite – redress for the poor.<sup>41</sup> Evidence is also provided of internal differentiation within the poor, with ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ being apparent. Thus, while intra-provincial equity across former departments has improved, within former departments it has not. The reconstitution of the middle class, particularly with changing demographics, requires greater research.

#### **Private inputs into public schooling: widening the gap**

Social capital and the presence of private expenditure in public schooling is subject to intense debate in the comparative context.<sup>42</sup> The level of private funding through parental contributions continues to be the main determinant of differentiation within the public schooling sector. The greatest percentage of increases in private expenditure has been for the poorest schools. The better-off schools have had a gradual increase in private expenditure over the last few years. The main

contributor to private school income is school fees, and the level of school fees in former DET schools is much lower than the provincial norm. Private funding is used for quality differentiation, including employing educators to lower learner: educator ratios. Much of post-apartheid education policy on schooling is based on the notion of decentralization and self-managing schools, which has as its rationale the promotion of equity, efficiency and redress and increasing community participation.<sup>43</sup> Whether the key outcomes of decentralization include equity and democratic governance is under considerable debate.<sup>44</sup>

Differing levels of private expenditure continue to lead to the main differentiation in public schooling. The ‘resource affluence’ of the schools which receive greater private resources is marked, and illustrates the quality and equity differentials among public schools.<sup>45</sup> The analysis here disaggregates the patterns of private contributions to schools, and examines the manner in which such contributions could contribute to education inequity in public schooling. Private contributions to public schools require more research attention.

In relation to our initial question about equalization and its direction, the research found that after eight years of post-apartheid education and democracy, equalization of expenditure rather than differential distribution has been achieved. Even within this ‘sameness’ there continue to be poor schools that are not better off. Differential distribution, which occurs through inter-provincial mechanisms, is not implemented differentially at intra-provincial level. Thus far, we have achieved resource allocation which has sought to establish equality or ‘sameness’ as defined by Secada.<sup>46</sup> Equity, however, which refers to that which is socially just,<sup>47</sup> and which would lead to differential outcomes, has yet to be achieved.

All of this takes us to the heart of the debate on equity. The typography of inequality in post-apartheid South Africa is complex and nuanced, with unexpected winners and losers. This chapter argues that while considerable progress has been made towards a distribution of public funds, significant inequalities persist. These are shaped to a large extent by the social challenge of overcoming the legacy of apartheid. The ability to deal with these challenges will determine how a developing nation such as South Africa will achieve equity and social justice in the twenty-first century.

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18. Between 1983 and 1994, the South African Parliament was composed of three Houses: the House of Assembly for whites, the House of Delegates for Indians and the House of Representatives for coloureds. Each of these Houses was responsible for the education of individuals of their racial group. Since Africans did not have the franchise, education for African children fell under the Department of Education and Training, administered by the Department of Bantu Affairs. This disparate education system was rationalized by the South African Schools Act of 1996.
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# MEETING A PRESENT NEED: REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMUNITY EDUCATION FORUM PROJECT

MICHAEL GARDINER

## **Introduction**

The primary purpose of the Community Education Forum Project (hereafter, the Project) was to trace the impact of Community Education Fora (CEFs) upon the communities in which they were located. During the implementation of the Project, attention was also drawn to the theoretical and methodological bases upon which the Project was proceeding and their consequent effects, for example, upon the roles of the Education Policy Consortium (EPC) researchers in the CEF project. This chapter attends to those two elements of this Project.

The data on which the reflections in this chapter are based is derived from four provincial reports encompassing six sites.<sup>1</sup> The reports consisted of: monthly reports and journals written by Community Researchers (CRs); papers drawn up by EPC researchers; reports of meetings, discussions and comments by all researchers; interviews with figures in each community; and community histories, political profiles and accounts of current educational practices, training workshops for CRs and national workshops for all EPC researchers.<sup>2</sup> All EPC researchers had previous research experience: some were academics while others were engaged either in Education Policy Unit or NGO-oriented research. This combination did mean tensions, disputes and differing expectations of the Project. However, those with experience in the Nelson Mandela Foundation's rural education project<sup>3</sup> avoided making explicit and overt theoretical judgments at the outset and instead made an essentially political decision to bring communities to research, and research to communities, through the formation of CEFs, and then tracing the effects of such intervention. This decision allowed researchers

to step aside (if only temporarily) from certain orthodoxies, in order to reconsider standard notions about community research when repudiating deficit models of apprehension, and to rethink the meanings and effects of standard terms such as 'rural' and 'development'.

Importantly, the researchers acknowledged the necessity of finding the complexity of each context, situation, effect, meaning and other dimensions of what transpired. Acknowledgement, recognition and affirmation of the complex have been one of the major achievements of this Project. Central to the engagement with complexity has been the recognition that every community contains the powerful presence of both the apartheid past and the post-apartheid present. The apartheid past has bequeathed contestations over traditional leadership, land and legitimacy;<sup>4</sup> the effects of Christian National Education and its venomous Fundamental Pedagogics;<sup>5</sup> endemic forms of poverty;<sup>6</sup> cultural confusions and distortions but also the continued integrity of certain practices;<sup>7</sup> the resonances of forced removals, resistance and the reclamation of land and property;<sup>8</sup> dependence upon urban centres;<sup>9</sup> and tensions between traditional and modern practices.<sup>10</sup> Post-apartheid factors include the need to reconceptualize terms such as 'rural'<sup>11</sup> and 'community',<sup>12</sup> and to address issues of inclusion and access to the economy and to education,<sup>13</sup> the nature and purpose of schooling,<sup>14</sup> relationships between education and community development,<sup>15</sup> the nature of the school curriculum,<sup>16</sup> and the open presence of political organizations as well as democratic national and local government.

This welter of issues, normal in South Africa, permeated and enriched all aspects and phases of

the CEF project. Such a research environment, with its unpredictability, the incomplete knowledge of even the ‘deep insider’ researchers, and the shift in preconceptions that most case studies effect,<sup>17</sup> demanded an approach rooted in *phronesis* rather than in the analytical nature of the epistemic or the informational and skill-oriented focus of *techné*.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, researchers had no opportunity for dispassionate and objective investigations into the nature of communities and their assumptions about education. Instead, by establishing dynamic and active CEFs, the Project unleashed dormant energies among communities which manifested themselves in appropriately varied ways. It was through such interchanges that EPC researchers learned the communities’ concerns about and attitudes towards education. In this respect, the CEF project’s impact was similar to that of the Nelson Mandela Foundation study,<sup>19</sup> particularly in the ways in which communities began to reflect on themselves.

This chapter reflects the fluctuating tensions between a subjective episteme (in this case, the positionality of researchers in relation to the knowledge produced and to the research subjects)<sup>20</sup> and the social episteme (the knowledge, concerns and experiences of communities and their schools). Such tensions can be resolved theoretically and conceptually, but in practice they are a real and demanding (though positive) presence. Despite their inchoate experiences, the researchers found value in the Project’s approach to community research (in education as well as in other spheres of community life) and in establishing means for communities to deal with the broader issues affecting education. What this ‘value’ consists in is suggested in the reflections that follow.

### **Conceptual signposts derived from implementing the Project: meandering through the labyrinth of theory**

Because the CEF project did not subscribe to the ‘apriorization’ of theory, it opened itself to a wide and varying construction of theory emanating from the nature and conduct of engagements by researchers with communities. Out of regular meetings of EPC researchers, and during the training of Community Researchers (CRs), a selection of clustered conceptual signposts (rather than firm theoretical assertions) was identified. This section is therefore subtitled: theoretically fraught and methodologically laden.

### **Community empowerment**

The CEF project offered communities an idea<sup>21</sup> which they could take up, the idea of establishing a representative forum to address the larger issues affecting education in each community. Local CRs were then appointed by EPC researchers on the advice from the new CEF, and trained to represent the Project continuously at the research site.<sup>22</sup> CEFs were urged to be representative of community interests and sensitive to gender and youth presences, and to try to resemble democratic structures already established within the community.<sup>23</sup>

No material resources were brought in by the Project. Instead, it was suggested to CEFs that, with the help of teachers, they become familiar with the new curriculum in order to find ways to support schools by making available local resources such as skills, equipment and expertise. Like other forums (such as policing), a forum for all educational activities coupled with assistance to schools in implementing the new curriculum was one of many places to initiate dialogue between teachers and the broader community. Engagement with the curriculum – a closely guarded mystery of the teacher’s craft long off-limits to outsiders – was an appropriate place to start, since attention there by the broader community would immediately destabilize some of the old divisions between teachers and community members.

Though CEFs were community-driven, making space for communities to set their own agendas for educational development and linking civil society with households and schools, they needed capacity to gather information and assemble their own expertise with which to hold their ground in engagements with educators. Hence they were requested by the Project to produce three documents: a local history, a political profile of the community and an account of the ‘nonformal’ education practised in the community. Such investigations into community life, and the collection of information with adequate depth and coherence, proved to be both formidably difficult and significantly valuable.

The strategy of the Project was to bring schools into the educational ambit of community life, but also to reduce the ‘epistemic oppression’<sup>24</sup> of which much research in Africa has been accused. Though the research posture required of EPC researchers by this Project is discussed separately below, it must be remarked here how difficult it was for researchers, with their array of expertise, to exercise the restraint

demanded by this approach.

In addition to such actions and strategies, this Project went beyond collecting ‘voices’<sup>25</sup> and sought instead to establish conditions for people to speak to each other in a public forum about education. Thus the Project has been more ethnographic than some variants of action research that seek to solve problems, and has instead encouraged communities to bring forward the problematics that confront them for recognition, acknowledgement, discussion and possible action.

### **Communities and their schools**

The Nelson Mandela Foundation’s study had highlighted aspects of the difficult relations between schools and community members.<sup>26</sup> School Governing Bodies (SGBs)<sup>27</sup> are bureaucratic structures that include parent voices to ensure compliance with policy. As ‘mediating structures that seek to facilitate dialogue between policies, ordinary discourses and discursive practices at large at community level’,<sup>28</sup> CEFs should, and in some cases did, provide platforms for SGBs and principals, as well as educators from all local schools who otherwise did not meet, to discuss shared educational concerns.

At each research site, the CEF shifted the nature of the relationship between schools and parents and between schools and the broader community. Once a CEF was fully in place, the school became more a part of the community’s spectrum of educational interest and practice than before. Though schools as instruments of the state remain answerable to the state, with the presence of CEFs they became accountable to the whole community as well, and not only to parents.<sup>29</sup> Add to this the CEF interest in the implementation of the new curriculum, and a new vista of engagement between school and community opens up. Though the new curriculum encourages engagement between community members and learners and schools, there is little evidence to suggest that these possibilities have been explored as yet. The only other organization that could make this possible would be a suitably oriented teacher union.

Though all communities have members with high degrees of local expertise, an expertise that most teachers lack, the incorporation of specific cultural practices into classrooms is massively controversial and therefore deeply interesting. For some, it is a matter of life and death at the levels of recognition and more deeply, visibility.<sup>30</sup> The creation of a CEF

and an interest in curricular matters brings local interests to bear on provincial and national policies and challenges the professional prerogative of teachers to be the sole fiduciaries of international knowledge. The bitter tension between local and school knowledge is quite clearly a political move masquerading as a pedagogical issue.<sup>31</sup>

In a number of cases, it was moving to observe that the creation of CEFs led to parents providing schools with information that they had withheld previously, volunteering information to teachers about domestic matters and the health of their children, attending school meetings in greater numbers than before and treating the schools as a place where matters affecting children could be transacted. Somewhere and somehow, barriers went down and levels of trust and incorporated familiarity were developed. In these cases, the presence of CEFs appeared to generate a climate of greater mutual access and reciprocal visibility.

### **Leadership and democracy**

The conceptual signposts that have been highlighted already point to engagement by the CEF project with questions of leadership and democracy at each research site. Given the over-arching rubric of the EPC research programme,<sup>32</sup> and in the light of the essentially political nature of CEFs, matters of representation, power and ownership, as in all social affairs, were seen as normal and inevitable.

In obliging schools to both account to the community at large and engage with that community over curricular matters, the CEFs are bringing back the voices of that 1980s educational movement, People’s Education for People’s Power, which later educational reforms failed to accommodate and bureaucracy eventually stifled.<sup>33</sup> This makes political parties nervous because of the potential wildness (anarcho-syndicalist?) and unpredictability of such practices. Another dimension of CEFs is that they are capable of straddling both traditional and democratic forms of leadership. Both forms of leadership showed interest in CEFs, except at Daggakraal, which has never been led by any chief, and at highly urbanized Cato Crest, where traditional leaders are not significant. In this way, CEFs became areas of contestation and reconciliation not amenable to party or bureaucratic control. In Phetole, for example, the local principal who attempted to capture the CEF was moved out by the community. In Davhana, the establishment of

the CEF had the extraordinary effect of persuading a reckless and destructive group of local villagers, calling themselves the 'Boeremags', to disband and take constructive part in community affairs, even joining the CEF.

The tension between traditional and democratic forms of leadership remains profoundly unresolved in South Africa – the most recent manifestation of this being the further powers granted to chiefs over land – and this is emblematic of centuries of bitter conflict between the ancient and the modern since the days of feudalism.<sup>34</sup> CEFs cannot and will not resolve such deep and extensive issues, but they can accommodate tensions like these in the focus on education. Whereas communal and familial forms of education have remained distinct from school education, CEFs, as mediating bodies, have the potential to bring into accord these dimensions of the whole education of people, instead of leaving them as unspoken and non-communicating elements in the lives of children and adults. While the two forms of education remain apart and unengaged with each other, it is unlikely that questions of rights, gender and other forms of social justice, and discriminatory practices, will be addressed by communities. In other words, CEFs have the potential to become leaders in their communities on matters of value as embodied in educational practice and influenced by issues of human rights and social justice.

### Revision of terminology and understanding

A constant feature of the CEF project has been the review of terms that researchers found themselves compelled to use but which clamoured for revision so as to make possible new understanding. It must be noted that the reverse also occurred: new understanding made the older definitions of terms unacceptable and inappropriate. A classic example of this is how terms such as 'work' and 'income' had to be revised before the survival of people in the poorest of KwaZulu-Natal villages could be understood by outside researchers.<sup>35</sup>

Triggered by experience of the Nelson Mandela Foundation's project and through the determination of two Centre for Education Policy Development researchers, Zafar and Ngonini, an entire issue of the Wits Education Policy Unit's journal was devoted to the need for a new understanding of the term 'rural', a concept which has accrued the ponderous baggage of Eurocentric, urban-oriented and apartheid-infected

modes of thinking about certain places where people live.<sup>36</sup> This work in turn encouraged Sookrajh and her research students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to think about questions of the spatial in relation to human communities.<sup>37</sup> Most recently, Porteus, on the basis of her work in the Eastern Cape, has suggested a radical redefinition of 'rural'.<sup>38</sup>

That convenient yet treacherous term, 'community', has continued to go through a range of transmogrifications and shape-shifting, despite its dogged clinging to dangerously bucolic and monolithic conceptions of rural life. This term caused havoc in the Cato Crest site where educational zones, municipal boundaries and local government wards delimit markedly different spaces, compelling residents to occupy the same place in different capacities and be members of multiple communities simultaneously.<sup>39</sup> This also underscores the deeply *provisional* nature of urban life among people in cities.<sup>40</sup> We found no satisfactory replacement for the threadbare term 'village', though this was definitely inapplicable to Daggakraal, which consists of an extensive set of farms, and to the infamous Cato Crest, an informal settlement squashed on all sides by the new housing estates that are part of the reclamation by the Ethekwini Metropolitan area of the old Cato Manor of historic renown.

The following section in the discussion of conceptual signposts that emanated from the CEF project is subtitled: methodologically fraught and theoretically laden.

### The universal and the particular: living with complexity and detail

Persistent attention by EPC researchers to events, circumstances and situations at each research site repeatedly confirmed the need to scrutinize the particular and focus on detail. We discovered a need to see the trees and pay less attention to the whole forest, and to attend to those details and particulars with intent attention.<sup>41</sup> Anxiety over how to deal with the general and the universal riddled the researchers' discussions and they searched for vindication for this determined focus on the particular.

Important direction was found in Wittgenstein's notion of 'family resemblances' between seemingly disparate entities that nevertheless belong to each other, such as different kinds of games, and in Blaug's reading of *phronesis* as a means of recognising these resemblances.<sup>42</sup> We also appropriated Darwin's

expression when he was compelled by an inexplicable event to exclaim, 'Markedly different but strikingly similar',<sup>43</sup> suggesting the possibility of reconciliation between the integrity of the particular and the sweep of the general. We recognise that all forms of attention obscure or overlook that which is not being attended to, but, in our view, emphasis upon the particular should take place before an attempt is made to establish wider linkages.

We were also determined to shy away from the abstract individual preferred by Kantian moral philosophy as well as from limited notions of the individual as impartial, rational and abstract. We came to ask how we, as researchers, could include in our sense of what happened in communities with CEFs, the feelings of passion, concern, outrage, indignation, joy, delight, pain, scepticism, distress, sorrow and grief that people expressed. Exclusion of the particular would also sever our ties with communities and our relationships with people in them when, as has been assumed by other conventions, the acknowledgement or inclusion of such responses, feelings and emotions threaten the impartiality of researchers in the face of competing self-interests. Willingness to include such edgy and vital qualities has become difficult in the writing up of observations and understandings of how communities have responded to the presence and influence of CEFs in their midst. Researchers in the Nelson Mandela Foundation project encountered deep difficulties in writing about their particular experiences in villages in relation to a broadly thematic issue, such as the relationships between schools and parents across all nine research sites. Certain kinds of clarity (usually the general) obscure appallingly the lively thrust of the particular.

However, given the insistence in this Project on the importance of the particular, it became increasingly difficult for researchers to simplify what they became aware of, or to invoke stereotypes to explain situations and events or to deploy that destructive deficit model lodged in the consciousness of so many. In contrast to the smoothness of sleek methodologies or slick theories, researchers in this Project found themselves in a welter of complexities, conflicts, contradictions, compromises and collective collaborations, and this led to the adoption of particular research postures.

### **Research postures**

The three key sets of figures in the CEF project were the EPC researchers, the CRs and the members of

the CEFs. Each site was initially familiar in different ways and to differing degrees to the EPC researchers. Though these links enabled rapid access to each community, the notion of researchers as 'insiders' was what determined the choice of site. But each 'insider' had developed another persona and set of connections: Paul Kgobe, a senior member of the Centre for Education Policy Development, grew up in Madietane but now lives in Ekurhuleni; Reshma Sookrajh is a senior academic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and resident in a Durban suburb but was born in Cato Manor; Stunky Duku has just completed her doctorate and lectures at the University of Fort Hare in East London but has a house near her mother in Tshatshu; and though he lived in Daggakraal for some years, Brian Ramadiro was an Education Rights Project researcher at the Wits Education Policy Unit in Johannesburg and now, as a doctoral student, is also Deputy Director of the Mandela Institute at the University of Fort Hare in East London.

It was clearly important to consider such factors in the light of how developments in communities were regarded and understood. And how were the EPC researchers regarded by the villagers? At first, the leaders of Tshatshu assumed that the CEF project was a vehicle for Stunky Duku to reclaim the throne taken from her family. Brian Ramadiro hoped to reconnect with the network of young activists in Daggakraal, but found those structures shattered by the advent of local government. Though born in Cato Manor, the place had changed so markedly that Reshma Sookrajh had to work with two ex-Nelson Mandela Foundation researchers, one of whom lives in a new housing estate there and whose isiZulu and organizing capacities are strong. The central act that defined the postures of EPC researchers was the appointment at each site of two Community Researchers from within that community. These were genuinely 'deep insiders'. At all the sites except Cato Crest,<sup>44</sup> it was their accounts of events, their advice and guidance and their information that EPC researchers had to rely on in order to trace the development and texture of events.

In seeking a means to describe the position of the EPC researchers, we adopted the term 'effacement', derived from a fine poem on motherhood by Sylvia Plath (see Appendix 2). Sookrajh and her team of doctoral students then pursued this term, producing a concept paper for the Project.<sup>45</sup> Effacement of

researchers does not mean their obliteration, or the abnegation of responsibility or withdrawal from involvement. It is an awkward and even painful process of standing back, of creating space for others to act in and draw upon their own resources. It is also a process whereby the powerful are shifted out and replaced by others, be it the next generation or a different culture or emphasis. It is also an acknowledgement of transience and impermanence. In this case, it was powerful EPC researchers getting out of the way so that communities could develop CEFs according to their priorities and needs.<sup>46</sup>

Adopting the priorities of *phronesis* as Flyvbjerg articulates them,<sup>47</sup> meant incorporating into the posture of EPC researchers the issue of value, because *phronesis* offers a form of value rationality. Values are thought about in relation to praxis, and thus are pragmatic, variable, context-dependent and oriented towards action. This pivotal notion<sup>48</sup> formed the major link between the CEF project and the thrust of the EPC programme on democracy, human rights and social justice. It stabilized the priorities of the research programme for researchers and gave direction to the judgements that researchers had to make. The importance of this stability is made clear when the destabilization of researchers' preconceptions in doing work of this kind is taken into account. As events developed at each research site in response to the presence of a CEF, so were the values, judgements, and priorities of researchers shifted. At each national CEF workshop, new and untried as well as imperfectly clear possibilities were discussed and explored for their potential to open up deeper understanding of the situations that were encountered. At the centre was a continuous question about the identity and role of the EPC researchers.

### Community Researchers

No such uncertainty appears to have afflicted (in the creative sense) the Community Researchers (CRs). Their role was a difficult one because they were asked to retain their community activism (which was one of the reasons why they were appointed by the Project) at the same time as they acted on behalf of the EPC. And they too had their agendas. In Davhana, one CR was clearly holding a watching brief on the Project for the traditional leadership. In Daggakraal the CRs used their position to re-establish youth and sporting activities, much to the advantage of the Project there. In Madietane, the CRs temporarily became the

leaders of a CEF reconstituted into an education crisis committee that freed members of the SGB who had been arrested on specious charges of intimidating a new, imported principal.

But throughout this turbulence – which was fully expected in one form or another – the CRs recorded CEF meetings as well as all events and developments that had educational significance in their communities. Many of these were not related to or caused by the establishment of CEFs. The CEFs simply added to the continuous swirl of activity that occurs in all human societies and communities.

Because the CRs were primarily activists, their reports and journals were more representational of events themselves than of the events' significance. However, because the EPC researchers knew much about the villages with which they were working, and through the regular use of telephonic communication, the CRs' oral impressions and interpretations of events could be retrieved by EPC researchers to flesh out the sometimes sparse recording of events in the monthly reports. Our experience suggests that much thought is needed if such a research relationship is to yield fuller and more comprehensive insights by local researchers into the dynamics of educational communities than we were able to extract this time around. More training is required, perhaps, but there are other factors that need attention as well. The painstaking research by Adato, Lund and Mhlongo<sup>49</sup> in KwaZulu-Natal took place over a three year span and was premised on the establishment of relations of deep trust between researchers and villagers.

We regard the arrangement of EPC researchers and CRs as a practical and satisfactory one. The arrangement extended and enriched the reach of researchers outside of communities. Training of CRs is intrinsic to a Project such as this. They were chosen with the active help of communities and demonstrated a high degree of intelligent independence. This was most marked in Daggakraal where the CRs were left to their own devices for lengthy periods without visits by EPC researchers. Consequently they devised a means of providing young people in the community with multiple forms of sport and cultural activities, which were then used to engage the schools in addition to participating in regional events and competitions. This had a revivifying effect on the community as a whole and the CRs had to work hard to avoid being co-opted by councillors, the police and other interest groups. On one notable occasion, a group of young

men approached the Daggakraal CRs and said they were all criminals who wished to renounce that kind of life and wanted to be taught useful skills so as to find other means of livelihood. The CRs took them all to the police station and told the police to work with these young men so as to make them productive and self-sufficient community members.

### **CEFs and their communities**

The central research question of the Project was: *How useful can a representative Community Education Forum be in bringing parents and other community members together with educators to implement the Revised National Curriculum Statement, using local resources?*

This was undergirded by four assumptions: that a CEF is a good way of harnessing local resources and bringing community members together with professional educators to implement the new curriculum; that teachers should use local resources (in addition to resources provided from elsewhere) to implement this curriculum; that it is educationally useful to bring community members together with teachers on curricular matters; and that local resources are useful for implementing the curriculum.

By 'resources', the Project had in mind, among other things: village people with knowledge and skills; active and retired professionals; community historians and keepers of customs; young people (often unemployed) with post-matric qualifications; poets, writers, musicians, dancers, craftspeople and other creative figures; healers; people with many kinds of experience; business people; family artefacts; and any materials that the school could use. All these and more are available in every community but are rarely made use of by schools.

It is important to note here some features of the contexts in which CEFs were introduced and established. Unfortunately, some level of generalization is necessary. In most sites, community organizations were either weak or else had disintegrated in the aftermath of the 1995 local government elections. The relative failure of local government to deliver services except in sporadic and uneven forms intensified feelings of bewilderment, disappointment and irritation among community members. It is likely that a sense of powerlessness ensued among people who, earlier, had mobilized against and resisted oppressive policies. One EPC researcher, Ngonini, suggested that the change was an outcome of the

decline in social politics and the rise of discipline and regulation politics as a predominantly technical field of production and control, with concomitant loss of connection with the practicalities and complexities of community life.<sup>50</sup> But as Kgobe suggested, the reason for the dissolution of these community organizations could well have been that they had served their pre-1994 purposes.<sup>51</sup>

Early in the life of the Project, Ngonini theorized that CEFs were heuristic devices aimed at promoting community involvement in education, and he suggested that they would take their form from the discursive practices of each community (such as *imbizos*) and would come to resemble other community fora. He also predicted that CEFs would have the potential to reveal otherwise untapped sources of knowledge in rural communities and declared that the CEF philosophy was that education is fundamentally relational.<sup>52</sup>

All the rural communities in the Project, except Daggakraal,<sup>53</sup> demonstrated a marked reliance on traditional leadership, one that is seemingly stable, continuous and familiar, and such leadership welcomed the advent of CEFs. The question being raised here is whether CEFs represented a retrogressive or progressive presence in these communities. Their composition is democratic, and their intention is to destabilize the conventional school-community relationship and improve community influence over all aspects of education offered to their children. Struggles over control of the CEFs suggest that they are sites where the traditional and the modern can meet. And the Project deliberately located one site in an urban area to test the CEF approach under non-rural conditions. It became clear to EPC researchers that it is dangerous to regard communities as if they are distinct, organic entities. To do so, is to separate them off from complexity and modernity and from their roles in political and economic development.<sup>54</sup> Here is another instance of 'visibility' mentioned earlier. It can be argued that Daggakraal's fame as a centre of resistance to forced removals in the 1980s is the cause of its disregard, notwithstanding the occasional quick visits by national leaders to this remarkable place. Its reputation has obscured and rendered invisible its dire economic and other needs.

The contestation over the CEFs was visible in the attempts by educators to dominate them. In Phetole, the school principal assumed the CEF chair until he was dislodged by the community as a whole. In

Madietane, the new principal would not allow the CEF to meet on school grounds. At CEF workshops in Tshatshu, teachers would not sit at the same tables as ordinary village folk. And in Davhana, the teachers initially treated the CEF with utmost condescension. Though the initial Project idea was for community members to engage with Foundation Phase educators, all CEFs now insist on having representatives (educators and SGB members) from all educational institutions in the area, as well as secondary school learners. Public and private institutions are included. The moment the CEFs took the view that they needed to attend to a wider range of issues affecting education, such as health and safety, the intense and exclusive foci on the preoccupations of individual schools were contextualized, which in turn took the school-community relationship to a new level.

Sections of each community welcomed the idea of a CEF. The relatively cohesive and coherent community of Davhana elected an interim and then a full CEF within a couple of weeks of the introduction of the Project. However, it took the schools some time to learn how to engage with the CEF. In the beginning, teachers and principals spoke sharply and down to them, blamed them for being ignorant and unreliable and handed them a list of needs the CEF should supply, as if it were their functionary. But gradually educators began to talk to non-educators as though they were normal people, not miscreants, and to explain what they needed and why. This shift of tone and attitude made for a constructive relationship, the most striking effect of which was the change in the stance of many parents towards the schools and the teachers. Formerly, parents had withheld information from the school, such as a child's date of birth, current state of health and other normal information that schools use for educational purposes. After the formation of the CEF in Davhana, parents willingly gave what information was asked for, came voluntarily to inform teachers about illness and other events at home affecting the child's learning, visited the schools freely (but not intrusively) and attended school meetings in larger numbers than before. In response, teachers began to inform CEF members of the themes, programmes and learning sequences that they were about to offer learners. Educators and community members were adamant that all this was a direct consequence of the presence of the CEF.

Whereas a CEF was established rapidly with the blessing of the chief and the support of the relatively

coherent Davhana community, it took months of tricky negotiations with various community factions and business as well as political interests to eventually assemble a CEF in Cato Crest, a polluted, sewage- and rat-infested urban conurbation of shacks. This patience and fortitude paid off, however, allowing the CEF to authoritatively represent a community that is economically fractured and also unstable in terms of life expectancy. This CEF (like that in Tshatshu) drew up and adopted a constitution.<sup>55</sup> At a community meeting on 4 December 2006, the chair of the CEF, Mrs Dlamini, an influential sangoma, listed the issues that had been addressed through the cooperation of EPC researchers with community members in Cato Crest: learners denied access to schools because of non-payment of fees; parents and neighbours creating deleterious environments for young children through drinking and inappropriate forms of behaviour; the two primary schools visited to understand their concerns as a basis for effective engagement with them; and a successful meeting with community members and parents to analyse political and health matters so that the CEF could understand the key social pressures faced by the community. These achievements occurred in the face of some CEF members dying, others moving away to take up employment and difficulties with venues; and the CEF emerged from the December meeting strengthened, with additional members, new portfolios and a plan of action for 2007.

