

Opening the Doors of Learning Changing Schools in South Africa

Pam Christie

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CHAPTER 1

Schooling and social change: framing the challenges

This chapter locates the launching of a new democracy in South Africa within the global context of change. It outlines the major changes in schooling after the end of apartheid, and raises the question of why the Freedom Charter's dream that 'The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!' has been so hard to realise. It outlines the approach taken in various chapters of the book, and also the key conceptual tools of structure/agency, ethics, equity and social justice. It sets out the framework for the book as a whole.

A TIME OF CHANGE

In 1994, a new democracy was launched in South Africa, and 40 years of apartheid were brought to an end. It was a moment of great achievement for all those people who had struggled – in many different ways – to achieve a fair and more equal society in South Africa. Many people had given their lives and many had died to achieve human dignity, rights and equality for all. Many of them were school and university students.

This was a time of great achievement, and a time of great hope. In human history, there are highpoints of change after which nothing is the same again. For South Africa, 1994 was a highpoint of this sort. But it was also a highpoint for the rest of the world. The South African example showed that it is possible to bring an unjust system to an end without major bloodshed. It showed that opponents could negotiate with each other successfully to reach a settlement, and that they could share a government of national unity. It showed that people could work together to achieve major social change.

There were also other reasons why the 1990s were a highpoint of change in world history. The victory of democracy in South Africa happened at the same time as the fall of Eastern European communist states, which crumbled one by one, starting with East Germany and the Berlin Wall in 1989. The Cold War was over. Capitalist market economies were seen as victorious over communism and state-controlled economies. It so happened that the Communist Party of South Africa was unbanned and relaunched at the same time as Communist parties in many other countries of the world were closing down.

And at the same time, other changes were taking place in the economies, societies and cultures of the world – changes associated with globalisation. New technologies were changing the face and pace of communication across the globe. Economic and financial transactions were taking place at a speed that had never been imagined. Capital, finances, ideas, images – and people – were flowing across the borders of countries as never before.

The new South Africa was born in a time of great change. It was born in circumstances that could not have been imagined when apartheid was designed in the 1950s nor when the armed struggle was launched in the 1960s. The new government came to power with a mandate to build a just and equal society. It had to do so on a terrain of great global change, of which it was also a part.

However, building a new society does not start on clear ground. Change emerges from what already exists. In South Africa, the new government was faced with the challenge of having to run the country and change it

at the same time. It had to build a democracy, develop the economy, and regulate society in line with the values of human dignity, equality and justice. South Africans' expectations were high, and the challenges facing the government were enormous.

One of the most important tasks facing the government was to rebuild the education system. Forty years of apartheid had left deep inequalities in schooling. Among these, racial inequalities were most obvious, but there were also inequalities between urban and rural schools, between rich and poor, and between boys and girls. HIV/AIDS brought an unanticipated ingredient into the mix. How could the old apartheid system be transformed to reflect the values of equality and justice? How could education be redesigned into a system of quality to prepare *all* young people to share a joint citizenship and also take their place in a rapidly globalising world? How could the new government run the education system and change it at the same time? Where to start and what to do?

In 1994, a new government of national unity took power in South Africa, with the mandate of transforming the racial apartheid state into a modern democracy. The new government moved to bring the racially divided education departments into provincial departments. It developed a system of funding which would make it possible for the poorest provinces and schools to receive more than their wealthier counterparts. The government built more schools and classrooms, and improved the resources in the poorest and most disadvantaged schools. Soon, all primary age children were in school, and more and more children were in secondary schools. Unlike many other countries, girls and boys appeared to be attending school in more or less equal numbers. Governing bodies were set up for all schools, and a measure of self-management was progressively introduced. A new curriculum was put in place and revised when difficulties were encountered. Teachers' conditions of work and pay were regularised and a new system of teacher appraisal and whole school evaluation was put in place. A great achievement was that the system kept operating at the same time as fundamental changes were introduced.

However, several shadows fell over the achievements of change. First, test scores suggested that the system was not serving all of its students equally, or even well. Matriculation results told a mixed story of success and failure. Comparative international tests were equally – if not more – problematic. South Africa's performance was disappointingly poor, even in comparison with countries in the Southern African region. Internationally, even the best performances in South Africa were no more than average in comparison with top performing countries.

A second, deep shadow was the poverty and poor functioning of many – if not most – of the country’s schools. It seemed that for the majority of young people, democracy had not brought better prospects in education. Patterns of inequality in education remained the same: poverty, race, gender and region mark out different educational experiences for most South African children. Why had this not changed?

For decades, since its adoption in 1955, the Freedom Charter had provided a vision for a future society based on human dignity, democracy, equality and sharing of wealth. The Freedom Charter famously declared that

The doors of learning and culture shall be opened!

This vision was given legal status in the new South African Constitution of 1996, which declared that:

Everyone shall have the right: (a) to basic education, including adult education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

Why was this vision so hard to put into practice? After 10 years of democracy, despite many changes in education policy, why were improvements so uneven? Why has it been so hard to ‘open the doors of learning’ and to provide education for all as a basic human right? What can be done about this situation? These questions have puzzled educators, policy makers and social reformers in South Africa. Interestingly, other countries have also faced similar puzzles about how to reduce educational inequalities and how to change schools. South Africa’s experience is not completely unique – though, of course, its specific forms are.

This book addresses the puzzle of educational change, from the perspective of South Africa. It does not aim to provide a narrative of the change processes in South Africa – what was done, by whom, when, and why. It is not primarily a book written *about* South African education, but a book written *for* educators grappling to understand the forces of change in the South African context.

SCALE AND EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

This book approaches the puzzle of educational change by looking at what change might involve from the perspectives of a series of different scales.

Each scale engages with its own debates, discourses, and logics, and each offers different approaches to education and educational change. The scales explored in this book are:

- ▶ the *global scale*, and the challenges that globalisation poses for educational change
- ▶ the *scale of nation state development*, and how decisions about economy, society and government at the scale of the nation state pose their own challenges for educational change
- ▶ the *scale of state policy*, and how the policy processes of modern states open possibilities for educational change, but also face limits in changing schools
- ▶ the *scale of the school and classroom*, and the importance of providing learning experiences of high quality for *all* students, so that the doors of learning may be opened *for all*.

The different scales of change offered here might have the appearance of a telescope, with each scale growing smaller and smaller and providing greater detail. But a telescopic logic is not the only one at work, and is not necessarily the best one to use. An alternative logic is to recognise that each scale opens up a terrain of its own. The terrain opened at each scale has its own concepts, ways of arguing, central concerns and focal points. The different scales of each terrain do not necessarily come together neatly to fit with other scales in a telescopic manner, so as to bring a sharper focus on a particular issue. In fact, the concepts and logics of each scale may be too different to fit easily together. It may take great effort for us as educationists to bring the insights of the different scales to bear on a single issue, such as school change. Yet the effort is worthwhile – indeed it is necessary – because the issue of schools and change is too complex to understand on a single scale.

Nor is it useful to see the scales as competing with each other to provide ‘the truth’ about educational change. It is more useful to view the scales as complementary. When read side-by-side, they provide a more comprehensive understanding of events than each would as a single account. Nor are these scales and the terrains they open up the only ones that could explain education in post-apartheid South Africa. Put together, however, they provide a particular account of events, a particular explanation of why things are as they are, and a particular set of possibilities for future change.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

This book draws on a tradition of research and theory which takes as its starting point the idea that human beings make their own history, along with others, though not in circumstances of their own choosing. The interplay of human agency with social structure in time and place is essentially creative, and is a source of identity and meaning for people. Each of the chapters of the book draws on this set of assumptions. Each chapter also draws on an approach to ethics, which calls for continual engagement with questions of how we might best live in the world we share with others. Achieving greater equity and social justice are values that this book aspires to contribute towards.

A closer look at the concepts of structure and agency, and of ethics and equity, provides a useful basis for discussions in later chapters.

Structure and agency

This book teases out a central question that the humanities and social sciences pose – and help us to address. Put simply:

How do individuals live in and change their shared social worlds? To what extent are individuals able to shape their lives as they would like to? To what extent are their opportunities shaped by the circumstances they are born into – social structures and historical time? What ‘agency’ do individuals have to influence their lives and their societies?

This is sometimes termed the ‘structure/agency’ debate. To take an example from schooling:

To what extent is success or failure at school the result of individual effort and capabilities? Can everyone succeed if they try hard enough? To what extent is success or failure already predetermined by a person’s family background or the quality of the school they attend? Are some people destined to fail because circumstances are against them? What freedom of choice and action do individuals have?

In answering questions such as these, this book starts from the position that human beings actively create their social worlds, but they do so in particular conditions and circumstances that are already structured by

history. An analysis of structure and agency in time and place underpins each chapter of the book.

The sociological imagination

The American sociologist C Wright Mills, writing in the 1950s, developed the concept of ‘the sociological imagination’ as a way of thinking about structure, agency and history. Each of us has our own individual life, our own hopes and dreams, our own relationships and decisions, our own careers, achievements and failures. At the same time, each person lives in a particular society at a particular time. What happens to us often happens to other people as well. We fit into social categories (sometimes without knowing it) and we experience ‘structures of opportunities’ that are similar to others like ourselves. In fact, says Mills, we can’t really make sense of our own experiences and chances in life until we are aware of other individuals who are in the same circumstances as we are. The sociological imagination, Mills suggests, helps us to see relationships between our own lives, the lives of others, and the times in which we live.

In Mills’s words, the sociological imagination helps people ‘to grasp what is going on in the world, and to understand what is happening in themselves as minute points of intersection of biography and history within society’ (2000/1959:7). At the intersection of individual biography, social structures and the ‘push and shove’ of history lie the possibilities for engaging with change.

Developing his argument further, Mills makes a useful distinction between *personal troubles* and *social issues*. Personal troubles are problems that have to do with ourselves alone. Social issues are problems that have to do with broader social patterns and opportunities. Mills gives several examples of this:

Unemployment:

When, in a city of 100,000, only one man is unemployed, that is his personal trouble, and for its relief we properly look to the character of the man, his skills, and his immediate opportunities. But when in a nation of 50 million employees, 15 million are unemployed, that is an issue, and we may not hope to find its solution within the range of opportunities open to any one individual. The very structure of opportunities has collapsed. Both the correct statement of the problem and the range of possible solutions require us to consider the economic and political institutions of the society, and not merely the personal situation and character of a scatter of individuals. (2000/1959:9)

War:

The personal problems of war, when it occurs, may be how to survive it or how to die with honour; how to make money out of it; how to climb into the safety of the military apparatus; or how to contribute to the war's termination. In short, according to one's values, ... to survive the war or make one's death in it meaningful. But the structural issues of war have to do with its causes; with what types of men it throws up into command; with its effects upon economic and political, family and religious institutions, with the unorganised irresponsibility of a world of nation-states. (2000/1959:9)

These concepts of personal troubles and social issues, of personal biographies and social structures, are useful in thinking about education. They are tools for analysing our social – and personal – circumstances. They may be helpful in understanding what our scope for action is: what the possibilities are, and the limitations. To what extent individual lives are determined by social structure, and to what extent they are shaped by free choice and human agency, is a matter that needs careful consideration.

Looking back to our earlier question about schooling:

Whether students succeed or fail at school is partly a reflection of their personal biography, individual capacities and choices. Success may well be the result of personal effort, and failure may be a reflection of 'personal trouble'. At the same time, success and failure are also influenced by structures of opportunity that lie beyond the control of single individuals: what school an individual attends; his/her levels of wealth or poverty and the resources he/she has at home; his/her networks of social relationships; how well he/she speaks the language of instruction; his/her teaching and learning experiences in classrooms and so on. When groups of people fail in predictable patterns, this is a 'social issue' that goes beyond the individual person. Understanding the interplay of these two – the personal and the social – helps us to understand the scope for action at that time and in that place.

On the one hand, it is important not to 'blame the victim' by holding people responsible for circumstances over which they have no control. On the other hand, it is important that we don't assume that people are simply 'victims of their circumstances'. We need a more dynamic analysis of this interplay if we are to understand success and failure at school.

In thinking about theories of education, it is also important to think about ethics. What does ethics entail?

Ethics

Ethics entails thinking about what counts as a good life, and how we should live together with others in the world we share. Schooling is full of ethical considerations. Schooling is a shared human activity (and so is theorising about schooling). It involves judgements of all sorts: about what is good and what is bad achievement; about what is correct and incorrect performance; about what is normal and what is deviant behaviour. In fact, schooling practices are saturated with judgements about the actions of human beings in relation to each other, and about what is good and right. In other words, they inevitably involve *ethics*.

Some theorists see ethics as a set of abstract principles about good and bad, right and wrong. However, the approach taken here is that ethics is an ongoing *practice*, rather than a set of ideal *principles*. It involves continuously being open to others and being prepared to think about how we should live together in the world.

The theorist Anna Yeatman (2004) sets out this position well:

Ethics refers to the practice of thinking about what living as a human subject in relation to fellow subjects, and the world that they share, demands of us. To open ourselves to ethical demands is to open ourselves to the challenge of thinking well and in ways that make our thoughtful engagement with the human condition both open and accountable to our contemporaries as fellow co-existents. It means being willing to listen to their objections to how we have represented the demands ethics poses for us and them, and when we have listened to those objections, to reconsider our position and to continue to engage in the dialogue...

This approach to ethics will be woven through our discussions of schooling in the rest of the book. Hopefully, this will be evident not so much in a fixed set of principles as in a continuous engagement with issues of human consequences as we consider different dimensions of schooling.

Equity and social justice

As a starting point, it is useful to distinguish equity from equality. Briefly, equality means sameness of treatment. The problem arises, however, in that people do not have equal capacities and resources. How then, might

societies recognise this? Some theorists argue that societies should not interfere. Others argue that social goods should be *unequally* distributed in order to benefit the least advantaged. This is the subject of much philosophical debate.

Another response is to argue that instead of equality, societies and education systems should aim for 'equity', or fairness. The question then becomes, how might societies and their education systems be more fair? For example, it may be fair to give more to some individuals or groups than to others, because they start out at a disadvantage.

This brings us to considerations of justice, which is a philosophical concept with a long history of debate in western thinking. According to Plato, the famous ancient Greek philosopher, justice is about the right and the good. Social justice, then, is about how societies may act in terms of what is right and good.

Using the approach to ethics suggested above, this book does not seek to find abstract principles of equity and justice. Rather, it attempts to think with these concepts in continually open ways, working towards building education systems for the greater benefit of all.

OUTLINE

The chapters that follow address a set of questions, within the conceptual framework set out above:

- ▶ What are the purposes of schooling? Why do societies have schools? What should we expect schools to do?
- ▶ What sorts of changes are currently taking place due to globalisation, and how should schools respond to these changes? How do global patterns relate to local conditions?
- ▶ What development policies did the post-apartheid South African government adopt to change the economy, society and politics, and how did these affect education?
- ▶ What policies were developed to change the education system? How was the policy process understood? What can policy achieve and what are its limits in terms of educational change?
- ▶ What can be done at the level of schools and classrooms to make a difference to students' learning?

Let's move, then, to look at the goals and purposes of schooling.

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CHAPTER 2

Goals and purposes of schooling

This chapter sets the foundation for discussions about schools and change. It argues that the goals of schooling are multiple and sometimes competing, and it introduces the concept of 'discourse' as a way of working with these different approaches. It suggests that we read different discourses as operating alongside one another, offering partial insights. Ultimately, the chapter does not attempt to reach certainty or closure about the goals and purposes of schooling. Instead, it suggests that we work across 'binary distinctions' without jumping to either side, and we try to hold both sides of seemingly contradictory positions. This is a task of intellectual rigour, not sloppy reasoning. The chapter argues that the doors of culture and learning are not likely to swing open in front of us. It suggests that we try to understand what is entailed in opening doors of learning, and to push strategically where we can.

Imagine a society without schools.

You may be surprised to learn that schools are very recent social inventions in western societies. Two hundred years ago, there were no schools as we know them today. Education took place in other ways. Most children lived and worked alongside their families, in the countryside and in households, and did not read or write. Children of wealthy families were taught by private tutors or were educated by the church. But over the last 200 years, schools developed in Europe and the United States, and spread across the world to all modern countries. Most societies today have schools, and schools across the world look much the same. They have the same basic institutional forms, such as classrooms and timetables, and groups of children organised by age, taught by adults. And most primary schools, at least, teach more or less the same curriculum areas: languages, mathematics, science, social studies and religious or moral education. Of course, what happens inside schools, classrooms and the curriculum is another matter – that’s where we see great variations within the same institutional form.

It’s hard to imagine a modern society without schools. And given how fixed and certain schools appear to be, it’s easy to forget that they are social constructions of fairly recent origin. If schools are constructed by social activity, then logically, it should be possible to change them. Yet schools around the world have proven hard to change. Societies appear to be committed to keeping schools much the same, even in times of considerable social change. Why is this? This is a puzzle which is explored throughout this book.

This chapter focuses on the goals and purposes of modern schooling. It explores in a systematic way the questions raised so far: Why do societies have schools? What purposes do schools serve? What should we expect schooling to do? In addressing these questions, the chapter also suggests how we might ‘read’ and engage with different theories about schooling.

1 WHY DO SOCIETIES HAVE SCHOOLS?

Let's look briefly at two different answers to the question of why societies have schools. We'll see that different narratives of schooling provide different explanations and different possibilities about what schools may and may not achieve.

A sociological narrative:

First, a narrative about the history of schooling using sociological discourses:

If we look at the history of schooling in different societies, we see that schools developed at the same time as societies were changing from being 'traditional' to being 'modern'. Mass schooling developed alongside industrialisation. It served two main purposes. First, as traditional social structures were breaking down, schools were agents of socialisation. They taught the cultures and values that were once taught in families and kinship groups. They were important institutions for building social cohesion. Second, as economies were changing, schools prepared people for different forms of work. They taught the skills and knowledges necessary for participation in modern economies.

In serving both these purposes – social cohesion and preparation for work – schools at the same time sorted and sifted students. Those who completed only a few years of schooling were prepared to do the less skilled, less valued work in society. Those who stayed longer were prepared for clerical and white collar jobs. And those who completed schooling could go on to university and to higher paid, professional or managerial work.

When western powers colonised other countries, they introduced schooling. Often, this role was taken on by missionaries who were keen to spread their religions. Schooling disrupted traditional social patterns, and imposed the worldviews, values and skills of colonisers. It prepared most colonised people for subservient roles and often gave them a sense of inferiority. But it also opened doors for a small group of people who formed the elites of their societies. Access to education has been part of independence struggles in many countries, and education has been important in the formation

of postcolonial states. It is an important signifier of modernity. Increasing access to education – Education for All – is a global goal promoted by nation states as well as international organisations.

This is a typical ‘functionalist’ account of schooling. It views schooling as serving particular social – and perhaps individual – functions or purposes. Schools teach individuals the skills and values that are necessary for social functioning in their particular historical times. They pass on valued knowledge to young people. They prepare students for different social and economic roles, for civic participation, and to take up different places in the economy. And people are able to use schools to meet their own social goals, particularly goals of social advancement.

Depending on their value-orientation, these theories view the role of schooling as part of a pattern which needs to be maintained, or modified, or broken altogether.

- ▶ Those who broadly support existing arrangements in society view schooling as important for social stability. They stress the role of schooling in social cohesion, and favour the expansion of schooling in order to socialise people and prepare them for civic and economic life. In this approach, schools have a conservative role in maintaining traditions and passing them on to future generations.
- ▶ Using the same broad approach, other theorists suggest that schools may also function to improve societies. They may provide equal opportunities to people of different backgrounds to enable them to advance themselves. Improving access to schooling, and to higher levels of schooling, may be a way of reducing inequality and improving the quality of life both for individuals and societies as a whole.
- ▶ In contrast to these views, theories that favour social change – for example, Marxist theories – see schooling as part of the problem of inequality, rather than a solution to it. These theories point out that schools *appear* to offer equal opportunities to students, but in practice, they don’t. Schools reproduce class inequalities and at the same time make these inequalities seem fair and natural, the result of individual abilities rather than social position. In this analysis, schooling functions to reproduce society. Thus it needs to be changed as part of broader social change.

A sociocultural psychology narrative:

Here is a second narrative about the history of schooling, this time drawing on discourses of sociocultural psychology:

To understand schools, we need to start by looking at human beings and how they learn. The human mind develops biologically as part of the body, but it also develops through social contact with others. We experience a physical world, but we make sense of the world through our interactions with other people. Human conscious thinking requires language, and language is part of culture. Culture provides us with shared meanings, language and symbols, through which we understand the world and communicate with others. Different languages and cultures provide different understandings of the world. Human understanding is 'culturally mediated', that is, it takes place within culture. Thus, human beings experience a 'double world': a natural world, and a cultural world of human making.

Where does schooling fit in with this? All cultures have language and symbols that they transmit from generation to generation, but not all have written language. Schools originated hundreds of years ago in those societies which had developed written language. Writing is the central cultural practice associated with schools, and it is the particular form of 'cultural mediation' that schools use and promote.

Children learn and develop outside of schools, but schools in the western world have a particular structure of learning. They teach written symbol systems (such as reading, writing, arithmetic); they teach abstract, coded, systems of knowledge; and they do so in particular ways. Material to be learnt is sorted and sequenced; category systems are used; and students practise mastery through repetition and recitation. Classroom language tends to follow the same pattern, called 'initiation – reply – evaluation', where a teacher asks a question, a student responds, and the teacher gives feedback on the response (see Cazden, 1988). Schools use formal modes of expression and tend to exclude everyday experience. They focus on formal and abstract thinking, and develop certain kinds of problem solving. In short, there is such a thing as 'school knowledge', generally understood, and school-based forms of thinking (or cognition).

Put simply, the purpose of schooling is to teach 'school knowledge' and ways of thinking. Whether or not this has application outside of schools, or brings personal advancement and social change, are matters of considerable debate.

- ▶ *Some theorists view literacy as a set of technical skills to be learnt. They talk of 'functional literacy', and assume that it is 'a good thing' for everyone to have these skills, which open up possibilities to the world beyond the school. Others dispute this, saying that literacy is not a neutral, value-free set of competencies. What counts as literacy depends upon social context and power relationships. Not all literacy provides people with the critical skills needed to understand the world and how power relations work.*

- ▶ *Some theorists argue that school knowledge and ways of thinking are important in themselves, and that they bring positive changes for individuals and societies. Others argue that students' school knowledge and cognitive operations 'become rusty' if they are not used. Learning literacy through schooling may be a waste of time and money if there are no opportunities to use it in the wider world. School knowledge is not necessarily valuable in itself. We can't assume that it is associated with positive change, either for individuals or societies.*

- ▶ *The sociocultural psychologist Mike Cole (1990) draws the following conclusions about these debates:*

Where writing is the medium of public life, learning to write at school may help students to perform in many settings outside of school.

Where the content of schooling is relevant to their circumstances, schools may help students to understand their social and historical contexts.

Where language capacity is expanded, schools may help to deepen students' cultural understanding. For, as Cole points out, every language 'carries within it the culture's theory about the nature of the world'. An expanded language capacity may give access to the meaning systems embedded in the language, and students may acquire understanding that may be applicable outside the school walls.

But, according to Cole, if these conditions are not present, learning literacy through schooling may be of doubtful benefit.

Cole agrees that schooling is associated with the development of urban centres of trade and technologies of production. However, his view is that schooling was neither the cause nor the effect of these changes. Rather, schooling was an enabling condition which helped changes to occur. He suggests that schooling in less developed societies has been 'an alien form', imposed by colonialism. Schooling may well be associated with modernity, but, in his view, 'there is little doubt that widespread adoption of formal schooling has also been a source of social disruption and human misery' (1990:107).

Comparing the two narratives

These two narratives about why schools developed and why they persist, tell us different stories. Both use the elements of the *sociological imagination* that we discussed in Chapter 1 – the individual life, the social context, and the historical times – but they do so in quite different ways. It's not that they contradict each other, or that we necessarily have to choose between them. What is important, rather, is to understand the way theories operate as explanations, and how we may work with them.

Each theory has its own particular concepts and concerns, and its own methods and logics of analysis. In an important sense, theories themselves set the terms within which they provide explanations. Theories use different discourses, or sets of language practices. In fact, some people argue that theories themselves *are* discourses.

Discourses, in this sense, are patterns of language use (speaking, listening, thinking) which provide us with shared social meanings. They position us as subjects in relation to others and to the world (for example as 'teachers', 'students', 'illiterate adults' and so on), and provide us with social identities. Discourses demarcate what 'makes sense' (and counts as knowledge) from what 'makes no sense' (and therefore cannot be 'true'). They link knowledge to power in specific ways. What counts as knowledge, who has access to it and how – these discourses involve power relations. Analysing discourse enables us to explore the relationships between language, power, meaning, and subjectivity or identity.

Looking back at the two narratives on schooling presented earlier, we can see different discourses at work.

- ▶ The first uses discourses of social function, social cohesion and socialisation, where schools prepare individuals to fit into and contribute to complex modern societies – a pattern to be supported, worked with, or broken.
- ▶ The second uses discourses of human learning, of mind and cultural mediation, where schools provide access to written symbol systems and codified knowledge. The usefulness of this narrative depends to a large degree on social context.

Both explanations seem coherent in their own terms – though they make little or no reference to each other. In each discourse, the school (which is familiar to us) is presented quite differently. In other words, each discourse provides the terms within which we may understand the school. In this sense, we could say that the discourse itself ‘creates’ the school. The French theorist Michel Foucault has famously made the point that ‘discourses create the objects of which they speak’.

Why are these points useful to understand? They open up considerations about how we might work with theory in understanding the social world.

WORKING WITH THEORY

This book starts from the premise that, in the humanities and social sciences, many different explanations are possible. Different theories and discourses use different central concepts, methods and logics of argument. They start at different points, and develop along different lines. Following these different lines brings us to different outcomes. No single narrative or discourse can account for everything. There is no single answer or single ‘truth’ waiting to be discovered. There are different answers, depending on different theories and discourses. Of course, this doesn’t mean they are all equally good answers, or equally useful. But it is helpful to know that we can analyse each approach within its own terms, and put different approaches side-by-side and understand them in relation to one another. The approach in this book is that it is useful to explore relationships between language, power, meaning and subjectivity in different discourses.

This position should not be confused with simple relativism, where ‘anything goes’ and the rules of logic may be set aside at whim. Instead, it supports the position that all knowledge is situated, and is governed by the perspectives of the ‘knowers’ (this perspectivalist position is well described by Yeatman, 1994).

The two narratives of schooling we have looked at are both ‘grand narratives’, in the sense that they tell overarching stories that explain the world. However, these narratives tell us nothing about particular schools in particular times. To get a sense of the texture of a particular school, in its community, at a particular social and historical moment, requires a different sort of analysis. It requires detailed research of the kind usually carried out by historical and anthropological studies.