Each research site has a different picture to paint. The Tshatshu CEF, for example, has been included on the Village Committee and now speaks for the entire village on educational matters, even though contestations between powerful families and painful legacies are far from being resolved. In Daggakraal, the CEF was initially composed exclusively of educators and parents from the five primary schools, but ended up being run by the CRs who used the CEF as a way of establishing relations between schools and youth organizations in the community, as described above.

Another matter of concern in the Project has been the question of culture. Traditional forms of dance, music, customs and ceremonies as well as myths, legends and histories comprise the expertise of cultural custodians, and about these teachers seem at best to be superficially informed. Finding ways of integrating the traditional with the modern at schools is a highly complex area and one of great contestation. Cati Coe's investigation into what happened when the

government of Ghana sought to introduce official, traditional culture into schools indicates how such efforts are bound to fail when educators are not sympathetic to what, from their Christian viewpoint, is an influx of the barbaric into their classrooms.<sup>56</sup>

In Phetole, for example, there was great excitement when traditional dancers, at the behest of the CEF and the CR, offered to teach primary school children. Dancing soon displaced conventional physical education exercises and the parents, a generation that seems to have missed this kind of instruction, applauded the fact that their children were acquiring skills they thought had been lost. But now, dancing and music is used only to entertain visiting dignitaries, and cultural practices have been reduced to events and performances away from the classroom but also dislocated from the proper contexts of such activities. In Coe's resonant phrase, traditional culture became 'drumming and dancing'.<sup>57</sup> Arts and culture are neither the most obvious nor the easiest ways of bringing schools and communities together. The new curriculum makes plenty of space for children to learn about cultural forms and activities at actual ceremonies and to gain understanding of what those ceremonies and their constituent parts imply and how they relate to the broader cultural texture of that society. Thus this can be achieved by educators and community members, even though, as one dance expert in Madietane expressed it, 'the only culture that teachers know are beauty contests and drum majorettes!'

### **Community Research**

In addition to tracing the impact of CEFs on communities, the Project sought to take research to communities and to bring communities to research. Each community was asked to write up its history, to generate a profile of power relations and to put together an account of the full range of nonformal educational activities conducted there, including cultural, traditional, familial and other activities involving overt instruction and induction.

The purposes of this last were multiple. The aim was for the community to provide itself with a picture of all the different kinds of learning it gives to its members; to provide non-educator members of the CEF with information not available to educators; and to bring under the CEF's overview both the nonformal and formal educational activities in the community. It was hoped that this would show that the school is

only one dimension of the full educational spectrum offered by community, family and school together. The outcomes of this first implementation were disappointing, however, though we remain persuaded of the worthwhile nature of the exercise.

CRs were asked to use whatever means they thought appropriate to compile a 'political profile' that would reveal who was answerable to whom and where different forms of power and influence were located in each community. This information was omitted in the Nelson Mandela Foundation's project and its absence was felt. CRs did some good work on this task, but it emerged towards the end of the Project rather than closer to the beginning when it would have been more useful. Information gathered through CR reporting actually provided central information of this kind in the struggles over control of the CEFs in Tshatshu, Phetole, Cato Crest and Davhana. But deeper investigations of this kind could reveal additional sources of power and influence such as by gangsters, money-lenders and other social actors.

Of the three assignments, the most successful was the compilation of local histories. This was done by community members at five of the six sites.<sup>58</sup> Local historians had to submit their first draft to EPC researchers and then read the next draft to a community meeting. Communities contain huge repositories of information of all kinds, especially historical and thus useful for a range of political purposes. The apartheid state had banished those who knew the history authoritatively and who could use it to demonstrate the basic illegality of the puppet chiefs installed by the state.<sup>59</sup> Now, EPC researchers wanted communities to write their own histories, as part of bringing communities to research and as a contribution by the CEF to schools for use in the classroom. The intent was also to trigger debate. In Phetole, the history writer was told that he favoured the Christian churches at the expense of the community's other forms of belief and worship. He also had to tone down references to the collaboration of chiefs and community members with forced removals and house burning in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so as to avoid an explosion of anger and recrimination in the community. After another local historian had read his piece, a woman rose and said: 'You can tell that this was written by a man! He tells the story of only one half of the community.'

In all the rural histories, except for Daggakraal, there is a wrestling with traditional leadership and

how it transmitted its authority down to the present. There are also huge silences and omissions in every account. The Davhana story omits the fact that the present ruling family assumed power only in 1927. There are few references to conflict or dissension or ugly events. The inventories (rather than histories) that have emerged from the three Limpopo sites are sanitized and wholly unreliable, other than as useful sources of bits of local lore and culture. It is likely that the communities are not yet ready to tell their stories with any degree of veracity and accuracy. Living in Davhana is the man who tortured activists on behalf of the Venda government. In the village of Tshatshu, the Sebe family continues to dominate community affairs, which allows for scant reference to the brutalities of Lennox and Charles Sebe. Instead, the history tells us how the village got its name and who begat whom and who milked the cow, but not much more.

Two real histories did emerge from this Project. The one was from Cato Manor and the other from Daggakraal. There is much already on record about the history of Cato Manor and there is now a museum in the suburb to which droves of Durban children are brought. The EPC researcher in KwaZulu-Natal commissioned an academic history of Cato Manor,<sup>60</sup> and at the same time two assistant EPC researchers developed a narrative history of the community by means of three extended interviews and their commentary on them. Neither of these means of obtaining a history was the intention of the Project, but the narrative history does reflect deep insider voices. In the case of Daggakraal, the CRs decided to engage with people in the community called 'icons', the elderly who had played a major role in community affairs. These figures wrote accounts of early Daggakraal and were interviewed on tape. They had a strong sense of narrative and significant detail and the result is a startling and gripping account from 1911 onwards, the time when the community bought three farms with the help of the lawyer, Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme.

It should be noted that the Daggakraal and Driefontein communities were the only ones to successfully resist their incorporation into 'homelands' in the 1980s. One of the most helpful informants in the compilation of the Daggakraal history was the widow of the chairperson of the Daggakraal Committee of Twelve who, with the murdered Saul Mkhize of Driefontein, led that resistance. She wrote her account in isiZulu and provided a sheaf

of documents to amplify the account. The Project coordinator has put all her material and that from other 'icons' into a composite account which will be read to the Daggakraal community.

Despite varying levels of success in getting communities to compile their histories, it is clear that EPC researchers have much to learn about empowering community members to undertake research. As with CRs, regular and programmatic training is needed to augment the skills and abilities that exist among community members. The skills of EPC researchers also need developing through interaction with those who already have them.

### **Conclusion**

This Project began with an unclarified intuitive sense that many South African communities have a need to appropriate, assimilate and incorporate into themselves those institutions which, formerly, had been agencies of misery and oppression. In this case, the focus fell on the relationship between schools and communities. That sensed need became clearer as the Project proceeded, and it took on further substance during the writing of this chapter. Prior to the events of the 1990s, life for most South Africans had been one of continuous opposition to state policies, and people had to live in conditions of persistent horror of what state institutions could and did inflict on them. After 1994, the democratic government gave promise of profound relief from these conditions, but thus far it has proved unable to do all that people had hoped it would do.

The People's Education for People's Power movement of the 1980s was a sure indication of how passionately people wanted to take ownership of schools and make them places of respect, dignity, hope and possibility. Those feelings have neither evaporated nor been satisfied. Organizations such as CEFs are important and necessary *now* because schools need to be embraced by and embedded into communities before they can become institutions of the people which can be trusted and relied upon. There could well be a time when CEFs are no longer necessary. If so, they should be regarded as a transitional means of establishing other, transformed relationships between public schools and their communities. It is possible that this insight about the need for and the role of CEFs applies also to other areas of South African social and political life. This chapter suggests that such a need is both real and important.

## APPENDIX 1

### Our Village<sup>61</sup>

Wopko Jensma

since two gents with white suits rolled up  
our village is not the same anymore  
they pumped our chief full of bullets  
they bumped off all our elders  
they started raping our womenfolk  
they keep talking of a new life for us  
they say this thing is also elsewhere  
they have our whole country tied up  
they have come a long way to help us  
they want us to have faith in them

our village is not the same anymore  
since two gents with white suits rolled up

## APPENDIX 2

### Morning Song<sup>62</sup>

Sylvia Plath

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.  
The midwife slapped your soles and your bald cry  
Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New  
statue.  
In a drafty museum, your nakedness  
Shadows our safety. We stand round as blankly as  
walls.

I'm no more your mother  
Than the cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own  
slow  
Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath  
Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:  
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and  
floral  
In my Victorian nightgown.  
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window  
square  
Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try  
Your handful of notes;

The clear vowels rise like balloons.

1. The six sites, as differentiated by province, were: *Limpopo* province: Madietane and its sister village, Phetole, in Ga-Matlala, south-west of Polokwane, and Davhana, located in Venda between Elim and Giyani; *KwaZulu-Natal*: Cato Crest, an unreconstructed urban settlement in Cato Manor, eThekweni/Durban; *Mpumalanga*: Daggakraal, between Amersfoort and Volksrust; and the *Eastern Cape*: Tshatshu Village, outside King Williams Town.
2. The EPC researchers included: Brian Ramadiro, Ntswake Senosi, Xola Ngonini and Michael Gardiner, from the *Wits Education Policy Unit*; Nkosinathi Mkosi, Mpumelelo 'Fruits' Ndlovu, Stunky Duku and Khayaletu Gxabalashé, from the *Fort Hare Education Policy Unit*; Reshma Sookrajh, Sandile Mbokazi and Thamsanqa Bhengu, plus a team of doctoral students, from the *University of KwaZulu-Natal*; and Paul Kgobe and Thivulawi Mukhwevho, from the *Centre for Education Policy Development*; all coordinated by Michael Gardiner of the Centre for Education Policy Development.
3. Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005). See especially pp.146-156 for an account of the variant of participatory qualitative research used successfully in this Project.
4. See Lungisile Ntsebeza, 'Rural Governance and Citizenship in Post-1994 South Africa: Democracy Compromised?', in Daniel, J., Southall, R. and Lutchman, J. (eds) *State of the Nation: South Africa 2004-2005* (Cape Town: HSRC, 2005); Lungisile Ntsebeza, *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of Land in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006); and newspaper articles such as Patekile Holomisa, 'Ubukhosi the bedrock of African democracy', *Mail & Guardian*, 11-17 February 2000, Herbert Vilakazi, 'How to stop the holocaust of tradition', *The Star*, 3 February 2000, and Sean Jacobs, 'The rightful role of traditional leaders', *City Press*, 26 March 2000. In addition, issue no.52, 2003, of the journal *Transformation* is devoted to matters of land reform in South Africa.
5. Mignon Breier, 'Conundrum, Compromise and Practical Wisdom: The Recognition of Prior Learning in a Teacher Upgrading Programme' (unpublished draft report for the Teacher Education Project, 5 December 2005), ch.3, pp.23-4, contains some trenchant comments on the nature and effects of Fundamental Pedagogics in current teachers' thinking and in courses presently being offered to teachers by some universities.
6. One-third of South Africans live on less than two US dollars a day, and 11% on less than one US dollar a day. The country's Gini coefficient, measuring income inequality, is one of the highest in the world. The poorest parts of the country are in the rural areas that comprised the former 'homelands'. See V.J. Reddy, 'Investment Choices in Education' (paper prepared for the Shuttleworth Foundation, 30 November 2006), and Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices*, pp.x-xi and 144-5.
7. Despite the ubiquitous presence of the modern, each research site incorporated both traditional and intermixed cultural forms as well as those affected by apartheid and the resistance to it.
8. See Cosmas Desmond, *The Discarded People* (Braamfontein: The Christian Institute, 1969/1970); Paul Kgobe, 'Resistance to Betterment in the Pietersburg Area: A Case Study of Ga-

- Matlala, 1940-1980' (unpublished Honours dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992); SANGOCO, 'Economic and Social Rights Report', in *Report on Poverty and Human Rights*, vol. V (Braamfontein: Sangoco, 1997-8); and Deborah James and Xola Ngonini, '(Re)constituting Class? Owners, Tenants and the Politics of Land Reform in Mpumalanga' (paper presented to the conference on State and Society, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004). Removals in Cato Manor are discussed in Brij Maharaj, 'Political Contestation and Urban Reconstruction in Cato Manor' (paper commissioned by the CEF project, 2005) and Sandile Mbokazi and Thamsanqa Bhengu, 'Teacher Development through Partnerships with the Community they Serve' (paper presented at the Teacher Development Conference, University of KwaZulu-Natal, February 2006), and in interviews with Cato Manor residents conducted for the CEF project.
9. Though not documented by the CEF project, economic dependence by rural communities on urban employment and state social grants is well-known. The rural sites had little or no independent economies beyond subsistence.
  10. These tensions compelled EPC researchers to use the term 'local knowledge' rather than 'indigenous knowledge'. The Project had access to two CEF Position Papers – Nkosinathi Mkosi, 'Surveying Indigenous Knowledge, the Curriculum and Development in Africa: A Critical African Viewpoint', 2004, and Nkosinathi Mkosi, 'What can Indigenous Knowledge Mean in the Context of the CEF project?', 2004 – as well as Catherine Odora Hoppers' (ed) *Indigenous Knowledge and the Integration of Knowledge Systems: Towards a Philosophy of Articulation* (Cape Town: New Africa Books, 2002). Given the rich mixture of modern and traditional influences in each community, we chose to frame the educational and epistemological debate as one between 'school knowledge' and 'local knowledge'.
  11. The ideological permutations of this term continue to be a matter of major concern at continental, national and local levels. See Reshma Sookrajh et al., 'The Politics of Place and Space' (CEF Position Paper, 2006); Xola Ngonini, 'Education and Rurality', *The Quarterly Review of Education and Training*, 11, 3, September 2004; and below in this chapter.
  12. This difficult term is discussed later in this chapter. Community researchers in the urban Cato Crest found that different age groups had differing conceptions of *umphakhati* (community). For a fifteen year-old, it meant cohesiveness in the fight against crime. Those between 18 and 30 saw 'community' as defined by a geographical area combined with sharing the same facilities and being exposed to the same social conditions. Those who have spent time in a community are known as *umkantsh'ubomvu* or wise and knowledgeable members of the community.
  13. Unemployment, dropping out of school, difficulties in studying further, rural remoteness and solitariness, and the obsolescence of rural areas as labour reservoirs were some of the concerns encountered by researchers.
  14. More than half the school-going population is located in the three most rural and poorest provinces: Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal (Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices*, p.x; see also pp.96-103).
  15. Three recent papers helpfully addressed these relationships: Elaine Unterhalter and Harry Brighouse, 'Distribution of What? How Will We Know if We Have Achieved Education for All by 2015?' (paper presented at the *3rd Conference on the Capabilities Approach: From Sustainable Development to Sustainable Freedom*, University of Pavia, September 2003); Mark Oranje, 'The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP): Critiques, Easy Answers and the Really Difficult Questions' (paper presented at the conference on *Overcoming Underdevelopment in South Africa's Second Economy*, 28-29 October 2004); and Daniel Nabudere, 'Development is Essentially the Transformation of Rural Life' (seminar paper, University of Fort Hare, 1 June 2005).
  16. The CEF focused on the relations between school knowledge and what it called local knowledge, informed by Cati Coe's *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools: Youth, Nationalism and the Translation of Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), on the incorporation of 'culture' into Ghanaian schools, and by Michael Young's 'The Knowledge Question and the Future of Education in South Africa: A Reply to Michelson's "On Trust, Desire and the Sacred: A Response to Johan Muller's Reclaiming Knowledge"', *Journal of Education*, 36, 2005, on the two forms of knowledge. See also Lerato Seohatse, 'Grounding Knowledge: A Case for the Recognition of Local Knowledge' (CEF Position Paper, 2007).
  17. 'According to the experiences [of Campbell, Ragin, Geertz and others] cited above, it is falsification and not verification which characterizes case study': Bent Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.83. EPC researchers wanted their assumptions challenged and their presuppositions put in disarray, for only then might the realities of the research site become apparent.
  18. *Phronesis*, first drawn to our attention by Flyvbjerg's *Making Social Science Matter* (see Note 17 above), is used here to denote the way researchers called on all their insight, experience, intuition and understanding, including emotions and value-judgements, to make sense of what confronted them at each research site. See also Ricardo Blaug, 'Citizenship and Political Judgement: Between Discourse Ethics and *Phronesis*', *Res Publica*, 6, 2000; Bernt Gustavsson, 'Negotiating Space for Democracy between the Universal and the Particular: The Role of *Phronesis*', in Odora Hoppers, C., Gustavsson, B., Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *Democracy and Human Rights in Education and Society: Explorations from South Africa and Sweden* (Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2007); and below in this chapter.
  19. See Note 3 above.
  20. Xola Ngonini, personal communication, 8 March 2007.
  21. Based on the Community Reference Group of the Nelson Mandela Foundation study.
  22. The role of Community Researcher involved advocacy of the Project, clarifying its aims and objectives for community members, keeping records of interviews, meetings and events related to the CEF, attending training and report-back sessions, keeping in regular contact with EPC researchers, liaison with community sectors and keeping a reflective journal.
  23. CEFs were expected to contain representatives of the School Governing Bodies of all primary schools, educators, parents, community leadership (traditional and democratic), civic organizations, the District Office and other useful members of the community such as traditional healers.
  24. A term used by Ngonini in response to comments on the CEF project at an EPC workshop in August 2005. His references were to Mahmood Mamdani's *Citizen and Subject* (1996), HYPERLINK "<http://www.marxists.org/subject/africa/mamdani/urban-rural.htm>" www.marxists.org/subject/africa/mamdani/urban-rural.htm, and to Nabudere's 'Development is Essentially the Transformation of Rural Life'.
  25. The term 'voices', in progressive social research, has come to mean providing opportunity for silenced people to speak on their own behalf. The Nelson Mandela Foundation study used this Freirean approach by generating community dialogue based on three central questions, gathering multiple voices

- and then stimulating ‘conversations’ that broke new ground in articulating experiences. But, after the meticulous collection, transcription and translation of these ‘voices’, the final report was able to provide very little direct space for them.
26. Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices*, chapters 4, 5 and 6.
  27. School Governing Bodies in their present form are being rethought by the Department of Education.
  28. Oral comment by Ngonini, 15 August 2005.
  29. The *South African Schools Act* (no.84 of 1996), Chapter 1, defines a parent as: ‘(a) the parent or guardian of a learner; (b) the person legally entitled to custody of a learner; or (c) the person who undertakes to fulfill the obligations of a person referred to in paragraphs (a) and (b) towards the learner’s education at school’.
  30. ‘The school in which I will place our children [concluded the most royal lady] will kill in them what today we love and rightly conserve with care. Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from schools, there may be those who will not recognize us. What I am proposing is that we should agree to die in our children’s heart and that the foreigners who have defeated us should fill their place, wholly, which we shall have left free’, Cheik Hamidou, quoted in Seohatse, ‘Grounding Knowledge’.
  31. Seohatse, ‘Grounding Knowledge’. Seohatse argues that all knowledge is rooted in community, society and culture and asserts that the *collective* symbolic of learners needs to be acknowledged by school curricula.
  32. The EPC programme undertook to challenge the narrow human capital view of education, with its commodifying and marketing bent, and committed itself to direct intervention using research to engage policy planners, engender public dialogue, produce scholarly outputs, popularize research and develop a cadre of critical researchers, academics and intellectuals. See the Introduction to this volume, and also the chapter by Enver Motala, ‘Engaged Social Policy Research: Some Reflections on the Nature of its Scholarship’, in this volume.
  33. The term ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ is not used lightly or sentimentally. It is time to revisit the following: George Mashamba, ‘A Conceptual Critique of the People’s Education Discourse’ (University of the Witwatersrand Education Policy Unit Research Report no.3, 1990); Neville Alexander, ‘People’s Education: Limits and Possibilities’, in Randall, P. (ed) *Addressing Educational Crises and Change: Relevant Private Sector Initiatives* (University of the Witwatersrand: Centre for Continuing Education, 1987); Michael Gardiner, ‘Liberating Language: People’s English for the Future’, in Nasson, B. and Samuel, J. (eds) *Education: from Poverty to Liberty* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1990); Michael Gardiner, ‘Efforts at Creating Alternative Curricula: Conceptual and Practical Considerations’, in Nkomo, M. (ed) *Pedagogy of Domination* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1990); Linda Chisholm and Bruce Fuller, ‘Remember People’s Education? Shifting Alliances, State Building and South Africa’s Narrowing Policy Agenda’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 11, 6, 1996; Shireen Motala and Salim Vally, ‘People’s Education: from People’s Power to Tirisano’, in Kallaway, P. (ed) *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994* (Cape Town: Pearson Education, 2002); Fhulu Nekhwevha, ‘No Matter How long the Night, the Day is Sure to Come: Culture and Educational Transformation in Post-Colonial Namibia and Post-Apartheid South Africa’, in Soudien, C. and Kallaway, P., with Breier, M. (eds) *Education, Equity and Transformation* (London: Kluwer, 1999); and Fhulu Nekhwevha, ‘The Influence of Paulo Freire’s “Pedagogy of Knowing” on the South African Education Struggle in the 1970s and 1980s’, in Kallaway, P. (ed) *The History of Education Under Apartheid 1948-1994* (Cape Town: Pearson Education, 2002).
  34. Despite Marx’s sympathy for the ordinary people of India under British rule in the mid-nineteenth century, he argued chillingly for the destruction of India’s ‘idyllic village communities’ because, as ‘the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, ... they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath the traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies’. Marx concluded that ‘England has to fulfill a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating – the annihilation of the Asiatic society and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia’. Quoted in Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1995), pp.153-4. A comment on such thinking is made in the poem, *Our Village*, by the South African, Wopko Jensma (see Appendix 1).
  35. See, in particular, Michelle Adato, Francie Lund and Phakama Mhlongo, ‘Capturing “Work” in South Africa: Evidence from a Study of Poverty and Well-being in KwaZulu-Natal’ (paper presented at the ILO-WIEGO Workshop, Geneva, December 2001; and by the same authors, ‘Methodological Innovations in Research on the Dynamics of Poverty: A Longitudinal Study in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa’ (paper presented at the *Q-squared in Practice: A Conference on Experiences of Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Poverty Appraisal*, Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, 15-16 March 2004.
  36. See the articles by Samiera Zafar, Xola Ngonini, Catherine Odora Hoppers and Sarah Motha, in Samiera Zafar (ed) *Learners in Rural Schools: Noble Causes or Worthy Citizens? Working at the Limits and Crossing Boundaries of the Policy Framework*, vol.11, no.3 of the *Quarterly Review of Education and Training*, September 2004. See also Oranje, ‘The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme’, which analyses, with some acerbity, official thinking about the urban and the rural.
  37. Reshma Sookrajh *et al.*, ‘The Politics of Place and Space’ (CEF Position Paper, 2006).
  38. Kim Porteus, *Re-Centring the Rural Agenda* (East London: University of Fort Hare Press, 2006).
  39. See Note 12 above.
  40. See AbdouMaliq Simone, ‘Introduction: Urban Processes and Change’, in Simone, A. and Abdouhani, A. (eds) *Urban Africa: Changing Contours of Survival in the City* (Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005), p.6.
  41. William Blake, ‘Auguries of Innocence’ (c.1803), in Stevenson, W. (ed) *The Complete Poems* (London: Longman, 1971), p.585, lines 1-4:  
To see a world in a grain of sand  
And heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour.
  42. Blaug, ‘Citizenship and Political Judgement’.
  43. See Jonathan Miller and Borin van Loon, *Darwin for Beginners* (London: Writers and Readers, 1982), p.78.
  44. In Cato Crest, two EPC researchers took over many of the activities of the CRs.
  45. Sookrajh *et al.*, ‘The Politics of Place and Space’.
  46. In his commentary on an earlier version of this chapter presented at the Education Policy Consortium conference, Johannesburg, 7-8 March 2007, Fhulu Nekhwevha urged researchers to be active participants in the work of the CEFs,

and to interrogate critically the experience of communities so as to expose the ideological elements within it. He called for a linking of critical theory to *phronesis* so that researchers could make bold and critical decisions. This represents a somewhat different line of thought from that embodied in the CEF project.

47. '*Phronesis* goes beyond both analytical, scientific knowledge (*episteme*) and technical knowledge or know-how (*techne*) and involves judgments and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social and political actor' (Flyvbjerg, *Making Social Science Matter*, p.2). Aristotle distinguished between epistemic science with its emphasis upon theories, analysis and universals, as one but only one 'intellectual virtue', and another, *phronesis*, which deals with context, practice, experience, common sense, intuition and practical wisdom. It is the second of these two that was emphasized in the CEF project, an emphasis which made great demands on researchers.
48. Marjorie Grene, *The Knower and the Known* (New York: Basic Books, 1966) argues convincingly that value comes before fact. For example, only by ascribing value to sound can we come to the fact of music, only by placing value on human life can we understand the fact of oppression. Behind every fact, therefore, lies history, value and the legacies of cultural accretion: 'All knowledge, even the most abstract, exists only within the fundamental evaluation, first of the total community which permits and respects such knowledge, and second, within this totality, of the special community whose consensus makes possible this particular discipline' (p.180). Grene also states that 'Perhaps the best known formulation [of Kant's distinction between an inner and an outer sense] was that put forward by Ogden and Richards in *The Meaning of Meaning*, where they distinguish between 'cognitive' and 'emotive' meaning; and correspondingly, the statements of science, which purvey information, were distinguished from the 'pseudo-statements' of poetry or religious discourse. Information, it is alleged, is always impersonal; where the person, and with him values, preferences, emotions enter, information withdraws' (pp.157-8). The split between 'cognitive' and 'emotive' is one of the most dangerous divisions that contemporary humanity has made. It is no longer a descriptive distinction but a division within the human whole that makes the unthinkable thinkable.
49. Adato, Lund and Mhlongo, 'Capturing "Work" in South Africa', and 'Methodological Innovations in Research on the Dynamics of Poverty'.
50. Ngonini, personal communication to Gardiner, Ramadiro and Kgobe, 11 March 2005.
51. Kgobe, CEF project national workshop, 2006.
52. Ngonini, personal communication to Gardiner, 24 June 2004.
53. Since its inception as a community in 1912, there has never been any significant traditional leadership in Daggakraal. Its leadership has always consisted of elected landowners who constitute a Committee of Twelve to represent the three farms.
54. Simone, 'Introduction: Urban Processes and Change', p.6.
55. For example: 'Vision: To see to it that education is integrated with knowledge and skills development among scholars; To give full support for the ambitious students who show they have potential to attend tertiary institutions; To promote and maintain good relations among pupils, teachers and parents; [the] CEF is striving for excellent education for learners. We are hoping to expand and positively contribute to different communities in South Africa thereby changing the lives of ordinary citizens of this country for the better'.
56. Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools*, pp.109-134.
57. Coe, *Dilemmas of Culture in African Schools*, pp.53-86.
58. The EPC researcher for Cato Crest used two researchers, one a resident of a new part of Cato Manor, to gather the history of the place, in addition to commissioning a piece of work by an academic historian.
59. See Helen Joseph, *Side by Side* (Johannesburg: Donker, 1986), ch.XIII, as well as her earlier work on her visit to the banished people, *Tomorrow's Sun* (London: Hutchinson, 1966).
60. Brij Maharaj, 'Political Contestation and Urban Reconstruction in Cato Manor' (paper commissioned for the CEF project, 2005).
61. Wopko Jensma, 'Our Village', in *Sing for Our Execution* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1973), p.69.
62. Sylvia Plath, 'Morning Song', in *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1961), pp.156-7.

# SCIENCE LEARNING AND RESEARCH IN A FRAMEWORK OF *UBUNTU*

MOYRA KEANE

*We deal with issues using our general knowledge, and others use school knowledge. These two types of knowledge are not the same.*<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

The study from which this chapter is drawn was part of the EPC project on *Human Rights, Democracy, and Social Justice: Science and Mathematics Literacy in Disadvantaged Communities*. We set out with the following Research Questions:

What is relevant science education for this community?

How do community voice and interests shape research?

The aim was to define and implement a relevant science curriculum that would contribute to well-being in the community; and to do this through a methodology that would itself also contribute to community life. In other words, we came in with our own agenda. The community responded with their own questions:

How can we lead a better life?

How can we preserve our culture?

Somehow and somewhere we had to find a way to set off on the same track. Though we kept the definition of curriculum as broad as possible to include possibilities for in-school and out-of-school activities, integration across subjects and place-based interventions, the inadequacy of the current science curriculum became immediately apparent. Over the next three years the research team, students, teachers, parents and farmers developed a community-based science curriculum supported by traditional leaders, education department officials and non-governmental organizations. In the context of community concerns

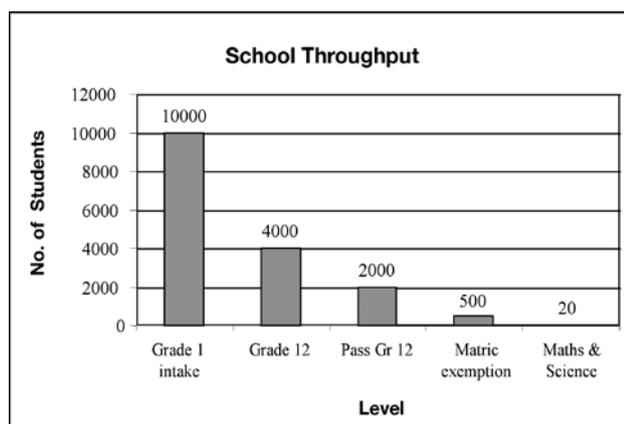
about health care, employment, traditional values and even survival, lessons were learnt in *ubuntu*, understandings of appropriate science emerged, practical skills were developed and the meagreness of conventional research paradigms were revealed.

The findings and consequences of this research project were numerous. Not only was the exploration and development of the science curriculum important, but the actual research process formed part of the substantial findings. Both these aspects relate to the worldview of the community: *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu* refers to an ontology and a way of living or being in the world that differ significantly from Western paradigms. Romanticized but not unique to Africa, *ubuntu* not only shapes experience but is a resource for creating knowledge and developing potential. In this chapter we<sup>2</sup> bring worldview into the foreground, to centre-stage, rather than leaving it in the background like a silent mural or lighting effect that sets a scene and colours activities and relationships. We do this by focusing on those aspects of the science curriculum that point to the importance of *ubuntu*. Furthermore, since the scientific process has much in common with the research process, it is fitting that the research process unfolded within a similar framework and worldview as the emergent definition of relevant science. Relevant research, like relevant science, needs to be community-centred, and the research process needs to be culturally consonant. The following discussion is based on findings from research participants and does not claim to be an exhaustive analysis of *ubuntu*. Rather, it wishes to sensitize researchers to, and inform policy makers on, approaches that are appropriate in the South African rural context.

**The science curriculum context in South Africa**

The majority of South African students are denied science education. The following statistics, available at the start of our research, highlight the situation which has not changed significantly since then. Of the 11.4 million children of school-going age, 7 million are in school.<sup>3</sup> For every 1000 black students entering Grade 1, about 450 reach Grade 12, 200 pass Grade 12, 50 qualify for university entrance and only 1 of these is in mathematics and science. This discounts the numbers of children who do not go to school at all. Further, this extraordinary child who makes it through the system, if enrolled at university, has only a 17% chance of gaining a degree. 25% of first year students at tertiary institutions drop out.<sup>4</sup> The situation for advantaged, mainly white students is somewhat better.

**Figure 1: Throughput of African students, Grade 1 to university entry<sup>5</sup>**



The matric pass rate at Sinevuso (the high school of our research project) was 15% in 2004. Students, community members and teachers complained, or conceded, that school science and mathematics was inappropriate to and ‘out of sync’ with the contextual and cultural realities of rural KwaZulu-Natal. The human rights gap here is clear: both policy and provision are inadequate. What is needed from research is an understanding of what kind of science is appropriate and what research methodologies lead to this understanding.

We do not argue merely for better provision of the mainstream science curriculum in rural areas, but for a revised curriculum that privileges rural over urban, African over Western and ubuntu over colonizing science education. A curriculum that at least provides

a better balance between these dichotomies would be the way of *ubuntu*: a curriculum that creates harmony between the worlds that students will have to negotiate.

**Relevant science**

Although this chapter does not focus substantially on curriculum development, the understanding of science learning that was developed importantly shows how the framework of *ubuntu* emerged in the various aspects of the research project. We divided the definition of relevant science into:

- Relevant purposes
- Relevant pedagogical structures
- Relevant context
- Relevant processes
- Relevant content

Broad, community-centred and culturally embedded approaches to the learning of science were far more effective and in line with the community’s goals than the conventional classroom syllabi. At the centre of all these ideas of relevance was participation and *ubuntu*.

**Relevant purposes** refer to what students and community hope to gain from their education. These purposes include food security, healthcare, employability, entrepreneurship, cultural appreciation and information access. This research has contributed to achieving some of these goals. A major difference between these purposes and those outlined in policy is the pressing need of the community for *immediate* benefits. If the family is starving *now* it is of little use to say that at some time after matric and tertiary study the family’s prospects will improve. Indeed, there is little evidence of this. What children are engaged in on a daily basis needs to contribute to survival.

**Relevant pedagogical structures** refer to how the curriculum is delivered to achieve the desired purposes. These structures need to be community-centred projects, place-based, culturally-embedded learning, and community science festivals. (The last was a way of bringing two schools and the community together to view aspects of science learning. It included student posters and performances, PowerPoint displays of shared data, report-backs on new farming developments, speeches from community leaders as well as providing for learning and sharing outside the regular timetable.) Rural community already

is a rich resource of place-based science education. Community-centred learning allows students and teachers flexibility, which is important where disruptions due to illness, chores, weather and so on impinge on attendance. Projects can have a wide and yet integrated set of outcomes, ranging from affirmation through to material products, as well as science educational outcomes. The latter include problem solving skills, the ability to critically evaluate information, communication skills, the making of decisions based on evidence, and the testing of hypotheses. Even with very limited time, great progress is possible, with minimal disruption to the current school timetable and by using existing organizations and community as educational resources. The institution of a science festival fits well with what is possible in terms of time and resources and is culturally consonant with the celebration of traditional life and achievement.

**Relevant context** refers to the need to re-evaluate the role of the school, especially secondary school, which, currently, is largely irrelevant to people's lives and contributes little to community aspirations. This is not so much a matter of the quality of schooling (although this is an issue) but of the alienation and isolation of school and teachers from community life. These problems rest not only with teachers, but are embedded in 'the system', 'the curriculum' and history. 'Outreach-schooling' may be most effective in rural areas when it involves finding bridges between school and community as well as between broader society and rural life. Students need to learn out of school and the wider community needs to move into school. Community development and individual development are inextricable. This shifts standard concepts of learner-centred education in the direction of *community-centred education*. Teachers need to give up the comfort and status of their isolated positions within rural communities, and allow the school and the community to constitute two overlapping 'communities of practice' which work together on joint projects.

**Relevant processes** refer to methodologies and the medium used for knowledge construction and assessment. These may include integration of dance, drama, story and song, and adult participation, as well as integration across subjects. These are not typical in science lessons but interventions during the project showed them to be effective means of achieving both conventional science and community

designed outcomes. An eclectic and participative approach helps to challenge subject boundaries and, in spite of contrary assumptions, research has shown that mathematics, science and language knowledge construction have many similarities.<sup>6</sup> While Western epistemology tends to separate out science, religion and aesthetics, indigenous ways of knowing are more holistic. We found, while exploring new curricula, that using culturally consonant activities in science contributes to forms of strengthening culture and community that elders considered important and that students came to appreciate later. *Indunas* (headmen) and the *inkosi* (chief) all echoed views expressed by Wangari Maathai:

People without culture feel insecure and are obsessed with the acquisition of material things, which give them a temporary security .... Without culture, a community loses self-awareness and guidance and grows weak and vulnerable. It disintegrates from within as it suffers a lack of identity, dignity, self-respect and a sense of destiny.<sup>7</sup>

Elders complained that conventional schooling contributes to such a situation.

Lastly, **relevant content** refers to farming, HIV/AIDS, technology, computers, electricity, nutrition and other curricular subject matter identified by community members and students.

It is clear that the different dimensions of relevance outlined above are connected. Mphahlele conceives of

education as community development', where 'community development should imply "in the interests of ...". The curriculum must be seen to fit into the cultural, political and economic goals of the community, local and national.<sup>8</sup>

As it turned out, this notion was expressed unequivocally by the entire community. There was little expression of individual ambition, or of a desire to leave the community. Students expressed the hope of staying and working in the village and contributing to community well-being. This relates to *ubuntu* in that, at an overarching level, each dimension of science education relevance aims to contribute to the direct and collective well-being of the community. It follows that the curriculum needs to address issues

relevant to this context and not to a broader or more distant one.

### Relevant science and relevant research parallels

Relevant science and relevant research overlap: science is research, research is science. So we employed the same ‘method’ for the research as for the relevant science: learning together through projects. In a rural South African context both science learning and research need to be participative and grounded in *ubuntu*. The ‘participative research and engagement’ that emerged applies as much to ‘relevant science’ as it does to ‘relevant research’. The relevance of outcomes and knowledge includes worldview: worldview determines what we do and know, what we value, what change is possible, and how we use knowledge.

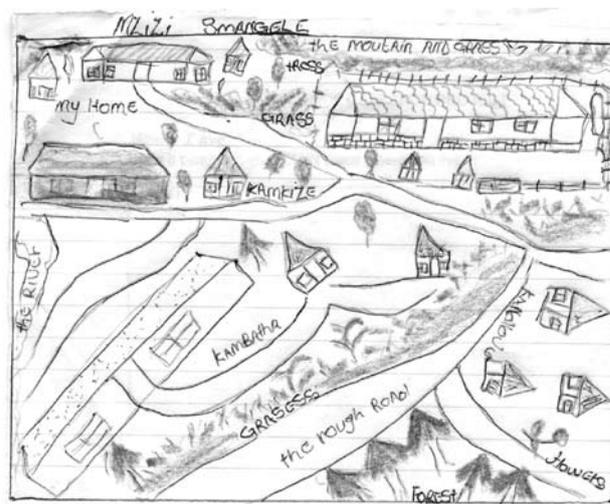
Grounded theory relies on inductive processes. It provides rigour through the systematic testing of emergent theories amidst other orientations that are deeply (and intentionally) subjective. At the same time, it is highly consonant with participative inquiry: it ‘looks at how “variables” are grounded – given meaning and played out in subjects’ lives. .... Their meanings and actions take priority over researchers’ analytical interests.’<sup>9</sup> The Participatory Research and Engagement approach, influenced by this understanding of grounded theory, is based on Participative Action Research with the proviso that the researcher cannot assume from the outset that action is what the community will advocate. ‘Engagement’ thus holds open the possibility of different paths, from discussion to non-participation. Given this grounded theory and participative approach, it is fitting that the theoretical framework that emerged was consistent with the worldview of the participants: in a word, *ubuntu*. This process of drawing from the worldview of participants is an established technique in relation to data collection: Lofland suggests that a researcher needs to use participants’ *own* categories in order to explicate *their* reality.<sup>10</sup> It would not make sense to claim to be engaged in participative action research and yet to ignore the participants’ framework, especially as this has shaped the project process as well as the interpretation of the findings.

### Ubuntu

I am human through relationship and hence through the playing out of rights and responsibilities. ‘I am a human being because I belong.’<sup>11</sup> This right to belong could be considered a fundamental right. There is

a tacit assumption in a democratic framework that everyone ‘belongs’, all having a right to voice an opinion, or to have access to resources. However, the ontological aspect is often more hidden. The following examples led us to see how *ubuntu* became important as a research framework. Students described *ubuntu* in various ways. When I asked the Grade 7 students to draw their home many drew the whole village. In drawing their huts many drew their neighbours too. A Grade 10 student said, ‘*Ubuntu* is to help people’. One boy wrote under his drawing: ‘A person without a neighbour is not a person’. The drawing (in Figure 2) also illustrates the African proverb that ‘One person’s path will intersect with another’s before long’.<sup>12</sup>

**Figure 2: ‘A person without a neighbour is not a person’**



The concept of *ubuntu* centres on relationship and harmony.<sup>13</sup> Wiredu explains that African humanism recognises that our most important need is that of human relationship. It follows that the ‘ultimate moral inadequacy’ consists of a lack of feeling for others, which reveals deep selfishness.<sup>14</sup> As a principle for organizing and understanding the world, *ubuntu* is also consistent with what Nisbett has described as the Asian worldview, which tenders ‘relationships’ in the place of Western ‘categories’, and ‘harmony’ instead of Western ‘contradiction’.<sup>15</sup> In Africa, sharing and reciprocity are norms throughout the continent.<sup>16</sup> However, in the critical area of academia, and especially in science education, a search for categorization and disputation – instances of contradiction – is usually more common than a search for relationships and harmony.

Students in the project presented the following examples of *ubuntu*:

Once upon a time there is a car near my home. The owner of this car is Mr. Dlamini. One day when I came to the town I never had money [for transport]. Mr. Dlamini told me: "You can get inside my car, my Neighbour." He took me to my home. I will never forget my neighbour. When you don't want your neighbour you are not a person. But now when I go to the town and I see some street kids I try to help them because many people want advice.

Once upon a time I see an old Grandmother whose name Florence Sosibo. She gave me a meal and then she was busy to plough. After she finish plough she pick spinach. My Granny is important in my life.

In a class with Grade 9 students, we had a lesson specifically on *ubuntu*. Students presented the following examples:

If a person has no food you give him some food.

You should not look for something in return for helping someone.

You can never lose your life helping someone.

There is a thin man Xolani and a fat man Mthembu. Mthembu is handing a plate of food to Xolani. Although Mthembu is wealthy, he does not look down on Xolani who is his neighbour but rather offers him food.

Sharing food is a manifestation of *ubuntu*. Learning to share food is one of the socializing trainings in a culture where social responsibility and nurturing are more important than autonomy.<sup>17</sup>

Students' drawings showed an older person helping a younger person, and a boy helping an old woman to carry wood. Students had no difficulty identifying instances of *ubuntu* in the community. However, it would be wrong to say that the community lived in total harmony and with a spirit of generosity. There has been more than one incident of a child hanging himself for feeling unwanted by family and neighbours. AIDS orphans have become victims of relatives greedy for the child grant available to such children. Abuse and neglect are not uncommon. Here too, traditional wisdom is in a precarious position.

The many duties that children have in rural communities are often cited as a feature of poverty that interferes with schooling and even borders on abuse.<sup>18</sup> It is certainly true that 'chores' make students late for school (or even prevent them from getting to school) and prevent them from completing homework, but the performing of community duties, explained the *induna* in Chibini, is in itself a vital aspect of African education. These moral obligations express deeper metaphysical concepts, and initiatives striving to improve educational access need to take this into consideration: while in a democratic society individual rights need protection, here there is also the concept that a human being is inescapably a cultural being.<sup>19</sup>

My own experiences of *ubuntu* in the community were from the perspective of friendliness which I encountered everywhere. This communitarian ethos has been characterized as sympathy for outsiders adrift in kinship alienation.<sup>20</sup> This extended to strangers whom I had not met but who came to recognise my car passing through the valley, to small children who ran to open the gate for me, and to the *inkosi* who was always gracious and went out of her way to make me feel at ease and welcome. This contributes not to a clinical research system, but to one grounded in relationship and reciprocity, with all the complexity that that brings.

In isiZulu, *ubuntu* is expressed as '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' (a person is a person through other persons; or, I am what I am because of you). *Ubuntu* is a way of life throughout Africa: it is caring for each other's well-being in a spirit of mutual support. Each person's humanity is ideally expressed through relationship. *Ubuntu* visualizes a community built upon interdependent relationships. This is seen, for example, in the concept of group work or '*shosholoz*' (work as one), and in the prevalence in South Africa of '*stokvels*' (collective enterprises), which are similar to the model used in the Heifer farming NGO that we introduced into the research project. In an African worldview, community is not simply an aggregate sum of individuals, but a collectivity.<sup>21</sup>

A Western worldview emphasizes thinking over being, while in *ubuntu*, identity centres on 'I am because I participate'. This is fundamentally different from Descartes' 'I think therefore I am'. Descartes draws on our experience of the independence and abstraction of thought, pointing to the separation of mind and matter, and hence to objective epistemologies; *ubuntu* points instead to participation, interdependence and

collectivity, and hence to subjective epistemologies, where intuition, revelation and inspiration are all valid ways of knowing.

The *ubuntu* worldview has much to contribute to the Western worldview, especially in its emphasis on cooperation and coexistence. *Ubuntu* is thus not inconsistent with the ontological views of scientists. For example:

A human being ... experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of understanding and compassion to embrace all living creatures and that of nature in its beauty.<sup>22</sup>

It is not necessary to polarize science and *ubuntu*, or to assign value qualifiers like ‘good’ or ‘bad’ to either. As the following examples show, there are overlaps in the emphasis on the value of relationships in both science and *ubuntu*. Even in the paradigm of quantum mechanics, there is recognition of harmony and of processes other than material. Einstein observed that:

Human beings can attain a worthy and harmonious life only if they are able to rid themselves, within the limits of human nature, of striving to fulfil wishes of the material kind.<sup>23</sup>

Steve Biko’s plea resonates with Einstein’s observation, characteristically by exhorting people to action:

We must seek to restore to the black man the great importance we used to give to human relations, the high regard for people and their property and for life in general; to reduce the triumph of technology over man and the materialistic element that is slowly creeping into our society.<sup>24</sup>

In such a brief overview of *ubuntu* as this, there is some danger of portraying it superficially. *Ubuntu* goes deeper than the commonly quoted phrase, ‘I am because of you’. *Ubuntu* or ‘African Humanism

is resiliently religious’,<sup>25</sup> and as such has ontological and metaphysical origins. Louw points out that, for a Westerner, the maxim, ‘a person is a person through other persons’, has no obvious religious connotations. It can be equated with a general appeal to treat others with respect and decency. A cynical Westerner may interpret *ubuntu* as nothing but ‘the startling observation that if you treat people well they will perform better’. In African tradition, however, this maxim has a deeply religious meaning: the person whom one is to become ‘through other persons’ is, ultimately, an ancestor. By the same token, these ‘other persons’ include ancestors. ‘Ancestors are extended family’.<sup>26</sup>

It is also important to caution that *ubuntu* and the Africanization of education need rigorous critique. This is particularly difficult in South Africa where ‘political correctness’ and a certain ‘trendiness’ preclude examining African traditions with the same scrutiny that might be applied to other paradigms. Enslin and Horsthemke provide a valuable critique in the context of citizenship education, arguing that *ubuntu* is not unique, nor are aspects of its pressure to conform compatible with democracy. (They also criticize other traditional practices such as gender stereotyping.)<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Western values of autonomy and individualism are not synonymous with selfishness and egoism, as is often asserted.<sup>28</sup>

Enslin and Horsthemke advocate the examination and revision of all cultural practices that are oppressive and antithetical to democratic principles. The youth in our project were very willing to engage in just such a debate, especially on the issue of HIV/AIDS. The desirable dynamic evolution of culture ought to apply to all cultures, and the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights as well as our very progressive educational policies stand out as examples of this. However, Enslin and Horsthemke add that the value of altruism is not unique to African culture, and that there are many social conventions set up in traditional African communities to facilitate its expression, on the one hand, and a deep ontological basis to support it, on the other.<sup>29</sup> If, however, altruism and community spirit were not universal values, there would be little possibility of promoting them as a research and educational approach. In exploring community and different ways of knowing it makes sense to understand the relevant epistemological and ontological frameworks. In short, this research project found evidence that supports Ramose’s view

that ubuntu and African philosophy need to be inscribed into the research agenda in education in South Africa.<sup>30</sup>

### **Ubuntu and learning**

From a learner-centred stance, educators need to understand that, in rural communities, individual interests are often surrendered to community interests and possibilities.<sup>31</sup> From an *ubuntu* perspective there is less emphasis on separate individuals. Western models do not fit very well in an African rural community. In a workshop with the teachers at a primary school, the teachers made lists of the talents of the children, to show aspects of the children's knowledge and competence.

What are the experiences and talents of the children?

- Looking after stock
- Fetching water
- Looking after children
- Cooking
- Traditional dancing
- Fetching and mixing herbs
- Ploughing fields
- Building houses
- Fetching honey
- Woodworking
- Clay pottery making and weaving
- Hunting
- Cleaning
- Parenting (some of them) and security
- Playing soccer or netball

In discussions there was no mention of particular talents of individual children. The skills mentioned were more or less generic, and mostly directed towards contributing to community life. Students presented similar lists or drawings of their lives. While Eurocentric sciences emphasize concepts and content knowledge, the community here was placing value on *ways of living in nature*.<sup>32</sup>

A lack of a perception of a self-contained 'self' was shown up in the difficulty that Chibini students often had in defining personal goals or visioning a future apart from their community. This is consistent with the notion that a person is not a person on their own.<sup>33</sup> One particular instance appeared at first to be a grammatical idiosyncrasy, when a number of students spoke of wanting to 'become a *somebody*'. Nsamenang explains how new-born children are considered 'no-body', lacking 'self'. Through developing social

intelligence and role competencies they gradually become 'a somebody'. These competencies are well laid out in developmental phases.<sup>34</sup> To take another example, a youth in the community lamented his grandfather's death, saying: 'He was the person who was going to make me a somebody'. Comparative studies of rural and urban youth have shown that rural youth have a stronger global, family and social self-concept than urban youth, who score higher on physical self-concept.<sup>35</sup> Other common instances of connected self are the practices of referring to someone as 'mother of ...', introducing someone by placing them in their family structure and enquiring after the whole family's health in greetings. These different ways of thinking relate to different conceptions of self and human purpose.<sup>36</sup> An understanding of these worldviews is essential for designing research instruments and in analysing data, and for harmonizing the 'collective' self-concept with our educational strategies and assessments.

An awareness of different knowledge paradigms was expressed by an induna in the community:

I have gained much to know different people ... If a person is using educational knowledge, he looks at things from a different perspective and range. He looks at the past, present, future and even the possible outcomes of what one is thinking. We just look at what is happening here. We are not looking at the distant future.

Table 1 draws on the data to contrast relevant aspects of a Western paradigm with an African one grounded in *ubuntu*. (Of course, this very categorizing is a Western scientific device!)

To recommend that educationists and researchers consider working within an *ubuntu* framework is not to totally dismiss the value of Western science processes. Nevertheless, while scientific knowledge is useful, it is also limited in its ignoring of spiritual forces, context and collectivity.<sup>38</sup> Moreover:

[Western science] is a useful way of perceiving some aspects of reality and a practical aid in day-to-day activities. Difficulty begins when it is held forth as the best way of perceiving reality. Destruction begins when it is held forth as the only way. It is only one perspective; only one way of perceiving reality. And it is the best way only for narrow, limited, quantifiable purposes.<sup>39</sup>

<b>Table 1: Contrasting concepts<sup>37</sup></b>			
	<b>African/ (Eastern)</b>	<b>Western/Northern</b>	<b>Example from research</b>
Self-concept	Collective self	Autonomous self	Students' drawings of 'their' home
Personal identity	Identifies strongly with group, grows through mentors and relationships	Stable attributes, 'one true self', grows through inner reflection; formal courses	'My Grandfather was the person who was to make me who I am'; science photo assignments of people
Success	Harmony, humility; collaborative	Singular achievement, self-aggrandizement; competitive	Students' personal goals to help the community; Helping community valued above personal goals
Relation-ships	Basic-essential	Useful	People describe themselves in relationship to family, as well as nature. Life is in all things.
Effective actions	Depend on context, complexity	Can be simplified into rules	Lengthy discussions in setting up projects
Progress	Consultative. Time circular	Linear, continuing, time efficient. Time linear	Meetings repeated; length of time valued for own sake
Freedom of action	Collective, freedom available through community	Individual, unconstrained by relationships	Elders giving ethics permissions for all children; wide consultation of ideas
Freedom of location	Value place-based community	Expect to move often, as part of individual achievement	<i>Induna</i> : 'I was born here and will die here'; knowledge of history of area
Hierarchy	Hierarchical (also regarding age and gender)	Egalitarian	Teachers unwilling to make decisions; seeking audience with <i>inkosi</i> through <i>induna</i>
Managing conflict	Collective decision-making, practical	Trading, arguing from principles	Ethics protocols were seen as offensive
Causality	Complex 'resonances'	Deterministic forces; mechanistic explanations	'Lightning may have many causes'
Knowledge	Instrumental and goal directed	Valued for own sake; disembodied; disjunctive	'What is a relevant science curriculum?'; 'We are hungry'
	Participative	Imposed	Originally learning was through relationship; 'transmission' learning in schools is exaggerated parody of 'Western'.
	Gained through 'apprenticeship' and ceremony	Formal schooling	Learning through stories of elders and traditional song/dance; farming duties

	African/ (Eastern)	Western/Northern	Example from research
	Rural, local bias valued as well as global information; learning is place-based	Urban, global bias	Inkosi: 'Youth need to know about farming and their traditions but also computers'; 'local' is not just a matter of 'relevant instances' but place is sacred.
	Verbs: knowledge is a way of living; tested in real world	Nouns: knowledge is gained, given, assessed in writing	<i>Ubuntu</i> is a way of living; science is 'living with nature'
	Nature is beautiful	Nature is knowable and controllable	'Cabbages are beautiful'; student photo assignment
	Interconnection of all things	Mind and matter separate	Spiritual forces acknowledged; interdependence of living things told in stories
	Qualification	Quantification	Worksheets requiring measurement did not work

This is not to suggest that Western scientific and African worldviews are opposites; or that African and Asian worldviews are synonymous. Distinctions that arose in the research illustrate a variety of ways of seeing and acting. However, it is clear that these differences in worldviews are both significant and important. It is likely that non-Western systems of thought and ways of being will become as globally important as China, Korea and Japan have become economically and politically important. African culture, knowledge and ubuntu need to be fostered in education so that this resource is made available not only for Africa but more widely. One of the more significant implications for research design in the framework of human rights and democracy is that relationships, aesthetics and mystery have a place in science education and research.

### Methodology and ubuntu

Research paradigms reflect our beliefs about the world.<sup>40</sup> The beliefs include, but are not limited to, ontological beliefs, epistemological beliefs, axiological beliefs, aesthetic beliefs and methodological beliefs. A research paradigm is synonymous with a research culture, and the adoption and application of a research paradigm itself requires investigation. What are empowering approaches to generating knowledge? Are the paradigms of the urban academic taken as the norm?

Rural communities have needs, problems, interests and strengths that are often different from those of

urban communities, even within South Africa. As argued above, the rural context is poorly understood and poorly served by current educational and social arrangements. Participatory and transformational research includes engagement that goes beyond academic knowledge outcomes. The rural community in this study made it clear that it had other priorities. If the research project could contribute towards their goals, then it was worth pursuing. Indeed, how can a research agenda within a human rights framework not take into account the very participants' needs and ways of working? Even within the paradigm of 'Participative Research' it is usually the '*researched*' who are the *participants*. They are still the *subjects* even though they play a role in a usually pre-designed programme. A research agenda is seldom framed in a way where the researchers participate in contributing to problem-solving issues identified by the community. Likening participative research to a soccer match, even if it is an away-match, researchers get to decide the game, chose the team and explain the rules. People become powerless when acted upon by the environment: an 'object' in life, rather than a 'subject' acting on the world.<sup>41</sup> In the framework of human rights and democracy the starting point needs to be the involvement of local communities in deciding the research questions, the theoretical frameworks, the processes and the interpretations. This is not only to give validity to the research; it is a moral imperative. Within such a methodology, the consequences of research are varied, and extend

beyond academic enrichment. This approach is consistent with *ubuntu*: the researchers join the community in working together through consensus, and the researchers (who also include community members) become ‘more of a person’ in the process.

Transformative research and engagement blurs the distinctions between the means and ends of research. Participation is an end, an expression of collective concern and at the same time a means to research, and a means to improved justice and human rights. The situation can be viewed as one of messiness, requiring frequent border crossings between epistemologies, but also as a ‘new’ epistemology in which epistemological choices depend on the immediate problem, but with a view to the whole.

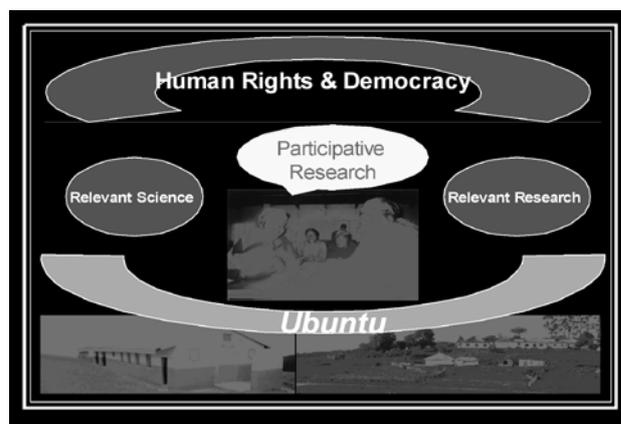
Through community-designed research, as mentioned, there are outcomes other than academic knowledge. These wider outcomes are harder to quantify, let alone set a budget to. Building relationships, finding common ground, changing direction in response to changing conditions, understanding inputs, being understood, and creating transformative structures, all take time. Community forums are consistent with rural life: the process itself is as important as the goals and products. It is probable that this report is the least significant outcome of the research project. Through participation, broader (and more difficult) questions are asked: ‘What is research? Why are you here? How does this help? How will we survive? Who benefits? Who answers these questions?’. The concept of *ubuntu* and communality cannot easily be confined to the research process. The norm of sharing has implications for the research agenda. Having entered into a relationship with a community, and having possible access to resources, what is the researchers’ (and funders’) obligation beyond that of data creation?

Research that explores frontiers should also stretch the boundaries of the frameworks themselves. These need to be not only epistemological and methodological but also ontological and axiological. Standard notions of validity are called into question. Validity needs to take into account all the research purposes, which stretch beyond knowledge creation. Research needs to be valid in terms of human rights and democracy – and this obviously includes the right of participants to provide frameworks, direct the research process and interpret results. *Ubuntu*’s conception of community affects access protocols as well as the type of questions and data collection

techniques that make sense. Methodologies grounded in *ubuntu* centre on community and participation. A research methodology based on *ubuntu* means that the way we approach ethics in research will be transformed. Standard ethical protocols are inadequate in the context of *ubuntu*, participative research, prolonged engagement and community transformation. A contractual ethics agreement drawn up in advance, promising anonymity and confidentiality, needs to be questioned. Instead, awareness and care, as well as healing and dialogical truths, become key principles.