Some further comments are necessary. First, the two narratives presented here, from sociology and psychology, are just two among very many. They are by no means the only narratives in those two disciplines. Second, it is worth noting that a lot of scholarly activity is concerned with delving into greater depth and detail to understand apparent social and historical patterns – or exceptions to these patterns.

A third observation concerns a point of change in theory. In the last few decades, important work in the humanities and social sciences has challenged the certainties of ‘grand narratives’ as a form of explanation. This ‘destabilisation’ in theory is partly associated with ‘post’ theories: post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism, and so on. ‘Post’ here is used to indicate that these theories are questioning and moving beyond the mainstream theoretical work that they have drawn on. However, not all theorists who analyse discourse, who look at relationships between knowledge and power, and who question the nature of ‘universal truths’ would identify themselves as ‘post’ theorists. Michel Foucault and Edward Said are significant examples. The theories clustered here generally favour a multiplicity of narratives, voices, meanings and subjectivities. This book draws on and explores a number of these theories in an open rather than dogmatic way. And it invites you, as reader, to question and to position yourself ethically where you judge best.

To sum up ...

In unpacking the question of why societies have schools, we started by looking at two sets of explanations, and moved from there to think about the nature of explanations themselves. The sections that follow will build on the narratives of schooling, as well as on the ideas raised about the nature of theory, discourse and ethics.

As we move to our second question on the goals and purposes of schooling, we’ll see how different discourses formulate different goals and purposes, which highlight different dimensions of schooling.

2 WHAT PURPOSES DO SCHOOLS SERVE?

In exploring this question, it is important to ask ‘Whose purposes?’ Purposes don’t float free, like butterflies, waiting to be found. Purposes depend on people who have different perspectives and interests, different ethical understandings and different relationships to power. In talking of schooling, are we interested in the purposes of children, or teachers, or parents, or social interest groups, or governments? Purposes are socially constructed; they are never neutral or interest free.

Here are some statements that you’ll recognise about the purposes of schooling:

- ▶ The primary purpose of a school is to provide an environment where teaching and learning take place.
- ▶ An important purpose of schooling is to prepare people for the world of work beyond school.
- ▶ Nation-building and citizenship – political goals – are the key purposes of schooling.
- ▶ In a democracy, public education – schooling – is one of the major vehicles for teaching the values of a society to children and young adults.
- ▶ Education is about the development of the individual.

These are very broad-ranging and sometimes grand claims. How might we assess them?

To explore these statements further, it is useful to look in greater depth at the discourses they represent – discourses about teaching and learning; about economics, politics and values; and about individual purposes of schooling. This chapter has touched on some of these already, particularly in the two narratives of schooling provided earlier. Hopefully, in tracing these discourses and placing them side-by-side, different pictures of the purposes of schooling will sharpen and fade, in ways that are complex but also recognisable.

Teaching and learning in schools

Let’s start by looking at the first statement of purposes from the list above:

The primary purpose of a school is to provide an environment where teaching and learning take place.

In unpacking this statement, a good place to begin is with schools themselves, and what happens every day in schools.

Everyday life in schools

The sounds and smells of schools – everyone who has been to school has their own memories. Sitting at a desk next to a friend. Waiting for the bell to ring and the class to end. Punishment for breaking a rule or talking in class. A favourite teacher. A teacher who hits students. The Science teacher's dog. Break times. Tests. Reports. Being anxious about not knowing the right answer to the teacher's question. Embarrassment. Doing homework. Playing sport. Library periods amidst the books. Reading under the desk. Being with friends. Other kids – those who always did well, those who did badly. Bullies. Popular kids. The sinking feeling of going back to school after holidays.

These are some of my memories that surface when I think of my school days. What memories do you have of school? Some people have memories of walking long distances to school, being hungry in class, being abused by teachers or other students. These experiences are part of everyday life in school for some children. Our particular experiences differ, but they also fall into patterns.

Students – and teachers – do many things at school. We play as well as work. We learn outside of the classroom as well as inside, informally as well as formally. We learn from our friends – and from our foes – as well as from our teachers. Sometimes we learn very little from our teachers (in fact, sometimes we learn in spite of them). We learn worthwhile things, and things we would be better off not learning. For a long period of our childhood and youth, we are placed in groups of our own age under the tutelage of adults. Our days are structured in particular rhythms which we may conform to, or resist. Along the way, our identities are shaped and formed, in a particular social institution alongside our peers.

Amidst the wide range of things that schools do, they have one defining purpose of their own that makes them distinctive: they are the only social institutions that are dedicated to formalised teaching and learning for young people. Though people learn in many different social institutions and activities (churches, sports clubs and so on), schools are the only social institutions whose central purpose is the formalised transmission of knowledge, skills and values.

The narrative from sociocultural psychology presented earlier provided a brief description of school knowledge and ways of thinking. ‘School knowledge’ is by no means all the knowledge a society has. It is a particular selection and ordering of knowledge, and it gives priority to some ways of knowing and learning while downplaying others. Some students are better than others at dealing with school knowledge. Social background and context are big factors. For some students, what happens in school is similar to what happens at home, in terms of classroom language, activities and learning objects (such as books and computers). For other students, there are large gaps between home and school experiences. Some schools provide better learning environments than others; some contexts are easier for schools to operate in than others. International research in sociology of education over many years has shown that there are patterns to performance, relating to home background and socioeconomic context (as well as language, race, gender and so on). These findings pose huge ethical and practical challenges in terms of social equity and fairness.

In the light of this, how might we respond to the statement ‘The primary purpose of a school is to provide an environment where teaching and learning takes place’?

- ▶ A strong response, proposed by Ivan Illich in the 1970s, is that we should ‘deschool’ society, because schools do more harm than good.
- ▶ Another response is to try to bring different knowledge and learning approaches into schools, so that they reflect a broader selection of social interests.
- ▶ Yet another response is to argue that if school knowledge is related to social power, then it is important for schools to open this knowledge to the very students who do not have easy access to it in their homes and neighbourhoods.

What these responses have in common is ethical positions which engage with, rather than accept, the status quo in society. Calling into question the relationship between school knowledge and social power is an important starting point for an ethics of engagement.

The position favoured in this book is that schools should be held accountable to their mandate of teaching school knowledge – the formal, codified knowledge of the society. Taking this further, they should do so in ways that open up possibilities for students to understand their worlds, and change them. And they should provide surroundings that are safe and show respect for teaching and learning.

As well as teaching and learning, the purposes of schooling are also framed in terms of economics, politics and values or ethics. Let's move on to look at these, one by one.

Schools and the economy

Economic discourses play across schooling in two main ways. First, education systems involve costs and need to be funded. How are decisions to be taken about the production and distribution of resources for education? What proportion of a government's budget should be spent on education? Should governments meet all or most of the costs of schooling? Should people pay fees? What is the optimum balance between the state and the private sector (or market) in providing education? Given that some forms of education are more costly than others (it is much more expensive to teach with science laboratories and vocational training facilities, for example, than to teach in primary schools), how much should be allocated to different activities and sectors of education? What education should governments fund to enhance economic development? And so on.

These are not simple questions. And as we address them, they give way to further questions. Certainly, they give way to questions about interests and values, political arrangements and power relations, as well as important questions of ethics. There are also questions about what further knowledge we may need to answer them. Some people suggest that this process is like peeling an onion, where there is a layer underneath each new layer. But this gives the impression that we would come to an end at some point – and the theoretical position suggested so far is that the process is a continuing one. There is no end point waiting to be discovered, no single truth or solution. Of course, some social arrangements are better than others – they are fairer and less oppressive. The task is to work continuously towards better solutions, without assuming that there is one ideal solution waiting to be found and put in place.

A second set of economic discourses is more directly concerned with the link between schools and the economy. Among the many questions that could be raised here, two stand out as important for educators. What is the link between schooling and the jobs people get after school? What role do schools play in individual and social development? Let's look briefly at both of these.

Schools and the labour market

Common sense suggests that there is a link between the amount of schooling that people have, and the jobs that are open to them. In general, less schooling is associated with unskilled work, and sometimes unemployment. More schooling is associated with better-paid, and higher-level skilled work. This suggests that

an important purpose of schooling is to prepare people for the world of work beyond the school.

Of course, we can think of instances where the link does not operate, but the general pattern seems self-evident.

However, as the Italian theorist Gramsci (1971) warns us, *common* sense is not always *good* sense. It requires further refinement.

- ▶ If we think more carefully, it is evident that people often don't use the actual knowledge they learn at schools and universities to do their jobs. In fact, new knowledge is being developed at great speed, and a lot of what we learn is soon out of date. We could counter this point by saying that schooling teaches people *how* to think, and this is what is important for work performance. But here we need to bear in mind the point made earlier by sociocultural psychologists – that school knowledge may 'become rusty' if there is no context in which to use it.
- ▶ In some cases, higher qualifications are required for jobs that have not changed. Think of all the jobs where a senior certificate was once enough, and now a university degree is required. We could counter this point by saying that schools and universities help to sort people according to their credentials, which are based on their suitability for the job market. The issue then becomes one of credentials, rather than competencies.
- ▶ Social institutions – like schools and labour markets – aren't neutral sites that offer equal opportunities to everyone. People don't enter these institutions as equal participants, and they aren't simply given equal life chances through them. The problems are more complex. People can't always get the jobs they want. Sometimes, this is what Mills would call a 'personal trouble'; sometimes it is a 'social problem'. More careful thinking is needed to understand the reasons. And there are ethical implications if social institutions operate unfairly.

- ▶ People sometimes blame schools and the education system for unemployment. But this transfers the problem from the economy to schools. Schools don't create jobs – economic activities do. Schools may prepare people for jobs, and they may make people more employable. Certainly, modern economies rely on schooling as well as on skilled workers. But schools alone cannot make economies productive.

A simple functionalist argument does not take us far enough in explaining the link between schooling and jobs. As Mills's sociological imagination reminds us, there is a structure of opportunities that individuals encounter at any historical time, and individuals make choices and take actions as they live their lives. Gender plays a role. So does race. So does the place where an individual lives. And there are many other variables too. We need a more dynamic analysis linking individuals to social structure and time. We also need an analysis that looks at different meanings, subjectivities and power relations.

In modern industrial societies, the link between schooling and the labour market has become increasingly tighter. As mass schooling has expanded, its social and economic significance has grown. The Australian sociologists, Teese and Polese (2003:12), point out that currently, 'practically all avenues to economic advancement' are linked to schools. This does not mean that schools work in democratic ways to open all avenues equally to all students. As well as providing avenues to advancement, schools also provide avenues to failure and marginalisation. Though the link is obvious, it is not quite as simple as it may seem, and it has proven very difficult to change. Certainly, this raises ethical issues about what schooling can and can't be expected to do in relation to students' life chances. Holding this analysis in mind, let's turn to another discourse that links schools to the economy.

Schools and economic growth

A major theory linking schools to the economy is *human capital theory*, which is part of neoclassical economics. This theory views education in economic terms, and analyses schooling as a 'production' factor contributing to economic growth.

Human capital theory argues that education should be viewed as investment (rather than consumption) which brings rates of return to individuals and societies. Individuals who invest in their education, and forego opportunities to earn money by going to school instead (that is, bear opportunity costs), reap the rewards of their investments by getting better, higher-paid jobs. Societies that provide education for their members are able to develop their economies by having better prepared workers, and they reap social benefits as well in terms of healthier, more prosperous citizens.

Human capital theory quite obviously uses a discourse of economics – of inputs and outputs, costs and benefits, investments and rates of return, production and consumption. Notably absent in this discourse is any detail about what actually happens inside schools and classrooms.

Human capital theory has strong supporters, particularly among economists, and strong critics, particularly among those who resist the treatment of education as ‘goods’ in economic terms. This discourse may appear misleadingly simple to those who disagree with it, but in practice, human capital theory is a sophisticated and influential set of research undertakings. And it has had important policy implications, particularly in developing countries.

A good example of research using human capital theory in South Africa is Charles Simkins’s study with Andrew Paterson, *Learner Performance in South Africa: social and economic determinants of success in language and mathematics* (2005). The study contains data on households and test results, as well as detailed accounts of the statistical procedures and methods used to analyse the data.

First, a summary of the study:

South Africa has done well to systematically expand its educational system and to lengthen the schooling experience of successive learner cohorts. But the quality of the output from the school system has been questioned. In seeking to identify the reasons for this, it is important to relate educational outputs (competencies, as measured for instance by examinations or standardised tests) to inputs. Determining the relative contributions of the inputs – of the school, the household and the individual learner – to educational outputs is not straightforward, particularly since very little educational production function analysis has been undertaken in South Africa.

Until recently, no South African school data has incorporated test results, school characteristics and information on the household circumstances of individual learners necessary for this kind of analysis. However, the results from a survey of a sample of schools involved in the large-scale Quality Learning Project (QLP), funded by the Business Trust, have yielded such data. The QLP data set offers a new analytical opportunity to address the question: What are the effects of social and economic variables on educational outcomes in the QLP schools? (Human Sciences Research Council, 2005)

Now, two extracts from the summary of its findings:

The general assessment is that social and economic variables at the household level do not play an enormous role in academic performance, with the exception of language variables. Pupils whose home language is an African language are at a considerable disadvantage in the language of instruction by the time they reach Grade 11 if the language of instruction is never spoken at home. This can be offset somewhat if the language of instruction is sometimes spoken at home and it can be offset considerably if the language of instruction is often spoken at home. (Simkins and Paterson, 2005:33)

... The rules to be followed by parents if they want their children to do well at school are Victorian in their simplicity:

Feed them as well as you can;

Equip them with a full range of inexpensive study aids;

Talk to them often in the language of instruction;

Don't fret about your somewhat richer neighbour – household wealth does not give much edge in school performance.

(Simkins and Paterson, 2005:34)

Studies such as these provide important, research-based knowledge about schooling. The picture is an important one, but it is a partial one – particularly for those who are interested in learning and teaching inside schools.

Development and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund

A discussion of the economics of education would be incomplete without considering the influence of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). These two bodies, established after the Second World War to provide development assistance to countries, have linked their financial aid to their preferred education policies. These policies reflect human capital assumptions.

For example, over time, the World Bank has supported countries to build up primary education, or vocational education, arguing that these give good rates of return on investment. These funding decisions have been made with little consideration of the policy preferences of people in the countries concerned. They have been driven by a particular understanding of economics and education, and reflect a particular power/knowledge

position. They favour an economics of structural adjustment, which means cutting down what governments spend on social services, and opening up markets. There is much debate about the effectiveness of these policies. Economists such as Joseph Stiglitz (2002), a former chief economist at the World Bank, argue that they actually lead to poverty and social disruption. Certainly, these policies are not neutral or value-free; they reflect particular interests and power relationships.

To sum up ...

Without going further into this debate, let's link back to theories of discourse. It is important to note here that all discourses are constructions of a particular sort. They make assumptions about what is important; they provide particular social identities and meanings; they draw on and expand their own bodies of knowledge; and they justify actions in terms of these. Assumptions about the purposes of education and about how funding is appropriately spent can never be value-free. They always need to be considered in terms of power relations, social interests and ethics (as well as in terms of their scholarly worth).

This does not mean that educationists should try to avoid discourses on schooling and the economy. On the contrary, these discourses are valuable and in a certain sense, indispensable. Schools do have links to the economy, and we cannot talk about these things without discourses. What is important, rather, is to continually explore their meanings, to probe them for their inconsistencies and cracks, and to work with and against them towards goals we value. After all, this is what they do themselves, and what they invite us to do.

Moving on from this picture of economic purposes of education, let's now consider the political and social purposes of education.

Schooling and political cohesion

Building the modern state

Around the world, schooling is associated with the modern state. Governments have set up education systems, and state education departments regulate a whole range of activities, from financing, to curriculum, to conditions of employment of teachers, to performance of students. Governments monitor school enrolments and attendance. And they commonly turn to schools to solve all sorts of social problems – or to blame them for the existence of problems, which may have nothing to do with them.

As the institutional theorists Bruce Fuller and Richard Rubinson (1992:4) note, states across the world, and particularly in developing countries, 'hold the school institution sacred; they regard it as being *the* organisational mechanism for delivering mass opportunity, economic growth and national integration'. Fuller and Rubinson see schools as an important indicator of western ideology. However, in their view, schooling is neither the result, nor the cause, of economic development or state organisation – a position compatible with that of Cole, as stated earlier.

Stephen Heynemann, a World Bank adviser, argues strongly that schools play an important role in 'building social cohesion'. In his view:

Nation-building and citizenship – political goals – are the key purpose of schooling.

In an article entitled 'A renewed sense for the purposes of schooling: the challenges of education and social cohesion in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and Central Asia' (2000), Heynemann and Todoric-Bebic emphasise the following three points about schooling:

The first is that the social cohesion function of education is at the heart of each nation's education system, and one of the main reasons why nations invest in public schooling. The second is that some school systems accomplish this better than others. In fact, it is possible to judge the performance of an education system as much on the basis of its contribution to social cohesion as on its attainment of learning objectives. The third is that the social cohesion objectives and concerns are not uniform around the world. There are countries in some regions that are concerned primarily with ethnic identity, while countries in other regions might be concerned with public corruption or illegal behaviour. But, regardless of the emphasis placed on social cohesion in different regions, one element appears to be true throughout: countries, when faced with a tendency to splinter, use public education to reduce the risk of that happening. (2000:146, original emphasis)

Heynemann and Todoric-Bebic identify the following *nation-building approaches* that have been adopted by African states:

Developing common nationality while preserving minority languages and cultures (e.g. Nigeria)

Quickly developing a unique new culture resulting from the synthesis of previously existing groups (e.g. Chad, Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania)

Gradually developing a national culture (e.g. Zimbabwe)

Developing unity within diversity (e.g. South Africa) (2000:147–48)

These authors identify the following *issues* to be addressed by education and social cohesion in Africa:

Language of instruction

Equality of opportunity

Universal primary education

Administration, organisation and school governance

The role of the teacher in political socialisation (2000:148–50)

This discourse of social cohesion – its language, priorities, interests – stands alongside human capital theory in stating the purposes of education. It provides a different, but not incompatible, account. And it has a familiar ring in post-apartheid South Africa. Both discourses are more concerned with broader social issues than with what happens in teaching and learning in schools. In this case, building the nation state, reducing conflict and enhancing citizenship are foregrounded. As we read earlier, Heynemann and Todoric-Bebic go so far as to say, ‘In fact, it is possible to judge the performance of an education system as much on the basis of its contribution to social cohesion as on its attainment of learning objectives’ (2000:146).

Schooling and values

A similar – and familiar – discourse of the purposes of schooling foregrounds the transmission of values. To quote the *Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (2001):

In a democracy, public education is one of the major vehicles by which the values of a people are acquired by the children and young adults who make up our schools’ population.

Elaborating on this, the report states:

In this report we make an argument for the promotion of the values of equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability

and social honour at our schools. We believe that these values are important for the personal development of our school-going population. They also define the moral aspirations of South African democracy as defined in our Constitution and Bill of Rights. The definition we give to values today is an avenue to imagining the future character of the South African people. These values are therefore the moral aspirations which South Africans should regard as desirable. (2001)

This statement of values grounds itself in the particular political settlement framed in the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights. In this way, it makes some of its own assumptions explicit – it takes us a layer back to show us what its own immediate reference point is. This is a way of making its power/knowledge claims explicit. Even so, value statements are more problematic than they seem. They always raise questions of ‘Whose values are these? Why are they being promoted here and now? What are the ethical implications?’

Other questions arise. How *do* schools teach values? Can people be told what values they should hold? When does teaching of values become indoctrination? What happens if general social values cut across other moral aspirations that people regard as desirable? What happens when values clash?

Discourses of values often present complex concepts as if they have single meanings. The particular value statement quoted above does try to specify what it means by equity, tolerance, and so on, and it assumes that most members of South African society would agree to these values.

But the apartheid state also had a set of values that it promoted through schooling.

- ▶ One of its stated values was ‘separate but equal’.
- ▶ It specifically linked schooling to purposes of social cohesion in terms of ‘separate development’.
- ▶ Its own philosophy of education, Fundamental Pedagogics, stressed the importance of moral development. It viewed ‘Bantu people’ as having the status of children who needed to be guided towards maturity.

And in one way or another, apartheid education policies addressed all of the social cohesion issues raised by Heynemann and Todoric-Bebic. There were policies on language of instruction, on (in)equality of

opportunity; on universal primary education for whites but not for blacks; on administration, organisation and governance; and on the role of the teacher in political socialisation. This cautions us never to take such claims at face value.

Given that education systems are linked to political and economic purposes, it is important to engage with these critically. There are always questions to be asked about the nature of the political economy and the state, about legitimacy, and about what actions are ethical and appropriate. History is continuously made and changed by human action. As configurations of power shift, as interests give way to other interests, as social relations are reshaped, as values shift, there is a continuous need for us to understand and engage with them.

The approach suggested here is that we work with the discourses and social arrangements we find ourselves in, recognising our own value position. Instead of trying to sidestep the power/knowledge link, there are always possibilities to engage reflectively and ethically with our conditions. Social institutions and cultures are imperfect, but they are constantly formed and transformed through human activity. Reflecting on action in ethical ways and engaging with change are important tasks for critical educationists.

Schooling and individual development

This brings us to the final statement made earlier about the purposes of schooling:

Education is about the development of the individual.

It would be hard – and even foolish – to deny that education is about individual development.

That said, the approach we have developed in this chapter suggests that a statement like this can be read in multiple ways. It takes on different meanings in different discourses. The different discourses – with their language, meanings, power relations and subjectivities – address ‘individual development’ in different ways:

- ▶ The analysis suggested by Mills’s *sociological imagination* links individuals in a dynamic way to their social structures and historical time. It argues that we cannot understand individual choices and actions (and development) without understanding the particular societies they are part of, how they are located within their societies, and the times in which they live.

- ▶ The narrative from *functionalist sociology* stresses the importance of schooling in the socialisation of individuals, so that they are prepared to contribute to social, civic and economic life. Individual development is seen to be a purpose of schooling, and individuals themselves may use schooling to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities it offers. Depending on their value orientations, theorists may seek to promote, work with or disrupt the school-society link.
- ▶ The example from *sociocultural psychology* argues that individuals experience the world ‘twice’ – as a natural world, and through the meanings of a culture. Individual development requires language and the shared meanings of culture. Individual development is a social, as well as an individual, process. Individual development does not only occur inside individuals; it is also linked to others.
- ▶ The discourses we have looked at on *economy, politics and society* have their own notions of the individual framed in terms of their own meanings and subjectivities. The economic subject who invests in her education, the political subject who learns a national language as well as a home language, the social subject who, as a young rural woman makes choices in relation to her labour market options – all of these encompass notions of ‘individual development’ and individual agency. These positions need not contradict each other; in fact, individuals hold multiple subject positions, and ‘individual development’ has multiple meanings.

To sum up ...

Schooling serves many purposes in modern societies. Schools are key social institutions which link young individuals to their social contexts in different historical times. For many, schooling serves to cement their social position of advantage or disadvantage. For some, schooling brings change.

Complexities and contradictions abound in schooling. Schools are public places, shared by many people. At the same time, they are also places of unique personal experience and memory. Schools are places of purposive human activity, but they are full of unplanned and unintended activity as well. They are places of formalised learning, but they are also places of informal learning, unintended learning, and failure to learn. They are places of conformity and tradition, but they are also places of new experiences. They are places regulated by routine and compulsion, but they are also places where people make choices. Experiences of schooling are infused with emotions, leaving lasting memories. Power pulses through them in obvious as well as hidden ways.

Many different discourses ‘create’ the school, and most fill it with intention, optimism and purpose.

3 WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT SCHOOLING TO DO?

Schooling seems to hold ‘keys to the future’. Discourses of social, economic and political change almost always include schooling. Yet, for all this, schooling across the world has not been easy to change, or to harness for specific purposes. In particular, social reformers in western countries over the past 50 years have stumbled in their attempts to use schooling to reduce social inequalities. Often, the hopes and purposes attached to schooling bear little resemblance to schools that actually exist or the schools we have experienced.

Here is an example of the optimism often associated with schooling:

Today the international community is faced with increasingly serious problems: proliferating acts of violence and conflicts; poverty and illiteracy; the gap between rich and poor; and marginalisation and social exclusion in a world where one quarter of all human beings live in poverty. The right to education is an invaluable tool in the bid to eradicate poverty and to tackle these problems. (Daudet and Singh, 2001:9)

Another example is from the former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, who used the election catchphrase ‘Education, Education, Education’ to sweep the Labour Party to victory in the elections in 1997.

The right to schooling is presented here as a ‘solution’ to wide-ranging social problems: violence, poverty, inequality, marginalisation and social exclusion. Yet there is very little evidence that schooling has actually achieved these sorts of goals in a sustainable and large-scale way. On the contrary, we could gather evidence of cases where schooling is part of, or contributes to, these very problems, rather than being part of their solution. Certainly, improvements in schooling may *happen alongside* the solution to social problems such as these. But that doesn’t mean they have caused either the problems or their solution. (This is a similar point to the one made earlier by Cole and Fuller and Rubinson: that schooling developed historically alongside other social processes, but it isn’t a direct cause or effect of these processes.) It is difficult to establish clear patterns of causation around schooling. It is

easier to show correlation (that things are happening simultaneously) than causation (that the one has caused the other to happen).

Is it possible to ‘open the doors of learning’ and use schooling to build a more equal and just society? As the debates covered in this chapter suggest, this question is not as straightforward as it might seem, and there are no ready answers. It is a question that will be addressed in different ways in the chapters that follow. This chapter suggests that one of the reasons why schooling is hard to change is that it serves a range of goals and purposes. As this chapter has shown, many discourses are at work to ‘create’ the school. There is no single logic that fully answers the question of why societies have schools. There is no single account that fully captures all the purposes of schooling. And there is no single action that could be taken to satisfy all of the different interests in schooling. Just as there is no single ‘grand narrative’ to explain schooling, there is no single ‘grand narrative’ to address how schooling might be changed. To change schooling means engaging with many different logics, purposes, and interests. It means engaging with power relations and grappling with ethical implications. Schooling can certainly be changed, but experience shows that this takes time and effort.

Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis, made a wry comment about the difficulties of achieving results in his own area of therapy. He said:

It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those ‘impossible’ professions in which one can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results. The other two, which have been known much longer, are education and government. (1964:248)

In other writings, Freud talks of educating, healing and governing as the ‘impossible professions’ (1961:273).

What do these three professions have in common? What makes them ‘impossible’? All three involve human beings with complex inner lives, meanings and activities. They involve social institutions, social practices and beliefs. All of these make change difficult. In all cases, change is time-consuming and cannot easily be rushed. The results are variable – there is almost always a mix of success and failure. There are unintended consequences. Changes are never completed – remnants of old practices persist alongside new ones, and there is always more to be done. It is often easier to settle for an incomplete solution. If one ‘problem’ seems to be resolved, another will surely appear. And if one set of interests appears to be satisfied, another will surely be dissatisfied.