In the natural flow of projects, many epistemologies work simultaneously: everyday knowledge, science knowledge, intuitive knowledge, theorizing, organizing and reflecting. In one sense, these are integrated by the project, but in another sense, they demand border crossings from one way of thinking to another and back, depending on the immediate context and task. In the process, everyone involved has to confront ways of thinking that are new to them, as well as assimilate new detailed knowledge. This is ‘learning’. Thus the research and interventions are inextricably linked. Figure 3 illustrates the parallel roles of the research content and research process in ‘relevant science’ and ‘relevant research’, both of which were undertaken under the umbrella of human rights and democracy and which came to be informed through the worldview of *ubuntu*.

**Figure 3: An ubuntu framework supports relevant science and research**



### Conclusion

The current science curriculum ignores the contextual reality of rural South Africa. So do conventional research paradigms and practices. This project highlights the parallels between science education

and education research. Both the school science curriculum, and science education research, needs to draw on the framework of *ubuntu*. Through this, conventional science outcomes and community envisioned outcomes can be achieved. Furthermore, research needs to free itself from set paradigms and move to the edge of established borders of knowing and practicing. Research within an *ubuntu* framework challenges notions of validity, as well as those of ethics and human rights. We need to move from learner-centred science to community-centred science, and from researcher-determined research goals and methods, to community-centred and community consonant research. This is dependent on moving back past design and methodology to an underlying worldview.

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# THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS ON ADDRESSING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

PAUL KGOBE AND SANDILE MBOKAZI

## **Introduction**

Although the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enshrines the rights of citizens to education, these rights are undermined by continuing violence in schools. Incidences of bullying, rape, assault, vandalism, gang fights, sexual harassment and other forms of violence in schools make headline news in the media. Various programmes and policies have been put in place to mitigate the effects of violence on society, and on schooling in particular. Amongst these are the policy initiatives that encourage and establish frameworks for partnerships between schools and communities. What impact have these partnerships had on mitigating the effects of violence in schools in South Africa? This is the question that this chapter attempts to answer. After discussing the successes and shortcomings of these partnerships in addressing violence in schools, it is argued that, in some areas, their impact has been minimal, primarily as a result of problems in the partnership model as well as the complex nature of violence.

## **Methodology**

This chapter is based on research undertaken during 2004 and 2005, at one school and its surrounding community at each of three sites in KwaZulu-Natal and two in Gauteng (specifically, Alexandra). Data was collected through focus groups and individual interviews with educators, learners (though only in KwaZulu-Natal),<sup>1</sup> parents and school management teams (SMTs), and through participatory workshops with parents and community members (including, in KwaZulu-Natal only, community policing forums,

traditional leaders, the police, social workers and health personnel). The research was intended to map violence in communities, to ascertain the prevalence of various forms of violence, and to understand, and assess the effectiveness of, various strategies employed by stakeholders, either individually or collectively, to address violence.

It should be noted that, whereas the study sought to focus on the broader school community, the notion of ‘community’ employed here is a limited one. Individual members of the communities and, in some instances, groups, participated in the research largely on the basis of their connection to the schools, either having children or dependants at a particular school, being employed by the school or serving on the school governing body. Others participated on the basis of their leadership role in the community, but again only in so far as they had some role to play in relation to violence in schools. The full concept of community is, of course, much broader and more complex, as Pryor has shown.<sup>2</sup> Drawing on the work of Basil Bernstein, Pryor explores the various elements that shape and constrain people’s participation in community affairs, including relational spaces (or sites where the less powerful are dominated by the more powerful) and the various forms of capital that render such participatory practices concrete. Access to and deployment of these forms of capital – cultural, social and linguistic resources that enable people to practice their level of power – is determined by habitus, referring to the multiple and overlapping identities that develop over time and together make up a person’s life.<sup>3</sup> This research thus employed

a comparatively limited notion of community: in emphasizing the formal relationships between the school and the community, it also limited understandings of the complexity of community participation in addressing violence in schools.

### **What is Violence?**

Two broad definitions of violence have been advanced in the literature. On the one hand, the World Health Organization defines violence as the intentional threatening or actual use of physical force or power against oneself, another person or a group or community. Such use of physical force or power often results in, or is likely to result in, injury, death, psychological harm, maladjustment or deprivation.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, this definition has been criticized for not taking cognizance of forms of violence perpetuated by social structures. A structural definition thus focuses on the complexity of causes and manifestations of violence linked to family conditions, socio-economic conditions and cultural mores. For this research, violence is taken to denote not only physical and psychological violence but also forms of violence visited upon people, consciously or unconsciously, at a systemic, institutional, group or individual level.

South Africa is a very violent and still relatively militarized society, the product of a history of political struggle coupled with high levels of crime and the ideological hegemony of violent masculinities. Structural violence of this sort is best addressed through concerted efforts to uncover the mechanisms, structures and processes through which violence is perpetuated and sustained. One of the areas deeply affected by ongoing violence and conflict is education. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s schools were mainly affected by political violence, other kinds of violence have become increasingly visible in schools following the transition to democracy in 1994. Bullying, rape, assault, vandalism, gang fights, sexual harassment and other forms of violence plague many South African schools.<sup>5</sup> Such violence is not restricted to a particular social context, but occurs at schools in former Bantustan areas, on commercial farms, in townships, middle class suburbs, informal settlements and inner-city neighbourhoods. Recently, in late 2006, the Minister of Education highlighted violence in schools as one of the areas that require attention.<sup>6</sup>

### **Violence in schools in the study**

An analysis of the data collected revealed that violence is rife in schools in the study. Whereas political violence was a major feature of society in the 1980s and 1990s, it was not mentioned across the sites during this study. As other studies undertaken during the late 1990s and early 2000s have shown, other forms of violence, notably sexual, domestic and youth violence, as well as violent crime, are now preponderant. During the intense political struggles of the late-apartheid period, research highlighted the impact on schooling of the atmosphere of fear, hostility and suspicion. The effects of some members of the school community being killed or burnt for political reasons included high staff turnover, learner dropout and absenteeism and a general decline in learner enrolments. Children were de-schooled by the violence, and de-schooling was exacerbated by police detentions.<sup>7</sup> Relationships between pupils and teachers deteriorated, characterized by a lack of communication and trust; effective parent-teacher-student alliances were compromised; and learners left violence-prone schools to study elsewhere. Schools in some communities were literally closed down because of political violence.

Following the 1994 elections, other forms of violence, especially criminal violence, emerged. Limited economic opportunities combined with an influx of political exiles meant that many people could not be absorbed into the formal political and economic structures, and some resorted to crime. It has been suggested that former members of *Umkonto We Sizwe*, the ANC's military wing, who had sacrificed their education for the liberation struggle and were instead trained to use deadly weapons, found themselves in a new society where their skills were no longer needed.<sup>8</sup> Some of these erstwhile defenders of their communities and liberators of the nation, illiterate, poverty-stricken and marginalized, also turned to crime. In addition to this kind of violence impacting on children's education, the following were prevalent across the sites in the study: faction fights, domestic violence, sexual violence, gang violence and bullying. Each of these is briefly discussed below, followed by a consideration of ways of addressing them.

Faction fights were a particular feature of one of the communities in the study. Normal schooling processes at this rural school in KwaZulu-Natal were threatened by faction fights between different villages. According to the principal, the community is spread

across several villages led by many different *izinduna zenkosi*,<sup>9</sup> and faction fighting often arose from incidents of perceived stock theft, or of adolescent sexual rivalry, such as a boy from one village starting a relationship with a girl from another village. The school draws its learners from several villages, and the boy and girl would thus be together during and sometimes after school. On occasion, the other boys in the village from which the girl came would object to the relationship, believing it to undermine them, and would organize to beat up the boy. In turn, boys from the boy's village would retaliate, and this would develop into a full-scale faction fight. The continuing faction fights, aggravated by the possession of firearms by some villagers, have shaped the ethos of the school: the fights have spilled over into the school itself and, at one stage, the school had to be closed down.

Sexual violence emerged as a concern at some of the sites. This form of violence, largely perpetrated by men against women, is unanimously linked in the literature to power or male dominance, rather than to sexual pleasure.<sup>10</sup> The scope of sexual violence includes physical assault, humiliation, emotional manipulation, rape, sexual harassment and sexual abuse. This form of violence is grossly under-reported because of the code of silence and fear that often characterizes it. At one school, the issue of a male teacher molesting female learners was reported by learners, who also indicated that they suspected that the school authorities knew about the situation but had nevertheless not taken any action. Violence in the form of rape was also highlighted at several sites, but this appeared to be a phenomenon within the community rather than the school. Learners at two sites indicated that they knew of several learners who had been raped, and that some of the perpetrators have been arrested.

Domestic forms of violence were also listed as a problem worthy of consideration, due to its impact on learner attendance and performance. It is not always possible to separate domestic or family violence from sexual violence, because these often overlap in terms of their locus. However, domestic or family violence is seen here as those forms of violence that occur in the domestic domain, particularly physical abuse of women or children. Again, most of the literature suggests that male dominance is largely the cause of this form of violence, which is often linked to alcoholism and to social and psychological dysfunctionality.<sup>11</sup> Simple adult abuse of authority may also be a factor: learners

at one site in KwaZulu-Natal alleged that orphans in the community were often physically and verbally abused by their caregivers. Domestic violence, like sexual violence in all its forms, is characterized by a strong code of silence, which exists even when victims are aware that others in the community are being similarly abused. Victims struggle with the dilemma that the perpetrators are often close relatives, and members of the same family protect one another's secrets from public exposure, which in turn breeds and encourages this form of violence.<sup>12</sup> The impact of domestic violence on schooling is largely emotional or psychological, and learners' performance suffers, suggesting that this form of violence can potentially destroy a victim's chances of succeeding later in life. To address the impact of domestic violence on children and their schooling, the code of silence has to be broken.

Across the sites, learners, teachers and community members acknowledged that some or other form of bullying is prevalent in their schools. Bullying can take many forms, ranging from name-calling to actual physical injury. As will be discussed later, the responses of schools have been lukewarm. Other studies have reported similar findings: the Education 2000 Plus study,<sup>13</sup> for example, revealed that teachers often brush bullying aside as normal children's play. Yet the literature suggests that the long-term effects on the bullied child can lead to irreversible harm, including dropping out of school or joining gangs in order to afford themselves protection.<sup>14</sup>

Educators consistently deny ever administering corporal punishment since it was declared illegal in 1996, but learners across the sites indicated that they were often beaten up by educators. Indications are that corporal punishment is still widespread in schools even if not as frequent or excessive as it used to be. Most stakeholders mentioned forms of violence that were physical or psychological in nature, but learners also tended to consider punishment in the form of detention or physical labour, or being locked out when they are late, as constituting violence.

### **Responses by schools and communities**

While violence has not led to a total collapse of schooling, as occurred during the 1980s, it is clearly impacting on learning and teaching and has to be addressed. In the immediate post-1994 period, government policy explicitly sought to encourage partnerships between communities and schools

as one of the ways through which the interests of schools could be advanced. Following decades of constrained community participation in education matters as a result of apartheid ideology, the transition to democracy created a new environment in which community participation was viewed as a key pillar for development and social transformation. The South African Schools Act<sup>15</sup> provides for the establishment of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), with representatives from educators and parents (and, in secondary schools, learners), in all public schools. Section 20(1a) of the Act enjoins the SGB to ‘promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school’. In addition to the explicit provisions for stakeholder involvement through SGBs, school management teams (SMTs) have become important features in education discourse.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, community participation in matters pertaining to schools has seen the establishment of structures such as Discipline, Safety and Security Committees (DSSCs). Unlike other structures with broader concerns than just violence, the DSSCs were introduced into communities to specifically address issues relating to the safety and security of school property and children, and are composed of school managers, community policing forum members, police service personnel, and traditional leaders as well as municipal councilors. What roles have these partnerships played in addressing the violence affecting schooling?

Given the enduring impact of violence on South African education, various strategies have been proposed to address it, including the development of a culture-based model of violence,<sup>17</sup> a safe schools model,<sup>18</sup> and whole-school anti-bullying policies.<sup>19</sup> These were the first fruits of calls for partnerships between schools and communities in order to curb violence in schools. At the national and provincial levels, Departments of Education have also embarked on a number of initiatives. These include revising the curriculum to enhance the Life Skills of learners and to build their capacity to deal with violence against them, and encouraging speaking out against sexual abuse in order to break the code of silence. In the Western Cape, the Department of Education’s Safe Schools Programme made it possible for learners to phone in to report all forms of violence. Most of the Discipline, Safety and Security Committees at the sites examined in this study, however, were not operating

effectively, primarily due to poor communication and the inaccessibility of members.

At school level, one of the ways in which schools can address the issue of violence is through the development of policy. Policy development at school level is a function of the SGB and the school management team. Across the sites, there is evidence that school policies reflecting an intention to address violence have been developed. An analysis of the school profile instruments revealed that the SGBs had developed a number of policies, including the school’s constitution, a learner code of conduct, and a discipline policy. Codes of conduct for learners, for example, identify various acts of violence as punishable offences, with the severity of the punishment depending on the violent act itself. At one site, sexual harassment is punishable by expulsion. A degree of broader participation in the development of school policies is also evident at most sites. However, the impact of these policies on violence in schools is unclear, given continuing incidents; and parents at one site contended that the policies and procedures were ‘not really effective’.

Among the reasons for the lack of effectiveness is that processes of policy development are themselves problematic. At one rural school, the drafting of the policy was modeled on an urban school which did not share the same experiences, and the relevance of the policy is therefore questionable. At this site it appeared that the principal and the educators viewed community members as having very low education levels, and ran the show exclusively themselves.

Another major limitation impacting on effectiveness was policy implementation, which did not always reflect the intentions. At a different rural school, there appeared to be difficulties in forming and sustaining structures that involve both the community and the school, not least the fact that most educators resided outside of the community and were therefore unlikely to fully participate in the activities suggested. Several initiatives aimed at addressing violence emanated from the community, but did not link up with school initiatives. A forum was established, representing the various parties, but in practice the forum had little to do. For example, at the site characterized by intermittent faction fighting, various celebrations, at which no violent slogans were allowed, were organized in the villages, and quarterly meetings were arranged to coach young men on how to be peaceable, but, while schools were invited, they largely ignored the functions.

The issue of how to address violence in schools remains contentious. It appears that, in some instances, there is a level of mistrust between educators and principals, on the one hand, and parents on the other. At one urban site, parents serving on the SGB appeared to have little faith in the ability of formal school policy mechanisms to address violence. They related that when they tried to ensure the disciplining of an educator accused of administering corporal punishment, and despite the fact that a learner was injured as a result, educators appeared to be acting to protect their own. This led to friction between educators and school management on the one hand, and the SGB on the other, with the SGB feeling disempowered to do anything about the problems existing at the school, in turn creating a vacuum of which learners are taking advantage.

### Conclusion

The Gender and Education for All report<sup>20</sup> suggests that schools remain sites of intolerance, discrimination and violence. This was the case in schools across this study. School-community partnerships have yielded no positive outcomes in these particular schools. Of particular significance are the limitations imposed by the partnership models often assumed in policy. While the partnerships are viewed as models which can facilitate the resolution of many issues within the communities, in practice there are many issues that hamper the effective functioning of such partnerships. In fact, while communities and parents are far from blameless, there were too many instances in the data of parents being undermined or excluded by educators, of educators closing ranks when one amongst them faces disciplinary charges, of educators ignoring bullying and still administering corporal punishment, and of school authorities failing to act on reports of violence or abuse and being ignorant of or disregarding important community initiatives aimed at addressing violence. While the literature emphasizes the benefits of partnerships, including being able to draw on the opinions, support, expertise and resources of the most powerful stakeholders in order to shape projects, it is apparent from the data that petty and not-so-petty politics are far more important in the success or failure of the school and community partnerships being promoted by South African education policy. More research is required.

1. Both the schools in Alexandra, Gauteng, were primary schools, and it was assumed that these learners would not have information about or experiences of participating in the partnerships with which the research was concerned.
2. John Pryor, 'Can Community Participation Mobilise Social Capital for Improvement of Rural Schooling? A Case Study from Ghana', *Compare*, 35, 2, June 2005.
3. Pryor, 'Can Community Participation Mobilise Social Capital', p.194.
4. Garth Stevens, Gail Wyngaard and Ashley van Niekerk, 'The Safe Schools Model: An Antidote to School Violence?', *Perspectives in Education*, 19, 2, 2001.
5. Among numerous and regular media reports on violence in schools, see Zenzele Kuhlase, 'From teacher to torturer', *The Teacher*, 6, 2002.
6. Department of Education, 'Statement by Minister Pandor on School Safety', Pretoria, 20 October 2006.
7. John Gultig and Mike Hart, 'The Effects of the Conflict on Schools and Schooling in the Edendale/ Vulindlela Districts of Natal' (paper presented at a conference on Economic Change, Social Conflict and Education in Apartheid South Africa, Grantham, 1989).
8. Thokozani Xaba, 'Masculinity in a Transitional Society: The Rise and Fall of "The Young Lions"' (paper presented at a Colloquium on Masculinities in Southern Africa, University Of Durban-Westville, Durban, 1997).
9. These are traditional leaders who report to the king.
10. Heather Brookes and Linda Richter, *A Study of School Responses to Violence and Harassment of Girls* (Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 2001); Katharine Wood and Rachel Jewkes, "Dangerous love": Reflections on Violence among Xhosa Township Youth', in Morrell, R. (ed) *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2001).
11. Brookes and Richter, *A Study of School Responses to Violence and Harassment of Girls*.
12. Lois Weis, Julia Marusza and Michelle Fine, 'Out of the Cupboard: Kids, Domestic Violence and Schools', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 19, 1998.
13. CEPD, *Transformation of the South African Schooling System: A Report from the Second Year of Education 2000 Plus* (Johannesburg: Centre for Education Policy Development, 2001).
14. T. Levin, 'Addressing bullying in schools' (unpublished paper prepared for the Centre for Education Policy Development, 2006).
15. Republic of South Africa, *South African Schools Act*, Act no.84 of 1996. Pretoria.
16. It is worth noting that the concept of School Management Teams does not explicitly appear in education policy, but has assumed a central place within the context of concerns about broader participation in decision-making processes.
17. Janie Ward, 'Cultivating a Morality of Care in African American Adolescents: A Culture-Based Model of Violence Prevention', *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 2, 1995.
18. Stevens, Wyngaard and van Niekerk, 'The Safe Schools Model'.
19. Mike Eslea and Peter Smith, 'The Long-Term Effectiveness of Anti-Bullying Work in Primary Schools', *Educational Research*, 40, 1998.
20. UNESCO, *Gender and Education for All: Global Monitoring Report* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2003/4)

# THE RIGHT TO BASIC EDUCATION: STATE POLICY AND COMMUNITY VOICES

SALIM VALLY AND SAMIERA ZAFAR

## Introduction

The Right to Basic Education (RBE) project commenced in 2003. It was managed by the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD) in partnership with the Fort Hare and Wits Education Policy Units (EPUs). To date, thirty two outputs have been recorded, consisting of reports, journal articles, book chapters, conference presentations, desk top studies, empirical case studies, popular booklets and submissions to state departments and to Chapter Nine institutions. These outputs are clustered into themes (see Appendix 1).

The *raison d'être* for the study emanated from the long-term research programme on Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice developed by the Education Policy Consortium. Central to the research agenda of this programme is a commitment that education is essential for the socialization of learners and educators into a culture based on human rights, democracy, and critical citizenship. There is also the strong belief that the exercise of rights cannot be achieved effectively under conditions that deny the citizenry its right to be heard and the freedoms associated with the right to participation in public life. Therefore, notions of consent, agreement, representation, participation and accountability have been problematized in the RBE and other Consortium research projects.

The RBE project was initiated by the Education Policy Consortium to enable researchers to critically appraise the broader socio-economic and development context and its bearing on the normative and regulatory framework of the right to education beyond policy and legislation. It called for an evaluation of the broader questions of development,

democracy and the political economy of rights in post-apartheid South Africa, and a problematization of the role, purpose and content of basic education. The conceptual orientation of the various components of the RBE embraced a critical, rights-based, social inclusion and human capability approach. The framing of the project allowed researchers to include in their analysis issues of politics, class, gender, 'race', rurality, marginalization, the social construction of knowledge and its relationship to power and ideology.

The limitations of rights framed as legal and justiciable phenomena in effecting redress and equity, and the instrumental link between education and the economy, received considerable attention. Similarly, the structure of the education and training system and the role and possibilities for agency in advancing education rights were keenly interrogated. Central to the arguments of many of the studies is the importance of understanding and engaging with the relationship between human agency and social change, and the role of research and researchers in this endeavour. In this regard, a significant portion of the empirical research was based on participatory research methods in which the voices of school-community representatives were fore-grounded.

Despite good intentions, and undoubted advances in schooling after 1994, the data from this project records persistent inequalities in education and continued violation of rights, and the analyses provide insights into why the quality of learning and teaching, social justice, democracy and human rights are compromised for many of South Africa's citizens. The current interpretation and implementation of the right to basic education through formal policy and

legislative frameworks fall far short of the needs of South Africans and the fulfilment of their potential. The project has generated valuable and rigorous insights into how the situation can be improved, through a combination of educational reforms accompanied by a wider range of redistributive strategies, democratic participation, political will and clear choices about the social ends policy interventions seek to achieve.

Some of the research questions framing this study were the following:

What are the implications of the constitutional right to basic education for the policy and legislative framework of the education and training system?

How do the deep social divisions in South African society, reflected by poverty and social inequalities, affect access to education?

Does the right to education impact on the development of democracy, and what are the obstacles and impediments to the fulfilment of educational rights?

How can the right to basic education be realized in a world where the public sector is increasingly threatened by the commodification of basic services, including education?

What is the relationship between the state and civil society and the meaning of this relationship for the establishment of democracy in education?

It is not possible in one presentation to do justice to and capture the nuances, richness and fine-grained analyses of the many outputs of this project. We will, however, summarize the main ideas in each discernable theme as delineated in Appendix 1.

### **Democracy, state, market, development and globalization**

The issues that emerged under this theme of the project call for an evaluation of broader questions of development, democracy and the political economy of rights in post-apartheid South Africa, and for a problematization of the role, purpose and content of basic education. This is not merely a critical theoretical exercise aimed at strengthening conceptual categories but a conceptualization of the theoretical debate in relation to practice and policy, as well as its impact on the labours of the state and of socially-oriented research and action. The goals of education cannot simply relate to the objectives of economic growth, productivity or the enhancement of 'human capital'. An analysis of the various development paradigms points to the dangers of such a reductionist view of the role

of education in development and the consequences of the commodification and marketization of education based on a narrow human capital view of education.

Such an approach, it is argued, prevents education as a public good from providing opportunities and capabilities for life chances to those who have been historically denied such opportunities. In this respect the project has, not uncritically, privileged the views of Amartya Sen (1999) on the relationship between development, education and capabilities. The concept of 'human rights as capabilities', proposed by Sen (1999) and taken on board in this research study, is defined as 'the substantive freedom of people to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the real choices they have' (Sen 1999: 293). More recently, Sen (2003) points to a range of issues affecting basic education, including human insecurity, deprivation, illiteracy and innumeracy, barriers to access, the inability of poor communities to invoke their legal rights, health and gender discrimination.

The seduction of the 'knowledge economy', the pressure of playing by the rules of corporate globalization and their impact on education is also examined under this theme. Recent developments in Venezuela, Uruguay and Bolivia show that not all nation states are naturally captive to globalization or powerless to buck the trend. This does not mean that the imperatives of international competitiveness have not lessened the autonomous agency of individual states. What it does suggest, however, is that the limits on state policy are, to a significant extent, self-imposed. In many respects, governments are not obliged to become the midwives of corporate globalization. There are alternative paths to development and these largely relate to political will and choices.

In their paper, 'The Case for Basic Education', Enver Motala and Tsakani Chaka take issue with a historical and decontextualized understandings of education which invariably are denuded of socially defined purpose. They concede that skills, technological acumen and other learning attributes are important but not merely for their worth in the labour market, for productivity and competitiveness, narrowly conceived; rather, they are crucial socially, politically and culturally and for enhancing the ability of citizens to participate in democratic processes. For them, basic education must evince 'particular attributes that speak to the broader reconstructive purposes of education's role in society' and that the 'ostensibly direct and functionalist relationship assumed to

exist between education and economic growth or “economic success” is largely unproven. While broadly supportive of Sen’s view of education, Motala and Chaka also note his silence on issues such as the contestations arising from unequal social relations in the schooling system, as well as issues of education quality, learning, teaching and the curriculum. They highlight this critique by referring to the fact that, despite higher enrolment in South African schools after 1994, outcomes continue to be variable and differentiated along ‘race’, gender, social class and geographic lines. Motala and Chaka conclude by making a case for the broader humanizing purpose of learning instead of a restrictive purpose largely limited to economic functions.

### **International and national human rights discourse and human rights instruments**

In their paper, Keet, Zafar and Richards speak to the uneasy reciprocity between the right to basic education and human rights. They contend that, while the aim of the right to basic education is to promote and protect access to quality education, such sustained and broadened access should be supported by a human rights education that builds on the ‘agency’ of the rights claimants. The late Tomasevski, quoted in Enver Motala’s paper on Education, Human Rights and the Law, complained that ‘the right to education has been converted from a right into a development goal. An increase in school enrollments from 30 percent to 40 percent was then recorded as a success. By the human rights yardstick, the increase signifies continued denial of the right to education to 60 percent of the population.’ Tomasevski emphasized the importance of placing human rights at the centre of education policies and the translation of these rights into ‘human rights obligations’, arguing that ‘rights based education entails safeguards for the right to education, and the advancing of all human rights through education.’

Keet, Zafar and Richards remind us that, despite the development of human rights enunciations since 1948, this ‘age of rights’ also witnessed over 169 million government inspired murders, the malnourishment of more than 840 million people, the death of 12 million people annually due to a lack of water, a world-wide incapacity for peace and an escalation in wars, deepening inequality in the context of globalization, and widespread human rights hypocrisy in Western democracies. Enver

Motala, too, referring to events in Iraq and Palestine, points to contradictions in and the relative nature of the ‘rule of the law’ with its conventions, constitutions and bills of rights. Keet, Zafar and Richards take issue with a dogmatic approach that focuses solely on human rights instruments without applying these to pedagogical practice. Such ‘declarationist’ human rights education cannot be ‘experiential’, ‘participatory’ or ‘emancipatory’ because human rights declarations and international instruments represent a pre-determined curriculum framework that is anti-educational in design and conservative in its programming.

An important thesis advanced in the studies is that rights framed as legal and ‘justiciable entities’ often do not operate on a level playing field. Left unmediated, they can construct and replicate narrow and privileged social interests and relations. Thus, legal mechanisms and human rights instruments must be understood within larger realities of power. Similarly, the research argues that unmediated education policies and legislation that cater for access to basic education are inadequate because of their ‘bluntness’ in relation to the needs of transformation. Language in education policy is an example of how this occurs. For instance, the codification of the right of all learners to receive most of their primary school instruction mainly in their first language is an important policy step, but the failure of the state to properly resource additive bilingual and multilingual education has had the effect of solidifying the hegemony of English. The consequences of not having an adequate number of appropriately trained educators to teach in bilingual and multilingual classrooms, nor up-to-date and readily accessible learning materials in indigenous languages, are that English and Afrikaans become the only practical choices for learners, parents and educators.

### **Policy, legislative review and implementation**

In her contribution to the project, concerned with theorizing the rural school learner as a cause, an object and a citizen, Catherine Odora Hoppers reminds us of the important intellectual frameworks proposed by Foucault and Chomsky. These frameworks have inspired several different outputs, from analyses of education rights as enshrined in legislation, through submissions to government, to individual researchers’ interactions with ordinary citizens. The real work of intellectuals, according to Foucault (cited in Rabinow

1984: 6), is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent, and to criticize them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked. For Chomsky, the problem is a political one. We must struggle against the injustices of our current society in the name of a higher goal – justice (Ibid.). Our job is to try to create a vision of a future just society, to create, if you like, a humanistic social theory that is based on some firm conception of the human essence or human nature.

Informed by such frameworks, Odora Hoppers calls for a re-theorization of rurality away from the deficit model. She critiques the construction of rural children as either *causes* or *objects* within the modalities of scientific rationalism, development and modernization, constructions which have damaging consequences for rural children and communities alike. Constructing learners in rural contexts as *citizens*, she believes, will create the space for these children, their parents and their communities to actively affirm their rights to equality and justice. She challenges researchers to work within empowerment-oriented paradigms, in terms of which communities are encouraged to reconnect and engage with their own history, tradition and ways of being and seeing.

Xola Ngonini details the history of rural areas in South Africa. He explores a range of definitions of rurality and the implications of these varied conceptual frameworks for the identity of people living in rural contexts. He considers the role of education and schooling in shaping rural areas under apartheid and capitalism, and demonstrates how the simple dichotomy of urban and rural is incapable of revealing how rural life is embedded in the institutional structures of wider society. Ngonini posits the possibility of moving beyond the currently dominant discourses of deficit, modernization and charity and instead actually engaging with, and learning from, those who until now have been merely the objects of research. He hopes that, 'in this way, it will be possible to draw conclusions which are informative and educative, not based on the panoptical and disciplinary approach which tends to possess knowledge about and on the *Other*' (Ngonini 2004: 17, emphasis in the original).

Samiera Zafar discusses the findings of a Human Rights Watch report which focuses on the right to basic education for learners in farm schools. Despite attempts in terms of the South African Schools Act

(RSA 1996) to deliver basic education to these children, their plight remains dire. Moreover, education policy with regard to these learners appears at best flawed and at worst in violation of the spirit and letter of their constitutional rights. Zafar's paper reflects on the wider legal implications of clashes between the private property rights of farm owners, the right to basic education of the children of farm workers, and the effect of making the state's responsibility for basic education contingent on the goodwill of farm owners.