However, this is not to say that the ‘impossible professions’ should be abandoned. They cannot be, since they are crucial to human societies.

Instead, the challenge is to work with imperfections.

For example, the educationist Jerome Bruner (1996) suggests that we approach dilemmas in education as ‘antinomies’ – as opposites which are both true, or contradictions which simply cannot be solved.

Bruner discusses three such antinomies:

- ▶ Education aims to help individuals to fulfil their potential; but it also aims to preserve and reproduce existing cultural and social patterns.
- ▶ Learning in schools is about individual intelligence; but it also depends on cultural context and the ‘toolkits’ that teachers provide to learners.
- ▶ In education, ‘local knowledge’, experience and ways of thinking should be valued as authoritative. But there are also questions of ‘universal knowledge’ and of larger settings that education should address.

Bruner’s response to these antinomies is that we should not try to resolve them by large-scale solutions. Instead, we should work with them using case-by-case judgement. He says:

We have three antinomies, then: the individual-realisation versus the culture-preserving antinomy; the talent-centred versus the tool-centred antinomy; and the particularism versus universalism antinomy. Without keeping them in mind, we risk losing our way in evaluating what we have learned about early schooling and where we are moving. For they help keep the issues in balance. There is no way to get the full measure from both sides of an antinomy, these three included. We need to realise human potential, but we need to maintain a culture’s integrity and stability. We need to recognise differing native talent, but we need to equip all with the tools of culture. We need to respect the uniqueness of local identities and experience, but we cannot stay together as a people if the cost of local identity is a cultural Tower of Babel [where we speak so differently that we cannot communicate with each other]. (1996:69–70)

Bruner goes on to suggest that it makes no sense to look for some ‘midpoint’ between antinomies. Nor can they be ignored. Instead, he suggests, we need to work with them in mindful and reflective ways.

If we expect the doors of culture and learning to swing open in front of us, we will surely be disappointed. An alternative approach is to frame the challenge differently: to try to understand what is entailed in opening doors of learning, and to push strategically where we can. The chapters that follow will return to this point.

Why literacy matters...

A comment by the Australian Professor Frances Christie:

To be literate in the contemporary world is to understand the very large range of written forms, text types or – as I shall call them here, genres – which we all need for both the reading and writing essential to participation in the community.... Genres of speech include job interviews, casual conversations, public speeches, to name a few obvious ones.... Genres of writing include items as various as recipes, reports, newspaper articles, different types of essays and so on.

To learn to recognise and create the various genres found in one's culture is to learn to exercise choices – choices in building and ordering different kinds of meaning and hence, potentially, choices in directing the course of one's life. Learning to control such genres, with their patterned uses of language, is a matter of practice and opportunity, and here the schools have a major responsibility to provide good educational programmes for the teaching and learning of literacy. The more students can be encouraged to enter with real understanding into the ways the written language works in creating the many written genres, the more enriched and independent they will actually become.

We need to develop resistant and critical readers as well as challenging and fluent writers. The most effective way to achieve this will be through educational programmes that cause students to examine the ways language works for the building and ordering of meanings. Such programmes will, by their nature, involve examination of both the spoken and the written modes, and they will teach explicitly the ways in which language operates. Knowing how language works in one's culture is important, I suggest, not only because it enables the individual to operate effectively in the culture, but also because it enables the individual to work for changes within the culture, where that is deemed a desirable thing. (1989:3)

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CHAPTER 3

Globalisation, the ‘knowledge economy’ and education

This chapter builds on discussions about the goals and purposes of education and the challenge of Chapter 2 to understand what ‘opening the doors of learning’ might involve from different perspectives. The perspective developed in this chapter is derived from a global scale. The global scale brings to the fore complex debates about the nature and speed of current change. In fact, key theorists like Castells and Appadurai suggest that the challenges of globalisation are so different that they call for new understandings and theoretical approaches. The global scale opens a terrain where education is called upon to respond to new challenges, and indeed the chapter ends by illustrating scenarios for the future of schooling. These scenarios, posed within concerns and discourses raised by globalisation, are based on the premise that schooling cannot stay the same if it is to address the needs of the future. However, the chapter suggests that these challenges – and the discourses, debates and logics that they draw upon – need to be critically probed. What do the complex dynamics of globalisation mean for educational change in a country like South Africa? What possibilities do they open or exclude?

It is 8 am, and the school day begins for Lebohang and Thembile.

Lebohang attends a multiracial school in a city. Her father drops her off at school by car on his way to work in the morning, and her mother fetches her in the afternoon. School fees are high, but Lebohang's father is a top-earning businessman. The school buildings are old and can be cold in winter, but Lebo has a warm uniform, and a good breakfast helps too. As she drives to school, she enjoys some new music that her brother downloaded onto her iPod at home the night before. Their computer at home is newer and faster than the ones at school, and Lebo likes to surf the net. Her brother prefers computer games. On the way to school, she sends an sms to her friend Angie to arrange to meet her at break. Angie has promised to lend her a new dvd that her parents bought for her on a trip overseas. Today's school timetable starts with Maths, then moves on to Science, English, and History. Lebohang likes the Maths teacher this year, and is thinking of studying finance after school. She has her tennis gear with her because her team is playing a match against another school in the afternoon. She likes that. As the first lesson starts, Lebohang yawns and stretches. She hopes the day will pass quickly.

Thembile lives in a remote rural area. She walks a long way to school, over a hill, across a river and past some scrub bush which is sometimes scary for her. In winter, it is still dark when she sets out. She has no electricity or running water at home. Her uniform is wearing thin, and sometimes she feels ashamed of her old jersey. Her mother struggles with odd jobs to earn money. So far, Thembile has managed to stay in school. She feels fortunate compared with her friend Thandeka, who used to come to school without eating breakfast, and had to leave school when her father died and there was no money at home. Before and after school, Thembi does household chores like cooking, washing clothes and sweeping the yard. Her brother takes the cattle to pasture before school and fetches them afterwards. Yesterday, he skipped school because he had to take the cattle to the dip. Today at school Thembile will have lessons in Maths, Science, English and History. Thembile likes her Maths teacher, though she has a feeling that perhaps she isn't learning as much as students in city schools. But she doesn't see herself moving away after school, so it isn't a problem for her. She wants the best schooling she can get, and maybe she will continue to study afterwards. Tomorrow, the school will be practising for the choir competition at the weekend.

She is looking forward to that. As the first lesson begins, Thembile yawns and stretches. She hopes the day will pass quickly.
(Story based on *Emerging Voices: a report on education in South African rural communities*, 2005)

Schooling in South Africa provides vastly different experiences for different students. These two snapshots show extreme ends of a spectrum, and there are many other experiences in between. The snapshots point to significant features of post-apartheid South Africa. Most obviously, they show that the deep inequalities carved by apartheid are still present. Poverty is a painful reality for many people, though some people experience great wealth. In fact, South Africa is still one of the most unequal countries in the world. Electronic technologies are an important indicator of inequalities. Some people have easy access to mobile phones and the internet so that instant communication is part of their daily lives. Others are able to access these technologies only with effort. And some may never have used them at all. For some people, the global world is open or at least accessible. Others know only their local worlds. Young people have different life chances, and different worlds of identity and meaning. Schooling is part of this difference.

In post-apartheid South Africa, there are significant differences in terms of:

- ▶ the ways people earn their living and their levels of wealth and poverty (economy)
- ▶ the social activities and social institutions they participate in, and the social services they have access to (society)
- ▶ their sense of who they are and what has meaning in their lives (identity and culture)

These differences raise a central question: How might schooling work across social divisions to provide worthwhile learning experiences that prepare *all* students for their lives beyond school?

In current times of *global change*, this question takes on added complexity. To use Bruner's (1996) term, there are new antinomies to be addressed – contradictions which cannot be solved. Is it possible for schooling to be geared towards preparing highly skilled people for technologically based economic activities, and at the same time be geared towards advancing the development of other ways of earning a living? How might schooling best prepare *all* young people to participate in a global world as well as their local worlds? These are some of the issues and antinomies that this chapter explores.

The chapter has four parts. It begins by looking at debates on globalisation and the complex changes that are taking place in economies, societies and cultures across the world. It then examines the notion of the 'knowledge economy' as part of these changes. Framed by this analysis, it explores an agenda for schooling in global times. Finally, it considers schooling for the future. In these four parts, the chapter works with concepts of economy, society and culture. And it draws on some of the key concepts of Chapters 1 and 2: structure, agency and history; ethics; discourse and power.

1 GLOBALISATION

In the 1990s, 'globalisation' emerged as a buzz word to describe enormous changes taking place across the world. Goods, money, ideas, images and even people are moving across the world at a greater pace and volume than ever before. But what this means is hard to pin down. Does it mean a new epoch in history, or simply a speeding up of processes already underway? Are the changes beneficial and to be embraced, or are they detrimental and to be resisted? The meaning and implications of globalisation have been widely debated, both politically and academically. Supporters portray globalisation as an irresistible force that has the potential to bring about economic prosperity across the world. Opponents argue that while globalisation in its current form may bring benefits to some, it excludes others and increases their marginalisation. Given the emotive and politicised debate, it is important to weigh up the many different discourses on globalisation. What are the economic, social and cultural shifts that characterise current times, and why are they so contentious?

Points of agreement

Economists, sociologists and anthropologists (who study culture) generally agree on a number of points – though they may interpret them differently and explain them in different discourses.

First, there is agreement that *new information and communication technologies* are changing the world. These technologies – developed in the last decades of the twentieth century – zig-zag across the world in networks, transforming every activity they touch. Information and images move instantly on the internet, crossing national boundaries as if they were not there. People buy and sell and do their banking electronically, whenever they like, from wherever they are. New technologies are able to shorten time and shrink space, a process which David Harvey (1989)

termed 'time-space compression'. People are able to communicate instantly anywhere across the globe – as long as they are connected to the network.

Second, there is agreement that there is now a *single economy* operating across the globe in a single time unit, and it is a capitalist economy. The volume of international trade has increased, and many trade barriers have been dropped. Global financial markets, in particular, move money anywhere and everywhere, and depend on technological infrastructures to operate at great speed. Multinational corporations, operating in global networks, are able to unbundle their activities and disperse them across the world to their comparative advantage. Their networks of production, management and distribution operate across national boundaries. Multinationals account for two-thirds of the world's trade – but much of this takes place within their own networks. In the new economy, knowledge itself is a source of value; knowledge-intensive and high-tech industries are the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy.

A **third** point of agreement among theorists is that globalisation brings *social and cultural* changes, as well economic. Sound bytes and images dart across the globe, as do newsclips, commercials and soap operas, music and movies, designer labels and icons of all sorts. Cultural ideas and practices move from one context to another, to be incorporated in daily life in imaginative new ways. Cultures mix to become hybrid. The spread of cultural images and ideas gives people a different consciousness of the world. There are different imaginative possibilities for the local and the global. Identity, meaning and culture shift with globalisation.

Predictably, within these points of agreement there is also much to disagree about.

In particular, there are political and ethical disagreements about the forms and effects of these changes.

Points of disagreement

First, globalisation links economies on particular capitalist terms. Institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) monitor the rules of the global game. There are very few possibilities for individual countries to change the terms of their involvement, particularly if they are developing countries on the margins of the game. And the terms favour the already industrialised and wealthy parts of the world. The IMF and the World Bank have promoted neoliberal policies of structural adjustment in developing countries. Neoliberal economics favours deregulating markets, reducing the role of the state, and reducing social expenditure, including expenditure on

education. In many cases, these policies have brought great hardship and questionable benefits. Are neoliberal economic terms the best for world development? This is a point of disagreement.

Second, the global game is not an equal one. Global economic forces are heightening the divide between rich and poor. There are great differences in wealth *between* countries, with some benefiting much more than others. And this also applies *within* countries, where the gap between rich and poor is growing. Though world trade has increased overall, the value of goods traded is vastly different, and growth is very uneven. While there is an increasingly internationalised economy, not all countries participate equally, or, for that matter, participate at all. Among the wealthy in countries across the world, there exists a global world, global investment markets and economic opportunities, global travel and global work opportunities. But the poor are often left out of these opportunities. Their economic conditions may not globalise – particularly if they are not linked to the net – and the only place they may experience is the local. Does wealth ‘trickle down’ from the rich to the poor? Is it possible that wealth could be more equally spread under current global arrangements? These are further points on which there is disagreement.

Third, the network technologies that link people across the globe also radically exclude those who do not have access to them. This is true of whole countries, as well as pockets within countries, and individuals. There are concentrations of people with access to network technologies – and there are those who are completely bypassed. This is sometimes referred to as the ‘digital divide’. Can these jagged inequalities around technology be reduced? This is also a point of debate and disagreement.

Fourth, while there are financial institutions to support global interconnectedness, there are currently no comparable political and social institutions. Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF are able to regulate financial transactions, but there are no agencies to monitor global governance and to build global social cohesion. International institutions such as the United Nations have limited powers in terms of global governance. Agreements such as Kyoto on the global environment are voluntary, and not binding on countries. How might a common global public good be built? How might global institutions be set up to promote a common global public space? These are points of debate.

Fifth, there are questions about whether current ways of living can be sustained as they are. There are grave concerns about the destruction of the environment due to intensified globalisation. Poverty is a reality across the globe, and there are few signs that human wellbeing and freedom are being advanced. Most people do not participate in global trade and technologies. Are the current ways of living sustainable for the future? Is it feasible to

assume that growth can simply continue? How might people best live together in the world we share? What are the possibilities for ethical globalisation?

In short, globalisation in its current form has the effect of intensifying capitalist relationships across the world and increasing inequalities. Whether or not its processes are beneficial is a matter of political and ideological debate. Anti-globalisation activists have focused attention on these issues, using network technologies to link up with each other across the globe and filling screens across the globe with images and messages. Some have called for the reform of existing arrangements. Others have called for a more radical change: for democracy at a global level to bring greater accountability; or for communities to 'delink' from global arrangements and pursue local autonomy. Movements for deglobalisation and degrowth have challenged mainstream thinking. Calls for global justice have inspired global social movements (see, for example, Walden Bello [2004]).

The International Labour Organisation (2004) summed up debates on globalisation in its report, *A Fair Globalization: Creating Opportunities for All*:

Globalisation and its impact

Globalisation has set in motion a process of far-reaching change that is affecting everyone. New technology, supported by more open policies, has created a world more interconnected than ever before. This spans not only growing interdependence in economic relations – trade, investment, finance and the organisation of production globally – but also social and political interaction among organisations and individuals across the world.

The potential for good is immense. The growing interconnectivity among people across the world is nurturing the realisation that we are all part of a global community. This nascent sense of interdependence, commitment to shared universal values, and solidarity among peoples across the world can be channelled to build enlightened and democratic global governance in the interests of all. The global market economy has demonstrated great productive capacity. Wisely managed, it can deliver unprecedented material progress, generate more productive and better jobs for all, and contribute significantly to reducing world poverty.

But we also see how far short we still are from realising this potential. The current process of globalisation is generating unbalanced outcomes, both between and within countries. Wealth is being created, but too many countries and people are not sharing its benefits. They also have little or no voice in shaping the process. Seen through the eyes of the vast majority of men and women, globalisation has not met their simple and legitimate aspirations for decent jobs and a better future for their children. Many of them live in the limbo of the informal economy without formal rights and in a swathe of poor countries that subsist precariously on the margins of the global economy. Even in the economically successful countries some workers and communities have been adversely affected by globalisation. Meanwhile the revolution in global communications heightens awareness of these disparities. (2004:x)

In the view of the report,

These global imbalances are morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable. (2004:x)

Returning to the snapshots of Lebohang and Thembile at school in South Africa, they illustrate two individual lives that make up broader social patterns that are characteristic of South Africa in a time of globalisation.

- ▶ The snapshots illustrate how the inequalities of globalisation operate within a single country. Lebohang lives in a wealthy segment of the economy, and has opportunities to participate in the global economy. She is networked to a whole world of activities which Thembile has no access to. Those like Thembile, who live in rural societies on the margins of the global economy, have few possibilities of generating wealth. Unless they have jobs, they are likely to live in poverty.
- ▶ Without electricity and telephone connections at home or school, Thembile does not have easy access to the new technologies in her daily life – though people in her community might have mobile phones, and watch TV in a shopping centre. Thembile’s access to the global world is limited until the infrastructures (like electricity, telephones and satellite links) are built up in her community. Lebohang’s home is networked, and she has the private means to upgrade technology continuously.

- ▶ Access to technology offers different imaginative possibilities. Lebohang participates in a global world of instant communication and time-space compression, as well as her local world of time and place. She has access to all sorts of ideas and images through technology and travel. Thembile lives in the time and place of a different local world. Until she is part of the network, the imaginative possibilities of the global world remain out of reach. The worlds of Lebohang and Thembile – with their different mixes of the global and the local – have different structures of opportunity. And schooling is one dimension of these differences.

In short, the snapshots show a local, South African version of global patterns. South Africa still bears the marks of apartheid inequalities, and globalisation interacts with this legacy in complex ways. This produces particular conditions that are both similar to other places in the global world, and also quite unique.

Understanding globalisation

Globalisation is a vast and complex issue, and it is constructed differently in different discourses. Because of the scope of the topic, discourses of globalisation may easily become 'grand narratives' – overarching explanations of everything. These kinds of narratives often assume that there is a single, universal experience that people share – or should share. They have limited value for understanding local experiences, and local possibilities for action.

Given the power of global forces, it is easy to slip into structuralist narratives, where 'the net' and 'the market' and 'the image' seem to have a life of their own, and human agency disappears from the picture. Current forms of globalisation may appear to be inevitable – even if they are not satisfactory. The logics of global markets may seem self-evident – even though they produce inequalities. Global images may appear convincing as they portray the world – even though they may be completely distorted. It is often difficult to work against the logics of dominant discourses to find alternative meanings. However, it is important to analyse these discourses, to find their cracks and spaces, and to explore relationships of power – which are often masked within the discourses themselves.

Among the many theorists of globalisation, two who have opened up new ways of thinking are the sociologist Manuel Castells and the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. These theorists provide powerful images of globalisation which also stimulate alternative thinking and possibilities for action.

Castells and the Information Age

Manuel Castells is a controversial and challenging theorist. Some readers view his work as deterministic and pessimistic, with too much emphasis on structure and technology. But it is also possible to read his analysis differently, and to find spaces for action and agency.

Castells's monumental three-volume study, *The Information Age: economy, society and culture* (1996, 1997, 1998), provides a comprehensive picture of current times. It illustrates the new global economy, based on information technologies, organised in fast-acting networks around the world, operating in ways that are selective and uneven. Castells argues that the power to access networks, and switch between multiple networks, is essential to participation in the information age. The flexible nature of the network means that it is possible to connect some people, firms and territories that are regarded as valuable, and discard those who are devalued (2001:17). Whole societies and parts of societies – including almost all of sub-Saharan Africa – are, in Castells's words, 'the black holes of the informational age' which are 'increasingly irrelevant for the global information economy' (1996:56).

Old divisions of the world into North and South no longer apply, because the internet cuts across both. In developing countries, there are small information-based sectors which are highly dynamic. These local elites may be wealthy and powerful in global terms. But there are huge numbers of people who are left out. They live precariously on the edges, cut out of the networked informational economy, and irrelevant to it.

In the new global economy, stable jobs with predictable careers are disappearing. They are being replaced by 'flexible labour'. Highly specialised workers are able to use information and innovation to generate value, and to continually reshape their work profiles to meet new demands. But the majority of workers are 'generic labour', with basic education and no particular skills. They work in part-time and casual jobs. And many people live in the survival sector, the informal sector and the criminal sector. The division of the world into highly unequal sectors is a characteristic feature of the global informational economy.

Castells paints a picture of a global economy that is simultaneously highly creative and productive, and highly exclusionary. In his view, this contradiction of development produces conditions which are not sustainable.

- ▶ Economically and technologically, the global system is vulnerable. Financial markets are unstable and cannot easily be regulated. Increased productivity may mean that more goods are produced than can be sold on the market.

- ▶ Socially and politically, a system which excludes two-thirds of humankind and pushes them to the margins of survival is unstable, and cannot be sustained.

Castells (1998) predicts that the excluded segments of humanity will try to play the game of global capitalism by different rules. One way will be through participating in a growing global criminal economy. Another way will be through fundamentalist movements which challenge the domination of one-sided global capitalism. The world will be vulnerable to terrorism by individuals, organisations and states who may have access to technologies of destruction.

Certainly, Castells's picture may be read as pessimistic and deterministic. Yet it also opens spaces for intervention and for agency. If trends can be identified, then it is possible for social action and political projects to take these up. As Castells says,

There is nothing that cannot be changed by conscious, purposive social action, provided with information, and supported by legitimacy. (1998:390)

This task requires massive political and social effort, but there are spaces and possibilities for action. Castells (2001) himself points to two key areas in development:

- ▶ A first priority for development, he argues, is to *build an internet-based economy*. If the global economy bypasses and radically excludes those who are not linked to the net, then linking up should be a development priority. This means building an information processing and communication structure, and providing internet access for local communities. Poor sectors need to be linked to dynamic sectors. Even if countries do not develop internet industries themselves, they still need information processing structures to be productive and competitive.

Castells recognises that poor countries may not have the resources for technological development. He proposes a massive programme of multi-lateral international aid for development policies based on technological innovation and diffusion. In his view,

Only an Internet-based economy can generate enough value in the new, global economy to enable countries to develop fast enough to provide for themselves without having to resort to international charity on a permanent basis. (2001:160)

- ▶ Equally important, Castells suggests, is *education*. There is no point in investing in an expensive infrastructure if people are not able to take advantage of its opportunities. It is important for people to have the capacity to use knowledge and information in a whole range of economic activities – production, management, marketing and sales, and the delivery of goods and services. People need to be able to find information, analyse it, and use it, and to do this, they need education. This means more than simply putting children into schools with poorly prepared teachers and few opportunities for intellectual engagement. He terms this ‘warehousing children’. Education systems need to be urgently improved, from top to bottom, and quickly. He states:

There is an absolute need to upgrade technological literacy in the short term. Short-cut strategies include community technology training centres; information technology extension programmes, both public and private; co-ordinating and combining existing resources; and fostering on-line development programmes. (2001:161)

An info-development model is based, in developing countries as everywhere, on on-line work, on-line service delivery, on-line learning, all linked to local economies and local communities. (2001:163)

Is Castells right to place so much confidence in new technologies as an engine for development? Is his approach too technologically determinist? Are his suggestions realistic? Are they achievable? Is it possible for education to change in the ways he suggests? These are some of many questions to be asked. There is no doubt that Castells is calling for enormous and unprecedented changes in education – but he would argue that these are unprecedented times.

Appadurai, flows and landscapes

The anthropologist Arjun Appadurai uses a language of flows and landscapes, and calls for a different imagination of globalisation. In *Modernity at Large: cultural dimensions of globalisation* (1996), he argues that current changes are so significant and complex that existing discourses can no longer explain them. Although world trade, imperialism and movements of people have been taking place for hundreds of years, there is a new complexity to them. Existing discourses of economy, culture and politics are inadequate. Instead, Appadurai suggests that we think of global

'flows' to capture unpredictable movements of speed, scale and volume, that cross boundaries as if they weren't there. (Castells also uses the term 'flows' to describe globalisation.) The image of flows may call to mind ease of movement. But flows may also be turbulent and even destructive – think, for instance, of a river in full flow that washes away everything in its path.

Appadurai suggests that we think of the global world in terms of overlapping landscapes of fluid, irregular shapes. These landscapes bring people into complex and changing relationships where different perspectives give different meanings. He suggests that global flows can be thought of in terms of five '(land)scapes': ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, financescapescapes, and ideoscapescapes. These landscapes are the building blocks of imagined worlds:

- ▶ *Ethnoscapescapes are the shifting landscapes of people moving in global times, as tourists, businesspeople, migrants, exiles, and refugees. Movement – and the imagination of movement – is as much part of global societies as are the more stable relationships of family and kinship.*
- ▶ *Technoscapescapes are the fluid global configurations of technology, distributed unevenly across the world in complex relationships. They jump in networks and connections rather than following straightforward economic or political controls. And in their complex interrelationships, they cannot simply be explained and predicted by conventional economic discourse.*
- ▶ *Financescapescapes, says Appadurai, refer to 'the disposition of global capital', which, as he vividly describes, 'is now a more mysterious, rapid and difficult landscape to follow than ever before, as currency markets, national stock exchanges, and commodity speculations move megamonies through national turnstiles at blinding speed, with vast, absolute implications for small differences in percentage points and time units' (1996:34–5).*
- ▶ *Mediascapescapes and ideoscapescapes refer to landscapes of ideas and images dispersed across the world through electronic means, to private homes and public outlets, to squatter settlements and remote rural areas – but not in controllable or fully predictable ways.*

Appadurai stresses the importance of imagination and of thinking differently. He suggests that the different 'scapes' interact and influence each other in complex and dislocating ways – what he terms 'disjunctive'. Working with disjunctive flows opens spaces for new understanding, and also for intervention.

Appadurai (2002) is critical of academic discourses of globalisation which seem to have little to do with the everyday understandings of the poor and marginalised. He calls for theory and research on 'globalisation from below'. This would support people who speak on behalf of the vulnerable, poor and marginalised in international forums. And it would open up other discourses and meanings for globalisation, which would challenge neoliberal versions. It would show that 'the word *globalisation*, and words like *freedom*, *choice*, and *justice* are not inevitably the property of the state-capital nexus' (2001:19).

To illustrate this point, Appadurai presents a study of an activist movement among the poorest of the poor in Mumbai, India. This movement shows a new form of politics emerging from below, drawing on the expert knowledge of the poor on how to survive poverty. It shows that it is possible for linkages to be made, through the internet, between similar alliances in cities across the globe, and to build transnational advocacy networks from below. Appadurai gives a fascinating picture of 'deep democracy', where marginalised people are not simply victims of their circumstances, but have vision, imagination and agency.

Is Appadurai too optimistic in his picture of a politics from below? Can global trends be shifted in this way? Can new imaginary worlds be opened up through thinking of moving flows and landscapes and globalisation from below? What part might education play in this? Is it possible for education to be part of the building blocks for different imagined worlds? These are some of the questions to be asked.

Theorists such as Castells and Appadurai suggest different ways of thinking about globalisation – to build new understandings, and to find space for agency. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of their particular approaches, their challenges are important. In particular, they challenge us to work in an ethical frame that considers the poor and marginalised and how their interests might be promoted under globalisation.

One of the specific debates within theories of globalisation is concerned with the 'knowledge economy' and its implications. This is addressed in the section that follows.

2 THE 'KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY' AND EDUCATION

A theme which frequently emerges in discussions of globalisation is the notion of a 'knowledge economy' (see Robertson, 2005). Castells and others have convincingly shown that a new economy is growing alongside and within the old. It is a global capitalist economy, linked by technologies, operating in a single time unit, and it is changing the nature of production and consumption. Given that knowledge and information have become sources of value in the global economy, the term 'knowledge economy' has some appeal. Questions then arise about an appropriate education for the knowledge economy. However, the concept of a knowledge economy needs closer consideration, as does the notion of education for a knowledge economy.

The following extracts from the World Bank Report, *Lifelong Learning in the Global Knowledge Society* (2003), illustrate a particular **human capital** view of the knowledge economy and the role of education:

Extract 1

A knowledge-based economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and on the application of technology rather than the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labour. It is an economy in which knowledge is created, acquired, transmitted, and used more effectively by individuals, enterprises, organisations and communities to improve economic and social development....

The knowledge economy is transforming the demands of the labour market in economies throughout the world. (2003:1)

Extract 2

Preparing workers to compete in the knowledge economy requires a new model of education and training, a model of lifelong learning. A lifelong learning framework encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle, from early childhood to retirement. It includes formal, nonformal, and informal education and training...

Lifelong learning is crucial in enabling workers to compete in the global economy. (2003:3–4)

Extract 3

Traditional educational systems, in which the teacher is the sole source of knowledge, are ill-suited to equip people to work and live in a knowledge economy...

A lifelong learning system must reach larger segments of the population, including people with diverse learning needs. It must be competency driven rather than age related. Within traditional institutional settings, new curricula and new teaching methods are needed. At the same time, efforts need to be made to reach learners who cannot enrol in programmes at traditional institutions. (2003:28–9)

In the functional logic of human capital theory, changes in the economy lead to changes in the labour market, these in turn require changes in education. This logic tends to work best for ‘big picture’ analysis. On closer examination, however, the picture appears less straightforward.

First, it is important to remember that *the economy is a complex structure of many different activities – not simply knowledge*. Just because the new global economy is linked in networks, this doesn’t mean that it is an economy of internet businesses. Rather, as Castells (2001) points out, it is an economy of all kinds of businesses that use the internet. For although the high-tech sector generates most wealth, there are comparatively few expert ‘knowledge workers’ in this sector. Economic activities are spread across other sectors too. The service sector employs many people, as does manufacturing – including sweatshop manufacturing. Physical abilities, the transformation of raw materials and the exploitation of labour (to use the terms of the World Bank Report) are still part of production processes that generate wealth. What is different is that technologies are used throughout the process. Many of the technologies – such as mobile phones, computers and the internet – don’t require complex skills and knowledge to operate. But they do require a different imagination and new ways of working. The new economy is transforming the old, into a range of economic activities using technologies of all sorts and linked to the net. Education needs to prepare people for a range of different ways of earning a living.

Second, in terms of the labour market, one of the most important changes is that *there are fewer stable jobs*. Flexibility is the new order of the day. Highly skilled and highly paid individuals increasingly work on a contractual basis. ‘Generic labour’ works increasingly in part-time, insecure jobs, often for little pay. And there are people who exist in survival sectors

outside the formal economy. In this scenario, lifelong learning may mean continually reskilling in order to get work.

Third, in terms of education, it is true that schools have a role in preparing people for work. But *schools also have broader goals and purposes beyond learning for work*. They are complex social institutions with many activities and goals, including social, cultural and political as well as economic. And experience shows that they are not easy to change. There is no single 'master narrative' that captures all that schools do – however persuasive the human capital narrative may seem.

The quote from the World Bank's *Report on Lifelong Learning* claims that schooling is 'ill-suited to equip people to work and live in a knowledge economy' and therefore needs to change. This assumes that there is a simple, functionalist relationship between schools and the economy – an assumption which needs to be challenged, as the debates in Chapter 2 have shown. A simple functionalist account does not throw much light on how schools actually change – or fail to change.

Fourth, in overall terms, it is important to consider the earlier debates about the nature of the economy under conditions of neoliberal globalisation. *There are questions about developing sustainable futures and about living together in ethical ways*. There are persistent questions about how to reduce inequalities and about whether the benefits of growth can be spread more fairly under the current system. None of these issues is debated in the simple formulation of human capital theory presented on page 55.

These cautionary comments are not intended to discredit discourses that link education to the economy. Schools *do* have links to the economy and to the labour market, and these discourses enable the links to be explored. The intention, rather, is to press these discourses away from simplistic notions towards more complex explorations in which social, political and ethical issues are considered. After all, discourses of the economy are quite capable of this complexity.

Perhaps 'knowledge society' is a more useful term than 'knowledge economy'. If the term 'knowledge society' is used as shorthand for the changing global economy and society, the question then remains: How might schooling best prepare *all* young people to participate in a global world as well as their local worlds? Drawing on concepts such as Harvey's time-space compression, Castells's networks of inclusion and exclusion, and Appadurai's landscapes and flows of the global imaginary, what might schooling for a global world look like? A further question might be: Is schooling capable of meeting the demands of the knowledge society, or is it outdated as an institution? We address these questions in the sections that follow.

3 SETTING AN AGENDA FOR SCHOOLING IN GLOBAL TIMES

Schools are key social institutions that link young individuals to their social contexts and to the historical times in which they live. But the relationships between individuals, schooling, social contexts and historical times are complex and dynamic, rather than functional and straightforward. Different discourses on the goals and purposes of schooling (discussed in Chapter 2) illuminate different ways of thinking about these issues. They provide different approaches to understanding the changes in economy, society, culture and identity that make up global times. There is no single ‘right answer’ to the questions posed above – although some answers are better than others. To some extent, the ‘solution’ depends on how the ‘problem’ is defined in the first place.

In what follows, the discourses are grouped and used somewhat differently from Chapter 2, but their themes and logics are evident. In exploring an agenda for schooling in global times, three central goals of schooling are explored here:

- ▶ systematic teaching and learning
- ▶ active participation in the world
- ▶ individual development.

These three broad goals provide a framework for thinking about schooling in global times.

Systematic teaching and learning as a goal of schooling

As institutions, schools have a defining purpose that is distinctively their own: they are the only social institutions that are dedicated to structured teaching and learning for young people. This doesn’t necessarily mean that they fulfil this purpose, or fulfil it well. But it does provide a touchstone for thinking about what might be expected of schooling.

In exploring an agenda for schooling in global times, questions like the following ones arise about teaching and learning:

- ▶ What should schools teach? What structured teaching and learning should schooling be responsible for in global times? What are the ‘building blocks’ of necessary learning that all students need access to in a knowledge society?
- ▶ What impact do network technologies have on schooling and, in particular, on the cultural images and identities they give rise to? How should schooling respond to technologies?

- ▶ What happens to 'local knowledge' and 'local contexts' under conditions of globalisation? What should be the relationship between local knowledge and global knowledge?

Let's consider *each* of these questions in turn.

What should schools teach?

Sociocultural discourses (explored in Chapter 2) provide a useful point of departure in addressing this question. These discourses start from the premise that human learning and development take place in social and cultural contexts. Humans understand the world and communicate with each other through the shared meanings of language and culture. Schools have a particular task in terms of social and cultural learning. They teach the formal symbol systems of culture, such as reading, writing and number systems. They also teach formal, abstract thinking as well as codified systems of knowledge. *Traditionally, these are viewed as the building blocks for participation in the modern world.* Whether or not this knowledge and learning is valuable depends on a number of conditions, as Mike Cole (1990) suggested: whether or not there are opportunities to use it in the wider world; whether or not the content of what is taught helps students to understand their social and historical contexts; and whether or not it opens deeper cultural meanings.

Extending this further, theorists such as the New London Group (1996) argue that the changes brought about by economic and cultural globalisation place additional demands on schooling. Schools need to teach more than the traditional skills and literacies of reading and writing. They also need to teach a multiplicity of discourses so that students are able to read multimedia texts and images, and to communicate across cultural and language differences. These theorists use the term *multiliteracies* to signify the expanded literacies of the knowledge society. Arguably, if these symbol systems are needed for participation in the global world, then all students need to have access to them.

This raises the issue of the *technologies* that link the global world in networks of information, images and ideas.

How should schooling respond to information technologies?

Technologies such as mobile phones and the internet open up new spaces for imagination and activity, and new ways of thinking about the world. They open up different possibilities in terms of identity and meaning.

Without access to these cultural tools of global experience, global choices may be unimaginable. What does this mean for schooling? There are a number of issues to unpack.

First, much of the learning around new technologies does not happen through formal teaching at school – even for students like Lebohang, who have well-equipped schools and well-educated teachers. After all, when telephones were first invented, people did not learn how to use them at school. The same applies to equipment of all sorts, including electronic technologies. Learning happens informally and outside of schools as well within them. It happens in shopping centres where people see TV, in community activities, wherever mobile phones are used and the internet is available. Important learning also happens at workplaces.

The issues for debate here are not about computers in classrooms, or computers replacing teachers. The issues are about teaching and learning for a knowledge society. *In a knowledge society, it is important for schools to teach at least the basic building blocks of formal codes and symbol systems to all students.* Certainly, access to opportunities of high level work in knowledge economies depends on school learning. All young people need access to the formal knowledge systems and ways of thinking that schooling transmits, if the doors of further learning are to be open to them.

Second, there are issues to do with new images and understandings associated with *global cultural exchange and shifting identities*. What is at stake here are the knowledge and opportunities to imagine the world in global ways. Notions of time-space compression, of networks, and of scapes and flows are examples of different ways of thinking about the world. How can all young people get exposure to these experiences of the global world? If some people do not have access to the conditions that open global experiences, their options and choices may be limited in comparison with those who do. At the same time, local worlds are also important sources of knowledge and meaning, and cannot be neglected in chasing after global experiences.

What about the relationship between local and global knowledge?

Should schools teach all students in order to achieve the same outcomes, regardless of whether they live in urban or rural areas, and regardless of their opportunities for participation in a global world? This turns the focus to Bruner's antinomy between 'local knowledge' and 'universal knowledge' – between valuing the uniqueness of local identity and experience, and also valuing the larger settings that education should address. *Both* need to be worked with in mindful and reflective ways.

The issue of **language** illustrates the global–local antinomy and the careful thinking that this requires:

- ▶ On the one hand, much research has shown that young children learn best through their mother tongue, particularly in the early stages of learning. Languages also give access to the meanings and symbols of cultures, and are an important resource for life. Learning the local language is important in valuing the culture and meanings of the group. In South Africa, where there are 11 official languages, multilingualism is surely important. It is a cultural resource and an important means of understanding the rich experiences of meaning of different world views.
- ▶ Alongside this position, the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, made a number of controversial points in the 1920s, arguing that his own local dialect was not enough to understand the world:

If it is true that every language contains the elements of a conception of the world and of a culture, it could also be true that from everyone's language one can assess the greater or lesser complexity of his conception of the world. Someone who only speaks a dialect, or understands the standard language incompletely, necessarily has an intuition of the world which is more or less limited and provincial, which is fossilised and anachronistic in relation to the major currents of thought which dominate world history. His interests will be limited, not universal... it is at least necessary to learn the national language properly. A great culture can be translated into the language of another great culture, that is to say a great national language with historic richness and complexity, and it can translate any other great culture and can be a world-wide means of expression. But a dialect cannot do this. (1971:325)

Debates on language are complex. They involve issues of identity and power, too important for us to jump to conclusions. Thoughtful deliberation and action is required to hold both poles of the antinomy.

Similarly, there is a tension between the global and the local that needs to be held in terms of **culture and curriculum**. On the one hand, local knowledge is important, as is knowledge about local livelihoods. This should not simply be disregarded in support of 'universal knowledge' and global imagination. However, an education that is geared too heavily towards local culture and experience and local job opportunities is also problematic. It may lock people out of possibilities of participation in other worlds of experience and activity.

This is particularly important to remember in South Africa, where the designers of apartheid used the logic of cultural difference to justify separate systems of education. Supporters of apartheid and its precursor, segregation, made powerful arguments that education should prepare young people for the environments in which they would grow up. The Eiselen Commission, on which Bantu Education was based, made the following observation in 1951:

The principle of leading the child in his education from the known and familiar to the unknown and unfamiliar has to be applied equally in the case of the Bantu child as with children of any other social group. But educational practice must recognise that it has to deal with a Bantu child, i.e. a child trained and conditioned in Bantu culture, endowed with a knowledge of a Bantu language and imbued with values, interests and behaviour patterns learned at the knee of a Bantu mother. These facts must dictate to a very large extent the content and methods of his early education.

The schools must also give due regard to the fact that out of school hours the young Bantu child develops and lives in a Bantu community, and when he [or she] reaches maturity he [or she] will be concerned with sharing and developing the life and culture of that community. (Rose and Tunmer, 1975:251)

These themes were further developed by Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, who introduced the Bantu Education Act in 1954. Here are two extracts from his speech in the Senate:

Extract 1

A Bantu pupil must obtain knowledge, skills and attitudes in the school which will be useful and advantageous to him [or her] and at the same time beneficial to his [or her] community.

The subject matter must be presented to him [or her] in such a way that he [or she] can understand and master it easily, making it his [or her] own, to the benefit and service of his [or her] community.

The school must equip him [or her] to meet the demands which the economic life of South Africa will impose upon him [or her]. (Rose and Tunmer, 1975:262)

Extract 2

It is the policy of my department that education would have its roots entirely in the Native areas and in the Native environment and Native community. There, Bantu education must be able to give itself complete expression and there it will perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his community in all respects.

There is no place for him in the European community above certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent for an education which has no specific aim but it is also dishonest to continue it... (Rose and Tunmer, 1975:265–66)

Language, culture and identity are complex issues of debate, which are not easily resolved. Similarly, the relationship between the global and local in schooling cannot be easily settled. Ideally, the systematic teaching and learning that happens at school should give students access to the symbol systems of both global and local worlds. These two worlds should not be seen as alternatives to each other. At issue are the choices that schooling opens up for young people. Ideally, everyone should have as much choice as possible, if the system is to achieve equity. But environment – place – does matter in terms of the opportunities that are available. So does quality of educational experience. As Cole points out, we cannot assume that school learning is always worthwhile. Its value depends on what opportunities there are to use it, on whether or not it provides social and historical understanding, and on the extent to which it actually does open up cultural meanings. These are issues which relate in part to the quality of the experience and also to its context.

As globalisation widens the gap between rich and poor, a government which aims at **equity** has an added responsibility to students who have few resources at home. This applies both to network access, and also to the thinking skills and knowledge forms of new literacies. Is schooling able to provide these knowledge forms? Are teachers adequately prepared to do this? To achieve this, what resources do schools and teachers need? These are important issues for governments to consider. If *all* young people are to

have opportunities for development, they *all* need to be able to link to the networks of the global world, as well as participate in their local worlds. If the schooling system is unable to provide learning opportunities of this sort, it is important that they be provided outside of schools – for example in community centres or alternative education projects – if equity is to be achieved.

So far, the discussion has centred around systematic teaching and learning and learning as a goal of schooling. The next issue we will address in an agenda for schooling in global times is that of participation in a shared world.

Active participation in the world as a goal of schooling

Another important set of goals for schooling is concerned with the school-society relationship. Schooling prepares young people for active participation in the world – in the economy and in the institutions of public life. In **social, political and economic discourses**, schooling is linked to purposes of social cohesion, citizenship and the world of work. These are important items on an agenda for schooling in global times.

In the changing world of work, themes of flexibility and lifelong learning have become important, as the discussion on the knowledge economy illustrated. In changing social times, themes of living together in the world in the face of differences have become increasingly important.

Building an active democracy requires an understanding of rights and responsibilities – for oneself and for others. It requires an understanding of the institutions of public life and how these might be upheld and changed. Developing and nurturing institutions of public life is important if people are to live together in the world in sustainable and ethical ways. At one time, these issues of active participation in a shared world applied mainly at the level of the nation state. Now, they apply also on a *global scale*. As well as building shared identity and common purpose at the nation state level, schooling for global times needs to address issues of global social cohesion, and participation in global institutions.

The increasing inequalities, marginalisations and exclusions of globalisation pose particular challenges for a country like South Africa, as the snapshots of Lebohang and Thembile illustrate. Inequality is complex and many-stranded. How might schooling build a sense of shared identity and common purpose when life circumstances are so different? Schooling cannot easily cut across broad social patterns of inequality and marginalisation. It cannot compensate for social disadvantage or prevent it.

However, if schooling itself is manifestly unequal – in terms of both access and quality – it is more likely to contribute to disadvantage than remedy it.

If South Africa is committed to equity and to social cohesion, it needs to provide access to learning of high quality to *all* young people, and do this in ways that build a sense of common purpose and shared future.

The third item on an agenda for schooling in global times relates to the development of the individual in a social context.

Individual learning and development as a goal of schooling

As discussed in Chapter 2, individual learning and development is a goal of schooling which is addressed in different ways through different discourses.

We have the capacity to reflect on ourselves and the world, to think critically, to experience a range of emotions, to be creative, to imagine how things might be different, to make choices, to change our minds, to do things differently, to form relationships of all sorts, to communicate, to make ethical judgements, and to take actions based on conscious processes. Through acting, people change the world and simultaneously change themselves. Being able to make choices and act ethically are important dimensions of human life. As a place of individual learning and development, the school has an important role in enhancing these capacities.

Ideally, schooling should help people to understand the cultural and natural worlds in which they live, to communicate with others, and to act in the world in ethical ways. In Mills's terms, it should assist in developing an imagination which understands individual lives in relation to social structures and historical times.

Mapping these capacities onto a global frame requires a consciousness of the global as well as the local. It means understanding our individual lives in the complex social structures and flows that make up the different global and local worlds of these historical times. The capacity to make decisions about our individual lives and the lives of others – global and local others – and to act ethically, are part of the individual learning and development required for global times.

Globalisation, in its material and imaginary forms, touches individual lives differently, and working with this difference in creative and ethical ways is a challenge for schooling in these times. Thinking and acting, both locally and globally, are important capacities for individuals to develop.

To sum up ...

The agenda for schooling set out here is an ambitious one, and there is always the danger of expecting more from schooling than it can realistically provide. But it is more useful to see the complexity of schooling than to look for simple levers to ‘open the doors of learning’. Amidst the complexity, it is possible to look for interrelationships and for the different meanings offered by different discourses, and always to work in ethical ways towards something better.

4 SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE?

Given the powerful changes taking place in the world, and the seemingly impossible demands placed on schooling, there are questions about what the future of schooling might be. Will schooling survive, or will other places and spaces of learning take its place?

In the late 1990s, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – an association of 30 market economy countries – opened a global debate on *Schooling for the Future*. Here are some of the questions it put out for debate:

What will our future schools look like? What kinds of teaching and learning will take place in them? Who will be the teachers, and will they be high quality? Will schools be laying the foundations for lifelong learning for all or for just the lucky few? These are crucial questions for education and society at large at the outset of the 21st Century. (OECD, 2001)

Using a model of future scenario planning, the OECD developed a set of six scenarios for schooling in 2020, and suggested that member countries use the scenarios to stimulate debate. The six scenarios are grouped as follows:

Attempting to maintain the status quo

According to these scenarios, the schooling system is maintained in its current form, in spite of its inadequacies and potential crises such as shortages of good teachers.

Scenario 1: Bureaucratic school systems continue

Scenario 2: Teacher exodus – the ‘meltdown scenario’

Re-schooling

In these scenarios, major investments are made in schooling, with high priorities placed on both quality and equity. Schools are revitalised and changed in the process.

Scenario 3: Schools as core social centres

Scenario 4: Schools as focused learning organisations

De-schooling

In these scenarios, dissatisfaction with schooling leads to the dismantling of schooling systems.

Scenario 5: Learning networks and the learning society

Scenario 6: Extending the market model

The OECD believes that it is important for schools to change from the status quo, as the following statement illustrates:

So long as schools continue to adhere to the model and assumptions of Scenario 1 – bureaucratic systems continuing the status quo – their capacity to contribute systematically to laying foundations for lifelong learning is bound to be limited. For in this model, schooling is too closed and inflexible and its professionals and organisations themselves are insufficiently defined by lifelong learning characteristics. Moving towards one of the other scenarios is thus necessary, though the nature of the foundation laid will clearly be shaped according to whether this is in the direction of “de-schooling” or “re-schooling”, and whether the latter would take the broader social remit or one more focused on knowledge. Which scenario is chosen also influences whether lifelong learning would be “for all” as the scenarios differ in their emphasis on inclusiveness. (2001:102)

The OECD strongly supports a framework of lifelong learning, operating alongside schooling in one form or another:

The principle of integrating school policy and practice into the larger lifelong learning framework is now widely agreed, for the benefit of both schooling and of lifelong learning strategies. It is less clear what this means in practice and the extent of change it implies. The scenarios suggest contrasting possibilities such as shorter, more intensive school careers compared with an extended initial education; diversified agencies, professionals and programmes

compared with highly focused knowledge-based approaches. Behind these choices lie further questions. Does the task of laying firm foundations for lifelong learning call for fundamentally different approaches by schools? Or instead, is it tantamount to a restatement of a demanding equality objective – ensuring that the quality resources and opportunities presently enjoyed only by the best-served are available to all students? (2001:109)

These are good questions to leave open for consideration as this chapter ends.

The chapter has provided analysis from a global scale. It suggested that globalisation, with its contradictory flows, its powerful dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and its shifting cultural forms, provides an important framework for thinking about schooling. The knowledge society and lifelong learning are key concepts to be considered, alongside schooling, in thinking about opening the doors of learning in times of global change. This chapter has raised questions without simple answers, in an attempt to open debates at a point of historical change.

Let's now leave Lebohang and Thembile to move into their different school days, having considered how their individual experiences fit into broader social patterns in their particular historical times.

Learning: the treasure within

This chapter has presented extracts of ideas from a number of global bodies: the ILO, the World Bank, and the OECD. To conclude, here is an extract from a UNESCO Report on learning for the 21st century, *Learning: the treasure within* (also known as the Delors Report).

The 'four pillars of learning' set out in the Delors Report are ideals for schooling to meet the future. These are stated in very general 'one-size-fits-all' terms. They would be easier to achieve in some contexts than others – a point which isn't always made in declarations on schooling.

The 'four pillars of learning' are:

Learning to live together:

The far-reaching changes in the traditional patterns of life require of us a better understanding of other people and the world at large; they demand mutual understanding, peaceful interchange and, indeed, harmony – the very things that are most lacking in our world today.

Learning to know:

Given the rapid changes brought about by scientific progress and the new forms of economic and social activity, the emphasis has to be on combining a sufficiently broad general education with the possibility of in-depth work on a selected number of subjects. Such a general background provides, so to speak, the passport to lifelong education, in so far as it gives people a taste – but also lays the foundations – for learning throughout life.

Learning to do:

In addition to learning to do a job of work, it should, more generally, entail the acquisition of a competence that enables people to deal with a variety of situations, often unforeseeable, and to work in teams, a feature to which educational methods do not at present pay enough attention. In many cases, such competence and skills are more readily acquired if pupils and students have the opportunity to try out and develop their abilities by becoming involved in work experience schemes or social work while they are still in education, hence the increased importance that should be attached to all methods of alternating study with work.

Learning to be:

In the twenty-first century everyone will need to exercise greater independence and judgement combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals. None of the talents, which are hidden like buried treasure in every person, must be left untapped. These are, to name but a few: memory, reasoning power, imagination, physical ability, aesthetic sense, the aptitude to communicate with others and the natural charisma of the group leader, which again goes to prove the need for greater self-knowledge.

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CHAPTER 4

Development and education

The global order, described in Chapter 3, is made up of nation states. South Africa is one of these. This chapter views education and change from the scale of the nation state, and the terrain of debates and discourses that make up the field of development theory. The first part of the chapter surveys a range of historical debates that have left their mark on the field. It shows that there are no simple answers to how to change economies, societies, governments and cultures in order to improve the conditions of people's lives. The second part of the chapter looks at the development choices made by the South African government, particularly in relation to reducing poverty and inequality, which have been central goals of the post-apartheid government. It examines the patterns of poverty and inequality in South Africa, and looks at why these have been so hard to shift. The third part of the chapter returns to debates about education and development. It argues that much is known about patterns of educational performance in countries across the world, yet these patterns persist, in South Africa and elsewhere. It needs to be recognised that the doors of learning do not open easily, even when governments express their commitment to providing education for all. It should no longer be acceptable to simply say that 'things are not right as they are'. For change to take place, we need a more critical approach to inequalities and stronger commitment to building a common society.

When the first democratic government came to power in South Africa in 1994, it had to manage the economy, run the government, and build an institutional framework to reflect the values of equality and democracy. In short, it needed to set in place a framework for *development*, in complex global and local circumstances. Launching the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), President Nelson Mandela committed his government to addressing ‘the problems of poverty and gross inequality evident in almost all aspects of South African society’. This would only be possible, he said, if the South African economy can be ‘firmly placed on the path of high and sustainable growth’ (1994:2).

Four years later, in 1998, President Thabo Mbeki reflected on the difficulties of this task. Commenting on the situation in South Africa, he spoke of ‘two nations’ existing side-by-side in South Africa:

Material conditions have divided our country into two nations, one black, the other white. The smaller, white group is relatively prosperous and has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. The second, and larger, nation of South Africa is black and poor, and lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped infrastructure.
(1998, modified)

Mbeki’s observation about the continuing divisions in South Africa raises a number of questions. Why do poverty and inequality persist after the end of apartheid, in spite of the new government’s intentions? Would it be possible to restructure the economy and society to provide better opportunities and choices for everyone? What part might education play?

These questions relate to nation state development, which is the terrain explored in this chapter. The debates and discourses, as well as the problems and logics of meaning which form the substance of this terrain, are somewhat different to those of globalisation, even though there are clear overlaps. And they are different again to the debates and problematics of policy, which is explored in the next chapter.

‘Development’ is obviously a value-laden term, often associated with notions of growth or improvement or progress. In terms of social theory on nation states, it usually refers to economic, social and political changes (or plans to change) in countries that were once colonies or settler societies. The implication is that these changes would improve people’s conditions of life. But what counts as ‘improvement’ and how might it best be achieved? What is desirable? And what is possible? These are matters for debate.

Over the last decades, there have been a number of different approaches to development – and to the role of education in development.

This chapter is divided into three parts:

- ▶ The first part outlines some of the major debates on nation state development since the end of the Second World War, including their approaches to education. It looks at different assumptions about what development is and how it may be achieved, in each case exploring how education for development is viewed.
- ▶ The second part builds on this outline, and sets out the development choices made by the South African government after 1994, in the context of globalisation. This provides a basis for understanding – and assessing – Mbeki's 'two nations' claim.
- ▶ The third part of the chapter returns to themes of education and development in the South African context. It re-examines and reflects on how education is positioned in discourses of development, and looks at the possibilities and limitations of these different approaches.

Overall, this chapter provides another framework for exploring how the doors of learning might be opened, and it provides a basis for looking at South Africa's education policies, which is the topic of Chapter 5.