Other articles that fall under this theme also focus on the right to basic education for special and vulnerable groups of children. Sarah Motha discusses the barriers to basic education experienced by learners whose parents are either asylum seekers, documented migrants or refugees. These barriers exist despite the historic role that migrants have played and continue to play in building South Africa's economy. Motha points to the gaps in the provision of basic education to these learners, and focuses in particular on issues of language and xenophobia which alienate learners notwithstanding the existence of international and national human rights instruments.

Hersheela Narsee's study on the governance of schools explores the relationship between decentralization, democracy and participation. Her paper discusses limitations of decentralization as a 'panacea for solving problems of democratic participation'. She concludes by asserting that 'the technocratic character of school governance in South Africa makes it inaccessible to the majority of its communities, disempowers the poor, illiterate and marginalized and serves as a barrier for the full participation of people for whom it was intended'.

### **Social movements, civil society and basic education**

South Africa has a proud history of mobilization around the right to basic education. Though, in comparison with the seventies and eighties, this praxis has diminished, it still exists today in the form of the new independent social movements. The nature of the negotiated settlement in South Africa, the continuation of the capitalist character of the state (despite the discourse of human rights and development) and the incorporation of South Africa into a global market economy ruptured the education principles and practices established by civil society during the seventies and eighties. Studies under this

theme have tried to understand how this once powerful vision of a democratic education has been reduced to little more than a mere 'footprint in the sand'. In continuity with past struggles and visions, the new social movements emphasize free quality education at all levels, education with production, participatory democracy in education, critical thinking for political action and access to higher education for the poor and for workers. At the same time, however, they are shedding the disarming and misplaced hope that formal political and constitutional change is sufficient to realize socio-economic rights and democratic citizenship.

The RBE project relates to these new social movements through the Education Rights Project (ERP) with its model of working with communities in the pursuit of basic education rights. Through a dialogical relationship between the qualitative and quantitative research conducted by communities, and academic research conducted by people based in universities and research centres, the RBE project seeks to ensure that scholarship contributes to ways of dealing with social challenges. Equally importantly, and without romanticizing the capacity of communities to conduct research, it makes it possible for communities themselves to profoundly inform, direct, own and use research produced through their efforts.

The ERP's espousal of education rights is cognizant of local democratic structures and contexts. In the past, partnerships have included social movements, progressive NGOs, teacher unions, and youth, students' and parents' organizations. In collaboration with partner organizations, the ERP develops a popular education and mobilization plan for a specific community. The plan usually begins with mass meetings or public hearings on the community's access to free, quality public education, and is followed by education rights workshops. The latter address the legal rights of learners, parents and educators, focus on problems raised by the community and work towards the formation of an action plan to confront these challenges. Plans differ from community to community, but in most instances include advocacy, legal literacy, and communication with state and statutory structures such as school governing bodies as well as with pertinent civil society organizations.

The ERP also partners communities with specialized interest groups, academics and others knowledgeable in the different areas of concern to communities, while ensuring that the nature of this relationship is both

democratic and dialogical. In many cases, workshops highlight the need for research within the community, whereupon the ERP works collaboratively with members of the community-based partner to develop and implement a participatory action research plan. These participatory research initiatives are also a form of social accountability. They assert the need for civil society to have access to collective self-knowledge, which is independent of government, in order to hold the state to account for its policies. They act thus a social check on the 'numbers' and 'statistics' put forward by state functionaries as official justification of state policies. This kind of critical research becomes 'a transformative endeavour unembarrassed by the label 'political' and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness'; and those involved in the ERP initiative see their research as 'the first step towards forms of political action that can address the injustices found in the field site or constructed in the very act of research itself' (Kincheloe and McLaren 1998: 264).

Thus far, actions typically involve a combination of attempts to communicate with schools and education officials, parents and school governing bodies, to obtain legal redress and, most importantly, to plan and organize local education campaigns. The premise and outcome of such a research process is social action. The outcomes of the research inform the design of a campaign aimed at improving local education. This will ultimately contribute to democratizing debates on, for example, the impact of government budgets on local education, since communities themselves will have the data to challenge or support assertions made by the state or other organizations about education provisioning. In the case of one of the studies supported by this project, the community of Durban Roodepoort Deep gained important concessions from the state in terms of the provision of transport. Expressed simply, until poor and marginalized communities are able, autonomously, to tell their own stories, powerful interests that are fundamentally opposed to the interests of such communities will continue to dominate debate on social policy.

By collecting testimonies detailing the views and experiences of learners, teachers and community activists of their local schools, cold statistical data on school fees, transport, feeding schemes, child labour, infrastructure and facilities are given new meaning. The troubles and struggles of individuals and communities to educate their young under very

trying circumstances, and to make the hard-won constitutional right to education a reality, are vividly portrayed in these testimonies. In the tradition of C. Wright Mills' evocative writing on the 'sociological imagination', active social scientists, by pointing out the connections between a person's individual troubles and connected social issues, can help create a vision of a society that overcomes or transcends these troubles. With the assistance of the ERP, a number of communities linked to social movements have collected or are in the process of collecting data about their communities on basic issues such as household incomes, the amount of school fees charged (as well as any violations of parents' or children's rights because of an inability to pay), the cost of uniforms, books and transport, and the provision of meals in schools. Together with ERP staff members, this data is

analyzed and then presented at community meetings where actions to be taken to deal with the problems are identified.

**Conclusion**

The importance of a research process as embodied in the Right to Basic Education project is that it problematizes dominant political and theoretical discourses at the same time as promoting democratic and cooperative practices in the production and designation of what constitutes knowledge. It also demystifies research practices and facilitates a social and active response to complex policy issues. In so doing it seeks to ensure that human rights, and particularly the right to education, are realized and come to fruition in the everyday lives of individual citizens as well as in all communities.

<b>Appendix 1</b>			
<b>Thematic List of Outputs for the Right to Basic Education Project</b>			
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Type of Research Output</b>	<b>Publication/Title</b>	<b>Participating Unit/Authors</b>
Democracy, State, Market, Development and Globalization	CEPD Occasional Publication Series, Occasional Paper no. 4	The Case for Basic Education	CEPD: Enver Motala and Tsakani Chaka
	Paper presented at the International Conference in Palestine, November 2004	The Impact of Globalisation on the Education System in South Africa	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro and Salim Vally
	Quarterly Review	Education as Market Fantasy or Education as a Public Good?	Wits EPU: Salim Vally and Andre Keet
	Book Chapter	The Globalisation of Education Policy and Practice in South Africa in George Martell (ed) Education's Iron Cage and its Dismantling in the New Global Order	Wits EPU: Salim Vally and Carol-Anne Spreen
	Book Chapter	Education Rights and the Commodification of Education in P. Bond, H. Chitonge and A. Hofman (eds) The Accumulation of Capital in South Africa (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation/Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal)	Wits EPU: Salim Vally

Theme	Type of Research Output	Publication/Title	Participating Unit/Authors
	Paper presented at the Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal	The Limits of Representative Democracy – Citizenship and Education Rights	Wits EPU, Salim Vally
	Paper presented at the DITSELA conference, Elijah Barayi Centre, Yeoville	The Political Economy of Education – Key Trends, Issues and their Significance	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
International Human Rights Discourse and Human Rights Instruments	Unpublished Paper	Right to Basic Education in Poor Communities in South Africa: A Review of the International Human Rights Instruments	Ft. Hare EPU: Symphorosa Rembe
	Unpublished Paper	Education, Human Rights and the Law	CEPD: Enver Motala
	Quarterly Review	Human Rights, Citizenship and Education	Wits EPU: Salim Vally, and CEPD: Enver Motala
Policy, Legislative Review and Implementation	Quarterly Review: issue on Learners in Rural Schools	Learners in Rural Schools	CEPD: Samiera Zafar (ed.)
	Paper also presented at the International Conference on the Right to Basic Education, Amsterdam, November 2004	The Cause, the Object, the Citizen: Rural School Learners in the Void of Intersecting Policies and Traditions of Thought	CEPD: Catherine Odora Hoppers
	CEPD Public Policy Seminar, November 2004	Education and Rurality	CEPD: Xola Ngonini
		The Right to Education for Asylum Seekers, Documented Migrants and Refugees in South Africa	Wits EPU: Sarah Motha
		Farm Schools: Poison or Remedy? A Review of a Human Rights Watch Report	CEPD: Samiera Zafar
	Paper presented at WCCES conference, Cuba October 2004	Decentralisation and Democracy: Uneasy Bedfellows	CEPD: Hersheela Narsee
	Unpublished Article	Vignettes on Policy Implementation at the Rural Chalk Face	CEPD: Samiera Zafar
	Dossier of rights based cases and articles on the violation of education rights	Wits EPU Submission to the SAHRC Public Hearing on the Right to Education	Wits EPU: Sarah Motha and Salim Vally
Submission to the Department of Education on the proposed amendments to the school fees regulations	ERP submission on the amendments to SASA on school fees	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro and Salim Vally	

Theme	Type of Research Output	Publication/Title	Participating Unit/Authors
	Journal Article	Citizenship and Children's Education Rights in South Africa, in Journal of Education	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
Social Movements, Civil Society and Basic Education	Journal Article	The Law, Education Rights and Social Movements – From People's Education to Neo-Liberalism, in Review of African Political Economy	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
	Book Chapter	Education Rights and Social Movements in South Africa, in S. Macrine, D. Hill and P. McLaren (eds) Organising Pedagogy: Educating for Social Justice Within and Beyond Global Neo-liberalism (Routledge)	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
	Paper presented at the World Social Forum, Mumbai	Arenas for Research and Action between Social Movements and Academics	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
	Paper presented at the Induction of the National Executive Committee, Treatment Action Campaign, Randburg	The Socio-Economic, Political and Education Context of the HIV/AIDS Pandemic	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
	Paper presented at the Gauteng Department of Education Colloquium, Braamfontein	Gauteng Schools – Sites of Social Justice?	Wits EPU: Salim Vally
Research Methodology	Lecture Programme delivered to Education students at Wits University	Selected Issues in the Methodology of Participatory Action Research Studies: Reflections on the Education Rights Project and the Right to Basic Education project	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro
	Quarterly Review	Education Research for Social Justice: From Objectivity to Subjectivity	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro, Shireen Motala and Mphela Motimela; CEPD: Samiera Zafar, Michael Gardiner and Xola Ngonini; CEREP: Cliff Malcolm

Theme	Type of Research Output	Publication/Title	Participating Unit/Authors
Right to Basic Education – The Voices of Learners	Compilation	The views of learners on issues such as School Governing Bodies, Gender and Violence, HIV/AIDS, Xenophobia and Discrimination, The Cost of Education, School Transport and Uniforms, Extra Curriculum Initiatives, Learner Representative Councils and Community-School Relationships, in Education Struggles After Apartheid, Khanya Journal	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro and Salim Vally (eds)
Case Studies	Research Report	Ft. Hare EPU Research Report on 6 Case Studies in the Eastern Cape	Ft. Hare EPU: Symphorosa Rembe
	Research Report	An Exploratory Study of Human Rights Education in Two Schools in Gauteng	CEPD: Samiera Zafar, Andre Keet and Ben Richards
	Research Report	The Right to Basic Education in Durban Roodepoort Deep and Rondebult	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro and Salim Vally
	Research Report	Survey of 1665 learners in Ekurhuleni and Soweto: Nutrition, Corporal Punishment, HIV/AIDS, Admission Policies, Pregnancy, School Fees and Attitudes to Schooling	Wits EPU: Brian Ramadiro, David Jenkins, Salim Vally and a team of fifteen community researchers.
Popular Booklets on the Right to Basic Education	Research and Background Literature Review to inform advocacy booklets on twelve issues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. HIV/AIDS</li> <li>2. Sexual Violence</li> <li>3. Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Migrants</li> <li>4. Language Rights</li> <li>5. Religion and Schools</li> <li>6. Disability</li> <li>7. School Governing Bodies</li> <li>8. The Cost of Schooling</li> <li>9. Admission Policy</li> <li>10. Adult Learners</li> <li>11. Corporal Punishment and Bullying</li> <li>12. Discrimination and Schooling</li> </ol>	Wits EPU: Salim Vally and Brian Ramadiro (eds)

# EDUCATION AND THE STATE: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE EDUCATION POLICY CONSORTIUM'S RESEARCH

JOHN PAMPALLIS AND ENVER MOTALA

## **Introduction**

In this chapter we consider the question of the state<sup>1</sup> and its implications for an analysis of social policy in the development of post-apartheid South Africa. Our approach to the state is intended to provide insights into how the relationship between education and other social policies is influenced by the state in the context of the contestations and contradictory impulses which impact on its policies and strategies. We argue that an understanding of the state is central to any attempt to understand or to analyse policy. In fact, some understanding of the state, its motivations and the interests it represents is inherent in almost any analysis of policy, whether explicit or not. Policy is about politics (that is, policy is a political instrument) and the state is the main arena in which or about which political activity takes place. So an understanding of the state is central to any analysis of policy.

The emergent democratic state faces persistent challenges and pressures – and these have a direct impact on its conceptualization of policy, its strategies and the processes to implement these. They affect the state's interpretation of its mediatory and transformative role in society which is expressed through a wide array of social policies, including those in the field of education. Hence the need to examine the state more systematically and critically and to encourage a greater study of the relationship between social policy and the politics of the state is both unavoidable and productive.

The research undertaken by the Education Policy Consortium (EPC) dealing with various aspects of the state and education<sup>2</sup> was unavoidably about political issues (though it does not delve in any detail into party political matters). This is so because the state

is the prime mover in the policy process, defining policy imperatives, goals, choices and strategies. The state is a critical category for social theory because of its pivotal role in the organization and allocation of resources and because it has the potential to determine the path of development of societies. Social theory without an orientation to the state is truncated and has a reduced explanatory power about social issues. Theorizing the state in regard to social policies is therefore necessary to understand the imperatives that drive policies and processes and how the state implements its programmes to meet the legislative requirements by which it is bound. Policy analysis without reference to politics is like 'Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark'.

An analysis of the state is also important because of the central role the state plays in determining and implementing a development path in any country.<sup>3</sup> How the state understands this role is determined by its understanding of its overarching goals (such as greater democracy and social equity, or economic growth, white supremacy, power over neighbouring countries, establishing working class power, a restoration of the free market, etc.). The state plays a pivotal role in organizing national resources and planning to give effect to nationally defined objectives, such as, in the case of South Africa today, the objectives of the Constitution and its subsidiary legislation, including broad goals such as democracy, greater social equity and economic growth. Less explicit goals reflecting the sectional interests of those most able to influence the state also play a role. How and what underpins the state's conceptualization of policies is therefore critical to planning processes and the implementation of policies. It is also likely

to illuminate how its approach to development facilitates or constrains its goals, the assumptions in the thinking of policy-makers (for example, ministers, Parliament, bureaucrats and their advisors, etc.) and, most importantly, whose interests are advanced and whose are not in the making of choices.

### **Contested interests in the state**

Political choices by the state are not made freely because they are subject to a welter of competing interests in society. The significance of the democratizing state to various stakeholders arises from its considerable power to organize and use the resources at its disposal in ways which facilitate particular approaches to social, economic, political and cultural development. These competing interests often give rise to the contradictions within the social, political and economic goals of nations, goals which, moreover, are themselves an expression of continuous contestation and conflict, now subdued and hidden, often open and hostile about social choices. So the actual policies that emerge are subject to the kinds of pressures that these different interests can bring to bear. This means that the relationship between the state's stated development objectives and the policies which emerge to give them effect are not easily translated into development strategies and actions.

Until recently in the post-apartheid state, the forms of contestation over policy appeared to be more 'consensual' than previously because of the ostensible power of the post-apartheid 'social compact'. Yet on occasion this is belied by the almost continuous acts of unrest now taking place in the country at this time, including protests over local government service delivery, industrial action by trade unions and the power struggles within the ruling party and its alliance partners. This would suggest that contestation with and over the state continues to be an abiding characteristic in the post-apartheid period even though the forms of that contestation may be very different from those that existed during apartheid.

Less dramatically, policy contestations continue across a wide range of other issues. The contest between capital and labour over questions of labour market flexibility (and unemployment levels) are a classic example.<sup>4</sup> And there are several similar examples in the domain of social policy, such as contests over medicine pricing and the treatment of disease (including HIV/AIDS), school fees, the role of higher education in relation to industry,

public and private educational provision, housing and social services delivery, the role of the Sector Education and Training Authorities, inflation targets and monetary policy, the role of the central bank, 'decentralization' of decision-making, the re-naming of cities and towns, Black Economic Empowerment, and other socio-economic policies. Concepts such as 'transformation', 'innovation', 'development', 'empowerment', 'the state', 'markets' and others are very much a part of that contestation. These contests – sometimes extremely antagonistic – are no longer largely about the legitimacy of the state but about its goals and actions (or lack thereof). Nonetheless, they do demonstrate the ongoing nature of the contest by various forces around the state, its policies, activities and choices.

Some analysts see the state as a direct instrument of the ruling class. But even those who do not, and who argue that the state is driven by a complex array of political and other factors, nevertheless concede that its politics expresses those interests which are dominant in society even if these face considerable challenge.<sup>5</sup> This should not be surprising given that such interests have powerful agencies of representation, advocacy and communication available to them. They are often well organized through formal structures and informal networks and control considerable resources with which to promote their interests. On the other hand, social groups and communities which are less organized or resourced have much less influence over public policy and the institutions of the state.

Hence, understanding the orientation of the state to social policies requires an analysis of the wider conditions for social policy and the critical factors that impact on state behaviour. Key amongst these is the relationship between economics and politics<sup>6</sup> and the way in which this is shaped and reshaped by ideological, cultural, religious, identity<sup>7</sup> and other discourses. Questions about how power is socially allocated remain central to these discussions.

### **Historical antecedents: state analysis and apartheid**

In South Africa there is a rich history of very meaningful analysis about the state, especially the apartheid state, which is instructive for thinking about the contemporary state. This is not to suggest that the apartheid and contemporary states are similar. Indeed, the very nature of state analysis under apartheid suggests how contemporary analysis

might be different, what its key elements should be, and how the differing objectives of the state then and now (and their similarities) might inform analysis. Historical analysis could illuminate a useful approach and methodology for serious analysis today, even though this should not be viewed in a reductionist way for understanding contemporary developments. Developments at this time need to be understood both contextually and historically, to the extent that societies are always in the grip of history and its stubborn continuities – such as in relation to questions of how power continues to be distributed in discriminatory ways – and its discontinuities – such as in the application of the new Constitution, including the Bill of Rights.

An examination of the way in which the form and function of the apartheid state was analyzed in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s<sup>8</sup> is instructive for state analysis today. It showed the important analytical relationships between the state and other social categories such as 'capital' and 'labour', and 'class' and 'race', and how the contradictions between these resulted in great social struggle and even potent analytical contests between the proponents of different orientations to the state. This debate raised fundamentally important questions for *theory* and *practice*.

Theoretically, the characterization of the apartheid state was rigorously debated by political scientists, sociologists, historians and others struggling to come to grips with the complexities of apartheid, its strategies and tactics and its ideological underpinnings. The debate provided a basis both for a critique of the state and for understanding a number of important related issues, including the relation of the South African state to capital accumulation and surplus value extraction, the competing claims of different sections (or 'fractions') of the capitalist class, the coercive regulation of labour in general and migrant labour in particular, the issue of race and the 'national question', the ideologies and roles of Afrikaner nationalism, African nationalism and liberalism, and the place of the South African state in international relations. Such analysis was extremely instructive for social theory because (depending on the viewpoint of the analyst) it provided a framework for understanding the objectives of apartheid planning in areas like education.

To take an example, the debate about the 'national question' within the Marxist and African nationalist traditions drew the most vigorous contestation

because of the divergent strategies associated with these traditions. For some, the 'national question' was principally about a 'democratic' revolution, while for others, that was a limited goal since there was little need to relate, both theoretically and strategically, the democratizing goals of the struggle against apartheid together with the broader social goals of socialism in defining the 'national question'.<sup>9</sup> In other words, although a close affinity between capitalism and apartheid was admitted, there was nevertheless disagreement about the nature of that affinity.

Those who regarded the 'national question' as primarily about the issue of race stressed the racist nature of the process of racial subjugation, and the racist forms of control over the lives of the populace and the allocation of public and private resources, while those who concentrated on class were wont to rely on questions of capital accumulation and its relationship with the form and function of the state and the struggle between capital and labour. In general, however, although some analysts were at pains to assert the primacy of 'race' or of 'class' as key to an understanding of the nature of the apartheid state, there were no serious analysts who did not understand the critically relational nature of race and class as categories for analytical purposes.

Moreover, the debate about the 'national question' was not merely about theory – it was about the nature of the struggle and of the 'revolution' itself. It was about who should constitute the leadership of the liberation struggle, how such a leadership was constituted relative to class, what alliances were necessary, what strategies and tactics should be pursued, what interests and forces would predominate in the post-apartheid state, and what ought to be the orientation to issues of property and production, social reorganization and redistribution, etc. Characterizing the state as a 'racial' state or as an 'exploitative capitalist' state gave rise to differing interpretations of the 'national question', and implied that how apartheid and capitalism were analyzed was critical to any view of the 'national question' along with related issues of leadership, alliances, strategies, 'multi-racialism' and 'non-racialism', class compromise and so on. These issues were of great strategic and tactical value in the national political organizations, trade unions, students', women's and civic movements and, somewhat less explicitly, even in organizations answering to the call of contextual theologies.

As we can see, therefore, theory and strategy were implicated in the analysis since how the state was conceptualized, for instance, in relation to the question of 'race', had direct implications for how the struggle for liberation was conducted. There were, for example, profound differences between the approaches adopted by the Black Consciousness Movement, the African National Congress (ANC) and 'workerist' tendencies in the trade union movement and other left political groupings, the last largely associated with the traditions of Trotskyism.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, though often not recognised in the literature of the 'left', debates on similar issues (albeit using different discourses) were also taking place among white business and political leaders in their attempt to find a way out of the morass into which apartheid had led them.

### **Conceptualization of policies post-apartheid**

Several projects within the *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education* programme of the Education Policy Consortium illustrate the importance of understanding the policy orientation of the state in order to clarify its impact on educational issues. These relate particularly to the state's conceptualization of issues like race, human rights, development, rurality and the like, and to the consequences of this for the implementation of its policies. For example, in their conclusion, Thaver and Thaver<sup>11</sup> argue that

'race' is not an epiphenomenon but structurally embedded in the project of modernity as evidenced in its institutions such as the state, its political project of nation formation, the process of modernization, the process of capital accumulation (especially primitive accumulation) and finally in the social agency as entailed in Mamdani's (1996) distinction between 'citizen' and 'subject'.<sup>12</sup>

In this light, South African society remains a 'racial formation'. While there are significant discontinuities between the apartheid and post-apartheid states, there are also continuities. Race, in particular, is deeply embedded in the structure of post-apartheid society.<sup>13</sup> Thaver and Thaver put this as follows:

We take the view that 'race' cannot only be accorded a subsidiary view insofar as it has been a formal organizing principle for social engineering in SA for almost fifty years (and

before apartheid, for much longer, albeit in an informal way). In this sense it has framed individual, collective and institutional identities.<sup>14</sup>

Under the apartheid and pre-apartheid states, the racial ordering of society and construction of social identities facilitated the exploitation of wage labour and the skewed distribution of resources. The post-apartheid state, too, makes use of racial categories, but in this case 'for the express purpose of conducting a social audit to serve as the empirical base for planned intervention and for devising dedicated policies aimed at racial redress'. Rather than reproducing racist formations, this continued use of racial categories, they suggest, is about deracializing social reproduction. The corollary to this is that 'to be colour-blind is not as much a testimony to non-racialism or anti-racism as it is a case of denial and avoidance of the scourge of racism'.<sup>15</sup> A rethinking of 'apartheid racial modalities' is necessary because of the persistence and 'structural embeddedness' of these modalities in the post-apartheid state. Thus:

if we are to shift the pendulum from racial formations promoting white 'power, privilege and property' to black equalization we need to abandon the superficiality of approaches which remain at the level of the individual, pseudo-scientific and linguistic ... concerns.<sup>16</sup>

Pampallis takes a somewhat different approach.<sup>17</sup> His paper outlines the development of the South African education system (particularly the schooling system) from colonial times to the present. It demonstrates how education policies mirrored the overall policies of the segregationist and apartheid states. The result was that, in 1994, the democratic state inherited a racially divided and extremely unequal education structure systematically shaped by years of white minority rule, and in which those sections catering for Africans had been particularly abjectly underdeveloped.

Examining the nature of the transition to a post-apartheid society, Pampallis notes that the newly democratic state embraced the challenge of creating an equitable system of education for all, as stated in the first White Paper on Education and Training (DOE, 1995:17). This was in line with the aspirations of the overwhelming majority of people – particularly blacks – and reflected the spirit of the Constitution. Yet

twelve years later, progress towards a more equitable system can hardly be described as significant. The first of the two main historical impediments is the obvious fact that more than a century of dispossession, subjugation, segregation and impoverishment of the black majority and of overt racial discrimination in state provision of education has left South Africa with an extremely unequal society<sup>18</sup> and a very unequal education system. 'This schismatic inequality', Pampallis states, 'still fundamentally shapes South African education today and high levels of inequality will continue for many years to come, even when they do begin to yield to policies aimed at overcoming them'.<sup>19</sup> This inequality and the grinding poverty that accompanies it – as well as the deficit of skills for tackling the problems – set the context for the South African state's most daunting challenges.

The second historical impediment relates to the nature of the negotiated transition to democracy in South Africa. This resulted in a parliamentary system of government under a Constitution which included an entrenched Bill of Rights and clauses providing for the protection of private property. The ANC, which led the first democratic government, had long been, according to Pampallis, a broad-based, multi-class movement, concealing different aspirations behind a united front. Now, with the ending of apartheid, the glue that held the multi-class alliance together began to dissipate. An aspirant black elite commenced building a partnership with the white middle class, particularly with big business, in order to follow a capitalist developmental path (any other path, in any case, looked virtually impossible given the post-Cold War balance of international forces) and force the old, racially-controlled economic institutions and the new government to rapidly open opportunities for a growing black middle class. The resultant informal, multi-racial, middle class alliance has become the dominant force in the South African state. (The formal Tripartite Alliance of the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) continues to exist with all sides enjoying some benefit from it, but is increasingly under strain as their class interests diverge.)

In terms of its effects on education,

the new alliance of the black and white middle classes can be discerned in the success in improving the quality of education available

to the children of the black middle class. This has been achieved through the racial integration of [fee-charging] former white public schools, private schools and universities ... as well as through the provision of higher education bursaries to poor students from the predominantly state-funded National Student Financial Aid Scheme .... The 'first priority in educational reconstruction' as set out in ... the ANC's 1994 *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (i.e., 'improving the quality of schooling in disadvantaged townships, farms, villages, informal settlements and rural areas') was quietly de-prioritised.<sup>20</sup>

A not dissimilar view of the state underpins the paper by Vally,<sup>21</sup> which uses the question of school fees to exemplify aspects of the politics of the state and the imperatives informing its policy choices. Examining the implications of the 'negotiated settlement' at the end of apartheid, Vally argues that the policies of the state have reinforced educational inequalities: given the 'class based assumptions of state actors around issues of equity, redress and rights', their 'user fees' policy, far from reducing inequalities in schooling, has 'at best maintained the reproduction of these inequalities'.<sup>22</sup>

Vally uses this argument as a point of departure for asking whether the post-apartheid state can be characterized as a 'developmental' or a 'neo-liberal' state. He suggests in this regard that the very process of negotiation led to a political 'concession' on the question of user fees, and approvingly adopts Alexander's argument about the negotiating strategy of the ANC, whose outcome was likely to give rise to an accommodation and power-sharing "'arrangement between Afrikaner and African nationalism" in which the *denouement* will be at the expense of the urban and rural poor'.<sup>23</sup>

He is also critical of the state's inability to reckon with the contradictory demands placed on it by divergent social interests, because of its ostensible 'neutrality' and the idea that it could be the purveyor of a 'fraternity of common purpose' through the establishment of stakeholder representation in the process of policy development. Referring to an earlier work,<sup>24</sup> Vally makes the further argument that it is no longer credible to blame the educational crisis on poor implementation alone; in fact,

the technically rational search for best practice innovations which were ‘cost-effective’ or ‘efficient’ did no more than tinker with the fundamental educational and social problems in question. Further, this form of censure ignored the mainsprings of a system and its policies that maintained, reproduced and often exacerbated inequalities.<sup>25</sup>

These arguments suggest that failure to acknowledge the existence of dominant social class relations in the state negates any attempt to resolve ‘the egregious inequalities plaguing the schooling system’ in South Africa. Not only has scant attention been paid to the effects of poverty and inequality on the implementation and impact of education policy and social justice in education, but the post-apartheid state’s conscious adoption of specific macro-economic policies has trumped education policy reforms.<sup>26</sup>

A paper which emphasizes the importance of conceptual clarity is that by Zafar and Chaka,<sup>27</sup> who analyze human rights discourses and their conceptualization in the policies and programmes of the state. They aver that these discourses have become ‘universal’ and ‘hegemonic’, originating largely in the ideas of ‘political liberalism, rationality and the autonomy of the individual.’<sup>28</sup> Such discourses frame the relationship between state and individual in ways which are inappropriate for the present South African context. Competing discourses about human rights not only raise questions about hegemony and power and suggest that human rights theory and practice ought to be treated as ‘historically contingent’, but the emphasis placed on political and civil rights tends, in their view, to constrain wider interpretations which include social and economic rights.

Zafar and Chaka also argue that whereas human rights are rooted in ideas about the sovereignty of states and citizens, globalization requires a more expansive framework which crosses national and regional borders. There is also substantial evidence that contemporary human rights express a view of politics that is required by and legitimizes capitalist market practices. The conditions attached to development aid and official donor assistance by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank often carry hidden political and economic costs for Africa: for instance, a World Bank Report motivated for the introduction of user fees for basic education in Malawi by arguing that, ‘for the sake of

efficiency, primary school fees should be raised and the additional funds should be used to reduce average class sizes and provide more books and supplies.’<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the ‘indicator language’ and ‘target-setting’ used in many policy documents is inadequate in situations like South Africa because it fails to account for contextual realities. In this sense, the

priority given by the South African government to the relevant United Nations Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) 1 and 3 as a primary measure of basic education delivery, leads to a compromise and/or points to a contradiction in the development agenda of the South African state (and takes us into a development trajectory of a particular kind).<sup>30</sup>

Zafar and Chaka argue that while quantitative enrolment indicators remain important in order to assess progress towards the goal of universal basic primary education, they do not present a full picture since educational realities also concern the outputs of the system and its qualitative attributes. Consequently,

the coarse grain indicators of gross and net enrolment and time-bound targets set for their attainment within the MDGs are often used by the DoE [Department of Education] to report successful implementation of basic education. However, there are several negative trends within the basic education system that are not factored into the coarse indicator language of the MDGs.<sup>31</sup>

The paper by Kgobe reflects on the state’s orientation to rurality and education.<sup>32</sup> He argues that the state’s practice evinces an urban ‘bias’ which influences its orientation, provides limited spaces for rural communities and affects their ability to influence policy and practice. This bias, moreover, ‘favours the formal economy’ and encourages urban migration for educational and employment opportunities.

Referring to the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) research project on rural schooling,<sup>33</sup> Kgobe argues that the state’s inability to factor the consequences of rurality into its planning and policies has meant that rural schooling is characterized by much greater resource backlogs and inequalities, and that there are ‘damaging ... hierarchical relationships that are

premised on the domination of the teacher over the learning and teaching activities' in such schooling environments. Moreover, these relationships thwart the active and meaningful participation of learners in the shaping of democratic institutions and 'stifle' their development. This in his view requires 'major interventions ... to address schooling in rural contexts, including in terms of quality'.<sup>34</sup>

The research conducted on behalf of the NMF exemplifies a critical failure in the South African state's understanding of rural communities, a failure derived from a conception of poor and vulnerable communities as 'lacking' anything to contribute to the definition and resolution of issues confronting them. This characterization, according to the research, is manifestly untrue, since much of the research demonstrates the contrary: communities that may lack physical and financial resources are nonetheless able to identify the problematic of their 'development' and the means to deal with its challenges, provided they are properly engaged in the processes of planning and the strategies emanating from them. Such engagement must recognize, however, the critical community research covenants, not only of respectful dialogue and debate but more fundamentally of a deeper understanding of local contexts, histories, traditions, practices and capacities. Only through such an approach can the possibilities of meaningful social agency and 'empowerment' be developed in and through such communities, and the potential value of social policy interventions realized. The implication is that engagement by government agencies (and, indeed, even by researchers) is often perfunctory and inadequate. Such engagement can be both useful and productive only when the communities, on whom the effects of social policy are likely to be visited, are meaningful participants in the process of social dialogue and contestation.

### **Conclusion**

The state is the critical instrument and agent of policy making in democratic societies and particularly in social systems emerging from undemocratic regimes. Its policies are an expression of its politics, of the assumptions which inform its politics and of how these are conceptualized in the mediating role it plays. How and what definitions the state brings to any social phenomenon are hugely influenced by the relations of power which find expression in the activities of the state. Democratic societies are nevertheless

characterized by substantial differences in access to power by different social groups – however they might be defined – and these differences have a profound impact on how the state responds to the diversity of interests with regard to particular social policies. Whether and how emergent democratic states like South Africa can, in any particular historical context, mediate the socially unequal relations of power in society through its policies, is a critical question for analysis. These unequal relations circumscribe the state's ability and freedom to act and often condition its ability to respond to the needs of less articulate communities about social issues, because of the seemingly overwhelming power and influence of more powerful constituencies.

As we have argued, social policy research draws on a range of disciplines in the social sciences and sometimes from other sciences as well – as in the case of the social aspects of HIV/AIDS, and in environmental policy. This means that social policy research, necessarily complex, has to achieve some understanding of a diverse set of disciplinary issues and the debates that rage within them in order to produce theoretical and practical proposals and policies. Without such rigorous application the foundations of social policy are likely to be weak and inappropriate and will almost inevitably produce social conflict.

The under-representation of muted social voices is compounded by the less than rigorous conceptualization of social issues by policy makers in the state. This failure arises from an over-reliance on the advice of consultants who are often preoccupied with technical questions about policy and its implementation and less concerned with the substantive political, social and cultural dimensions of social issues. The resulting poverty of analysis, the absence of methodological strategies to encourage public participation in policy processes and the lack of the capacity and the political will to produce policy in a socially informed and educative way will inevitably lead to policies which are in serious danger of not achieving their aims. Especially in societies where inequalities are deeply entrenched, such political will and the capacity to engage in meaningful dialogue, analysis and strategic thinking is essential to the formulation of effective and legitimate social policies. Without this, the goals of social justice and genuine freedom will remain unachievable.

List of papers developed for the *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education* programme of the Education Policy Consortium: The State Analysis Project. The papers are obtainable from the authors via their contact email addresses.

Kgobe, Paul (May 2006) *The state, education and rural development in South Africa*. HYPERLINK “mailto:kgobe@cepd.org.za” kgobe@cepd.org.za

Motala, Enver (March 2006) ‘State’ Analysis: Its importance to theory, critique and practice: The Case of the Apartheid State. HYPERLINK “mailto:emotala@lantic.net” emotala@lantic.net

Pampallis, John (2007) ‘The Establishment and Transformation of a Repressive System: A Historical Perspective on Educational Change in South Africa’, in Odora Hoppers, C., Gustavsson, B., Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *Democracy and Human Rights in Education and Society: Explorations from South Africa and Sweden* (Örebro: Örebro University Press). HYPERLINK “mailto:john@cepd.org.za” john@cepd.org.za

Thaver, Lionel and Thaver, Beverley (April 2006) *Structural orientation and social agency in South Africa: state, race, higher education and transformation*. HYPERLINK “mailto:bthaver@uwc.ac.za” bthaver@uwc.ac.za

Vally, Salim (May 2006) *Entrenching or eradicating inequality? Understanding the post-apartheid state through its adoption and revision of the ‘user fees’ option for school financing*. HYPERLINK “mailto:vallys@epu.wits.ac.za” vallys@epu.wits.ac.za

Zafar, Samiera and Chaka, Tsakani (April 2006) *Understanding the nature of the South African state through its policy on the right to basic education*. HYPERLINK “mailto:samiera@samdi.gov.za” samiera@samdi.gov.za and HYPERLINK “mailto:tsakani@cepd.org.za” tsakani@cepd.org.za

1. We do not here provide an exposition of what the idea of ‘state’ encapsulates. For our purposes it is the collective institutions of government which are responsible for the determination of its policies and strategies and for implementing them. These institutions are liable to be held to public account and are funded by the public fiscus to provide a framework for the government of the society over which the state has sovereignty.
2. The product of this research consists of the 6 diverse papers by Kgobe, Motala, Pampallis, Thaver and Thaver, Vally, and Zafar and Chaka (full details provided at the end of this chapter).
3. In post-apartheid South Africa these strategies commenced under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and later the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy.
4. See, for instance, Neva Makgetla (at the time a Congress of South African Trade Unions economist), ‘IMF’s annual labour drill out of step with reality’, *Business Day*, 23 September 2005, and the subsequent letters and debate in that newspaper. See also Haroon Bhorat and Ravi Kanbur, *Poverty and Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006).
5. See the literature on the ‘State Debate’ conducted through various journals during the 1970s and 1980s: *Economy and Society*, 2, 1974; *Review of African Political Economy*, 7, 1976; *Capital and Class*, 2, 1977 and 5, 1978; *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 8, 1980; *Journal of Southern African Studies*, April 1983; and the texts detailed in note 8 below. See also the bibliographical lists in Enver Motala, ‘State’ Analysis: Its importance to theory, critique and practice: The Case of the

- Apartheid State* (EPC Research Project Paper, 2006), and in Simon Clarke, *The State Debate* (London: Macmillan, 1991).
6. This is not an argument about what has primacy – since there are instances where the relationship between the economic and political domains is not so clear cut. Nor is it to suggest that there is a direct and reducible relationship between these social domains. Yet, it would be difficult to reduce that relationship to no more than an incidental one.
  7. With regard to the question of identity, see Mamdani’s account of colonialism’s legacy, that is, the construction of a bifurcated state mediating racial domination through a combination of racial and ethnic identities: Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996).
  8. Harold Wolpe, ‘Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid’, *Economy and Society*, 1, 4, 1972; Harold Wolpe, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* (London: James Currey, 1988); Martin Legassick, ‘Legislation, Ideology and Economy in Post-1948 South Africa’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1, 1, 1974; Martin Legassick, ‘South Africa: Forced Labour, Industrialization, and Racial Differentiation’, in Harris, R. (ed) *The Political Economy of Africa* (Boston: Schenkman, 1975); Martin Legassick, ‘Race, Industrialization and Social Change in South Africa: The Case of R.F.A. Hoernle’, *African Affairs*, 75, 1976; Merle Lipton, *Capitalism and Apartheid: South Africa, 1910-1986* (London: Wildwood House, 1986); Simon Clarke, ‘Capital, Fractions of Capital and the State: “Neo-Marxist” Analysis of the South African State’, *Capital and Class*, 5, Summer, 1978; Simon Clarke, *The State Debate* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Neville Alexander [No Sizwe], *One Azania, One Nation* (London: Zed Press, 1979); and documents such as the South African Communist Party’s 1962 *Road to South African Freedom* (HYPERLINK “http://amadlandawonye.wikispaces.com/1962,+SACP,+The+Road+to+South+African+Freedom” http://amadlandawonye.wikispaces.com/1962,+SACP,+The+Road+to+South+African+Freedom), and the African National Congress’ 1969 ‘Strategic and Tactics of the ANC’ and ‘Revolutionary Programme of the ANC’.
  9. For an analysis of the different ‘nationalist’ perspectives and their limitations, see Alexander, *One Azania, One Nation*.
  10. The issue of gender was not developed to the extent to which class and race issues were and, in fact, except for a few writings, was largely absent.
  11. Lionel Thaver and Beverley Thaver, *Structural orientation and social agency in South Africa: state, race, higher education and transformation* (EPC Paper, April 2006).
  12. *Ibid.*, p.52. For Mamdani, see Note 7 above.
  13. We understand ‘race’ in this context to mean racial consciousness in society, racial determination of an individual’s life chances and the racial composition of institutions and social groupings.
  14. Thaver and Thaver, *Structural orientation and social agency in South Africa*, p.9.
  15. *Ibid.*, p.40.
  16. Thaver and Thaver, *Structural orientation and social agency in South Africa*, p.51.
  17. John Pampallis, ‘The Establishment and Transformation of a Repressive System: A Historical Perspective on Educational Change in South Africa’, in Odora Hoppers, C., Gustavsson, B., Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *Democracy and Human Rights in Education and Society: Explorations from South Africa and Sweden* (Örebro: Örebro University Press, 2007).
  18. The United Nations Development Programme lists South Africa as one of the most unequal societies in the world: ‘In 1995, the Gini coefficient for South Africa was 0.596; it

- rose to 0.635 in 2001, suggesting that income inequality is worsening'. United Nations Development Programme, *South Africa Human Development Report 2003: The Challenge of Sustainable Development in South Africa: Unlocking People's Creativity* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2003), p.43.
19. Pampallis, 'The Establishment and Transformation of a Repressive System', p.34.
  20. Pampallis, 'The Establishment and Transformation of a Repressive System', pp.35-6.
  21. Salim Vally, Entrenching or eradicating inequality? *Understanding the post-apartheid state through its adoption and revision of the 'user fees' option for school financing* (EPC Paper, May 2006).
  22. Ibid., p.1.
  23. Ibid., pp.12-13. See also Neville Alexander, *South Africa: Which Road to Freedom?* (San Francisco: Walnut Publishing, 1994).
  24. Salim Vally and Carol Anne Spreen, 'Education Policy and Implementation', in Chisholm, L., Motala, S. and Vally, S. (eds) *South African Education Policy Review 1993-2000* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2003).
  25. Vally and Spreen, 'Education Policy and Implementation', p.433.
  26. A similar approach is adopted by Katerina Nicolaou, 'The Link between Macroeconomic Policies, Education Policies and the Education Budget', in Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *The State, Education and Equity in Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Impact of State Policies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002).
  27. Samiera Zafar and Tsakani Chaka, *Understanding the nature of the South African state through its policy on the right to basic education* (EPC Paper, April 2006).
  28. Ibid., p.4.
  29. George Psacharopoulos and Maureen Woodhall, *Education for Development: An Analysis of Investment Choices* (New York: World Bank/Oxford University Press, 1985), pp.3-4, cited in Katarina Tomasevski, *Education Denied* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p.5.
  30. Zafar and Chaka, *Understanding the nature of the South African state*, p.5.
  31. Ibid.
  32. Paul Kgobe, *The state, education and rural development in South Africa* (EPC Paper, May 2006).
  33. Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South Africa's Rural Communities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005).
  34. Kgobe, *The state, education and rural development in South Africa*, p.14.

# THE DERACIALISATION OF THE ACADEMIC PROFESSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PROJECT IN SOUTH AFRICA

BEVERLEY THAYER

## Introduction

In South Africa, the complexities of change in the higher education sector are partly framed by the principle of the abstraction of universities from society. To this end, universities are viewed as operating autonomously from society and, by implication, from the political agenda of the apartheid state. By contrast, in this chapter,<sup>1</sup> I advance the argument that the apartheid state's modernizing and racially-based narrative is organically embedded in institutions, which consequently bear the imprint of a liberal modernizing (albeit racialized) project. In this regard, the daily practices that mark the working lives of academics also bear this signature. It follows that the new state's reform processes bring new pressures to bear on these institutions, not least requiring them to open their doors to a cohort of new entrants to the profession.<sup>2</sup> The dynamics of this transformation of academic staff, particularly in terms of the micro-level implementation of Employment Equity, and its implications for the strengthening of the democratic process, are the primary focus of this chapter. After briefly outlining the social function of universities and the historical formation of the academic profession, the chapter examines how academics have responded to Employment Equity with respect to recruitment, teaching, research, community service, administration and promotion. The second half of the chapter considers the implications of certain broad themes (including university governance, equality and fairness, constraints on free inquiry, trust and institutional citizenship) for the democratization process in the sector and in society as a whole.

## The social function of universities

The challenge in all countries that have undergone a *transition* from an authoritarian to a democratic order has been to consolidate the democratic ideals and practices.<sup>3</sup> Thus, creating and sustaining the (social) conditions necessary and sufficient for consolidation, are essential features of the process.<sup>4</sup> Arising from the embedded political interconnection between the state and the different spheres of society,<sup>5</sup> universities too are subject to change, insofar as neither their role in society nor their institutional structures are independent of each other.<sup>6</sup> In other words, their reproductive functions are fourfold: ideological device; mechanism for the socialization of elites; means of knowledge production; and instrument for training a skilled labour force.<sup>7</sup>

Internally, the practical expression of these functions is very much steeped in a liberal framework. What this means is that universities are 'bastions of free inquiry and expression which, protected by the principle of academic freedom, also go beyond articulations of opinion, ideology or political persuasion'.<sup>8</sup> This *liberal* approach to universities holds that the canon of objectivity in the pursuit of truth and academic integrity is the hallmark of a university's identity. Flowing from this, Johnstone argues, 'one assumes that its faculty have gained membership in that body through rigorous processes of peer review and merit selection *untainted by politics or personalities or other factors unrelated to academic ability*'.<sup>9</sup> This liberal and modernizing discourse, with its emphasis on objectivity, rationality and scientific thought, is intended to work with (in a somewhat instrumentalist

way) and against (as in being critical and distanced) the broader imperatives of society. The modernization perspective emphasizes the emulation of Western norms and values as part of the process through which society enters the linear ‘take-off’ phase. Although subject to critique by the Dependency School of Andre Gunder Frank and Walter Rodney, this image of modernity has nonetheless framed Western societies.<sup>10</sup> More specifically, in South Africa, it has informed the racial project of apartheid in both vulgar and nuanced ways. I wish to explore how the university sector navigates the contradictory tensions and pressures that are being brought to bear through the systemic reform that is Employment Equity. My interest in Employment Equity is much more than just labour-related, or to do with human resource development; I am keen to understand how such systemic changes are developing the necessary conditions for building an epistemic project more aligned to the features of a democracy. In other words, given the university’s social mandate, how can one defend and advance the ideals and practices required to sustain and give effect to the features of an emerging liberal democracy?<sup>11</sup> What kinds of internal dynamics unfold through the pressure (in this instance, Employment Equity) exerted as a result of changes in the external political system?

### **Methodology**

The data for this chapter was obtained from a qualitative research study that focused broadly on structural aspects associated with the deracialization of academic staff at five universities in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape provinces of South Africa.<sup>12</sup> The study probed how academics at the micro-level of these institutions responded to the implementation of the systemic reform that is Employment Equity. A central question was: to what degree are academic practices advancing social equity?<sup>13</sup> The schedule comprised themes relating to the recruitment and promotion of academics and their four occupational functions of teaching, research, community service and administration. 61 semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior black<sup>14</sup> and white academics from Natural Science, Social Science and Humanities departments across the five institutions. Respondents from the different disciplines were not evenly distributed across the universities.

### **The development of the academic profession in South Africa**

During the first half of the twentieth century, several colleges (though not the South African Native College) were granted university status. This development of the early infrastructural base for the academic profession occurred against the backdrop of industrialization and political struggles for hegemony in the South African social formation. In the fledgling university sector, one manifestation of these struggles concerned the dominance of either the English or the Afrikaans language and their attendant value systems. To this end, the universities started to consolidate their identities, refracted through their admissions criteria and language preferences. Symptomatic of the wider social tensions, an emerging Afrikaner nationalism with its associated concept of the ‘volk’ asserted itself in competition with Anglo-Saxon (more specifically, Scottish) values that were also seeking to embed themselves in some of the universities. Current research highlights the magnitude of the European influence on universities in South Africa. Several of the professorial appointments and selection committees were British-based. Similarly, the background and experiences of the academic staff shaped curriculum development and the academic structure more generally within the established universities. Though there was a shift in the nature of appointments in the mid-1940s, at that time just under half of the professors had received training in Scotland, England or the Netherlands. Despite their diverse interests, this unifying ‘white’ bloc in turn imprinted a colonial signature on the evolving university sector, from its curriculum development to an array of symbols and rituals. In certain instances these were advanced through structural mechanisms which were further consolidated in the apartheid period.<sup>15</sup>

The beginning of the second half of the twentieth century was also marked by the granting of university status to some existing colleges, as well as the burgeoning of new university colleges established within the separate development racial framework of the apartheid state. As the separate development framework came to be nuanced around ethnicity, so too did this give birth to several universities for different black language groupings. The development of the university sector in South Africa thus was not spared the apartheid rod, in that the ‘founding of universities for *specific groups* [was] ... established procedure in South Africa.’<sup>16</sup> Much like the earlier

period, there was a continuity of struggle between the different fractions of English and Afrikaner capital around the control and shape of the university sector. Some of these tensions coalesced around admissions' criteria, while others were around academic appointments, as demonstrated in the Mafeje Affair<sup>17</sup> and in the influence of the state on appointments at the ethnically-based universities.<sup>18</sup> By the time of apartheid's demise in the last decade of the twentieth century, the academic profession very much mirrored the tensions evident in the broader society. How then have Employment Equity practices unfolded at the micro-level, and what has been the response to the introduction of this reform?

### **Recruitment**

The recruitment process, especially as this relates to the implementation of Employment Equity, is strongly influenced by tensions between centralized and decentralized forms of control, corresponding to the executive and faculty levels, respectively, of universities.<sup>19</sup> The centralized approach, an outflow of state control, interferes with traditionally autonomous forms of professorial power and scholarly freedom.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, management at the faculty level, invoking this academic autonomy, can impede centralized control. At both levels, the dynamics of selection committees are perceived as crucial.

Selection committees, a key mechanism for appointments, are steered in a tacit way, by a historical policy mandate.<sup>21</sup> Seniority, rank and age constitute criteria for membership of selection committees, and senior academic members, especially those with long institutional histories and membership as well as Deanship positions, exercise an over-determining decision-making role. However, at all the sites, current practices show traces of responsiveness to the policy reform insofar as the selection committees are beginning to include non-traditional members. This merging of 'the old with the new' sets in motion a set of tensions regarding the 'objective' application of selection criteria.

There are perceptions (from the black respondents) that white and black candidates are not evaluated against uniform criteria, with competence or the lack thereof, respectively, being used. At some sites these tensions are further fuelled by selection in terms of competence in either English or Afrikaans. White respondents, on the other hand, frame their responses in terms of universal standards and excellence, with

much emphasis placed on the 'best candidate for the job'. In the light of this, market forces are also perceived as a key barrier to appointing 'suitable black candidates'. There are traces here of a moral position which connotes that black academics (as recent entrants to the profession) are chasing the money, with the corollary assumption that the academic profession rests on long-term sacrifice and nobility.

### **Teaching**

Several influences seem to be at work in terms of decisions around course content. At two of the sites, processes for curriculum development are relatively tightly controlled by Heads of Departments; at a third site, there seem to be high levels of autonomy; while in one of the science disciplines at this third site, the content of teaching is mainly decided by long-established committees. These processes are buttressed by individuals with longstanding expertise in their particular fields, who also discursively manage contradictory elements in relation to curriculum development. A 'Eurocentric' trend can be observed at a fourth site and (to a lesser degree) a fifth site, where there is much pressure to align the curriculum with global standards, especially in terms of specific professions, and thus make qualifications internationally transferable. These global and market mechanisms are lubricated by piecemeal programmatic curriculum reform initiatives evident at some of the sites.

### **Research**

The area of research is contested in terms of both resources and meanings. In the current subsidy climate, pressure is mounting for individual academics to engage in fully-fledged research activities with accredited outputs. However, a strong trend in the data is the tension that academics experience between research demands and teaching loads. Reference was made (by the black respondents) to how increasingly heavier workloads militate against research productivity and passion. Coupled with this are contestations around what constitutes 'research', with a recurrent theme being the need to challenge traditional measures of research output as well as proposals for reward systems tailored for research on discipline- and field-related policy processes. Reference was also made to a tendency to accord higher value to research with a Western or Eurocentric underpinning than to that with an African orientation.

Many of the traditional and pastoral ways of conducting research are beginning to come under pressure. The overwhelming trend in the data suggests that, traditionally, the research process is an individualistic activity. However, the data also suggests, interestingly, that there is a trend towards team-based research, fuelled by some donor and state agencies' criteria which emphasize group or collective expertise. The latter trend is associated with a greater degree of public accountability in relation to both the content and the process of research. Moreover, certain donor conditions on the allocation of funds are encouraging white and black academics to work collaboratively. This shift from a private, individualized and predominantly white approach to research to a more public, team-based and deracialized approach is also an international trend.<sup>22</sup>

### **Community service**

Individual academics define 'community service' in very different ways, ranging from 'working with a professional community' (as in academic peers), 'research for industry', 'consultation around natural disasters' and policy research for government to 'working with disadvantaged communities' and 'poverty alleviation projects'. There does not seem to be much recognition by universities for community service, despite it commonly being listed as one of four key institutional functions (alongside teaching, research and administration). There are limited rules and guidelines as to what constitutes 'community service', and even where emphasis is placed on forging links between the university and the community (albeit couched within a managerial discourse of 'image' and 'marketability'), it is still viewed as an appendage to core functions.

### **Administration**

Academic administration is important insofar as academics influence decisions around the operations of a university and as such become critical participants in the process. There are hierarchies of committees within institutions, beginning at the departmental or school level through faculty to overarching institutional levels. Participation in different committees is determined by individuals with long established histories and institutional memory. While newer entrants are beginning to shape some of the processes at the micro-level, with much unevenness across sites and within institutions, there

continue to be participation challenges with regard to the 'committees that matter', with institutional rank, tradition and age remaining key criteria for membership.

### **Promotion**

With the exception of the two black sites, the promotion criteria around the four factors (teaching, research, community service and administration) are, in general, transparent and public. Yet, in practice, there are several dynamics at play. An interesting phenomenon emerging from the data are the processes leading up to the actual promotion. The personal and the affective were particularly evident in the significant (arguably, over-determining) roles played by Deans and Heads of Departments. Coupled with this, is the 'groundwork' that occurs outside committees, before the actual meetings. There is a perception that there is a 'likelihood of offers being made to individual academics without the detail being public'. This reinforces the view that 'much secrecy' operates in relation to the promotion process.

Structural factors also come into play. Besides race and class, a crucial factor at all of the sites seemed to be age, with professorial promotions in the humanities and social sciences occurring mainly over 45 years of age. The implication is that lengthy and sustained immersion (even stretching beyond twenty years) is an important criterion for promotion to professorial level. There are other dynamics at play in certain disciplines and fields in terms of promotion to senior lecturer level. Increasingly, since 1994, an earned doctorate is becoming the bar for promotion to this level, against the historical backdrop of the Masters level qualifications of a (mainly white) professoriate. This has ushered in a host of tensions around historical and current promotions' criteria, resulting in a perception of discriminatory or unfair judgements and inconsistent application of the rules: it was claimed that the 'criteria apply in a certain way to some and in a completely different way to others', or that, in certain instances, the rules are 'strictly applied' while in others they are 'manipulated' or 'relaxed'.

### **Implications for democracy**

I turn now to an assessment of the implications of certain themes for the liberal democratic project in South Africa, beginning by addressing the relationship between forms of state control and the early development of the academic profession. During

the segregation period, a time when the English and Afrikaans sites retained their linkages with the English and Dutch traditions, the state embarked on its modernization path within the framework of missionary-based education. In this regard, the appointment process was a key mechanism for instilling the colonial academic traditions, such as through the establishment of British-based selection agencies. It is apparent that during this time, institutions could freely appoint academics from outside South Africa with minimal intervention by the colonial government. During the apartheid period, two interconnected racial thrusts (scientific racism and ethnicity) yielded specific university types<sup>23</sup> within a framework of governance that vacillated between direct intervention and relative autonomy.

What is interesting is the role of the state in terms of controlling appointments as well as governance issues, a process that was uneven across the different university types. In the case of black institutions in this study, there was direct control over appointments, with academics accountable directly to the government. In contrast, in the case of the three white institutions, accountability was directly to the university councils. This too was not without a degree of state control, insofar as the state, through the council, was able to challenge the appointment of the first black academic in one of the sites.

This differentiation in terms of state intervention in the appointment process – between state control and relative autonomy – resulted in a bifurcated academic profession. One thrust sees its sustenance outside South African soil, while the other, seeking to untie itself from the historical state's projects, attempts to embed itself in the soil. The political contours of this legacy are evident in the different responses to the Employment Equity reform. A decentralized approach seeks to keep the state's reform project at bay, while a more centralized approach retains the interventionist legacy, only this time with a different end goal, namely, establishing the conditions for the development of a more nationally-based academic profession. However, both the direct and indirect approaches are caught up in a web of predefined relations that invest 'trust in the self-steering capacities of academics as long standing and socialized professionals' to make decisions.<sup>24</sup> From this vantage point, the stand for autonomy is also circumscribed by external factors, such as globalization, which muddies the waters to some extent. My argument here is that one stream

of the profession lends itself more favourably to taking global flight and thus effectively disarticulates itself from the transformative project. On the other hand, a second stream, seeking to unhook itself from history, remains hamstrung by history insofar as it perpetuates and, in fact, reconfigures ethnic-based frameworks. In the latter, the debates that rage over entitlement and the beneficiaries of equity and affirmative action further fuel the conflicts at work in the democratization process.<sup>25</sup>

### **Governance: collegiality under duress**

Any discussion of the democratic process simultaneously raises the issue of university governance. While it is not the purpose of this chapter to delve into the nature of governance structures at universities, it is important to signal some of the nuances in this area, especially in terms of their implications for the democratic process. Briefly stated, universities traditionally have operated on the basis of a collegial system of governance, which in a nutshell is about shared authority and responsibility among its members. The idea of collegial governance is based on good personal relations, expert authority and the principles of persuasion and rationality. Ideally, all members of the unit (for example, at the faculty level) subscribe to these principles and act in good faith around academic matters. However, there seems to be two interconnected tensions at work in the democratization process.

On the one hand, a democratic process of decision-making inheres in the collegial system. On the other hand, this collegial system is currently under pressure due to the intrusion of a managerial approach that emphasizes cost efficiency and performance management.<sup>26</sup> Of crucial importance here is that the traditional, autonomous and decentralized forms of collegiality, focused primarily on academic matters, are now being populated by an approach to governance that stresses economic rationality and accountability to external agencies, including the state. Here is where the tension is at work: the implementation of Employment Equity coincides with the intrusion of managerialism and competition in relation to performativity.

At the micro-level, there is intensive competition among academics for time and resources in order to enhance research productivity. As outlined earlier, the state's subsidy formula, based on accredited publication outputs, inadvertently favours those academics with

lengthy immersion in the institution. In other words, those who have acquired and learned the habits and practices of what it means to be an academic and who are historically part of established publication networks are better placed in terms of calculating academic value vis-à-vis the investment of time and resources in teaching and research activities. By contrast, recent entrants with much heavier teaching loads and limited academic institutional experience are consequently constrained in terms of generating sufficient research outputs. This subsequently results in a perceived under-performance on the part of black junior academics and a more calculating and value-laden approach on the part of white junior and senior academics. The discourse of cost-efficiency and -effectiveness has the potential to disturb traditional forms of collegial politeness, respectability and 'good academic faith'.