First, an overview of the different theories of development and the assumptions about education that each has supported.

1 DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Discussions on development surfaced after the Second World War, at the time of the decolonisation of countries in Africa, South Asia and South East Asia. How should these countries improve the conditions of life for their populations? How should they structure their economies and trade relationships, their governments, and their social institutions? What role might culture and identity play? Over the years, competing discourses on development have addressed these questions in different ways. They have drawn on different bodies of knowledge and provided different analyses of economy and society. In particular, they have made different assumptions about the causes, power relations and possibilities of development. This is illustrated in the following brief sketch of the major discourses of development since the Second World War.

Modernisation

Modernisation discourses emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. They assumed that all countries of the world would follow the same path to economic growth that industrialised countries had taken in the centuries before. They assumed that this was both possible and desirable. 'Traditional' societies in former colonies would become 'modern' and would resemble western states in terms of economy, government and social institutions. In early discourses of modernisation, 'modern' was equated with 'western' and with 'progress'. The assumption was that with the right mix of infrastructure, human capital development (including education) and cultural change, economic growth could 'take off' in all countries. Wealth would 'trickle down' from rich to poor, and the quality of life would gradually improve. This approach was captured in a highly significant book by WW Rostow (1960) entitled *The stages of Economic Growth: a non-communist manifesto*. Gary Becker's (1964) definitive text, *Human Capital: a theoretical and empirical analysis: with special reference to education*, also appeared at this time.

Modernisation assumptions underpinned the aid programmes of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the post-war period. During the 1950s and 1960s, industrialisation was the major goal for developing countries, particularly with the aim of reducing their dependence on exporting primary commodities. Typically, these countries adopted policies of tariff protection to support their emerging industries; they regulated their financial markets; and they used state-controlled marketing boards to assist in development strategies (see Seekings and Nattrass, 2005:13). As time went on, however, development interventions based on these assumptions did not bring the anticipated economic growth and social equality in former colonies, often termed 'the Third World'. Economic growth slowed down during the 1970s and stagnated in the 1980s and 1990s. Nonetheless, many of the assumptions linking development, westernisation, industrialisation and progress have endured and are still in currency in the new century.

How did modernisation theories view education?

Modernisation discourses supported a strong version of human capital theory – that investment in education would lead to economic growth. These approaches usually viewed education in functionalist terms, as a means of bringing about cultural, political and economic modernisation. They assumed that western-style schooling would teach people the skills, attitudes and cultural practices that developing countries would need to build modern

economies and societies. Under colonisation, provision of schooling had been limited. Usually, it had been the privilege of small, elite groups. Modernisation theories assumed that the expansion of primary and then secondary schooling would result in economic and social development. Improved education would lead to improved health and improved standards of living generally. Thus education would be an agent of modernisation.

Informed by human capital approaches, the World Bank calculated costs and 'rates of return' for different levels of education (primary, secondary and higher) and for different types of education (academic and vocational). These assumptions and calculations underpinned their advice and funding on education policy for developing countries.

In practice, former colonies struggled to expand educational provision. It is still generally the case that developing countries do not have education systems that match those of developed countries. Access to schooling is still not universal. In very poor countries, there are many people with little or no schooling. Deep gender inequalities are also evident in terms of access and outcomes. Providing quality of schooling has also been a continuing challenge in developing countries.

Briefly, the link between education and development has not worked in simple functionalist ways, as was hoped in the optimistic early days of modernisation theory.

Dependency

Dependency discourses challenged the assumptions of modernisation, particularly in the 1970s. Drawing on Marxist analyses, different theories of dependency analysed the power relations of neo-colonialism – the patterns of inequality that continued to exist after colonialism ended. The general thrust of dependency arguments was that wealthy countries had developed their economies *at the expense of* their colonies, and they continued to do so after independence. This was explained in a number of ways. Some arguments highlighted unequal trade relations, saying that wealthy countries exploited colonies and former colonies and *caused* their poverty and underdevelopment. Others highlighted the unequal relations between countries of the 'core' and countries of the 'periphery', suggesting

that unequal – or uneven – development was an outcome of capitalism. Others pointed to the role of elites within poor countries, who were linked in capitalist relationships to rich countries, and benefited as intermediaries. This meant that they would be unlikely to lead changes that would disrupt capitalist relationships to benefit the majority of people.

In the logic of these dependency arguments, economic growth would be elusive for poor countries as long as the exploitative and unequal class relations of capitalism continued. Modernity would be little more than a surface veneer. Two well-known theorists of dependency are André Gunder Frank and Samir Amin. Related but somewhat different is the work of Emmanuel Wallerstein and world systems theory.

An important extension of dependency theory, particularly for South Africa, was the theory of *internal colonialism*. In this analysis, colonial-type relationships of exploitation and underdevelopment were seen to operate *within* a single country. So, for example, Harold Wolpe and others argued that the apartheid state used a form of internal colonialism by establishing reserves or ‘homelands’ for Africans, and then systematically underdeveloping them. Reserves were used as sources of cheap labour power and as places to house economically unproductive people, such as women, children and old people. In this analysis, reserves were exploited and underdeveloped as part of the unequal relations of apartheid capitalism.

How did dependency theories view education?

Dependency theories were generally critical of human capital assumptions that schooling would provide the skills and attitudes to break out of the cycle of dependency. They pointed out that schooling systems in former colonies modelled their curriculum and ways of thinking on those of their colonisers. These schooling systems produced elites, while providing little benefit to the masses. Under neo-colonialism and dependency, relations of inequality would be perpetuated through schooling, not shifted.

At this time, the educationist Paolo Freire (1972) wrote Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Cultural Action for Freedom. Freire criticised the ‘banking’ model of education, where teachers ‘deposit’ knowledge into empty heads. Instead, he proposed a critical pedagogy of dialogue and conscientisation to enable people to name the world and change it.

Freire's work was very influential in challenging modernisation assumptions that schooling could be value-free. He argued that education is always political, and he and others pointed out that schooling may actually work against the liberation of people's thinking.

Asian developmental states

During the mid-1970s, changes in the Asia Pacific region challenged the assumptions of modernisation and dependency theories. A group of countries in the Asia Pacific – South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan – achieved unanticipated economic growth through government-driven approaches to development. The growth achieved by these developmental states was based on state intervention in the economy rather than free trade. The governments of these states were not representative democracies of the western model, and they used social policies to build support and legitimacy (see Zhang, 2003). Like Japan before them, these 'Asian tigers' set economic growth as a priority, and achieved results. Other Asian countries, including Thailand and Malaysia, followed this developmental model. This path to development was not anticipated by either modernisation or dependency theories. In spite of this different model of development, the World Bank and IMF continued to support development policies based on free markets.

In the mid-1990s, a number of Asia Pacific countries experienced economic crises. Economists were divided on what the causes were. Some blamed the development model, while others blamed speculation and the rapid movement of finances out of these countries, enabled by globalisation and information technologies. However, these countries – and others in the region – have continued to develop in ways that differ from western assumptions. And the emergence of India and China as important economies – both very large – brings the prospect of great change to the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

How did the developmental states view education?

Asian developmental states invested heavily in social infrastructure and social programmes as a means to achieve economic development and political legitimacy. They viewed education as a priority in terms of social spending.

The educationist Don Adams (2004) summarises education in the newly industrialised economies (NIEs) in developing Asia, as follows:

- ▶ *All had well-developed systems of basic education in place prior to their period of growth – at least six years for boys and girls.*
- ▶ *Some had extensive secondary and higher education systems as well.*
- ▶ *All had ‘enabling laws, national policies and adequate central financing’ (2004:23).*
- ▶ *Government funding was supplemented by parents and private contributions.*
- ▶ *In government and civil society, there were high expectations for basic education.*
- ▶ *There was low absenteeism among teachers and pupils, and ‘teacher quality was comparatively high’ (2004:23).*

Not by chance, the Asian tigers performed extremely well on comparative international tests on mathematics and science – the very tests in which South Africa has performed poorly. Public and private investment in education, high expectations and a culture of achievement provide a picture of an education system very different to that of South Africa.

Adams comments, however, that rapid growth has not been without problems, socially, politically and educationally. He adds that ‘The new education question is whether the schools can better assist in the acquisition of higher order skills and creativity to sustain economic and social change’ (2004:23).

Whatever assessment is made, there is no doubt that education played an important part in the particular growth path developed by these countries. Their education systems, and the ways in which they are linked to their economies and societies, provide a different picture to other developing countries – and a challenging one.

The Washington Consensus

During the 1980s, faced with economic stagnation and debt crises in poor countries, mainstream development thinking shifted again, this time influenced by neoliberalism. This shift is known as ‘the Washington Consensus’. The Washington Consensus refers to a set of assumptions, supported by the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the IMF (known as the Bretton Woods institutions), that developing countries

need to restructure their economies along particular neoliberal lines in order for development to take place. ‘*Structural adjustment*’ means that economies should be adjusted through a range of policies: reduced government spending (including spending on social services); tax reforms; open markets and trade liberalisation; and foreign direct investment. (We refer briefly to these reforms in Chapter 3.) Structural adjustment became a precondition for financial aid from the Bretton Woods institutions.

What were the educational implications of these views?

Neoliberal approaches tend to favour the operation of markets in education. They favour private funding and fees, as well as individual choice. The emphasis is on individuals being responsible for making choices to benefit themselves.

Market principles are more concerned with efficiency than equity. In schooling, market approaches and fees mean that additional funding comes into the system from private sources. Potentially, this could result in a better resourced system for everyone, if policies are developed to redistribute resources. But markets do not operate to equalise. They offer choice – but only to those who have money to bring to the market in the first place. Those who have money to pay fees are able to choose from what is on offer. Those who cannot afford fees have little or no choice.

Overall, the logic of neoliberal structural adjustment has meant reduced state spending on social services in developing countries. And this has meant less money for education. In the logic of structural adjustment, efficiency is an important consideration. Rather than increasing funding for education, the emphasis is on making sure that existing funds are properly used. The argument is that there is no point in increasing funding to education unless systems are efficient and use their money well.

Social development agenda

At the same time as the Washington Consensus focused on a largely economic agenda, the United Nations outlined a **broad social development** agenda. It was joined by other multilateral organisations representing wealthy countries, such as the OECD, the G8 and the European

Union. Through the 1990s and 2000s, these agencies – predominantly representing wealthy capitalist countries – have set development goals for countries in the developing world. (Kenneth King and Simon McGrath [2004:23] describe this as ‘a new architecture of aid’.) There are development goals for education, environment, human rights, population, social development, women, human settlements, food security and climate change. Every year, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gathers information on key indicators such as education, health and income, and compiles a Human Development Index. At the turn of the century, the UN restated these goals as *Millennium Development Goals*.



(UNDP, 2006:29)

The UNDP describes the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as follows:

The MDGs represent a global partnership that has grown from the commitments and targets established at the world summits of the 1990s. Responding to the world's main development challenges and to the calls of civil society, the MDGs promote poverty reduction, education, maternal health, gender equality, and aim at combating child mortality, AIDS and other diseases.

Set for the year 2015, the MDGs are an agreed set of goals that can be achieved if all actors work together and do their part. Poor countries have pledged to govern better, and invest in their people through health care and education. Rich countries have pledged to support them, through aid, debt relief, and fairer trade.

UNDP is working with a wide range of partners to help create coalitions for change to support the goals at global, regional and national levels, to benchmark progress towards them, and to help countries to build the institutional capacity, policies and programmes needed to achieve the MDGs. (UNDP, 2006:29)

However, what is striking is that inequalities across the world have not reduced, in spite of resolutions such as these. Living conditions in poor countries continue to fall short of the targeted goals. Under conditions of globalisation, development goals have been hard to reach and global inequalities have increased. Poverty and marginalisation continue to follow predictable patterns.

In contrast to the economic emphasis of neoliberalism and the Washington Consensus, the social development agenda stresses human well-being as the goal of development. Annual *Human Development Reports*, published by the UN, stress the importance of choice as part of human well-being. They state, for example:

Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. If these essential choices are not available, many other opportunities remain inaccessible.

But human development does not end here. Additional choices, highly valued by many people, range from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive, and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights... According to this conception of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one.... Development must be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people. (UNDP, 1990:10)

An important contributor to the social development agenda is Amartya Sen (1999), Nobel Prize-winning economist. Sen has argued for *Development as Freedom*. He recognises that development has proven to be elusive. But he argues that it is important for development measures to go beyond economic goals and other conventional indicators. Development should enhance human dignity and increase the opportunities that make it possible for people to fulfil their 'human capabilities'. Working alongside Sen, the philosopher, Martha Nussbaum (2000), has drawn up sets of human capabilities which she suggests should operate universally. According to the capabilities approach, development involves people's

right to access resources that enable them to have sufficient nourishment, avoid illness, sustain their livelihoods, have self-respect, and live meaningful lives.

Read what Nussbaum says about the importance of this approach:

...It is important to insist that development is a normative concept [a concept that involves values] and that we should not assume that the human norms we want will be delivered simply through a policy of fostering economic growth. (2004:328)

The capabilities approach has been increasingly influential in discourses of social development, including education. (In the South African context, educationists such as Melanie Walker and Elaine Unterhalter have argued for a capabilities approach to highlight social justice in education policies.)

However, casting a shadow across the ideals and ambitions of the social development agenda is the spectre of **HIV/AIDS**, which disproportionately affects poor and developing countries. HIV/AIDS cuts across every dimension of life in places where it is prevalent: individual lives, health and welfare systems, education and social services, and economic activities. The effects are too immense to be ignored, and they challenge every dimension of the social development agenda. The following brief extract from the UNDP *Human Development Report* of 2006 illustrates the multi-dimensional issues that HIV/AIDS poses for the development agenda.

HIV/AIDS generates multiple human development reversals

Falling life expectancy is one indicator capturing the impact of HIV/AIDS. But the epidemic is generating multiple human development reversals, extending beyond health into food security, education and other areas.

HIV-affected households are trapped in a financial pincer as health costs rise and incomes fall. Costs can amount to more than one-third of household income, crowding out spending in other areas. In Namibia and Uganda, studies have found households resorting to distress sales of food and livestock to cover medical costs, increasing their vulnerability. Meanwhile, HIV/AIDS erodes their most valuable asset: their labour. In Swaziland maize production falls on average by more than 50% following an adult death from HIV/AIDS.

Beyond the household, HIV/AIDS is eroding the social and economic infrastructure. Health systems are suffering from a lethal interaction of two effects: attrition among workers and rising demand. Already overstretched health infrastructures are being pushed to the brink of collapse. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda, patients with HIV-related conditions occupy more than half of all hospital beds.

HIV/AIDS is eroding human capacity on a broad front. Zambia now loses two-thirds of its trained teachers to HIV/AIDS, and in 2000 two in three agricultural extension workers in the country reported having lost a co-worker in the past year.

The spread of AIDS is a consequence as well as a cause of vulnerability. HIV/AIDS suppresses the body's immune system and leads to malnutrition. At the same time, nutritional deficiencies hasten the onset of AIDS and its progression. Women with HIV/AIDS suffer a loss of status. At the same time, gender inequality and the subservient status of women are at the heart of power inequalities that increase the risk of contracting the disease. Violence against women, especially forced or coercive sex, is a major cause of vulnerability. Another is women's weak negotiating position on the use of condoms.

Source: Gillespie and Kadiyala 2005; Yamano and Jayne 2004; Carr-Hill 2004; Swaziland Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives and Business 2002.

How does the social development agenda view education?

This is regarded as one of the most important indicators of human development, and a key to other dimensions of development. The global campaign of Education for All (EFA), the Jomtien Declaration (1990) and the Dakar Framework for Action (2000) all emphasise the importance of education for individual and social development. They note that education is a basic human right, and is often the key to realising other rights. They also emphasise that everyone should have access to quality education. Yet in spite of numerous declarations, goals and targets set internationally, the provision of quality education for all remains elusive.

The EFA Global Monitoring Reports provide detailed pictures of education in different parts of the world. There is extensive

information on many indicators in different countries: on enrolments, including gender participation, retention and repetition rates; on HIV/AIDS and education; on funding patterns; on literacy; on achievement on comparative tests; on teacher qualifications; on national policies. By now, the picture is well known, and broad, historical patterns of inequality are predictable. Nonetheless, they have proven to be hard to shift.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report for 2005 suggests that the world is divided between a large group of countries that have achieved high and stable enrolments in schooling, and a smaller (but still large) group of poorer countries that have not. Almost all of the high achieving countries are located in North America and Europe, or are one of the Asian developmental states. The low achievers are the poorest countries, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa.

Before moving on to our final set of theories, it is worth noting that the impact of HIV/AIDS on education is a major concern for social development. The following brief statement from the 2002 EFA Report sums up the significance of this:

The HIV/AIDS pandemic also has implications for the level of resources needed for education and for household costs. HIV/AIDS is likely to reduce the overall resource envelope for education and affects the allocation of available resources within the sector. It has cost implications for learners, for educators and for the development of new education programmes responsive to HIV/AIDS. Additional costs are likely to be incurred from the training and the salaries of additional teachers, the provision of death benefits, introducing HIV/AIDS [education] throughout the school curriculum, managing systemic change, increasing counselling services and providing incentives to attend school.

The World Bank's UPE [Universal Primary Education] analysis does demonstrate that HIV/AIDS [education] adds substantially to overall education costs. It suggests that in countries such as Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia the incremental costs due to HIV/AIDS will increase recurrent budgets by more than 45%. However, it is probable that the budgetary impact of AIDS is even more dramatic. The EFA Report estimates the total additional annual costs of the epidemic for the

achievement of universal primary education as US\$975 million per year, compared to US\$560 million estimated in the Bank's simulations. The cost implications of HIV/AIDS are so extensive and so pervasive that they may serve better than anything else to demonstrate the urgency of protecting the education sector against the ravages of the epidemic and of using the potential of education to extend greater protection to society. (UNESCO, 2002)

The social development agenda has become increasingly explicit about the goals of development in terms of human well-being. But these goals seem to be elusive, if not receding. Why has the social development agenda been so hard to achieve?

- ▶ On the one hand, it is possible to argue that poor countries could improve their performance (including their performance in education) with more effort, efficiency and political will.
- ▶ On the other hand, it could be argued that social and economic development cannot be separated. The social development agenda cannot be advanced separately from the economic development agenda. Setting targets for social improvements cannot rectify the inequalities of neoliberal economics.

Let's now move to a final set of theories which look at what development means and how it might be achieved.

Postcolonial and postdevelopment theories

Development debates are far from settled. The differences *between* developing countries (highlighted by changes in the Asia Pacific region), and the uneven and changing flows and cross-currents of globalisation, have brought greater complexity to debates. The explanatory power of major theories such as modernisation and dependency has diminished. At the same time, it is clear that neoliberal globalisation and structural adjustment have not stimulated development as hoped. And the goals set out in social development agendas are proving hard to reach.

In this context, **postcolonial** discourses have emerged, bringing fresh perspectives on issues of culture, identity and power. (These discourses are related to the other 'post' discourses mentioned in Chapter 2.) In this context, 'post' does not simply refer to the historical period after colonialism. Rather, it refers to the task of working against discourses of colonialism (colonisers and colonised), to show the power relations

within these discourses, and the unequal subject positions they create. Postcolonial thinkers have highlighted the ways in which dominant (western) discourses have distorted and silenced the views and voices of people on the margins, while privileging the identities and cultures of the powerful. For example, Edward Said's work on *Orientalism* (1978) shows how western discourses construct notions of the East, which divide the East from the West and position the West as superior. Gayatri Spivak's work on postcolonial feminism explores how knowledge of the world is constructed within power relations which render those on the margins voiceless. And Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1998) has challenged whether the language of colonisers can ever express the experiences of the colonised.

Postcolonial theories are important in challenging power relations, seeking to forge new identities outside of colonial categories, and valuing languages and cultures that have been marginalised through colonialism. They have highlighted the discourses whereby western categories and frames of knowledge become 'normal' and operate in ways that marginalise others.

Postdevelopment discourses have questioned whether the notion of 'development' is an appropriate framework to think about change in former colonies and settler societies. These discourses have questioned whether poverty, suffering and marginalisation could ever be reduced in conventional development frameworks. And they have challenged the assumption that 'development', defined in terms of capitalist growth and expansion, is possible or even desirable. The work of Arturo Escobar is well known for challenging the discourses of development. Gilbert Rist sets out the postdevelopment challenge powerfully in the following statement:

End of sequence. End of game. The lights that made the hope glow have gone out. The huge enterprise that began in both North and South at the end of the Second World War, with the aim of accelerating 'development', has come to a complete end. It is time to recognise that the world cannot be changed with the help of concepts and strategies belonging to the dreams of yesteryear. (1997:220, original emphasis)

Postcolonial and postdevelopment theories signal a crisis in theories of development. They challenge thinkers to move away from the certainties and predictions of master narratives and overarching explanations and solutions – such as those provided by modernisation, dependency, the Washington Consensus, and social development agendas.

What, then, of education?

Postcolonial approaches to education have highlighted issues of identity, culture and language. They have questioned the colonial biases of the curriculum. They have pointed out that local knowledge and local languages have been marginalised in education in favour of the knowledge and languages of colonisers. Some theorists have argued for the importance of indigenous knowledge systems. Most have stressed the importance of valuing local culture and language, and of constructing identities in education to challenge the remnants of colonial relations of power.

Postdevelopmental approaches have questioned links between schooling, growth and 'progress' as part of their general critique of development assumptions.

To sum up ...

The different theories of development illustrate different assumptions about economy, society, government and culture. Different discourses define 'the problem' of development and its 'solution' in different ways. They draw on different bodies of knowledge, use different terminology, and point to different relationships of power. They also make different assumptions about what is desirable and what is possible. All of this illustrates Foucault's point that discourses operate in ways that 'create' the objects that they speak about (see page 19). These different discourses operate alongside and against each other to create the terrain of 'development theory'.

The range of theories illustrates that there is no single answer to how economies might be structured to bring about sustainable growth and reduce poverty and inequality. The answers depend, in part at least, upon what assumptions we make in the first place. And they involve ethical considerations about how people should live together in a shared world.

Whatever approach we take, the questions remain: Is it possible to improve the conditions of life of all of the world's people? Is development possible for all according to the existing terms of economic growth and social advancement? And what part might education play? Considering theories of underdevelopment in Africa and current conditions of globalisation, Stefan Andreasson (2005) suggests four alternative positions:

Position 1:

Continue to insist that development is a possibility for all – this is the orthodox neoliberal position.

Position 2:

Suggest that although equality can't be attained for all, improvement of living conditions is possible – this is a 'third way' position.

Position 3:

Attempt to maintain the status quo, hoping that the dream of opportunities for all will be enough to maintain things as they are – this is what Andreasson calls a cynical, 'realpolitik' position.

Position 4:

In Andreasson's words: 'Acknowledge that the current world order and its attendant development discourse is not sustainable in any form (economically, politically, socially or ecologically) and therefore not morally or ethically justifiable either – moving "beyond development"' (2005:980).

Clearly, there is room for much debate.

From this brief overview of different approaches and theories, it is apparent that 'development' is not easy to define or achieve. Though the term is problematic, the issues that it addresses are important ones for all governments to engage with: issues of economic growth, institutional frameworks, political arrangements and cultural identities. It is clear, though, that development is not an automatically unfolding process. It entails difficult ethical and political choices, and it requires decisions and strategies on many fronts simultaneously. And in current times, nation state development requires engagement with both local and global conditions.

In terms of the divides between rich and poor in South Africa (as referred to in Thabo Mbeki's speech at the beginning of this chapter), debates on development suggest that these are not likely to shift without specific interventions. And even then, development cannot be assured, particularly in the fast-moving, complex and exclusionary flows of current globalisation.

The first part of this chapter has scanned the very broad field of development theories. But how is South Africa positioned in relation to these different discourses of development? Let's now turn to this question.

2 SOUTH AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT CHOICES

Historically, the liberation movements were committed to racial equality and economic redistribution. In 1955, the Freedom Charter promised that 'The people shall govern', and that 'The national wealth of our country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people'. But what could this mean in the global and local circumstances of 1994? The new government inherited a struggling economy, distorted by segregation, with a limited skills base, unequal infrastructure, and many people living in poverty. The need for growth, reconstruction and development was obvious. But – as the different discourses of development have indicated – these processes are open to different interpretations, and they are not easy to secure.

Globally: South Africa's political transition to democracy took place at a time when the world's economies were almost all capitalist, and neoliberal ideology was paramount. The global climate was not sympathetic to an agenda of redistribution. Global and local capitalist interests warned that investment in South Africa depended crucially on political and economic stability as well as the safety of persons and property. They vigilantly monitored any possible signs of nationalisation.

Locally: the new government was formed on the basis of a negotiated settlement with the apartheid state. A Government of National Unity (GNU) was led by the ANC with its alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the former National Party government and other political groupings. The GNU brought together people of different views, and its emphasis was on compromise and reconciliation.

Under these global and local conditions, visions of transformation held by the liberation movements were soon narrowed down.

What development choices were made and how did these affect education? We can trace South Africa's framework for development through the development agendas set out in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). These development agendas provide a framework for understanding Mbeki's 'two nations' comment. They also provide a basis for understanding educational provision in South Africa, and for assessing the performance of South Africa's education system in terms of conventional development indicators.

RDP, GEAR and NEPAD

Initially, it was assumed that South Africa's approach to development would be 'people-centred' and based on the principle of 'growth through redistribution' in a mixed economy. In 1994, the government introduced the **RDP** as an integrated and coherent strategy for growth and development. The RDP White Paper opened with the commitment from President Nelson Mandela quoted at the start of this chapter: that the government would 'address the problems of poverty and the gross inequality evident in almost all aspects of South African society' (1994:2).

The White Paper continued as follows:

The GNU inherited an economy characterised by a number of structural problems ... The challenge is to correct those problems and regenerate economic growth and a more equitable distribution of the benefits of such growth. The RDP provides a strategic framework to address these problems. It recognises the simultaneous necessity of meeting basic needs, developing human resources, building the economy and democratising the State and society ... Reconstruction and development will be achieved through the leading and enabling role of the State, a thriving private sector and active involvement by all sectors of civil society. (1994:20)

However, by the end of 1996, this redistributive agenda had faded away, and the programme for transformation had shifted. In the global climate of neoliberal capitalism, the ANC-led government made the political choice to attune its macroeconomic policy to market-led economic growth and integration into the global economy. In place of the RDP, the ANC introduced its Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy. In spite of its name, **GEAR** is a neoliberal macroeconomic programme of deregulation, privatisation and fiscal restraint – similar to the structural adjustment programmes advocated by the World Bank and the IMF.