There are also interesting insights from the data on implementation issues, which reveal how the collegial discourse of intellectual rationality and persuasion is being forced to defend itself against inroads by equity and managerial discourses. The responses of white academics were both 'thick', consisting of lengthy rational arguments couched in terms of standards, excellence or suitability, and 'thin', namely, short and procedural ('we follow the policy of the university'). On the other hand, black academics offered 'thick' politically defensive arguments framed within an assumed competency. These responses offer glimpses of how each of the competing discourses – that of the state (equity), the market (managerialism) and the institution (collegialism) – is struggling to assert itself. In addition, on the individual level, competition for job security plays no small part in the entire process.

### **Unequal applications of uniform criteria**

At the most general and broadly political level, social democratic change is characterized by the integration and participation of those previously excluded. By extension, at the institutional level, this has to do with widening access to, participation in and membership of the academic profession. After all, what happens inside institutions (in terms of the membership of the profession) is also a measure of the (intellectual) quality of public life. In the light of this, the argument for Employment Equity centres upon equality, rights and distributive justice. From a liberal and highly individualist social justice model, Rawls tells us that one of the conditions for a just and

open political system is the 'principle of fair equality of opportunity', which means that 'those with similar abilities and skills should have similar life chances'.<sup>27</sup> However, 'equality' is not just about 'being in law', but ought also to be 'in reality'.<sup>28</sup>

There are definitely tensions at work in the dynamics around what are perceived to be the inconsistent application of criteria and standards within the profession. At the level of selection, the bar has been raised by the requirement that candidates hold a doctorate; yet the qualifications of the traditional professoriate were built on an outdated 1974 policy text which specified only a four year teaching qualification. Once inside the institution, the issue of fair judgement is also at stake. A key question to pose is the extent to which peer review and merit selection processes are as objective as Johnstone would have us believe, namely, 'untainted by politics and other factors unrelated to academic ability'.<sup>29</sup> Discussion earlier in this chapter of the six themes (recruitment, teaching, research, community service, administration and promotion) would suggest, rather, that intellectual practices around promotion and research activity, if not 'tainted by politics and other factors', are, at a minimum, steeped in conceptions of racial domination and the rationality of modernization. Judgement calls around selections which have implications for the 'opening up of membership' to black academics are partly about lack of academic ability (although this points to a vulgarly naturalist view of race); but much more about the extent to which academics have 'developed' along the path of Western modernization. In other words, it has to do with the progression of black academics along a historicist racial path<sup>30</sup> in order to be schooled in the values and norms of democracy. This linear developmental approach is aptly summed up in the contemporary discourses of 'capacity building' versus 'professional development'.<sup>31</sup>

Another area where inequalities are perceived is the measurement and application of specific research criteria. It is believed that criteria are applied differently when assessing the validity of research topics, such that a topic proposed by a white person might be accepted on the subjective assumption that, 'with a bit of panel beating of the topic here and there, ... it should be fine'; whereas a similar topic proposed by a black person will be subjected to rigorously objective criteria. It appears that the democratization process inside institutions is fraught with tensions about what

constitutes 'fair judgement' and 'rights'. The point is that recourse to more clearly defined formal equality and legal rights is neither sufficient nor perhaps even necessary; the challenge for the democratic process, rather, is how to give substantive meaning to a more ideal, even collective, form of equality of rights in ways that expose those practices that structurally continue to bear the mark of 'what it is [of which] we want to rid ourselves'. In short, my argument here is that current practices which involve double standards must be unearthed and confronted.

### **Conditions and constraints on free academic inquiry**

Universalism in the Mertonian sense refers to the judgement of knowledge claims on the basis of universal truths without reference to social bias.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the notions of truth and validity arising from science can be judged regardless of personal and political subjectivities. In the debates over excellence, there is a sense that there is a universal (albeit abstracted) truth about what excellence constitutes. In fact, it appears to be more like a code word for understanding anxieties around bringing in newcomers.<sup>33</sup> A further probing of the data shows that the notion of excellence has traces of pedagogical content and of approaches that uphold a commitment to traditional, classical and disciplinary bodies of thought. Here, competence in (arguably) the English language (and, to some extent, Afrikaans) represents the level of having accessed the academic civilisation ladder and by implication, attained membership of the elite body.

As mentioned in the beginning, a key component of the university's democratic mission is to pursue free inquiry on the principle of academic freedom. It is not the aim of this chapter to explore the complexities associated with academic freedom.<sup>34</sup> Instead, our question is: to what extent are the universities in this study, through their empirical practices, fulfilling the objective of free inquiry? Are conditions of such a nature that unfettered inquiry is advanced?

In terms of the knowledge content of both teaching and research activities, the data seems to suggest that there is limited 'freedom' to pursue lines of thought that do not uphold the Western epistemic norm. In practice, therefore, there are constraints in terms of inserting an overtly African orientation, which are further exacerbated by the need to align curricula in certain disciplines with global standards. Global

standards, generally, imply Western standards and norms of knowledge production. This Western-based modernizing trajectory which continues to marginalize African schools of thought assumes that the latter are limited in terms of rationality. Yet rationality as a culture-dependent practice is as much present in African as it is in Western society: as Gyekye reminds us, African rationality is a 'critical re-evaluative response to the basic human problems that arise in any African society'.<sup>35</sup>

The exclusive emphasis on Western forms of knowledge production is also circumscribed by global factors in terms of what constitute scholarly criteria. Here, the emphasis, in the South, on Western epistemologies and methodologies, arises very much from Western-dominated norms and values, with the former ultimately seeking validation from the latter.<sup>36</sup> This is a challenge for what is an important function of a university in a democratization process, namely, the development of alternative and innovative ways of thinking. More specifically, there are implications for the building of a knowledge base that is rooted in the South African context. The integration of feminist as well as other marginalized epistemologies will be crucial, as well as the development of methodologies which are both outside of the traditional Western forms and can capture the varied and complex nature of societies.

Both the data and the international literature suggest that arrangements at faculty level are premised on the principle of high inter-personal relations.<sup>37</sup> In particular, access to more intangible and non-formal academic practices depends on reasonable personal relations among those concerned, to the extent that, in their absence, the dilemma becomes 'how a new academic gets to work out how to get ahead, namely, build a career in the institution'. Given the apartheid legacy of separation and fragmentation, and that black and white academics enter the profession from a polarized context, it is difficult to expect that they would easily engage in the kinds of personal interaction through which the 'unwritten rules' are often acquired. Without building relations of trust and legitimacy, it is also difficult to imagine how academic newcomers can succeed in bringing to the institution new ways of thinking about social contexts and practices that have, until now, been on the margins of knowledge.

### **Trust, legitimacy and institutional citizenship**

Key indicators of the shift to a democratic order are the levels of trust and legitimacy invested in processes, systems and institutions. This study shows that there is a crisis of trust and legitimacy on the part of both black and white academics, most evident in their degree of anxiety around tenure, promotions, new forms of work arrangements and greater public accountability. For example, the trend away from traditionally private or individualized research practices towards more inclusive, collaborative, collective or team-based research activities necessitates a substantial amount of cohesion and cooperation among researchers as well as confidence in the authority and expertise of team leaders. The challenge is how to sustain the expectations of both the old and the new members 'on the grounds of effectiveness for a long enough period to develop legitimacy upon the new basis so that a new crisis may not develop'.<sup>38</sup> In particular, how might trust and legitimacy be invested sufficiently and adequately to convince participants that the 'game is a fair one'; and are there new forms of mutual reciprocity that could be established within a framework of institutional citizenship?

Active, critical and participatory citizens are vital components of a democratic process. To what extent do black and white academics perceive themselves as having a place in the institution, i.e., enjoying institutional citizenship, along with an accompanying degree of institutional influence? Given the highly stratified nature of the universities, the quality of participation in and the degree of influence over the functioning of the institution are to a large extent determined by levels of seniority and professorial rank. Add to this the historical privilege that nests within the decision-making structures, and the process is fraught with tension. While a perception that black academics are in need of 'guidance' could be a rather benign and partly also necessary practice, the legacy of privilege tends to reduce this to 'condescension'. There are additional tensions around notions of 'voice' and 'authority', or the extent to which the recognition of intellectual and institutional authority is dependent upon 'who speaks' and with 'what authority'. Whether or not 'one's voice is heard' is also determined by competency in either English or Afrikaans. The implications for the democratic process are that not all black academics currently in the system are sufficiently developed to assume the reins of academic and intellectual power.

Since knowledge of these languages and their attendant cultural narratives and respective ethos, traditions, rituals and symbols tend to have a totalizing effect on institutions, prior immersion in or acquisition of this institutional software positions certain academics to engage more effectively with, and improves their mobility and progression within, the institutional domain. For other academics, this imperative to inhabit and take ownership of contested institutional space is sometimes abandoned, encouraging them to 'take flight'. This phenomenon is common to all the sites, with one site undergoing 'white flight' in the early- to mid-1990s and the other sites currently experiencing 'black flight'.

I want to argue that the contestations over assuming and giving meaning to institutional citizenship are marked by a vertical relationship segmented along racial, class and gender lines with exclusive cultures. It is important to note that these contestations and struggles around integration and citizenship are also marked by a degree of xenophobia, which tended to be concentrated in one of the sites. Ironically, in those institutions where white academics hold dual citizenship in a country in the North, these tensions are not that stark. Is it that academics with Northern citizenship are more modernized than academics with citizenship in another African country?

The question of racism in its global modernizing form still remains.<sup>39</sup> In South Africa, the upshot of this is the operation of parallel discourses of race/racism and racelessness/colourblindness.<sup>40</sup> Baldly stated, white respondents 'do not see race' (or where it is seen, it is on the modernization path) whereas black respondents in general 'see race'. This is aptly represented through the framing of excellence and standards as key intellectual criteria for entry into and advancement inside the institution. By contrast, there is a view that such abstract and decontextualized 'norms' also have the effect of 'keeping one at bay'. It is with this complex that we must perforce work, if we are to seek to create an institutional culture that recognises difference, instead of one that tirelessly seeks homogeneity. In other words, we must work with difference in a positive (though not in a celebratory) way, where our relations and terms of engagement with each other are more horizontal. In this way, the conditions can be created for black and white academics to shift from being, respectively, the beneficiaries and guardians of development, to becoming fully fledged critical intellectual citizens.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to illustrate the relationship between the university and society through the lens of the previous state's political projects, as these pertained to the academic profession. I argued that the social relations framed by the old modernization and racial discourse continue to structure, at the micro-level, the practices of academics, which are additionally circumscribed by the global Western modernization narrative. Effectively, in the first twelve years of our democracy, several interconnected tensions were brought to bear on the democratic project. An analysis of the implications for democracy leads me to conclude with a challenge: how can a developmental state manage the tension between establishing modernizing conditions and foregrounding the realities of the social context?<sup>41</sup> Whereas a traditional modernizing narrative decontextualizes university practices, a developmental narrative provides an opportunity to recontextualize and in fact, re-imagine university practices in ways that speak to the diversity and richness of the intellectual capital of South African society. In this way, we all take our rightful place in the citadels of knowledge.

1. This chapter is a shortened version of a paper presented at a Education Policy Consortium conference in March 2007. I would like to thank Yusuf Waghid for responding to the paper and introducing me to Kwame Gyekye's ideas.
2. Department of Education, *National Plan for Higher Education* (Pretoria: Department of Education, 2001); Department of Science and Technology, *Securing Tomorrow Today: Facing the Challenge of Reproducing and Transforming the Social Composition of New Generations of South African Science and Technology Personpower* (draft report prepared for the Council for Higher Education's Colloquium on Ten Years of Democracy and Higher Education Change, Pretoria, 2004).
3. Andreas Schedler, 'What is Democratic Consolidation?', *Journal of Democracy*, 9, 2, 1998.
4. Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, 'Towards Consolidated Democracies', *Journal of Democracy*, 7, 2, 1996.
5. Sophie Oldfield, 'The South African State in Transition: A Question of Form, Function and Fragmentation of Education Policy', in Motala, E. and Pampallis, J. (eds) *Education and Equity: The Impact of State Policies on South African Education* (Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2001), p.40.
6. Alan Montefiore, 'The Role of Democracy in the University: The University and its Old Members', *Interchange*, 23, 1 & 2, 1992.
7. Manuel Castells, 'Universities as Dynamic Systems of Contradictory Functions', in Muller, J. et al. (eds) *Challenges of Globalization: South African Debates with Manuel Castells* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 2001).
8. Bruce Johnstone, 'The University, Democracy and the Challenge to Meritocracy', *Interchange*, 23, 1 & 2, 1992, p.20.
9. Ibid.
10. James Bill and Robert Hardgrave, *Comparative Politics* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981).
11. Seymour Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *The American Political Science Review*, 53, 1, 1959; and Larry Diamond, 'Is the Third Wave Over?', *Journal of Democracy*, 7, 3, 1996. Key features of a liberal democracy are constitutional power (including the executive being constrained by the constitution), the protection of minority rights/parties/languages, multiple channels and associations/groups which citizens are free to join, alternative sources of information (including a free press), freedom of belief and legal equality for all citizens.
12. The study was part of the Education Policy Consortium Research Project, an initiative funded by the Swedish and Dutch governments. The five universities included three historically white (two English- and one Afrikaans-speaking) and two historically black institutions (one of which was coloured). I would like to thank the members of the research project (Gisella Prasad, Benito Khotseng and Chupe Serote), and all the respondents, who freely gave of their time.
13. Johnstone, 'The University, Democracy and the Challenge to Meritocracy'.
14. The term 'black' in the lower case (as per the Employment Equity Act of 1998) is used in the generic sense to refer collectively to black African, coloured and Indian.
15. For much of this paragraph, see Howard Philips, 'A Caledonian College in Cape Town and Beyond: An Investigation into the Foundations of the South African University System', *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17, 3, 2003.
16. G. Oosthuizen, A. Clifford-Vaughan, A. Behr and G. Rauche (eds), *Challenge to a South African University: The University of Durban Westville* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1981), p.17.
17. F. Hendricks, *The Mafeje Affair* (unpublished paper, no date).
18. Nkosinathi Gwala, 'State Control, Student Politics and the Crisis in Black Universities', in Cobbett, W. and Cohen, R. (eds) *Popular Struggles in South Africa* (London: James Currey, 1988).
19. Beverley Thaver, 'Deracialising Universities: Reflexive Conversations', *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17, 3, 2003.
20. Graeme Moodie, 'The State and the Liberal Universities in South Africa: 1948-1990', *Higher Education*, 27, 1994.
21. *Main Report of the Van Wyk de Vries Commission of Inquiry into Universities* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1974).
22. Peter Scott, 'Challenges to Academic Values and the Organisation of Academic Work in a Time of Globalization', *Higher Education in Europe*, 28, 3, 2003.
23. Such as the coloured institution included in this study.
24. Jürgen Enders, 'Between State Control and Academic Capitalism', in Enders, J. (ed) *Academic Staff in Europe: Changing Contexts and Conditions* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), p.6.
25. For example, the historical legacy and preferential policies that resulted in a hierarchy of opportunity at one of the sites, begs the perennial question as to whether the category 'coloured' should be given preference over that of 'black African' in the appointment process.
26. John Clarke and Janet Newman, *The Managerial State: Power, Politics and Ideology in the Remaking of Social Welfare* (London: Sage, 1977).
27. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.73.
28. Norberto Bobbio, *Liberalism and Democracy* (London: Verso,

- 2005), p.69.
29. Johnstone, 'The University, Democracy and the Challenge to Meritocracy'.
  30. David Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
  31. In the South African context, capacity development, premised on a deficit model, denotes the need (for black persons) to acquire basic skills and competencies for an occupational position. On the other hand, professional development (for white persons) works from the premise that the individual has the basic skill and competencies for the profession and needs to enhance and strengthen the skills in the context of the profession. Capacity development implies that the individual is not yet capable and as such does not inhabit the occupational or professional space; whereas the term professional development implies that the individual occupies the space and merely has to learn and acquire the 'tools of the trade'.
  32. Robert Merton, *The Sociology of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
  33. Francis Maher and Mary Thompson Tetreault, *Privilege and Diversity in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
  34. See André du Toit, 'Recasting the Autonomy Debate: T.B. Davie in a Time of Accountability, Managerialism and Mergers' (Centre for Higher Education Transformation seminar presentation, Cape Town, March 2005).
  35. Kwame Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.236.
  36. Philip Altbach, *The Decline of the Guru: The Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-Income Countries* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p.4.
  37. Enders, 'Between State Control and Academic Capitalism'.
  38. Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy', p.87.
  39. Goldberg, *The Racial State*.
  40. David Goldberg, seminar presentation, Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, 2006.
  41. I wish to thank Lionel Thaver for assistance in thinking through this idea as it pertains to the state and university practices.

# ENGAGED SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF ITS SCHOLARSHIP

ENVER MOTALA

## **Introduction**

The Education Policy Consortium's (EPC) research programme on *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education in South Africa*,<sup>1</sup> carried out over the last few years, has given rise to a range of issues pertaining to the nature of engaged social policy research. This chapter<sup>2</sup> reflects on these issues, focusing on the process and effects of undertaking research in developing societies and asking, in particular, what value such an enterprise might have for the stimulation of ideas about policy scholarship concerned with important social questions. The idea of scholarship, conventionally described in terms of 'the trio of teaching, research, and service functions', though in practice often reduced to only 'research and publication',<sup>3</sup> is used here to signify a broader range of intellectual commitments associated with the activities of critical social policy analysts in South Africa.

Let me state upfront, and quite categorically, that we in the EPC are enjoined by the very nature of our craft to reflect on the social value and uses of knowledge, on the responsibilities of public bodies and intellectuals, and on the relationship between knowledge, power and the dominance of ideological positions in and through research. Our perspective has always been that our work must unambiguously contribute to the social goal of a democratic, informed and thinking citizenry, an objective which does not pretend to adopt a 'neutral' approach to research. To that extent the EPC researchers remain committed to the ideas that informed the struggle for democracy and social justice in South Africa and the world.

On behalf of all those committed to the practice of critical social policy research in developing countries,

we are obliged to raise a number of questions about the nature of our undertaking, its social purposes and its value to society. We cannot avoid questions about how the emerging democratic state is being reconfigured during this phase, whose interests it serves and what its orientation is to issues of class and gender, urban-ness and rurality, social rights and individual choice, the powerful and the weak, and the articulate and the subdued, about the effects of global capitalism on developing societies, and about numerous other complex, multifaceted and intersecting issues which confront scholarship through research. We are also obliged to take critical account of the commercialization and commodification of knowledge at the behest of powerful and intertwined military-corporate interests which are not subject to processes of public and democratic accountability. This commercialization of knowledge regards practical knowledge, and practical solutions to pressing social issues, as subsidiary to its primary purposes of economic profit, military capability and political supremacy, and is consequently largely disdainful of and has little regard for the theoretical foundations of knowledge or its social value.

## **Social policy research as applied and socially engaged research**

The domain of policy-related research in the social sciences embraces knowledge which is applied and socially engaged. It is intended to provide critical insights which might be useful in thinking about some of the most obdurate challenges facing societies. Although many general research conventions apply equally to it, social policy research is more characteristic of applied research. Yet it must also be distinguished

from other forms of applied scientific research, such as the development of industrial technologies for manufacturing, because the purposes and outcomes of such research and development are different from those of social policy research. The implication of this is that policy-related applied research cannot be evaluated in the same way as basic or fundamental research, like research about the nature of the universe, germane to the work of physicists and astronomers, or research about epistemological systems, or even research which applies the theoretical principles of the physical sciences to product development.

Social science knowledge can have a deep social value. Even without adopting Gibbons' perspectives on modes of knowledge,<sup>4</sup> it is possible to assert the social value and importance of applied knowledge. The only condition must surely be the proviso that, like any other knowledge worthy of such a description, it must have coherence and integrity based on the objectively validated criteria by which it is produced, that is, in ways that are not self-serving.

Social policy research, while it draws on basic research and its theoretical foundations, is essentially about statecraft, the precepts of state and other policy making bodies, the activities of government in areas within its jurisdiction and, we would argue, the nature of power relations and their effects on the ideological and conceptual proclivities of policy and decision-makers. It is about the conditions which circumscribe the behaviour of policy makers in relation to the particular issues they wish to address in the context of evolving social and economic production systems, the contradictory tensions which these produce, and the mode and methodologies of policy making and its processes. In addition, it is about how these policies are implemented and what their effects are on the general population and on specific communities and social categories within it. Its analyses are necessarily complex because it draws on the social sciences more generally and produces a body of theories about social policy making and its processes. In so doing, it must be mindful of the problems of nomothetic approaches and the purported 'universality' of its theorizations, since, as we will show, the business of policy analysis is largely contextual and not easily given to generalization. Of greater importance to policy research are its analytical approach and its critical impact.

### **Legalistic interpretations of policy are inadequate to critical scholarship**

Underlying much social policy analysis in South Africa is a legalistic interpretation of the values and rights bequeathed by the Constitution.<sup>5</sup> Educational analysts, as well as analysts of other social policies such as housing, health, land and basic needs, stress the importance of the rights-based Constitution and how education and other policies are bound within its limits and stand or fall by its tests. This is a powerful impulsion for policy analysis, and for many it constitutes the condition for the evaluation of both the precepts of policy and its implementation. But that is not the end of the matter, since in South Africa in particular, some analysts of the constitutional state have pointed to its very limits, to its foundational qualifications, its 'negotiated' brief and the limiting effects of these conditions on social transformation.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, some have argued that the Constitution suffers limitations because of its inability to penetrate the structural attributes of race, class and gender, which act as fundamental barriers to the realization of its imprimatur. It could therefore be argued that policy research in South Africa must adopt a critical stance to the constitutional legalism underpinning more conventional research and, indeed, that analyses restricted to the constitutional framework are hardly adequate.

In my view, education policy analysis is best understood within a broader context of political, economic and social analysis. I am not arguing that the analysis of education itself is unimportant, or that it can be substituted by a more general approach. What has been learned through research in and about education, and the theoretical perspectives derived from education, have great value in their own right. My argument here is about the relationship between discipline-specific knowledge and the social sciences more generally, especially as these arise in questions about social policy. In 'developing countries'<sup>7</sup> in particular, education policy research should be approached by reference to this relationship between education and more general social issues, and the analytical framework must to some degree be synonymous with the political economy of democracy, development and the 'national question'.<sup>8</sup> Such research is profoundly 'political' because of the analytical centrality of the activities of the state, which in turn are deeply affected by economic questions because of the importance of economic

systems and their ideologies to capitalist societies. A broader canvas of analytical categories, derived from state and society and impacted upon by global political, economic and ideological systems – and not limited to educational issues alone – will produce a deeper, fuller, more textured and qualitatively more thoughtful view of the issues affecting education.<sup>9</sup>

In most educational analysis in South Africa, this relationship is rarely taken into account, except in the form of reductionist arguments about the role of education in ‘responding’ to the demands of the labour market.<sup>10</sup> Over the last decade, a considerable volume of literature has developed around schooling in South Africa, ranging from treatises on mathematics and science education, classroom practice and curriculum to work on teacher education, school governance and education systems. Although nearly all of it is concerned with policy-related issues, its orientation to the ‘externalities’ which influence education policy and implementation is limited. Issues of social and historical ‘disadvantage’, ‘marginalization’, ‘exclusion’, poverty and inequality and other such abiding social phenomena are often raised, and these writings rightly point out that the educational system is characterized by deep inequalities, especially noticeable in relation to poor communities where there are considerable ‘backlogs’ as a result of South Africa’s discriminatory and racist past and the deliberately distorted distribution of educational expenditure to favour ‘white’ minorities. Yet few of these texts deal specifically with the political and economic imperatives which inform state policy making and its choices and, when they do, the discussion is essentially about the *effects* of educational reform rather than the underlying political conceptions informing policy in the post-apartheid period.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, any attempt at understanding educational policy and how it is implemented must reckon with what informs the ‘developmental’ perspective of the state, its political and ideological standpoints and its orientation to the ‘best models’ for fiscal, monetary, trade, industrial and economic policy more generally, that is, the perspectives which delineate the political economy of educational alternatives. Policy makers in emergent democratic states always refer to education as intrinsic to the achievement of ‘development’, and in most developing countries the affinity between education and the goals of modernization are a constant refrain in the pronouncements of politicians and business leaders alike, despite serious

contestations around such modernist discourses preoccupied exclusively with questions about economic efficiency.<sup>12</sup>

These hegemonic ideological constructs about democracy, development and the ‘national question’ are the inseparable drivers of social policy in post-colonial states, and an evaluation of social policy which ignores these questions leaves social theory impoverished and policy analysis lifeless and unresponsive. The relationship between these framing concepts is contradictory and complex, sometimes complementary and reciprocal and at other times conflicting and oppositional, as shown by those post-colonial nationalisms whose positive attributes and goals of popular liberation have been overwhelmed by opportunism. In such societies the promotion of justice and social amity have on occasion been supplanted by dictatorial agendas, and broader social development subverted by the promotion of elites. As Shivji has argued, these contradictory developments are in part ascribable to the unreconstructed continuities of state forms bequeathed to post-colonial states.<sup>13</sup> The ideological ascendancy and sovereignty of former colonial powers have been replaced by new forms of social and political privilege, deforming conceptions of freedom and justice to meet self-serving interpretations of nationhood and liberty. These approaches to national reconstruction have served mainly to extend the global reach of dependency-seeking regimes acting in the interests of multinational corporations.

This is why critical social policy analysis must seek better understandings of the social phenomena of rising elite power, political privilege and social marginalization, both as new forms of imperial dominion and political control though unequal trade and financial regimes *and* as self-serving opportunism. The implication is that the analysis of social policy is either vitiated or strengthened by its orientation to the broader conditionalities imposed by political, economic, cultural, religious and other factors. In developing countries especially, there is every reason to understand the context in which social policies are applied as conjunctural to the broader developmental challenges which face such developing states and societies. For instance, policy analysis which makes no attempt to comprehend the effects of political turmoil and upheaval (as in Iraq), high levels of social disintegration (as in Darfur and elsewhere), high levels of inequality (as in South

Africa, Brazil or India), unemployment and poverty (as in most underdeveloped countries), or extreme vulnerability to trade and financial regimes (as in most countries of the South), would simply be too uninformed and unable to illuminate the critical factors determining the path of social policy. Global and national factors impact on societies not merely through one arena of social policy but pervasively and broadly, muting the power of individual states and their social interventions and practices. An analysis informed by the categories of political economy and enhanced by other more contingent notions about culture, tradition and religion is essential to provide a deeper understanding of social policy and history.

**Academic research and social policy analysis: a questionable distinction for developing countries**

I turn now to the distinctions between academic researchers and policy analysts in rapidly changing societies such as South Africa. In his contribution to *Educational Research, Methodology, and Measurement: An International Handbook*,<sup>14</sup> Martin Trow traces the origins of policy analysis and explains more fully the relationship between research and policy. He speaks of the emergence, in the United States during the 1970s, of policy analysts

whose training, habits of mind, and conditions of work are expressly designed to narrow the gap between the researcher and the policy maker and to bring systematic knowledge to bear more directly, more quickly, and more relevantly on the issues of public policy.<sup>15</sup>

Trow refers to two models of policy-related research: the ‘percolation model’ in which ‘research somehow ... influences policy indirectly, by entering into the consciousness of the actors’ and shaping their choice of policy alternatives, and the ‘political model’ which is about ‘the intentional use of research by political decision makers to strengthen an argument, to justify the taking of unpopular decisions’.<sup>16</sup> He argues that, in contrast to conventional academic research in the social sciences, policy researchers are trained to assess and conceptualize problems in ways that are suitable not for academic enquiry but for the needs of decision-makers, and to take cognisance of questions of efficacy, costs and benefits, trade offs and alternatives. Indeed, ‘not all policy analysts are “researchers” as the university conceives of research,’

though this does not mean that the application of intellectual and analytical skills is not required by policy analysts.