In adopting this approach, the ANC-led government distanced itself from Marxist ideology, socialism and nationalisation, and oriented itself towards domestic and international capitalism. Whereas the RDP had intended to stimulate economic growth in ways that would lead to the reduction of poverty and inequality, GEAR focused on economic growth

along the lines that would be attractive to international and domestic investment. The government justified its decisions by stressing that this approach was necessary if economic growth was to be achieved, and that building global markets was an important strategy for achieving growth (see Chisholm, 1997; Marais, 2001; Weber, 2002).

In 2000, the government took a further step in this direction through **NEPAD**, an agreement spearheaded by the leaders of South Africa, Algeria and Nigeria. NEPAD committed itself to African development through integration in the global capitalist economy and partnerships with the international community and highly industrialised countries.

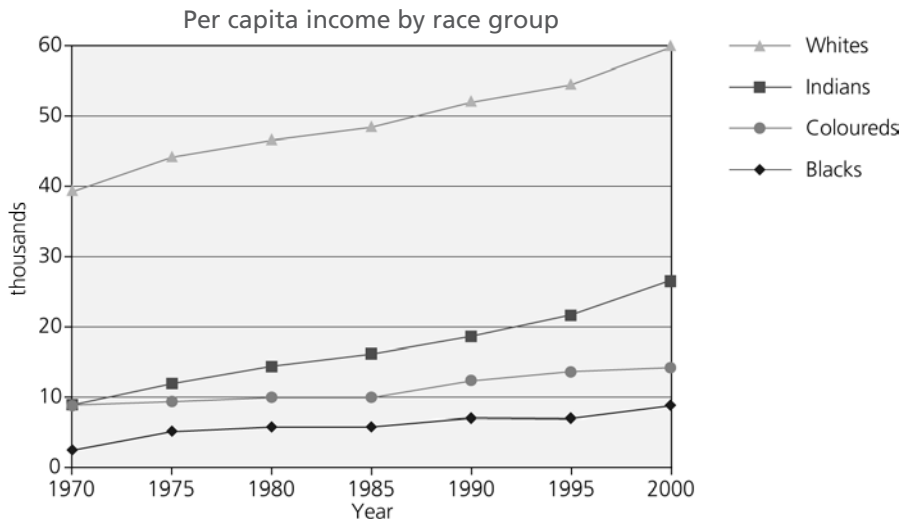
There is much debate about the reasons for the policy shift from the RDP to GEAR and NEPAD. The government insisted that it had no choice but to fall in with neoliberal globalisation and its economic directions. But politics always involves choices and preferences – in spite of claims made by governments throughout history that their (chosen) way is the only option. History is always formed in the interplay of *structure* (the existing opportunities and constraints of what already exists) and the actions taken by people (human *agency*).

Whatever the reasons, there can be no doubt that the government endorsed a neoliberal global framework – though this framework has no track record of reducing poverty and inequality. Is this development approach the best under the circumstances? What other choices were possible? This is a matter for robust debate, as reflected, for example, in the work of Stephen Gelb, Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass, Patrick Bond and others. In any event, as Manuel Castells points out, engaging with globalisation is a difficult challenge. He states: ‘The real problem for South Africa is how to avoid being pushed aside itself from the harsh competition in the new global economy, once its economy is open’ (2000:126).

In short, the development model that was adopted for post-apartheid South Africa was a particular form of non-racial capitalism. As Gelb points out, it represented an accommodation between the ANC and big business, and rested on policies to promote globalisation and black economic empowerment (2003:41). Redistribution and redress were to be ‘detached’ from economic growth. They were to be attended to separately through policies for social services and meeting basic needs such as land reform, social infrastructure, housing, and labour market reform, as well as through age pensions, child grants and disability grants.

How successful was this development strategy in the first 10 years of the new government? Thinking back to Mandela’s introduction to the RDP White Paper, did the country manage to achieve high and sustainable growth as a basis for addressing problems of poverty and inequality?

- ▶ On the positive side, the government's austere economic approach did manage to stabilise the macroeconomic environment. It managed to reduce the budget deficit and lower inflation. More services were provided for poor people, particularly in terms of housing, water, electricity and schools.
- ▶ On the negative side, economic development in the period 1996 to 2001 did not bring about the anticipated levels of growth. Nor did it produce enough jobs to keep pace with the growth in population (*Statistics South Africa, 2005:63*). Patterns of poverty and inequality remained much the same as they were. A small but prominent number of black people increased their wealth and moved into the middle classes. Overall, however, the apartheid racial and class profiles of wealth and poverty were still evident.



Source: van der Berg & Louw 2003:11; *Business Report* 25.02.04

It is perhaps too soon to judge the strategy overall, especially since 2007 figures show that unemployment levels have dropped. It is possible that South Africa might look to other development options or alter its policies in new or different ways. Transformation of economy, society and government are extremely complex to achieve, and it is important not to make simplistic judgements about success and failure. Nonetheless, looking at the first 10 years of change, the overall development approach did not achieve the high and sustainable growth that was hoped for as a basis for redressing poverty and inequality. Nor did it reduce the very high rates of unemployment.

Let's now return to the argument that there are 'two nations' in South Africa and examine it more closely.

3 TWO NATIONS? ECONOMIC GROWTH, POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The following extract from the World Bank's country summary of South Africa (November, 2005) paints a similar picture to Thabo Mbeki's 'two nations':

Economy

With GNI per capita of \$3,630 (2004, World Bank Atlas method), South Africa is one of the few African countries to have joined the group of upper middle income countries. Its economy is larger than that of Malaysia, and is by far the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, about 35 percent of total sub-Saharan African GDP, exerting major influence on total output, trade, and investment flows of the African continent. It dominates the southern African region, where it plays a vital role in the regional economic institutions, such as Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), and continental fora such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

However, the lacklustre growth, averaging only three percent per year over the past decade, has not been able to reduce high unemployment (26 percent according to the narrow definition, or 41 percent when discouraged workers are included), poverty, and inequality.

Services now account for most of South Africa's economy, surpassing the abundant mineral and energy resources that formed the core of the country's economic activity. Much of manufacturing is based on mining, and platinum has now overtaken gold and diamond exports. In the post-apartheid era the government has focused on controlling the deficit while striving to step up spending on social programmes to combat inequality. The Central Bank has used tight macroeconomic policies to control inflation.

South Africa's income aggregates hide extreme differences in incomes and wealth between the white (similar to OECD average of GNI per capita of about US\$26,000) and non-white populations (similar to many low-income African countries, with GNI per capita under US\$825). 13 percent of the population lives in "first world"

conditions, while at the other extreme, about 22 million people [about 50% of the population] live in “third world” conditions. In this latter group only one quarter of households have access to electricity and running water; only half have a primary school education; and over a third of the children suffer from chronic malnutrition.

This picture describes income, wealth and living conditions. To probe this further, it is useful to look more closely at the concepts of poverty and inequality, and the forms they take in South Africa.

Poverty and inequality

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world, as measured by the Gini Coefficient (a commonly used measure of the inequality of distribution of income). South Africa also has high levels of poverty. Indeed, estimates suggest that about 40% of the population live in poverty (which is very high by any measure). Why is this so?

To understand poverty and inequality, a useful starting point is to recognise that they are not the same thing. It is possible for a society to be unequal, yet have no one living in poverty. Conversely, it is possible for a society to be fairly equal, with most people living in poverty. Economic growth is an important factor in reducing poverty, but it does not necessarily reduce inequality. In fact, inequality may *increase* with economic growth.

There is a difference between economic growth, and how the benefits of growth are distributed. Distribution of wealth and poverty involve political as well as economic factors. And they involve ethical considerations about how people should live together. As with theories of development more generally, there is no single answer as to how economies might be structured to bring about sustainable growth and reduce poverty and inequality.

Who is poor, and what counts as poverty?

There is much debate internationally and in South Africa about how to define and measure poverty. Though there is no official definition of poverty in South Africa, there is broad agreement about its profile. A group of South African economists, Bhorat, Leibbrant, Maziya, van der Berg and Woolard, provide the following sketch:

The poor are more likely to be African and to live in rural areas ... The poor also have low levels of education, lack access to wage employment, and are also more likely to be found in female-headed households. The poor also lack access to basic services and to transport. Given all of the above, it is not surprising that the poor are more vulnerable to illness and to stunted growth. Such physical and human capital deprivation are important in perpetuating a cycle of poverty. (2001:72)

The researchers Barbarin and Richter, in their study *Mandela's Children*, flesh out the experiences of poverty from a child's perspective:

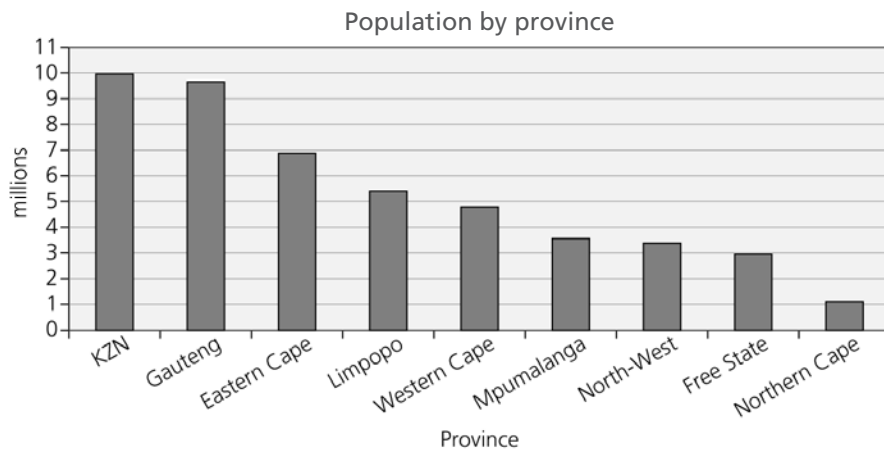
To be poor and South African usually means to be unemployed with no dependable means of support, to live with a single mother or grandmother, and to survive primarily on the grandmother's pension. To be poor is to experience hunger frequently, to live on a diet of bread and tea without milk or sugar and be grateful to have cabbage soup at night. It means living in a one-room shack without electricity, heat, a refrigerator, or a television, and relying on candles for light at night. It means having to rely on taxis for transportation when you can afford it, and to go places by foot when there is no money.... Poverty means insufficient money for school fees and books, and having to stay out of school for several weeks until funds can be found to purchase shoes and school uniforms... Poverty means children being left at home by parents who must leave for work before they wake up, with the children getting themselves up on their own and out to school without breakfast. (2001:173–4)

Poverty involves much more than income poverty. Poverty touches on people's sense of well-being and self-esteem, their sense of agency in the world, and what they can and cannot do. Poor people often experience powerlessness and disregard. *Emerging Voices* (2005), which looks at rural poverty and education in South Africa, points out that the Zulu language has eight different expressions for poverty, including 'degrees of poverty, its visibility, the form that it takes and the emotions and sense of self-worth associated with it' (2005:30).

What are the patterns of poverty in South Africa?

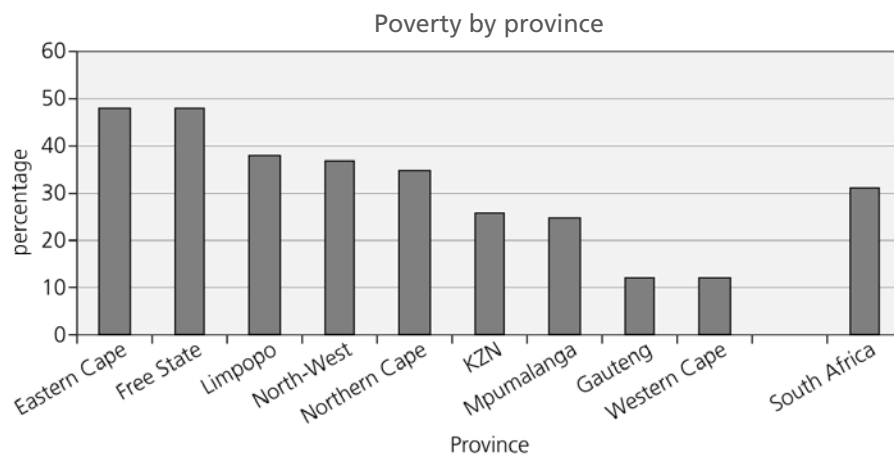
Poverty in South Africa has particular features. Much of it is ‘endemic’, which means that it is regularly found among the same people. And it is ‘chronic’ rather than ‘transient’, meaning that people spend a long time in poverty – sometimes all their lives – rather than moving in and out of poverty.

Three sets of figures are useful in illustrating poverty in South Africa. Figure 1 shows population *numbers* in millions, with provinces ranked from largest to smallest. Figure 2 illustrates the *percentages* of people living in poverty in the different provinces of South Africa. Figure 3 shows unemployment by province.



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2007

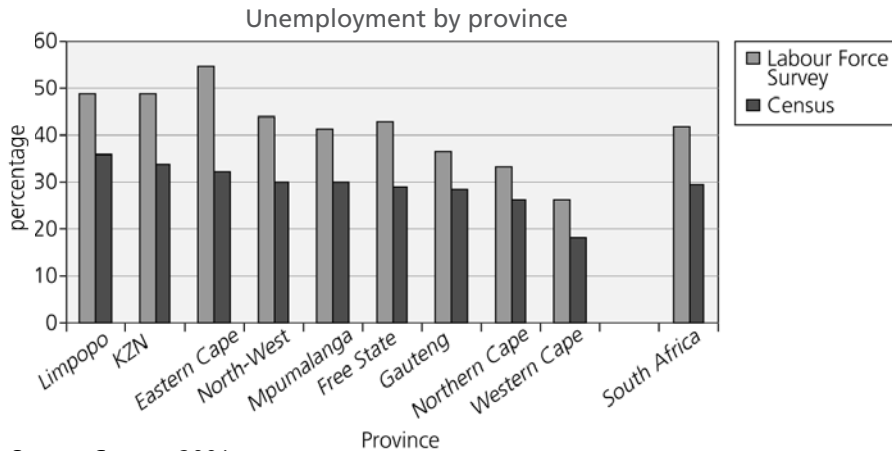
Figure 1: Population numbers per province, 2007



Source: Census, 2001

Figure 2: Percentages of those living in poverty by province, 2000

Gauteng and Western Cape, which have the lowest percentages of poverty, are the most urbanised provinces. Neither of them includes a former homeland. They are also the provinces with the highest percentages of employed people, as Figure 3 illustrates.



Source: Census, 2001

Figure 3: Percentages for unemployment by province, 2001

Figure 3 compares unemployment statistics gathered in two ways: through the Census and through the Labour Force Survey carried out by *Statistics South Africa*. It is interesting to note that the statistics differ. For example, the Labour Force Survey says that over 40% of the population is unemployed, but the Census shows 30%. This suggests that the definitions we use and how we gather information make a difference to the results we get. For example: What counts as 'employment'? Should beggars, who work for their living, be included among the employed or the unemployed? What about people who work for a couple of hours a week? Or those who have jobs, but do not earn enough to live on? Questions like these always arise when definitions are drawn up and statistics gathered for measurement.

Leaving these questions aside, what all of the figures show is that South Africa has very high rates of unemployment. This has a central place in understanding poverty and inequality.

Patterns of poverty and inequality in South Africa can be traced back to the history of apartheid and segregation before that. Segregation and apartheid brought, among other things, dispossession of land, inequalities in ownership of assets, lack of access to resources, a distorted labour market, and poor social services for the majority of the population. They also impacted on unequal gender relations. All of these historical patterns form the basis of current poverty in South Africa.

What are the features of poverty in South Africa?

- ▶ **Employment** is a big factor in determining poverty levels in South Africa. People without jobs are more likely to live in poverty. However, in some cases people's wages are so low that they live in poverty, even though they are working. Farm workers and domestic workers are examples of this.
- ▶ As we've seen, there is more poverty in the **rural** provinces than in more urbanised and industrialised provinces. It is no coincidence that the poorest parts of South Africa are the rural areas of the former homelands. These rural provinces also have the largest population sizes. That said, there is also poverty in urban areas.
- ▶ **Gender** is a significant factor in poverty. More women live in poverty than men, internationally as well as in South Africa. There are persistent gender inequalities in wages and labour market access, and in ownership of assets. This means that female-headed households are more vulnerable to poverty.
- ▶ **Education** makes a difference to patterns of employment and poverty. People with little or no education usually earn the least. More education brings more access to jobs and higher earnings. However, this formula doesn't always work neatly. In South Africa, racial discrimination under apartheid influenced people's access to the labour market, as well as the education they received. Labour markets are now more open in terms of race and gender, but old patterns are still evident. Education plays a key role in influencing people's opportunities, but education itself does not create jobs. In South Africa, there are more people looking for work than there are jobs, and unemployed people do not necessarily have the skills that the labour market requires.
- ▶ **Youth unemployment** is a particular problem in South Africa. Between 1996 and 2001, more people between 20 and 34 were unemployed and looking for work than any other age group. Many of them had completed secondary schooling.
- ▶ **HIV/AIDS** has an enormous impact on poverty, particularly when breadwinners become ill or die. South Africa has one of the highest proportions of people with HIV/AIDS in the world, and estimates are that the pandemic is not yet at its worst.
- ▶ In South Africa, large numbers of **children** live in poverty. Benjamin Roberts suggests that 40% of those aged 14 or under live on less than \$1 a day (2005:490).

How does poverty affect schooling?

A ‘two nations’ description may be applied to schooling, as is seen in the following statement made at the Public Hearing on the Right to Basic Education, held by the South African Human Rights Commission in 2005:

The research clearly shows that if you are black – particularly if you are rural and poor – schooling and education does not work for you. For 60–80% of our children, education reinforces marginalisation, trapped in a second economy of unemployment and survival with few ways out. It may even be said that there exist ‘two education systems’ in South Africa, mirroring the problems of two economies. (SA Human Rights Commission, 2006:18)

Decades of research in many countries have documented the adverse effects of poverty on children’s experiences of schooling and on their learning outcomes. Put briefly:

- ▶ If children are poor, they may not be able to afford to go to school. Schooling involves direct costs such as fees, uniforms, textbooks and stationery. It also involves indirect costs such as not being able to earn money or contribute to the household. Across the world, there are many children who are out of school because of poverty.
- ▶ Poor children often go to school hungry, poorly nourished, unwell, without adequate clothing, and so on. These conditions have an impact upon them as they go to class, and influence the benefits they receive from schooling, including their learning.
- ▶ Children from households where there are no school-related resources such as books (and adults who read to them) are at a disadvantage when they start school. The same also applies when the languages of home and school are different, and there are no resources to supplement language. Schools seldom help these students to catch up; in fact, they are in danger of falling further behind their more privileged counterparts.
- ▶ Sometimes, children have to fit school around work or household chores or caring for relatives. They may miss school, or drop out and in again. All of this is likely to impact upon their experiences of school. Broken attendance patterns, dropping in and out of school and missing school days are all associated with children in poverty. Interruptions in learning disadvantage students and make it harder for them to keep up with their class.

- ▶ Opportunities to work may also influence demand for schooling. For example, people may leave school to look for work – and this may be different for boys and girls. The networks of opportunities that are available for poor people – particularly poor rural people – also influence the choices people make.
- ▶ Poverty makes people more vulnerable if things go wrong. If a breadwinner becomes ill or dies, children may have to interrupt their schooling, or drop out altogether. There are fewer ‘cushions’ or ‘shock absorbers’ for poor people. Poor people have to make decisions about schooling in times of crisis that people with more resources don’t necessarily have to make. In some cases, poor children who experience ‘shocks’ in their lives may drop out of school altogether. In other cases, they may interrupt their schooling and return to their studies later. In all cases, children who are poor are more vulnerable.
- ▶ Poverty touches people’s consciousness as well as their material well-being. Poor people are often rendered powerless by their structural conditions – and as a result, they may *feel* powerless to act. Their points of view are often overlooked, their voices not heard, and this influences their sense of agency in the world. The emotional effects of poverty can be profound.

Many of these points focus on how poverty affects individuals. But it is important to recognise that *schools* in poor and disadvantaged communities are seldom as well resourced as schools in wealthier communities. Their teaching resources and facilities are often less good, and there is often a high turnover of teachers and principals. These are often the least supported schools in the system – although they are recognised as some of the most difficult in which to teach. There are issues of quality to be addressed. In short, it is important to recognise that the schooling that governments provide for poor children and poor communities may often *contribute to* their disadvantage, rather than remedy it.

How might poverty and inequality be addressed in South Africa?

The situation in South Africa is a complex picture of large-scale, chronic and endemic poverty, and long-standing inequality. How accurate, or useful, is it to think of this in terms of ‘two nations’?

The idea of two nations provides a picture of poverty alongside wealth in South Africa, and it relates inequalities to race. While there is truth to this,

it is not the whole picture, nor is it completely accurate. What it does not show is that patterns of race and class are shifting as the economy develops in particular ways. Race remains a key factor in poverty and inequality. But neoliberal growth strategies have increased the size and wealth of the black middle classes, so that inequalities *among* black people are growing. An adequate picture of inequality needs to consider class and gender as well as race. It needs to look at structural patterns of distribution and how they are changing – or not changing. It also needs to acknowledge the role of public policies in addressing unemployment, poverty and inequality.

Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass (2005) are among a number of scholars who provide an alternative analysis to ‘two nations’. They trace the historical patterns of growth and distribution in South Africa, which have privileged some groups and excluded others. They call this South Africa’s ‘distributional regime’. Historical patterns of economic activity have been deracialised by the post-apartheid government. But they have not been fundamentally transformed. Gelb, Seekings and Nattrass stress the important part played by unemployment in terms of poverty and inequality in South Africa. Scholars argue that class, rather than race, is currently the main driver of inequality.

The study undertaken by Seekings and Nattrass clearly shows that post-apartheid public policies – decisions made by the government – improved the opportunities of some black people, but not of others. The post-apartheid growth path benefits the black middle class through deracialisation and affirmative action. Workers who belong to unions – the industrial working class – benefit from policies that raise wages and improve working conditions. But the unemployed, and particularly the rural unemployed, experience continuing disadvantage and have few opportunities to improve their circumstances. Although redistribution takes place through pensions and grants, and through social services such as education, the growth path is not pro-poor. The poor, particularly the rural poor, are marginalised and their voices are largely ignored. Seekings and Nattrass clearly show that post-apartheid public policies improved the opportunities of some black people, but not of others. Tracing the development of public policies in the decade after 1994, they conclude that these policies caused unemployment to increase, rather than decrease. In their words:

Overall, ... key public policies were reformed rather than transformed after 1994, with the result that there was further deracialisation at the top end of the income distribution but no or limited change in the position of the people at the bottom end. It is crucial to realise that public policies exacerbated [made worse] rather than mitigated [made better] the problem of unemployment. (2005:341)

Clearly, issues of growth, development, poverty and inequality are extremely complex to work with and change.

An international perspective on poverty and inequality is provided by the reports of the UNDP. The *Human Development Report (2005)*, for example, notes that while economic growth is important for reducing poverty, it is not enough. Some parts of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, have stagnating economies. Other parts, such as India, have achieved growth through integration into global markets, but poverty and inequality still remain. The UNDP Report suggests that deeper structural changes are needed along with economic growth, if poverty is to be reduced:

Changing this picture will require public policies that address deep-rooted inequalities between rich and poor people, between men and women, and between more prosperous and less prosperous regions. These inequalities are rooted in power differences – and they are perpetuated by public policy choices. (2005:30)

The UNDP's *Poverty Report (2000)* recognises the difficulties of developing pro-poor policies within the constraints of neoliberalism. However, it suggests that this is possible, drawing on its research in 23 countries. It suggests that countries need to develop economic strategies that have poverty reduction as their central focus, and that they need to involve the poor in drawing up these strategies.

South Africa does not measure up well in terms of the UNDP *Poverty Report*, at least for the first 10 years of its democracy. It does not have anti-poverty plans with targets, funding and co-ordination. It has a two-track approach, with policies for economic growth being supplemented by policies for providing services to the poor. This is not the same as attacking poverty in a pro-poor economic and political strategy. The pro-poor logic of the *Poverty Report* suggests that addressing poverty and inequality in South Africa would require more radical and imaginative strategies than were put in place in the first 10 years. This could entail developing pro-poor strategies within or alongside a neoliberal development framework. Or it could entail a completely different development approach.

Of course, the logic and recommendations of the UNDP *Poverty Report* may be debated. What they do show, however, is that alternative thinking is possible, even within a neoliberal development framework. Similarly, the work of Seekings and Natrass challenges the sense of inevitability and lack of choice that governments often rely upon to justify their actions.

To sum up ...

This section has argued that ‘two nations’ thinking does not provide an adequate analysis of poverty and inequality in South Africa. Without this, change becomes hard to envisage. A more robust understanding of social structures and policy choices is needed to challenge the seeming inevitability of what exists and build a more just and equal society. This is not a simple task, but it is not an impossible one either. There are no easy answers and a lot is at stake. But as human beings we have the task of building our own history in the conditions in which we find ourselves. This is an ethical responsibility that we cannot sidestep.

That concludes our discussion of South Africa’s development choices, and growth, poverty and inequality in South Africa. Let’s now return to issues of education and development.

4 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT: OPENING THE DOORS OF LEARNING?

As we have discussed in this chapter, poverty and inequality are deeply entrenched in South Africa. Under such conditions, what part might education play in national development? Reflecting on the issues and discussions raised in this chapter, a number of points are worth making.

Master narratives of development

In this chapter, development theories have been set out in the form of ‘master narratives’ – as overarching accounts that offer explanations of the ‘big picture’, highlighting power relations and different logics of cause and effect. Master narratives have their place, but they are not adequate by themselves. Theories such as these provide tools for social analysis, but there is always the danger that they may distort our understanding of social complexity. They do not tell us about the texture of everyday life with its contradictions, struggles, confusions and achievements. They do not tell us about the many actions and decisions taken by governments and ordinary people that make up the texture of human history. The events of history are not inevitable, and the future does not lie predictably before us – however appealing a master narrative might seem.

Development strategies involve complex economic, social and political decisions, and these necessarily entail technical knowledge of all sorts.

This specialised knowledge is not always within the expertise of educationists. That said, knowledge is not neutral, particularly when it is put to use in social programmes such as development. Social programmes require consideration of ‘what ought to be’ as well as ‘what is’. Running through all of this are ethical considerations – what counts as a good life and how we might best live together in the world we share. These are concerns that involve educationists.

We, as educationists, have our own perspectives, experiences and knowledge to add to debates on development. Thus it is important that we engage in the debates with these perspectives. The perspectives of education involve, above all, consideration of formalised teaching and learning, of social cohesion, of the world of work, and of individual development. Development debates tend to address the social and economic purposes of education. But the purposes of teaching and learning, and of individual development, need to be integrally considered in development debates as well.

Market narratives and social justice

Neoliberal master narratives are particularly compelling at this time in history, when capitalism is the dominant economic system across the globe. It may seem as if there are no alternatives to neoliberalism, even if conditions are less than ideal. Yet neoliberal narratives are incomplete in the context of change in South Africa. They cannot perform all that is required. In their current forms, they are narratives of markets, efficiencies and individual choice. While they may be able to address the government’s goals of economic growth, they are not able to address its commitment to redressing poverty and inequality. More needs to be done outside of neoliberal frames if these commitments are to be met. The market offers equal choices to all, but it does not address the fact that people do not come to the market with equal resources to make their choices. Some have many choices; others have none. The market itself does not address existing social inequalities. It does not operate with a justice of redress. If the goal is to redress historical inequalities, it is necessary to look beyond market approaches.

Schooling and inequality

As mentioned earlier, the social development agenda that is supported by global bodies such as UNESCO and the EFA initiative has set targets for education that are monitored regularly. More is known than ever

before about the state of schooling in countries across the world. There is information on almost all measurable aspects of education systems: on enrolments and provision of schooling, on participation and completion rates, on gender differences, on performance in literacy and numeracy and comparative test rates, on teacher qualifications, the impact of HIV/AIDS and measures to improve this. The following trends in access and participation in schooling are, by now, well known (see Christie, Dieltiens and Lewin, 2006):

- ▶ Levels of wealth and poverty have a clear influence on the resources available for education, and this in turn is a major influence on access, participation and keeping students in schools. Political economy affects the supply of education, and it also affects people's demand for education.
- ▶ What resources are available to schools may have an effect on learning outcomes. Although additional resources may have little effect in well-established schooling systems, they do have an effect in poorer countries.
- ▶ Cultural practices, particularly around gender, have predictable effects on both supply of and demand for schooling.
- ▶ Opportunities for economic activity and how these link to education affect the supply of schools, the value placed on schooling and on demand.
- ▶ Where there are populations or subgroups with particular or specific needs, the standardised approaches of schooling systems – particularly the inflexibility of school arrangements and their geographical fixity – affect access, participation and retention. This is evident in countries with mobile populations such as nomads, travellers, migrant workers and refugees. Minority languages often require special consideration. Disabilities of various sorts – intellectual, physical, psychiatric, etc – require specific interventions. This broad range of specialised needs interacts in particular ways with system resources and capacity, and influences access, participation and retention.
- ▶ The living conditions of children have well-documented effects on participation and success in schooling. Most notably, children's health and nutrition affect their learning. HIV/AIDS has multiple effects, actual and anticipated, on both students and teachers. Work has adverse effects on children's school attendance and how well they do. Conditions of violence and social conflict are disruptive to schooling. (See Christie, Dieltiens and Lewin, 2006)

In short, many of the variables which affect access, participation and retention are well known to researchers and policy makers. However,

remedying these well-known problems is not straightforward. One reason is that education systems cannot be understood separately from the societies in which they operate – their economic, political, social and cultural contexts. In spite of their apparently universal forms, education systems do not stand apart from their societies, and they are not amenable to interventions that treat them as if they did.

If we look across the countries of the world, what emerges is a picture of historical inequalities between and within countries which is shifting slowly, and in some cases not at all. Changing these inequalities is not as straightforward as early modernisation theorists might have assumed. The experience of decades shows that poorer countries have found it extremely difficult to build schooling systems that provide access to quality education for all their young people. Schooling is not a simple instrument for achieving equality or social justice, either between or within societies. This applies to South Africa as well.

Nonetheless, countries across the world consider schooling an important indicator of a modern state, as pointed out in Chapter Two. Schooling is so entrenched as a world institution that it is hard to imagine a modern state that decided not to invest in schooling – a point which Bruce Fuller makes in *Growing-Up Modern: the western state builds third-world schools* (1991). Schooling has enormous symbolic significance. It acts as ‘the norm’ for education, even when it is unable to deliver what it promises: formal teaching and learning for young people. Attempts to educate people outside of schools, for example in non-formal education programmes or adult basic education programmes, tend always to operate on a second track to schooling, which remains the symbolic ideal.

Schooling, like the market, attracts people of all backgrounds. If it treats everyone as if they had equal resources, the outcomes will certainly be unequal. And if the schools that are provided for different communities are unequal, it should be no surprise if the outcomes tend to be unequal. If schooling is to play a part in achieving a more equitable society, it is necessary to imagine, and put in place, more radical measures than currently exist.

Schooling and development

The development experiences of the past five decades show that we cannot assume that quality schooling systems will grow organically as part of an unfolding process of development. Schooling systems have been built over time and tend to reflect the development patterns of their contexts.

Few developing countries have schooling systems that match those of Europe and North America on indicators of provision and quality. Moreover, the experience of the Asian developmental states suggests that if schooling is to contribute to economic growth, it is important for governments and societies to invest in schooling – materially, politically and symbolically. Developmental states provide schooling for all at basic and post-basic levels; their systems are well run with adequate funding from both state and private sources; and they have high expectations of teachers and students.

In South Africa's case, a schooling system of equal quality for all is not likely to unfold without deliberate efforts to bridge the historical divisions. Building a quality schooling system for all is likely to require political will and strong interventions, backed by targeted resources. It will require an ethical commitment to improve the conditions of the poor and marginalised in ways that enable their active participation in building a system that meets their needs. And it will take time.

5 CONCLUSION

After more than 50 years of theory and research on education and national development, it is clear that there are no simple solutions. Both development and education are expressions of power relations that are not easy to understand or shift. Yet they need to be worked with in one way or another if we hope to improve the conditions and experiences of all people.

Development is a complex and multi-dimensional issue. For governments, development entails working with economic, political and social visions and practicalities, which are sometimes competing. It means addressing historical legacies, engaging with local conditions and global forces, and imagining and implementing strategies to improve people's conditions of life. Education is integral to development, however this is defined. But there is no simple, functional relationship between education and development. There are no straightforward solutions to problems of poverty, inequality and economic growth. There are judgements and trade-offs to be made, with ethical and political implications. There is difficult and sometimes unrewarding work to be done. Much has been achieved, yet much remains to be done.

How might poverty and inequality be reduced and economic growth achieved in South Africa? This is the challenge facing all South Africans. The debates of this chapter have explored different assumptions and approaches to this question. The goal has been to push the boundaries of

what is taken for granted from a particular value position: a position which supports opening the doors of learning for all.

The French philosopher Foucault states the importance of critical thinking as follows (and he is only one among many to advocate critical thinking):

A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out "what kind of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought, the practices that we accept rest [upon]". Criticism is a matter of flushing out that thought and trying to change it: to show that things are not as self-evident as we believed, to see that what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practising criticism is a matter of making facile [comfortable and uncomplicated] gestures difficult. (1988:154)

If we take Foucault's challenge of not accepting what seems to be self-evident, development for a more just and equitable society requires different thinking and action to what we take for granted. Action is not something to be postponed for the future – when the transition is over – but something to be lived now. As Paolo Freire says, we build the future through the actions we take in the present. In his words, *we make the path through walking it*. If we are to build a sense of common purpose and common interest across the historic divides and inequalities in South Africa, then it is important that we do not perpetuate these divides. 'Two nations' will not become 'one nation' without significant actions to change the continuing social divisions. The doors of learning will not swing open at a touch. It will take intention and effort to achieve this. Instead of accepting the current situation as self-evident and inevitable, the task is to challenge our unconsidered assumptions and practices and to try to change them. To use Foucault's words, facile gestures should not be acceptable.

Moving forward...

On the shifting terrain of development strategies, governments make education policies to give expression to their social visions. So let's gather up the development discourses of this chapter and take them with us into the next chapter, where we change scale again as we explore the policy approaches adopted by the South African government to eradicate apartheid and set in place an education system for the good of all.

GLOBAL COMPARISONS OF DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

One of the spin-offs of globalisation and the spread of information technologies is that global comparisons are possible. Global organisations such as the World Bank and the UN gather information on countries in order to measure and compare their performance against each other. The comparative statistics they produce are discourses like any other: they are selections of knowledge, guided by assumptions about what is valuable and ‘true’; about what information is useful and how it might be gathered and analysed; and what an ‘ideal’ profile would look like on the selected indicators. These statistics – like all others – need to be read with care. Statistics cannot ‘speak for themselves’. They always need to be interpreted. They illustrate particular perspectives, rather than complete truths.

In interpreting indicators, it is always important to locate them within their particular contexts and historical legacies. In each case, there are questions about what produced the outcomes registered on the indicators. Under what circumstances is an outcome reached? What particular social structure and what forms of agency have produced it? With what costs, benefits, and trade-offs was it achieved? Without further information and interpretation, indicators cannot tell us about historical circumstances, ethical choices, or contextual consequences – and these may be crucial.

That said, if indicators are used with care, they do provide a particular picture of comparative conditions in the world.

An important comparative index is the UNDP’s **Human Development Index (HDI)** which is based on statistics on life expectancy, education, and adjusted real income. How does South Africa perform on this index and its component parts?

- ▶ In 2005, South Africa ranked 120 out of 175 countries on the HDI – and its ranking has fallen since 1994.
- ▶ South Africa is classified by the World Bank as one of 40 upper-middle-income countries, along with countries like Malaysia, Mexico, Chile and Poland.
- ▶ It has high levels of inequality compared with other countries of the world, along with countries like Brazil, Colombia, Chile and Paraguay.
- ▶ It has a middle ranking for poverty, along with Egypt, Congo, India and Sudan.
- ▶ It is one of 87 countries ranked as ‘medium’ on the HDI, along with Egypt, Brazil, Indonesia and India.

As mentioned earlier, comparative statistics need to be interpreted with care. Obviously, the accuracy of statistics depends upon how accurately the data collection processes have been. It also depends on what definitions are used. Indicators provide a selection of information, not a complete picture. That said, they do illustrate patterns of differences, and when measured over a number of years, they are able to illustrate trends.

The trends shown in the Human Development Reports over many years confirm the patterns of inequality between the developed and developing countries, discussed earlier in this chapter. They also confirm that inequalities are not shifting under conditions of neoliberal globalisation, as discussed in Chapter 3.

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CHAPTER 5

Education policy

This chapter moves from the scale of the global order and the scale of nation state development to that of policy-making, which is a form of decision-making in modern states. The chapter looks at how policy thinking became the order of the day as apartheid gave way to a modernist state with a democratic government and rights to equal citizenship for all. The first part of the chapter looks at the nature of policy and the policy process – which is important because policy discourses have become so prominent in education in South Africa. The second part of the chapter turns to education policy in South Africa, and explains the particular approach taken to policy and the frameworks that resulted from this. The chapter then narrows its focus to look at policies for equity, and the potential contradiction between these and the funding framework adopted by the government. Although it is easy to assume that policy makers and governments ‘get what they want’, the chapter points out that policy implementation is a complex process and policies seldom turn out as envisaged. Drawing on insights from policy implementation studies, the chapter weighs up South Africa’s policy choices. Finally, the chapter considers South Africa’s education policies in the light of opening the doors of learning for all, concluding that achievements have been limited.

Preamble Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996

*We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;
Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land
Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country;
and
Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in
our diversity.
We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this
Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –
Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on
democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which
government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is
equally protected by law;
Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of
each person; and
Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful
place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.
May God protect our people.
Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjaba sa heso.
God seën Suid Afrika. God bless South Africa.
Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afrika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.*

The Constitution of South Africa, adopted in 1996, signalled an end to apartheid and the birth of a new political and social order. South Africa would have the hallmarks of a modern liberal state: democratic government, human rights, equal citizenship and the rule of law. It would take its place as a sovereign state in the global order.

As the Constitution was being drafted in the dying days of apartheid, educators, activists and interested parties turned their energies to thinking about what the education system might look like in a post-apartheid South Africa. What principles should underpin the new system? How should it be governed? How should it be funded? Who should have access to what education? What should be taught, to whom, by whom, under what arrangements? Questions of this kind framed the educational debates of this period in terms of 'policy'.

Policy is a key concept when thinking about educational change in a modern state. It is particularly useful in providing systemic perspectives on education, and in highlighting steps that governments take in the sphere

of education. As this chapter will show, policy has an important role in educational change, but it cannot address everything that educational change entails. Policy is crucial, but it has its limits.

The chapter begins by unpacking the concepts of policy and the policy process. It then sets out some of the policy changes in education in post-apartheid South Africa, looking at what steps were taken, by whom, and with what effects. On this basis, it considers more carefully what policy can and can't achieve – its possibilities and limitations – in terms of educational change. The chapter concludes by weighing up the contribution of policy to educational change in South Africa, particularly in relation to equity and opening the doors of learning to all.

Let's turn to the question: What is policy, and what perspectives does it provide in thinking about educational change?

1 POLICY: DISCOURSES, CONCEPTS AND THEORIES

What is policy?

As used here, 'policy' is shorthand for 'public policy' and refers mainly to the sphere of government. Policy is one of the ways in which the governments of modern states envisage what they would like, and how they intend to 'make things happen'. The Australian theorists, Janice Dudley and Lesley Vidovich (1995), define policy as follows:

Policy may be regarded as collective social decision-making. It is collective and social because the decisions made concern the whole of society rather than individuals alone, and second because participants in the decision making process are considered to be the legitimate decision makers for society ... The values or preferences integral to policy reflect not only different goals, but also different means of achieving goals. (1995:15)

There are many definitions of policy, ranging from the very broad to the precise and specific. Some **features of policy** are:

- ▶ It is a form of decision making that has goals and purposes.
- ▶ It is a values-driven activity, based on what people would like a society to look like.

- ▶ It often involves a vision of some ideal state of affairs.
- ▶ It usually involves attempts to ‘make things better’ or prevent ‘something bad from happening’ (and what counts as ‘better’ or ‘worse’ clearly depends on your point of view).
- ▶ It typically involves allocating resources on the basis of interests.
- ▶ It may involve decisions not to act, as well as decisions to act.
- ▶ It often is the outcome of compromises between different interests and groups.
- ▶ Its results are not always predictable, and may take time to play out.
- ▶ It may be difficult to implement as intended.

Understanding policy means understanding how governments, as legitimate decision-makers in societies, act to achieve goals in their particular political, social and economic contexts. Policy is part of the cut-and-thrust of politics, as groups and individuals with competing interests strive to decide how society should be organised and what actions should be taken ‘in the best interests of all’. To understand the complex terrain of policy, it is useful to look more closely at how political discourses operate, and some of the key concepts in these discourses.

Concepts in policy discourse

In his classical study on *The Terms of Political Discourse*, the political scientist William Connolly (1974) points out that the language we use channels our thoughts and actions in certain directions. Language is a structured set of meanings and concepts, and the words we use may easily limit our perceptions without us realising it. Connolly urges us to reflect critically on the terms of political discourse, in order to explore alternative, more radical, perspectives.

Connolly suggests that there are many concepts in politics whose meanings are less certain than they appear to be. He suggests that concepts like democracy, freedom, legitimacy, violence and tolerance are open to endless disputes about their meaning. These disputes, he suggests, are not likely to be resolved. Reasoned argument is possible, but agreement is unlikely because people hold different beliefs about what they mean. Connolly uses the term ‘essentially contested concepts’ (from the philosopher WG Gallie) and suggests that the meanings of these concepts need to be continually probed, rather than taken for granted. (We might note in passing that ‘education’ has all the features of an ‘essentially contested concept’!)

Discussions of policy inevitably touch on concepts of the state, government, civil society and power. These are complex concepts, and there are vigorous debates about their meanings. Without going into these debates, let's draw on some working definitions of these key terms.

The Routledge Dictionary of Politics (Robertson, 2004) provides the following working definitions of the state, civil society and government.

The state:

The state means, essentially, the whole fixed political system, the set-up of authoritative and legitimately powerful roles by which we are finally controlled, ordered and organised. Thus the **police**, the **army** and the **civil service** are aspects of the state, as is **parliament** and perhaps local authorities. But many institutions with a great deal of actual power, **trade unions**, for example, are not part of the state, because they are voluntary organisations which could, at least hypothetically, be dispensed with, and especially because they directly represent one section of society against another ... Political parties are not part of the state ..., and governments formed and supported by them are not quite part of the state. The offices of, for example, the **prime minister** or **president**, however, which depend entirely on parties for their filling and operation, are state offices...

Civil society:

... the whole range of organised and permanent institutions and behavioural practices, like the economy, churches, schools and family patterns, that make up our ordinary life under the ultimate control of the coercive force of politics. (Robertson, 2004:457)

Government:

This term is used in two different ways in *English-derived political systems*. It refers both to 'the body that has authority in a given unit – whether national, regional or local – and the whole constitutional system' (2004:201). *American English* talks of 'administration' to refer to a particular government, while *European languages* talk of 'the state' when referring to the general sense of government.

Another important concept that has many definitions and applications is the concept of power. The South African sociologist, Ran Greenstein, sums up power as follows:

Power:

Power is defined as a set of practices and discourses that govern the interactions between social actors... Power has several dimensions, of which three are of importance. These are:

Social power (access by individuals and groups to resources and control over their allocation),

Institutional power (strategies employed by groups and institutions in exercising administrative and legal authority) and

Discursive power (shaping social, political, and cultural agendas through contestations over meanings). (2003:1)

As the chapter unfolds, we'll see these terms in use.

As the political scientist PG Cerny points out in his book, *The Changing Architecture of Politics* (1990), the **nation state** is the most common political unit in the world today. But this is a fairly recent political phenomenon. Nation states developed during the last 300 years, and came to prevail over other political forms such as kingdoms, empires, chieftaincies and clans. It is important to remember that states are not 'natural' formations (like landscapes or continents). They are social constructions, made by human activity in the course of history. States are always in the process of formation, change and potential decay. The state, argues Cerny, is partly a product of historical accident and coincidence, and partly a product of design and intention. Once the structural patterns of a state are established, they become hard to shift. However, these structural patterns are ever-changing, not least because of the intentional and unintentional actions of agents. The combination of structure, agency and history, already covered in previous chapters, is also useful in analysing the nation state and its forms of government.

Joel Migdal (2001) offers a useful contribution by warning against 'mystifying' the state by viewing it as all-powerful and always able to do whatever it likes. Certainly, states may try to create uniformity and impose rules of behaviour within their borders, but the state is not the only source of authority in society. There are other social organisations that also have authority in respect of how people live their lives (for example, different religious organisations, or cultural practices, or ethnic identities). The state does not always prevail over these other sources of authority.

Migdal invites us to think of states and societies as mutually influencing each other, and sometimes in conflict with each other. He writes:

States are in conflict with a heterogenous flock of other social organisations that do not share the rules of the state. Whether and to what degree states can successfully triumph in their conflict with such organisations varies. ... The specific types of order and change in a society are the outcomes of the struggles ... among social organisations, including ... the state. How that struggle has developed and how it will proceed depend not only on domestic factors but on important historical and contemporary actions and alliances originating in the larger world system. (2001:230)

Why then do people voluntarily obey the state above other social organisations? Of course, there are laws, police, courts, and punishments that ensure compliance. But overall, most people conform voluntarily. Migdal suggests that the state has come to provide a framework within which we, as individuals, actively live our lives. The state provides us with a framework of rules and regulations, services and guarantees, out of which we forge our own 'strategies for survival':

State rules have ... protected the water one drinks, assured the terms for receiving credit, provided schools as a means of mobility for one's children, and much more. States offer a large chunk of the strategies of survival that people construct for themselves. Obedience and conformity, then, have been trade-offs accepted by individuals who see the state as a large piece of their personal life puzzles. (2001:252)

To sum up ...

Engaging with 'policy' requires critical reflection on a number of concepts that are complex and 'essentially contested'. Concepts of the state, government, civil society, and power are endlessly debated and open to different interpretations. Nonetheless, working definitions are necessary because the idea of 'policy' makes little sense outside of these concepts.

In dealing with political concepts, it is important to bear in mind that alternative ideas and practices are always possible. Power operates through all political discourses and activities, as people strive to influence and change the societies they live in.

Different kinds of policy

The argument so far is that policy is an important activity of governments in modern states. In democracies, elected governments have the authority – the legitimate power – to develop policies to give direction across the wide range of activities that make up public life.

Policies always engage with what already exists, either to change it or to preserve it. Policy seldom begins ‘from scratch’, or is written ‘on a clean slate’ in ideal circumstances. Because of this, it often involves compromises between what is possible and what is desirable. Policy is not neutral; it always pursues particular values or ideals. It often involves reaching agreements – sometimes called ‘settlements’ – among competing views and interests. Policies seldom operate in isolation. Rather, policies in one field interact with policies in other fields to produce a complex web. Education policies, for example, are affected by health policies, by social welfare policies, by immigration and settlement policies, and so on. Often, policies cut across each other, or contradict each other. Policies always have unexpected consequences. In current times in which globalisation is so dominant, policies are borrowed from other countries and contexts, and adapted locally – often with unexpected outcomes. In short, policy matters are always complex, even if they appear simple at first.

Policies serve a number of purposes and therefore take different forms:

- ▶ Policies may guide actions through laws and regulations, or set out procedures for doing things. (They are termed *regulatory* or *procedural*.) An example is the National Education Policy Act of 1996, which sets out the structures of decision-making in the education system, including relationships between the national department and the provinces.
- ▶ Some policies are about distribution or redistribution of resources. (They are termed *distributive* or *redistributive*.) An example is South Africa’s Equitable Shares Policy, which was developed in 1998 in order to distribute education funding to provinces according to their level of need.
- ▶ Some policies set out ideals that cannot necessarily be achieved in practice. These may be understood as *symbolic policies*. For example, the Constitution states that everyone has the right to education, but the state does not actually provide this. Symbolic policies play an important role in marking out ideals and values and, in some ways, all policies are partly symbolic. Symbolic policies may be important in opening spaces for legitimate struggle. But they may also be frustrating in appearing to promise what they do not deliver.

- ▶ Policies that are intended to be implemented are sometimes referred to as *substantive* or *material* policies. The South African Schools Act of 1996 is an example of substantive policy.

In education, policy approaches are indispensable for understanding how the system works. For example, the goals and principles underpinning the system are part of policy. Regulations for admission to school and the payment of fees are policy decisions. What should be taught in the curriculum is a matter of policy. The required qualifications for teachers and their conditions of work are set out in policy. The duties and responsibilities of principals, and the constitution and functions of governing bodies, are set out in policy regulations. All matters that relate to governance of the system are policy matters.

However, as this chapter will argue, education is a complex process, and it involves more than policy discourses can cover. Not all of the goals and purposes that were considered in Chapter 1 can be set out, or achieved, in policy terms. For example, the core activities of teaching and learning are framed by curriculum policy documents and there are policies for monitoring teachers. But the day-to-day practices that make up the texture of classrooms are hard to reach through policy mandates. Culture, meaning, emotions, creativity, ways of thinking – these and many other crucial dimensions of education lie tantalisingly beyond the reach of policy mandates, as we shall see.

How are policies made?

How do policies come into being? There are many debates about the ‘*policy process*’ and how it works. These debates are important because they help us to understand what can be expected of policy, and where the policy process ‘goes wrong’. Let’s look at some ways to approach policy:

- ▶ **Rational approaches** assume that the policy process is best understood as a sequence of steps, and takes place in a linear progression or in cycles.
 - ▶ The starting point of a policy is an issue that requires attention, or a problem that needs to be addressed.
 - ▶ Policy makers – those in governments and bureaucracies – decide how to deal with the issue. They ‘decide how to decide’ (for example, through an act of parliament, or a set of new procedures under an existing act, or a commission of inquiry, or public consultation, and so on).
 - ▶ They investigate different options, drawing on expert knowledge and taking into account the views of different interest groups.

- ▶ They then decide what option to take, and formulate policies accordingly. Often (but not always) these are written policies.
- ▶ They allocate resources and draw up regulations and procedures.
- ▶ They then implement the policies, monitor the results, and adjust the policies to ensure that they meet their goals.
- ▶ Then the cycle begins again.

Theorists like Carley (1980) argue that even if the policy process is not as neat as this description suggests, there is still value in defining its different stages and activities in a rational way. The rational approach is particularly useful in analysing how to intervene in the policy process, or improve it.

Rational theories of policy often see policy formulation and policy implementation as two separate steps in the process. The challenge, in terms of these theories, is to move smoothly from one step to the next, recognising that the process may get stuck along the way.

- ▶ **Critical approaches** to policy assume that the policy process cannot be put into a neat sequence. In fact, trying to impose a rational approach is likely to distort our understanding of what actually happens in the policy process. The world of policy is complex and messy. Issues don't simply present themselves as 'problems' to be 'solved'. Rather, those in power decide what issues they will address in terms of their values and interests. Setting the policy agenda is more political than rational. Policy makers don't always have full knowledge of the issues they address. Nor are they necessarily able to get what they want. Competing interests inside and outside of government may influence decisions in ways that are not necessarily 'in the best interests of all'. Policies are often patched-up compromises and temporary agreements rather than clear, long-term decisions or solutions. Policy implementation is often confused. In particular, confusion arises if policy implementation is viewed as a separate step from policy formulation instead of an integral part of it.

According to these analysts, policy-making is not necessarily a step-by-step linear or cyclical process. It's a mix of simultaneous activities, often at cross purposes. The complexity of policy processes, they argue, cannot be understood in terms of sequential steps. Nor can it be understood without taking into account the competing interests and power of social actors. (The theorist Stephen Ball has done important work within this approach to policy.)

HK Colebatch (2002) proposes a policy model that captures something of both of these approaches. He suggests that policy may be understood as a mix of two intersecting dimensions: vertical and horizontal sets of activities.

The *vertical dimension* covers the rational, top-down work of policy. Colebatch writes:

The vertical dimension sees policy as rule: it is concerned with the transmission downwards of authorised decisions. The authorised decision-makers [e.g. the government of the day] select courses of action which will maximise the values they hold, and transmit these to subordinate officials to implement.... This is a dimension which stresses instrumental action, rational choice and the force of legitimate authority. It is concerned about the ability or capacity of subordinate officials to give effect to these decisions (the 'implementation problem') and with ways of structuring the process of government so as to achieve this compliance. (2002:23)

The *horizontal dimension* of policy covers the activities of a broad range of people, both inside government and in other outside organisations, who are participants in the policy process. Negotiation and consensus are important so that these individuals and groups share the same understandings of the policy thrust. Their actions need to be brought in line, or 'structured' into, the policy process. In other words, there are many different participants (or 'agents', or 'actors') in the policy process, not only the authorised decision-makers. Colebatch writes:

The horizontal dimension sees policy in terms of structuring of action. It is concerned with relationships among policy participants in different organisations – that is, outside of the line of hierarchical authority. It recognises that policy work takes place across organisational boundaries as well as within them ... It is concerned with the nature of these linkages across organisations, with how they are formed and sustained, with the interpretive frameworks with which participants understand policy questions, and the institutional formations within which these are mobilised. (2002:23–24)

In Colebatch's model, the policy process involves both dimensions simultaneously, in a complex and unpredictable mix. He provides a diagram to illustrate his model (2002:24).