In a word, they try to see problems from the perspective of the decision maker, but with a set of intellectual, analytical and research tools that the politician or senior civil servant may not possess. They are ... at the elbow of the decision makers, or if not in government, then serving the ‘government in opposition’ or some think-tank or interest group which hopes to staff the next administration ....<sup>17</sup>

Trow also draws a distinction between ‘faculty members’ and the policy analysts who are trained by them. The ‘former are almost without exception academics with PhDs’ who are ‘specialists’ in the domain of public policy. These ‘policy intellectuals’, as distinct from ‘policy analysts’ (*a la* Wilson)<sup>18</sup>, undertake research ‘according to the paradigms’ of their graduate studies, operate at a high level of specialization (and consequently do not deal with ‘global problems’), and there are few limitations on which policy issues they might choose to investigate. Policy analysts, by contrast, ‘serve the client’, through ‘interdisciplinary’ work on issues constrained by a defined problematic or ‘circumscribed policy areas’ rather than through freely chosen theories, and without any peer review system.<sup>19</sup> Because policy analysts do not use ethnographic research, they are often the victims of ‘official statistics’ which they, unlike university-trained analysts, are not inclined to question. The constraints on their analyses are likely to reflect the tension between their client and the needs of their professional commitment and integrity. The relation between analysts and intellectuals also has a bearing ‘on the nature of communication and persuasion in the political arena’.<sup>20</sup>

Even if one agrees with elements of Trow’s analysis of the differences between policy analysts and academic researchers in the United States, it is hardly an adequate description of the complexities and attributes of policy research and practitioners in developing democracies like South Africa, nor of their social and intellectual orientations, their training, methodological choices or social location. In fact, Trow’s account might be no more than a caricature of policy analysis in South Africa which, it must be said, ranges from consultancy work contracted to

audit and accounting firms to critical social research undertaken in academia and in bodies like the EPC. In the United States, policy research and practice, and the distinction between policy analyst and researcher, has been defined over a long period of time in a comparatively stable environment for policy making. Policy-related research in a 'developing' country like South Africa is complicated by the dynamics of political and social change itself. This complexity arises not only from the process of legislative reform but also because of the identities of the actors involved and the specificities of the conditions for policy formation prevailing at any time. As Fritz Ringer asked of French intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century, are intellectuals in South Africa today 'prophets or sages; or are they scientists, specialized researchers or technical innovators? Are they critics of power or expert advisers of politicians, direct or indirect moulders of public opinion?'. These positions, roles and identities are in themselves 'a vital force of the cognitive dispositions at work in the intellectual field'.<sup>21</sup>

These roles, moreover, are also affected by the phenomena of democracy, development, nationalism and globalization. Trow's simple dichotomy between researcher and policy analyst is not wholly tenable in South Africa because of the interchangeability of the roles and functions of intellectuals involved in policy-related applied research as well as the specific 'conjunctures' defining these roles. Particular roles are shaped largely by the conditions of their production. Hence, formulaic typologies do not adequately reflect the complex intellectual and scholarly functions of social policy analysts in fields such as health, housing, land and local government, as well as the work of the EPC and others in education.

Relative to what is normally ascribed to the regimen of policy analysis, policy research bodies in rapidly changing societies like South Africa are engaged in heterodox scholarship. They work both within and beyond the formal conventions of policy analysis, and their research undertakings attempt to offer not only policy briefings but also intellectually stimulating ideas, critique and the possibility of public engagement in issues of policy. They also develop academic writings and may even be commissioned to provide consultancy-type reports. This complex of activities reflects more accurately the status of policy analysis in South Africa and, especially in relation to the work of the EPC, the tension between technicist

and critical modes of policy research. The variety of approaches to scholarly work<sup>22</sup> developed by the EPC and similar bodies is also a product of the need to take account of a range of factors, such as the purpose of any particular undertaking, its origin and audience, and most importantly the scale of time and resources available for such work. In each case, how the projected research is conceptualized determines the nature of its outcome, its audience, qualitative requirements, form of dissemination and use of resources.

It follows, too, that a measure of research outputs in the form of a fixed number of approved journal publications each year would be an inadequate gauge for evaluating or understanding the wide array of scholarly activities arising from the EPC's research. Rather, its research ought to be viewed on a continuum which includes consultations with policy makers, directly commissioned 'expert' consultancy advice, dialogue and public engagement activities, intellectual debate and social critique, and the publication and dissemination of research activities. And each of these could take a variety of forms. For instance, engagement could take the form of discussions with government officials, parliamentary committees or Ministers, with and through the media, with communities of interest, social movements and trade unions, through public debate, and discussions in academic spaces. Publication and dissemination can also take many forms.

### **Policy scholarship through public dialogue and intellectual engagement**

These 'conditions' for policy scholarship raise more than a few important – some might say fundamental – questions about the intellectual demands of such scholarship. Indeed, what is meant by 'intellectual' in this instance is itself a matter for discussion, since the term has had many meanings attached to it historically. In early modern France, for instance, intellectuals were easily identified by law and through social perception. There is today no such formal recognition by the state nor any substantive definition. In contemporary Western society the term is used *ad hoc*,<sup>23</sup> referring to people with university degrees, or in specified professions (such as writers, journalists and teachers), or with certain social roles or functions, or with particular psychological and behavioural traits. Structural approaches emphasize an intellectual's 'observable position in the social structure', while phenomenological approaches refer

instead to the 'the self-understanding and perceptions of the individual, as shown by his or her particular ways of thinking and acting'.<sup>24</sup> How do we understand this role today?

It may be that academic scholarship satisfies its intellectual demands through mechanisms such as the peer review system, the imperative to 'publish or perish' and the expert supervision of academic dissertations. There is, for instance, no requirement that academic scholarship be widely read and disseminated or be accessible to those not in the academic community. Thus the constant lament that such research often 'lies on the shelf to gather dust' is unreasonable and disingenuous, since widespread dissemination is never a criterion of such research. The rationale for such a selective and privileging disposition to the availability of academic research lies in the view that the demands of scholarly rigour preclude such inclusivity. Regardless of the efficacy of such a view, some institutions are seriously rethinking their criteria for academic scholarship in the light of considerations of 'social responsiveness' and, somewhat ironically, the need for additional sources of income.<sup>25</sup> Given that the scholarly enterprise of research bodies such as the EPC is not limited to academic publication and higher-degree teaching, universities in particular need to think of how to support such applied and socially responsive scholarship without diminishing the value of academic and publishable work. It is salient to remind ourselves that, if all research was judged only by its academic merit, then we would be bereft of the great body of human knowledge acquired over millennia, since very little of it was produced within the conventions of academia.<sup>26</sup>

In the case of the EPC, its public intellectual role is intrinsic to its scholarship through policy research. Its role renders problematic the ostensibly easy distinctions between the scholarly attributes of intellectual and academic, activist and advocate, and policy analyst and intellectual. Its wider and socially relevant interpretation of scholarship simultaneously attests to the importance of space for thoughtful disputation, enquiry and dialogue, provides content and support to such a role and recognizes its responsible contribution to the goal of a democratic, informed and thinking citizenry and to social change more generally. The EPC engages with its peers and the public on matters ranging from democratic school governance, basic educational rights, violence in schools, community and student organization, and

mathematics and science education to rural schooling and poverty, and is invited to share its views on these issues with decision-makers, communities, social movements, trade unions, student bodies, rights lobbies and a range of other groups and interests both powerful and powerless. This kind of intellectual engagement and peer review would not be so far from the normative scientific conventions of academic scholarship if the latter were not narrowly restricted to the criterion of publication in an approved journal but extended to include criteria such as the role of research in the stimulation of *public* dialogue, enquiry, accountability, disputation and debate. Such criteria are, arguably, closer to the tradition of Socrates and the agora than to the tradition of the relatively closed society of academia.<sup>27</sup>

The intellectual engagement process of policy-related scholarship requires a diversity of strategies for the production, dissemination and 'delivery' of the outputs of scholarship, new ways of thinking about its uses, and new forms of communication, none of which should unthinkingly reproduce the prescriptions of discipline-based academic research. Social policy research raises a different set of questions about the nature of its community, which itself extends well beyond academic communities. Indeed, it raises questions about who exactly is its community, besides its academic peers and other policy-related research analysts. In South Africa, given the historical antecedents of policy making, there is a very wide range of bodies, institutions, organizations and individuals that constitute the 'community' of interests relevant to the work of the social policy analyst. For instance, not only must the EPC engage with policy makers in government (at national, provincial and local levels as well as in legislative interest groups such as Standing Committees), but it must also engage with other policy making institutions (such as the Human Rights Commission and the Human Sciences Research Council), with research bodies internationally, with interested donor agencies who are willing to support such policy work and who are constantly on the lookout for relevance to fulfil their development-cooperation agreements, and with the media whose interests are sometimes provoked by the social relevance of policy-related work. Of equally great importance is the need to engage with those organizations in civil society that best represent the interests of specific constituencies affected by particular policies. These, too, represent a

range of bodies, such as teachers' and other unions, human rights interests groups, civic bodies, student organizations, social movements, local community groups and even individuals interested in the work of policy analysts for a variety of academic, 'political' or organizational reasons.

The manner of engaging with these communities differs quite considerably one from the other. Engaging with a community of academic peers is very different from the practices of policy analysts working inside or outside of the legislative bodies of the country. And both of these are quite different from the mode, purposes and forms of engagement with local communities, themselves varying in terms of their geographic locations, levels of organization, languages of communication, levels of literacy, local histories, traditions and practices. Such concerns of particular relevance to social policy research tend to be ignored or avoided in conventional academic research whose mandate for engagement is more narrowly defined. Very importantly, this has meant that, through its work, the EPC has had to problematize the ostensible separation between academic, intellectual and educational 'activist' in the discourse of social policy analysis.

### **Policy scholarship, methodological issues and the dissemination of research**

The need to construct methodologies for a wider sphere of engagement through research is not well understood outside the policy research community. It raises many difficult questions about *how* to engage, and the integrity of such engagement, through research. For example, in the case of the EPC's work with the Nelson Mandela Foundation,<sup>28</sup> it was initially envisaged, by some of the researchers at least, that the primary mode of enquiry would be a survey of the opinions and views of the communities with whom the research was concerned. Over time, through debate and discussion, it became clearer that the *relationship* between survey and ethnography had to be explored more fully. Indeed, the role of the survey was seen in its proper light as generating a great deal of important quantitative information which would be powerfully augmented by the qualitative voices (however difficult it may have been to obtain these 'voices' with integrity) of the communities through ethnographic research.<sup>29</sup> Contrary to much orthodoxy, the combination of research methodologies was likely to, and did in fact, produce the best understanding of

the problematic defined by the research project. In addition, the EPC's orientation to scholarship through research raises other important questions about the relationship between research and its methodologies, such as the dangers of 'objectifying' communities in research.<sup>30</sup> Increasingly, policy analysts have come to understand the value of ethnographic approaches to research, to satisfy the criterion of 'non-objectification', to understand subjectivities and to integrate methodologies of enquiry in mutually enriching ways.

The EPC orientates itself to policy research in a manner that is mindful of the conflicting research traditions that abide in the social sciences. Understanding this conflict, suggests Popkewitz, requires

an inquiry into the social, political and epistemological assumptions that shape and fashion the activities and outcomes of research. One of the ironies of contemporary social science is that a particular and narrow conception of science has come to dominate social research. That conception gives emphasis to the procedural logic of research by making statistical and procedural problems paramount to the conduct of research. This view eliminates from scrutiny the social movements and values that underlie research methods and which give definition to the researcher as a particular social type. As a result, the possibilities of social sciences are at best limited, and at worst mystifying of the very human conditions that the methods of science were invented to illuminate.<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the EPC's research programme on *Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education in South Africa*, several methodological approaches were used. In some, extensive discussions were held about the relevance and appropriateness of particular research methodologies directly intended to adduce the voice of the communities in which research was conducted. This was regarded as essential for the authentication and validation of qualitative data and, in addition, for using the experiences of those communities in order to think about the potential solutions to their educational challenges.

The necessity to engage and to construct methodologies for such engagement also leads to many questions about the *how* and *what* of dissemination.

These questions are compounded by the overt and other relations of power which pervade the publication of research more generally. This in turn has a decisive influence on the form of publication and writing that results from such research. In the case of social policy research, there are many possibilities for publication and many modes of doing so. In many cases these modes are demanded by the very process of engagement. In addition to the production of written work for the research process itself (for training and inducting researchers and clarifying the objectives of the research for communities), a welter of writings emanate directly from the research, including reports and policy briefings for decision-makers and the media, 'popular' writings, monographs, advocacy materials, discussion documents, conference presentations and academic writings.<sup>32</sup> Only a very small proportion of policy-related research is ever published in peer-reviewed academic publications, although the demand for a variety of written outputs is greater than that for academic journal publication. For instance, while a researcher at an academic institution might be required to publish at least one journal article per year,<sup>33</sup> the actual output of written work in the EPC consists not only of accredited journal articles but also book publications, conference presentations, newspaper articles, non-accredited journal articles and, of course, voluminous research reports.

### **Policy scholarship through critique**

The EPC's scholarship through research goes beyond research which is responsive to the needs of the contracting parties, that is, user-driven research. It is intended to provide systematic, analytical and sustained reflection *and critique* of the nature of public policies and their implications for and effects on society as a whole, or on social classes, groups or communities. Critique must be differentiated from other forms of writing and thinking which, although they might be contiguous, have different social purposes, such as commissioned report-writing, journalistic and popular works, and texts geared to the purpose of academic teaching.

Conceptions of policy-related research are sometimes confused with the role that policy decision-makers must play in discharging their duties – in other words, with the work of devising particular strategies to give effect to the intentions of government policies. This is not the work of policy-related scholarship,

even if it has consequences for policy and decision-makers. The theoretical framework for policy-related work in the case of the EPC is to be found largely in theories about social change and in critical theory. This established area of intellectual and theoretical work, associated with the work of the Frankfurt School and scholars such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas, is important not only for scholarship, but also for the critical questions all of us face at this time. It has significance and conjunctural value because it is concerned with processes of social change, democratic transformation, reform and other very important issues which policy analysts must take on and participate in.<sup>34</sup>

The role of critique in scholarly research has long been the subject of theorization and practice. It refers in part to how phenomena are investigated and understood and what the implications of understanding might be for practice. Kant's proposition was that knowing and the conditions under which we come to know are inextricable from each other and are contextually bound. Critique is therefore intrinsic to intellectual enquiry.

In critique, ... we transcend the strictly technical or practical as we consider how the forms and contents of our thought shape and are shaped by the historical situations in which we find ourselves ... and how history itself will be shaped by our praxis.<sup>35</sup>

Barnett adds that critique is not simply synonymous with the acquisition of knowledge – it is more than that. Although change might be grounded on knowledge, to what extent is such knowledge 'critical knowledge' or, as he puts it, 'under critical control':

Has knowledge become simply the supplier of means to non-debated ends or are the ends up for debate too? We do not have to invoke an image of a worn out and unworkable central control to ask whether society can be said to be, in any real sense, steering its changes with the maximum insight that might be available.<sup>36</sup>

Critique must be clear and unambiguous, reflective and analytical, stating its underlying assumptions and values, clarifying its ideological standpoint, and based on careful study of the facts and good empirical evidence without being empiricist. It must be faithful

to the conventions of accuracy of detail and of sources, posit its own limits and, in the case of policy critique, suggest reform alternatives and point to other useful and instructive research.

Most importantly, critique is scholarly when it is about producing higher levels of knowledge and when it is not disconnected from or indifferent to the problems of social change. It must engage with the important issues of relationships. In my view, research which is predictable, which does not raise new and difficult questions about social choices, and which simply confirms the pre-existing choices of client agencies (regardless of who these are) is not very useful. It simply avoids the most important questions to be clarified and fails to make any real contribution, even to policy.

Although there is a strong association between policy research and the work of government, it is wrong to infer from this that all policy-related critical research must, in the first instance, serve the needs of government alone. It is a false premise that only government is implicated in policy-related research. This is very different from suggesting that it must support existing government policies. It could reach analytical conclusions that do so – but that is not its explicit purpose. The concerns of government are no less the concerns of communities and social movements – why else would there be such serious ideological and organizational conflict over these issues? Another equally untested (and probably false) premise is that government has no need for proper theorization and scholarly critique, despite the proclivities of some high-level bureaucrats. The purpose of doing research can hardly be to produce work which lacks theorization and scholarship, and no serious and responsible (or democratic) government or social movement can ignore the importance of critical enquiry nor should it rely on anything less than this.

In my view, it would be better to view scholarly critique in social policy as inseparable from the challenges of producing relevant social research. In this way relevance and scholarship are not falsely polarized because of the difficulties of producing scholarly critical research. This implies rethinking how we conceptualize the role of research in the context of a changing state and not simply reproducing the obsequious relationship which prevailed between the apartheid state and its research agencies. It also implies rethinking the role of research in the context

of the post-apartheid state's location in a regime of global production relations, the decline of some and re-invigoration of other organizations of civil society in the period since 1994, and the relationship between the state's social and economic (especially fiscal, monetary and employment-related) policies and priorities and their impact on social policy in general. All of these issues are bound up with contestations over the ideological suppositions that underpin state policies, especially the weight of economic and technologically determinist views of development relative to other conceptions of development. It implies an engagement with a broader canvas of research and knowledge than was previously available, the testing of hypotheses against a global reality, the evaluation and use of networks of intellectual activity in many parts of the world and the scrutiny of wider scholarship.

### **Conclusion**

There is a wide-ranging debate about these and other issues in South Africa and many other countries, and in particular about education's contribution to the development of a critical citizenry, and about the relationships between individuals and society, 'public' and 'private', states and markets, the national and the global, autonomy and accountability and other complexities of the democratic undertaking in 'developing' societies. Institutions of higher education at times define their mandate in terms of the 'knowledge debate', and at other times make reference to concepts of 'transformation' or 'engagement' or 'responsiveness'.<sup>37</sup> Suffice it to say that each of these descriptive monikers is ultimately about the future of this society and the possible roles that researchers in university environments, including social policy researchers, might play.

Beyond the considerable enhancement of research capacity, the building of research networks and collaboration, and the generation and stimulation of public dialogue and academic and other writings, the EPC has opened up a range of important conceptual and theoretical issues about engaged social policy research. Its scholarship has raised critical questions about education and development, rurality and poverty, the discourse of rights, society and violence, gender and reform, epistemological privilege and exclusion,<sup>38</sup> identity and culture, traditionalism and modernity, the limits and possibilities of methodologies and the meaning of 'voice', the

concept of 'dialogue', ethical research methodologies and other related questions, all of which are under discussion locally and internationally.<sup>39</sup> It has raised questions which go beyond educational policy and seek to understand the politics of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

1. Eight separate research projects were conducted under the auspices of this programme between 2002 and 2006: a) Investigating Governance and Equity in the South African Schools Act at School Level within the Context of Democracy, Social Justice, and Human Rights; (b) The Effects of Social Violence on Schooling in South Africa; (c) The Right to Basic Education in South Africa; (d) The Deracialization of Academia in South Africa; (e) The Community Education Forum Project; (f) Human Rights, Democracy, and Social Justice: Science and Mathematics Literacy in Disadvantaged Communities; (g) Audit of Student Representative Council Elections at 21 Universities and Technikons in South Africa from 2002-2004; and (h) Education and the Analysis of the South African State.
2. This chapter was the keynote address to the Education Policy Consortium Research Conference on Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice in Education, 7-8 March 2007, Rosebank Hotel, Johannesburg. I wish to acknowledge the useful comments and criticisms I have received from Lis Lange, Alan Ralphs, John Pampallis, Brian Ramadiro and Rasigan Maharaj, as well as the steadfast support received throughout from the funders of this project, the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA).
3. Michael Paulsen and Kenneth FELDMAN [HYPERLINK "http://www.highbeam.com/Search.aspx?q=author:%5bFeldman%3bKenneth%3bA.%5d" \o "See more articles by Feldman, Kenneth A." Feldman, "Toward a reconceptualization of scholarship: a human action system with functional imperatives", \*Journal of Higher Education\*, 66, 6, 1995. See also Maxine Atkinson, "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Reconceptualizing Scholarship and Transforming the Academy", \*Social Forces\*, 79, 4, 2001, p.1217, where she argues that 'the scholarship of teaching is a concept with multiple ramifications. It is at the core of the current transformation of higher education. The scholarship of teaching challenges the existing stratification system within the academy. The scholarship of teaching and learning is a much larger enterprise, a movement, that can transform the nature of academia'.](http://www.highbeam.com/Search.aspx?q=author:%5bFeldman%3bKenneth%3bA.%5d%5c%22%22%20%22See%20more%20articles%20by%20Feldman,%20Kenneth%20A.%22%20Feldman,%20%22Toward%20a%20reconceptualization%20of%20scholarship%3A%20a%20human%20action%20system%20with%20functional%20imperatives%22%2C%20Journal%20of%20Higher%20Education%2C%2066%2C%206%2C%201995.%22%20See%20also%20Maxine%20Atkinson%2C%20%22The%20Scholarship%20of%20Teaching%20and%20Learning%3A%20Reconceptualizing%20Scholarship%20and%20Transforming%20the%20Academy%22%2C%20Social%20Forces%2C%2079%2C%204%2C%202001%2C%20p.1217%2C%20where%20she%20argues%20that%20%22the%20scholarship%20of%20teaching%20is%20a%20concept%20with%20multiple%20ramifications.%20It%20is%20at%20the%20core%20of%20the%20current%20transformation%20of%20higher%20education.%20The%20scholarship%20of%20teaching%20challenges%20the%20existing%20stratification%20system%20within%20the%20academy.%20The%20scholarship%20of%20teaching%20and%20learning%20is%20a%20much%20larger%20enterprise%2C%20a%20movement%2C%20that%20can%20transform%20the%20nature%20of%20academia.%22)
4. See Michael Gibbons, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Simon Schwartzman, Peter Scott and Martin Trow, *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1994); Pedro Conceicao and Manuel Heitor, 'On the Role of the University in the Knowledge Economy', *Science and Public Policy*, 26, 1, 1999; and Michael Young, 'An Old Problem in a New Context: Rethinking the Relationship between Sociology and Educational Policy' (paper presented at the International Conference on the Sociology of Education, London, 2-4 January, 2004).
5. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Cape Town: Constitutional Court, 1996). The limits of legalistic interpretations of constitutional rights are discussed more fully in Samiera Zafar and Enver Motala, 'Education, Human Rights and Law' (unpublished paper, prepared for The Right To Basic Education Project, a project of the Democracy, Human Rights and Social Justice Programme in Education in South Africa, Johannesburg, Centre for Education Policy Development, 2005). See also Neil Gotanda, 'A Critique of "Our Constitution is Color-Blind"', in Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G. and Thomas, K. (eds) *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement* (New York: New Press, 1995); Cheryl Harris, 'Whiteness as Property', in Crenshaw, K. et al., *Critical Race Theory*; and Ronald Dworkin, *Taking Rights Seriously* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978).
6. Neville Alexander, *An Ordinary Country: Issues in the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy in South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002). See also Zafar and Motala, 'Education, Human Rights and Law'.
7. I grant that the nomenclature, 'developing country', has a contested meaning, but I do not wish to digress into a debate about the discourses of development here.
8. The 'national question' was classically about the contradictory impulses of national self-determination, language, culture, ethnicity and social class and the contestations over their meaning and effects in the determination of emerging 'nations'. Debates about this were particularly vigorous at the end of the nineteenth century, but continue to have resonance even now as debates about the nature of the apartheid state showed. In the latter debate, characterizing the state as a 'racial' state or as an 'exploitative capitalist' state gave rise to differing interpretations of the 'national question' and implied that an analysis of apartheid and of its relationship to capitalism was critical to any view of the 'national question'. This in turn affected what strategies were appropriate in the struggle against apartheid. See Harold Wolpe, *Race, Class and the Apartheid State* (London: James Currey, 1988); Martin Legassick, 'South Africa: Capital Accumulation and Violence', *Economy and Society*, 2, 3, 1974; Martin Legassick, 'Legislation, Ideology and Economy in Post-1948 South Africa', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 1, 1, 1974; Harold Wolpe, 'The Theory of Internal Colonization: The South African Case', University of London Institute of Commonwealth Studies Seminar Papers, Vol.5, 1973-4; and Neville Alexander [No Sizwe], *One Azania, One Nation* (London: Zed Press, 1979).
9. Young, 'An old problem in a new context', p.4, refers to the need to 'cross the boundaries' between the discipline-based theoretical debates about policy and political debates about 'the efficacy and goals of actual policies'.
10. Labour market outcomes for education and training are very important, but that does not mean that the purposes of education can be reduced to this alone.
11. An important exception in this regard is Linda Chisholm (ed) *Changing Class: Education and Social Change in Post-apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004). The title of the book 'suggests both the active process of effecting change within social classes and classrooms and the nature and process of that change' (p.2), and its 'major conclusion' is that present policies favour an 'expanding, racially-mixed middle class' (p.7).
12. For extensive reference to the literature on the 'modernization' debate, see Enver Motala and Tsakani Chaka, 'The Case for Basic Education' (CEPD Occasional Paper No. 4, 2005).
13. Issa Shivji, 'Revisiting the Debate on National Autonomous Development' (paper prepared at the request of the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Unit for Rural Schooling and Development, University of Fort Hare, March 2006).
14. Martin Trow, 'Policy Analysis', in Keeves, J. (ed) *Educational Research, Methodology and Measurement: An International*

- Handbook* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988).
15. Trow, 'Policy Analysis', p.197.
  16. *Ibid.*, p.197.
  17. *Ibid.*, p.198.
  18. James Wilson, "'Policy Intellectuals' and Public Policy', *Public Interest*, 64, 1981.
  19. Trow, 'Policy Analysis', p.199.
  20. *Ibid.*, p.201.
  21. Ringer, quoted in Johan Muller, *Reclaiming Knowledge: Social Theory, Curriculum and Education Policy* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000), p.113.
  22. The Concise Oxford Dictionary's definition of scholarship refers to 'the quality of having attained learning', and somewhat teleologically it refers to 'methods and achievements characteristic of scholars'. We view it more as denoting the activity of producing new ideas, or new interpretations of old ideas, adding to the body of human understanding, expanding the horizons of such understanding and taking understanding to a higher level of clarity and the modes and methods of doing so through the process of engagement in the production and dissemination of knowledge.
  23. Ron Eyerman, Lennart Svensson and Thomas Soderqvist (eds), *Intellectuals, Universities, and the State in Western Modern Societies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
  24. Eyerman, Svensson and Soderqvist, *Intellectuals, Universities, and the State*, p.3. Even less complementary perceptions about intellectuals were expressed by Robert Michels in his classic, *Political Parties* (New York, 1915), p.3: 'From time to time the state, embarrassed by the increasing demand for positions in its service, is forced to open the sluices of its bureaucratic canals in order to admit thousands of new postulants and thus to transform these from dangerous adversaries into zealous defenders and partisans. There are two classes of intellectuals: those who have succeeded in securing a post at the manger of the state, whilst the others consist of those who ... have assaulted the fortress without being able to force their way in'.
  25. The University of Cape Town is discussing systemically embedding a revised definition of 'social responsiveness' in its criteria for assessing the performance of academics. This would offer academics the possibility of using outputs associated with social responsiveness for purposes of *ad hominem* promotions and performance reviews.
  26. Of the great 'natural philosophers' and scientists of the past it would be surprising to find any who produced scholarship by the conventions of academic research. See also Clifford Conner, *A People's History of Science* (New York: Nation Books, 2005), in which it is argued that nearly every significant advance in science was attributable to the prior experience gained from artisanal, seafaring, navigational, midwifery, mechanical, blacksmithing, craft-related and other 'ordinary' endeavours.
  27. We do not engage with the critique about the possibilities and restrictions endured by scholarship within neo-liberal regimes, although we recognise the force of that view today. See Bronwyn Davies, 'The (Im)possibility of Intellectual Work in Neo-Liberal Regimes', *Discourse: Studies in the Politics of Education*, 26, 1, 2005.
  28. See Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2005).
  29. The term 'ethnographic' is used here to signify more than just a branch of anthropology concerned with ethnic groups, but rather the idea that researchers need to investigate social phenomena within the socio-cultural context in which they occur, using qualitative methods and approaches.
  30. See Dani Nabudere, 'Towards an Afriquiry of Knowledge Production and African Regeneration' (paper presented at the First International Conference on African Renaissance Studies, University of South Africa, 2006); and Dani Nabudere, 'Professor Cheick Anta Diop and Transdisciplinarity' (unpublished paper, 2005).
  31. Thomas Popkewitz, *Paradigm and Ideology in Educational Research* (London: Falmer Press, 1984), p.2.
  32. Examples of 'popular' writings are the booklets on the Right to Basic Education: see also, in this volume, Salim Vally and Samiera Zafar, 'The Right to Basic Education: State Policy and Community Voices', Appendix 1.
  33. As far as I am aware, no institution has reached that target (most are way below it) and even the Human Sciences Research Council's target is less than one per year.
  34. David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); Barry Smart, *Sociology, Phenomenology and Marxian Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976).
  35. Stephen Kemmis, 'Action Research and the Politics of Reflection', in Bond, D., Keogh, R. and Walker, D. (eds) *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning* (London: Kogan Page, 1985), p.142.
  36. Ronald Barnett, *Higher Education: A Critical Business* (Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press, 1997), p.6.
  37. The growing body of literature on these issues includes David Ashton and Francis Green, *Education, Training and the Global Economy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996); Philip Brown, Andy Green and Hugh Lauder, *High Skills: Globalization, Competitiveness and Skill Formation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Peter Easton and Steven Klees, 'Conceptualizing the Role of Education in the Economy', in Arnove, R., Altbach, P. and Kelly, G. (eds) *Emergent Issues in Education: Comparative Perspectives* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992); Les Levidow, 'Marketizing Higher Education: Neoliberal Strategies and Counter-Strategies', *The Commoner*, 3, January 2002, <http://www.thecommoner.org/>; Mala Singh, *Universities and Society: Whose Terms of Engagement?* (Pretoria: Council on Higher Education, 2004); and Kenneth King and Simon McGrath, *Knowledge for Development* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004).
  38. See Thandika Mkandawire (ed), *African Intellectuals: Rethinking Politics, Language, Gender and Development* (Dakar: Codesria Books, 1988), especially Paul Zeleza's contribution, 'The Academic Diaspora and Knowledge Production in and on Africa: What role for CODESRIA?'.
  39. Amina Mama, 'Strengthening Civil Society: Participatory Action Research in a Militarized State', *Development in Practice*, 10, 1, 2000; Chandra Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, 30, 1988; Stephen Kemmis, 'Action Research and Social Movement: A Challenge for Policy Research', *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 1, 1, 1993; and Dennis Sumara and Brent Davis, 'Enactivist Theory and Community Learning: Towards a Complexified Understanding of Action Research', *Education Action Research*, 5, 3, 1997.

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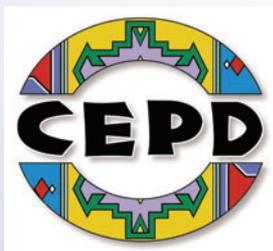
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