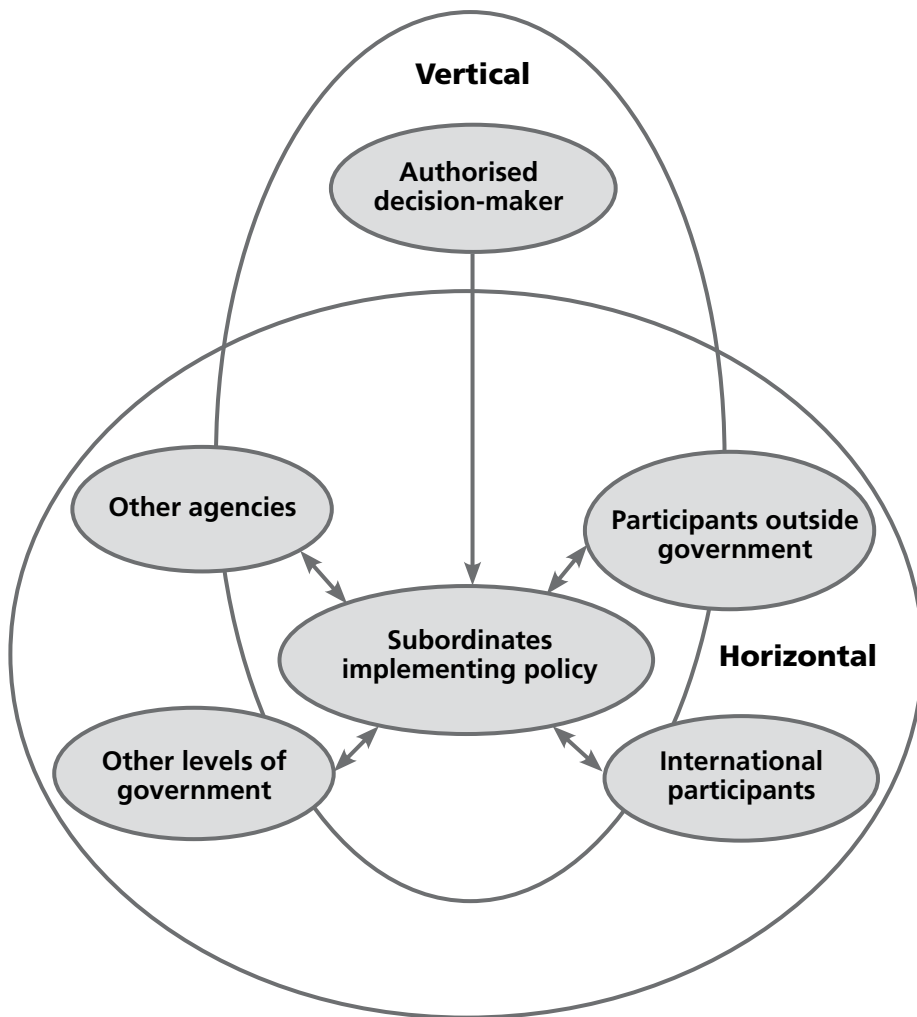


Figure 5.1: The vertical and horizontal dimensions of policy

To sum up so far ...

Policy – including education policy – is concerned with decision-making that is directed towards achieving goals and values. Policy activity involves planned procedures and careful choices, but it also involves hasty moves made in the heat of the game. Policies are often compromise positions that are stitched together with the goal of bringing about, or maintaining, some desired state of affairs. From one perspective, policies are about ideals and visions. From another perspective, they are about the practicalities of what can be achieved under the circumstances.

Policy offers important perspectives on education. In particular, policy discourses are helpful in thinking about how education systems are run in

modern states. Policy studies alert us to the complexity of achieving policy goals and to the dynamic contexts of policy implementation. In addition, we need to bear in mind that important dimensions of education cannot easily be captured in policy terms – something we explore more fully later in the chapter.

The next section provides a particular analysis of the new policy framework and policy process of the post-apartheid government in South Africa. There is no shortage of good writing on the policies of this period. (See, in particular, Alexander, 2002; Fiske and Ladd, 2004; Fleisch, 2002; Chisholm, 2004; Chisholm, Motala and Vally, 2003; Kraak and Young, 2001; Motala and Pampallis, 2001; Sayed and Jansen, 2001). Instead of summarising these analyses, the next section tells the story in its own way, using the concepts outlined in this chapter so far. It does not attempt to set out a detailed picture of the policies and their effects. Rather, the next section aims to provide an analytical framework for interpreting the approach to education policy in South Africa after 1994.

2 THE ‘POLICY TURN’ IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

As mentioned earlier, most of the debates on educational change in South Africa after 1994 were framed in terms of policy. How did the government approach its task of policy development? What policy framework was put in place? And what policies were adopted? We’ll look briefly at these issues, as well as some of the key policies to achieve equity and redress.

The 1994 government and its policy approach

The government that came to power in South Africa in 1994 was the product of a negotiated settlement between the liberation movements and the apartheid state. The Government of National Unity brought together former enemies to run the state on behalf of all of its people. Obviously this involved major compromises on all sides. The principles of the Constitution, which was in the process of being adopted, formed the basis for the new government. Equality and human rights would be the guiding principles, and there would be a place for the politicians and bureaucrats of the apartheid state to work alongside the ANC Alliance and other political groupings to build a new South Africa. In the 1990s, many of the

‘old guard’ stayed on in government, to be joined by the ‘new guard’ who had little or no experience of running a government.

Arguably, ‘the state’ was not ‘overthrown’ in South Africa, though power was transferred to a different group of people. The architecture of the state, as envisaged in the 1996 Constitution, followed the broad design template of a modern, western-style democracy. The Constitution was intended to provide a state-of-the-art version of conventional government, rather than a redesign of its principles. The goal of the government was to run the state and simultaneously to change it, based on the principles of equality and human rights instead of apartheid racial divisions. Common citizenship rather than racial difference was to be the basis of identity. And the approach taken to policy development, as we shall see, fell in line with the conventions of modern governance – parliamentary, cabinet and legislative procedures, together with a structure of separate government departments.

Policy development was a strong priority for the government. New policies were needed both to undo apartheid laws and practices, and to establish non-racial, rights-oriented laws and practices. A new vision for education was urgently required, as well as steps to change the obviously unequal apartheid education system. Policy-making had a double task: to dismantle the past and to put in place foundations for the future.

From 1990 onwards, with the unbanning of political organisations, there was a flurry of activity around possibilities for change. Activists and academics, trade unions and the business sector, members of NGOs and civil society groupings of all sorts were mobilised to think about alternatives in terms of policy – in terms of actions that a government might take. In place of the radical slogans of the liberation struggle, such as ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ and ‘Liberation before Education’, policy thinking (that is, thinking about actions government might take) became the order of the day. At this time, a loose grouping of people in the broad democratic movement gathered to form the *National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI)*. This was followed by the ANC’s *Implementation Plans for Education and Training*. The *National Training Strategy Initiative*, led by the National Training Board, brought government, business, labour and civil society groupings together to think about future possibilities for education. At the same time, the outgoing apartheid government had also issued its own policy vision in the *Education Renewal Strategy* and *A Curriculum Model for South Africa*. Discussions of educational change were dominated by thinking about what an incoming government might do. Policy discourses were the order of the day.

During this period of policy exploration, the broad democratic movement envisaged the integration of education and training in a system of lifelong

learning that would articulate adult basic education and training, formal schooling, and learning programmes for out-of-school children and youth. Structures representing civil society stakeholder interests would ensure accountability and participation at all levels of the integrated system. A national qualification framework (NQF) would plot equivalences or equal values between qualifications to maximise horizontal and vertical mobility. New policies would articulate changes across the whole of the existing education and training system.

When the government was formed in 1994, however, much of this 'horizontal' work (to use Colebatch's model) was set aside. A 'vertical' approach came to the fore, with the new 'authorised decision-makers' keen to establish the stamp of their rule. Some of the pre-1994 ideas were lost, such as the proposed integration of education and training into a single department. Others, such as the National Qualifications Framework, took different forms as they moved from the sketchy ideas of pre-1994 to the codified systems that the new government favoured. Structures for civil society stakeholder involvement were not included in the new designs. The government's moderate politics of compromise tempered the more radical pre-election ideals. Conventional approaches were favoured over experimentation.

Meeting the policy challenges

How did the 1994 government, in particular the education department, approach the policy challenges before it? The approach taken by the education ministry and department was to work with established procedures for parliamentary governance – white papers and national commissions, parliamentary debates and portfolio committees, legislation and regulations, bureaucracies and departments with line functions and appointed personnel. These processes were not fundamentally redesigned. Rather, they were reshaped to reflect the principles of the 1996 Constitution. Reflecting the times of globalisation, the government also 'borrowed' policy ideas from other countries, drawing on practices that were globally fashionable (such as financing education through markets and fees; decentralising governance through school-based management; and adopting an outcomes-based curriculum). The task was to run the existing system and, at the same time, to change it.

Faced with the enormous task of reforming the education system from top to bottom, the government gave immediate priority to its own structures. An early task was to dismantle the 19 separate apartheid departments of education, and to restructure them into nine provincially-

based departments and a national department. Early on, a mapping process was begun to see what schools existed and what their level of provision was (this was the Schools Register of Needs, published in 1996). A commission was set up to investigate higher education, and another to recommend policy for the governance and funding of schools. International expertise was brought in to address technical complexities, such as funding. (These are examples of horizontal policy activities, initiated by the government.)

In 1995, the first White Paper on Education and Training was published. It set out the governing principles for the system, and outlined a broad sweep of development initiatives that the government intended to take. These were subsequently turned into legislation or investigated in later white papers. White Paper One was a visionary document, which assumed the top-down, 'vertical' logic of government, with little or no reference to the 'horizontal' policy activities of the early 1990s.

Was this the only approach available to the government? The educationist Francine de Clercq argues convincingly that the 1994 policy makers had other choices available to them. In 1997, she wrote:

The Ministry of Education had several policy and strategy choices available to start transforming the uneven and discriminatory education system. It could have built on previous ANC policy work and options of the pre-election era and moved into implementation plans and strategies for action. It could have united the majority of the provincial departments around common policy priorities and plans for intervening in the education system. It could have mobilised, through well-focused campaigns and pilot programmes, educational communities around the worst inherited problem areas. It could have worked in partnership with non-governmental education organisations and other education interest groups to plan and evaluate how to deliver better quality services and activities to some traditionally disadvantaged communities. Above all, it could have strategised and devised programmes to change the culture and ethos, as well as build the managerial and leadership capacity, of its own state bureaucrats ... In reality, it did very little on these fronts. (1997:136–37)

Whether or not de Clercq's analysis is accurate, it is important in illustrating that governments always have choices, even if they present their choice as the only possible one. The policy approach favoured by the government – a top-down, 'vertical' logic – resulted in a framework of ideal-type policies for change, as the next section illustrates.

The landscape of change

In terms of the Constitution, the National Department of Education was given responsibility for developing norms and standards, frameworks and national policies for the system as a whole. Provincial departments were given responsibility for implementing these frameworks and delivering services (for example, providing schools). Interpreting this in strict terms, the National Department concentrated on developing policy frameworks for the system as a whole. It developed a series of ideal-type policy frameworks, without fully considering whether or how these could be implemented by provinces. The major new policy frameworks included:

- ▶ The National Education Policy Act of 1996: this set out national and provincial powers in education, and the structures for decision-making with the system (as described above).
- ▶ The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA): this was established in 1996 to set out the framework on which all qualifications could be registered and articulated with each other.
- ▶ The South Africa Schools Act (SASA) of 1996: this set out frameworks, norms and standards for the governance of schools. It stipulated that all schools should have democratically elected School Governing Bodies (SGBs) on which parents would be the majority. SGBs were given powers to determine admissions policy, language policy and school fees. They also had powers to administer properties, and make recommendations to provinces on hiring teachers. Section 20 gave basic management powers to all schools, and schools that had the capacity to manage their own budgets were given additional Section 21 powers.
- ▶ The 1998 National Norms and Standards for School Funding (amended in 2005): this set out the framework for funding provinces and schools. It included a pro-poor funding formula for part of the education budget, whereby more funds would be given to poorer provinces and schools.
- ▶ A National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE): this provided the basis for the Higher Education Act of 1997 and the redesign of the higher education system. In terms of this act, colleges of education were closed down or amalgamated with universities, and, in later developments a number of universities were merged. Altogether, 101 colleges were incorporated into universities, and universities and technikons were merged to form 24 higher education institutions.
- ▶ Curriculum 2005: this introduced an outcomes-based curriculum for general education. It was phased into schools from 1998, reviewed in 2000, and replaced by revised National Curriculum Statements.

- ▶ A National Committee on Further Education and Training (FET): this presented its report in 1997, as the basis for the Further Education and Training Act of 1998.
- ▶ A White Paper on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in 2000: this envisaged the introduction of a pre-school reception grade.
- ▶ A National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training: this advocated 'mainstreaming' of learners with special educational needs, and was followed by White Paper Six on Inclusive Education (2001).
- ▶ Frameworks for teacher employment were set out in the Education Labour Relations Act (ELRA) of 1995. Conditions of work, codes of conduct, and duties and responsibilities were agreed upon for educators. All teachers were required to register with the South African Council of Educators (SACE).
- ▶ A series of policies were adopted to monitor and evaluate quality in schools. The Development Appraisal System (1998) aimed to improve the performance of individual teachers through peer review. A Performance Measurement System (2003) was designed to evaluate teachers for promotion and salary purposes. The National Whole School Evaluation Policy (2001) looked at improving school effectiveness more broadly. To address the confusions and overlaps that arose between these different policies, the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) was introduced in 2003.

Thus a particular policy architecture was developed in the first period of government. As the implementation of these policies unfolded, the tasks of policy monitoring, evaluation and revision became increasingly important.

In many ways, the policy documents developed by the 1994 government were 'state-of-the-art'. They specifically drew on what was judged to be best international practice at the time, bringing global ideas into the local context. They set out a vision of what an ideal education system might look like in South Africa, based on two main sets of principles: equality and human rights on the one hand, and human resource development on the other. What they envisaged was a functioning education system, linked to a high-skill economy and a fully-fledged democracy. They envisaged a modern, non-racial, citizenry with equal rights, including the rights to different languages and cultures in a shared social order. This was enormously important in breaking with the past and giving a sense of new possibilities and direction to the education system. But it was a far cry from what actually existed in South Africa in terms of education, economy and society.

This approach to the policy process soon ran into difficulties. The policies could not be implemented as envisaged. They were formulated in terms of what would be ideal, rather than in terms of changing what actually existed. They emphasised structural design, without giving sufficient attention to implementation and the support that might be required in different contexts. Funding was inadequate to meet the policy designs, and the expertise and capacity of people working within the system were even more inadequate. The policies had many unintended consequences, as policy actors at the school level interpreted them in ways which had not been anticipated by policy makers. The overall result was that the deep inequalities did not shift substantially during the first 10 years of government (1994–2004) – a point we'll return to later.

To sum up ...

There are many policy examples that illustrate the difficulties of educational change in South Africa. In fact, every policy intervention across the system, from early childhood development to higher education, proved to be more complex and contested than anticipated. No educational practice is simple to change, not least because there are competing views and vested interests on every issue: finance; governance; curriculum; teachers' conditions of work, qualifications and remuneration; assessment and qualification systems; management systems; provisioning; training; inclusion and special needs education; and so on. Many actors influence a policy process.

Fundamental change of existing education systems is an extremely difficult task, and it takes time. As the first part of this chapter showed, policy and the policy process are essentially contested, and 'the state' or 'the government' are not always able to get what they want. Policies are often compromises, and they involve chance and circumstantial choices alongside well-considered decisions. Viewed in this light, South Africa post-1994 provides an excellent case study in the difficulties of educational change and the possibilities and limits of policy.

Looking across the many policy developments of the immediate post-apartheid period, two main strands of logic created tensions between what was desirable, and what was possible. These two logics both inspired and constrained the changes that policies could achieve. The one, stemming from the history of the liberation struggle, stressed justice, equity and rights. The other, stemming from the influence of globalisation, stressed neoliberal approaches to economic and social development. These two strands of thinking were not always compatible, as the following section illustrates.

3 FUNDING POLICIES TO PROMOTE EQUITY

For equity to be achieved, apartheid's legacy of inequality needed to be addressed. But this needed to be done within the limited budgetary framework available to the government. A brief look at policies for funding equity highlights the complexity of competing demands.

The vision of equity and the reality of inequality

The Constitution and White Paper One on education and training made clear the vision that all would be equal in the new order, and that discrimination would not be tolerated. All citizens would have equal rights, and basic education would be a right for all. In the words of White Paper One:

The paramount task is to build a just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners young and old throughout the country. (1995:7)

White Paper One also made an optimistic claim about the benefits of education (the kind of claim we questioned in Chapter 2):

Appropriate education and training can empower people to participate effectively in all the processes of democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression, and community life, and can help citizens to build a nation free of race, gender and every other form of discrimination. (1995:7)

This is an inspiring vision, but it is not a substantive policy statement. As the earlier discussions on policy and the policy process indicated, policy involves not only vision, but also goal-directed actions and the allocation of resources. As this vision was put into policy, and implementation unfolded, new challenges emerged at every turn.

The existing education system in the mid-1990s bore the marks of 40 years of apartheid. In many ways it was the opposite of an equitable and just system. It had been designed to provide 'world-class' schooling for the white minority, at the expense of other racial groups, who were the vast majority of the population. This systemic discrimination produced

highly unequal experiences and outcomes in schooling over many years. The apartheid system had produced unequal infrastructure, resources and capacity, and inequalities had deepened over the decades. In 1994, the apartheid government was spending four times as much on the education of a white child than a black child, while in the heyday of apartheid as much as 12 times more was spent on white children than on black children. Not surprisingly, white children received more years of schooling, learnt in smaller classes in better provisioned schools. White children were taught by better qualified teachers, had lower failure and repetition rates, and performed much better in matriculation (Senior Certificate) examinations. The system was flawed by its apartheid character, which emphasised compliance in an authoritarian, prejudiced and distorted society. Nevertheless, the white sector was the best performing part of the system.

In contrast, the majority of schools were not equipped for success, and many township schools were barely functioning. High repetition and drop-out rates pointed to inefficiencies in the system. Poor results in Senior Certificate examinations indicated that the system was not providing education of sufficient quality for the majority of students. The School Register of Needs, which was completed in 1996, showed the stark deprivation of the majority of schools serving black students: 24% had no water within walking distance, 13% had no toilet facilities at all, 57% had no electricity, 69% had no learning materials, 83% had no library facilities, 6% were in such poor condition that they were not suitable for education at all, and a further 11% were in serious need of repair (see Bot, 1997). The greatest deprivation was in rural schools, and consequently in provinces which were largely rural.

The challenge

The bar graphs below illustrate the dilemma faced by the government in changing the distortions of apartheid school funding. Using 1989 figures as an example, the bar graphs illustrate a funding pattern in which the minority of the population (classified white) received the bulk of the funding for schooling. The first graph shows the comparative sizes of the four main population groups, and the second graph shows the scale of expenditure for each of the groups.

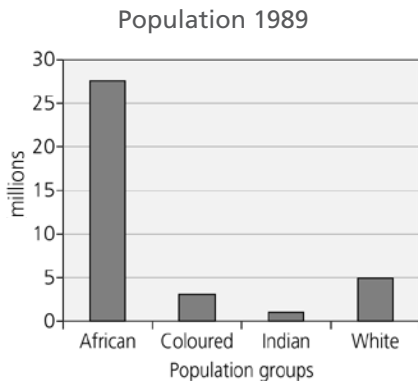


Figure 5.2: Population 1989

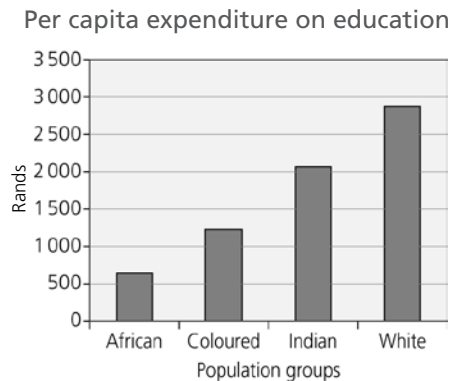


Figure 5.3: Per capita expenditure on education, 1989

These funding distortions presented a dilemma for policy makers in the 1994 government. How could they give effect to the principles of equity and social justice?

- ▶ On the one hand, given the differences in population size, if everyone were to be given equal schooling at the level of white provision, this would mean an enormous increase in state expenditure on education.
- ▶ On the other hand, the former white schools functioned at the highest level in the system. Dismantling their privileged position would cut across powerful vested interests. It would also jeopardise strategies for high-skill economic growth.

Faced with this dilemma, the government's response was cautious. Its aim was to expand and reform the existing system, rather than radically change it. As Servaas van der Berg (2001) suggests, it focused its equity measures on shifting resources, rather than changing educational outcomes.

In their book *Elusive Equity*, Edward Fiske and Helen Ladd (2004) provide a useful discussion of the different forms that equity may take. It may take the form of *equal treatment*, where, for example, there is no discrimination on the basis of race and everyone is treated equally. Or it may take the form of *equal educational opportunity*. This is a broader standard and may involve affirmative action or redress to correct inequalities within the system. Or it may take the form of *educational adequacy*, which shifts attention to outcomes, and asks what minimum provisions should be in place for everyone to have an adequate education. An 'adequate education', they suggest, would be the education level needed for people to participate fully in political and economic life. Having analysed the financing reforms in post-apartheid South Africa,

Fiske and Ladd concluded that the government took an ‘equal treatment’ approach to equity, rather than the broader approaches of equality of opportunity or adequacy.

In short, the government’s equity policies aimed to provide more resources to poorer schools, while ensuring that wealthier schools could supplement their funding through charging fees. This approach to equity was influenced by neoliberal thinking, as the next section illustrates.

The logic of neoliberalism and its effects on school funding

As well as its equity goals, the government was powerfully influenced by neoliberal thinking, which had become prominent across the world, particularly with globalisation. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, the logic of neoliberalism emphasises limited government spending, maximum efficiency measures, a mix of public and private contributions to education financing, and market choice. As policy development in South Africa unfolded, these neoliberal ideas provided the overarching framework within which equity policies were understood.

The idealism of the 1996 Constitution, and the simultaneous restrictions of neoliberalism, created a complex and contradictory framework for funding policies. Implementation did not always proceed as envisaged, and this compounded the difficulties of competing goals.

► Budgetary allocation

An early decision was taken that the funding allocation to education in the national budget would not be significantly increased, in spite of historical backlogs. The government argued that its spending on education should be line with the spending patterns of similar countries, and that in comparison with these South Africa’s expenditure on education was on the high side. This meant that there would be no major additional resources to fund equity measures. Instead of allocating increased funds to education, the government aimed to use existing budgets more efficiently, and to bring additional funds into the education system by charging school fees. Equity would be achieved by redistributing resources from the rich to the poor.

For the first few years, from 1994 to 2001, education spending increased slightly, but after that, it began to decline. The Education Department struggled with the Treasury against its stringent budget allocations. In 2005, the Director-General of the Department of Education commented as follows in response to a Treasury publication, *Provincial Budgets and Expenditure Review 2001/02–07/08*:

The Treasury says that "South Africa's spending on education as a percentage of GDP shows a slight downward trend from 6,8% in 1995 to 5,2% in 2001 ..."

A drop from 6,8% to 5,2% of GDP is not a "slight downward trend". It is not "slight" by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, it is a massive cut. And we can take no satisfaction in the fact that, and I quote, "the level is still above other countries at similar levels of development" (p. 24) or even that our average of 5,8% over the period 1995 to 2003 is, and I quote, "high relative to comparable countries"(p. 11).

I have to emphasise that a decline in percentage share over six years of 6% is of concern. This is not a gradual decline. This is not an acceptable decline. This is a sharp decline and it is a decline that we simply cannot afford. (DoE, Press Release: 2005)

As a result: In the context of limited spending, it was simply not possible to fundamentally redress historical imbalances in schooling. Improvements were certainly made to poor schools, but they remained under-resourced, particularly in comparison to former white schools. And this meant that racial inequalities in schooling persisted, since most black children attended the poorer schools in the system – and achieved lower pass rates in Senior Certificate examinations.

► **Equitable shares funding formula**

To promote equity, and to encourage all provinces to spend the same amount on education for each learner, the national government drew up a formula for weighted funding for provinces. Each province would be given an 'equitable share' of national revenue to provide public services in the sectors of education, health and welfare. The equitable shares formula was designed to ensure that every province could spend the same amount of money per student. Thus the poorer provinces were allocated comparatively more funding. This was a major step away from apartheid's pro-rich funding policy, towards pro-poor funding.

However, funds were allocated to provinces in block grants, and the national government could not force provinces to spend their allocations for education. Provinces did not always spend their funds as the national department intended – to its continuing frustration. In some cases, provinces did not have the capacity to spend their allocations as intended. And in other cases, provinces had different priorities from the national department.

As a result: The structural divisions between national and provincial government hampered the implementation of funding policies. Lack of capacity within government at national and provincial levels also hampered policy implementation. One consequence of provincial differences is that the amount spent on education per learner differs from province to province. In 2006, the educational planners Martin Gustafsson and Firoz Patel estimated that:

On average, the Free State and Northern Cape learner is funded around 20% more than the KwaZulu-Natal or Eastern Cape learner. (2006:70)

► National funding norms

As another equity measure, the 1998 National Norms and Standards for School Funding of 1998 provided for redirecting a small part of the budget (about 5%) from rich schools to poor schools.

Provinces were required to rank their schools according to a poverty index. If, for example, a province had 5 000 schools, it listed them from the poorest to the least poor. It then divided the list into five equal groups each with 20% of the schools (these are known as ‘quintiles’). Funding was divided up according to quintiles with more money being given to the poorest quintile. The poorest quintile was given 35% of the funding, while the least poor (or the richest) received only 5%. In 2005, this system was amended, and national quintiles were drawn up to take into account the different poverty levels of provinces.

As a result: This is a clear equity policy, but its impact has been limited, mainly because the overall amount that is redistributed from this source is comparatively small. There are also big differences between provinces in terms of how this funding is distributed to schools, so that the poorest schools do not always benefit equally. Another unexpected outcome is that poorer schools have not always used funds to improve their facilities, in case this would move them up in the quintiles, in which case they would receive less funding!

► Public contributions through fees

To increase the overall funding available for education, the government took the decision to charge fees for schooling. Fee levels would be determined by school governing bodies (SGBs), who were responsible for running the finances of each school. No upper limit (or ‘cap’) was set on what fees could be charged. Schools were able to use the fees they raised to supplement state funding. In particular, they were able to hire additional teachers using these fees.

One reason for adopting a partnership approach between the state and parents was to encourage the middle classes to keep their children in state schools, rather than moving them to private schools. This measure was intended to maintain quality education within the public sector. It was envisaged that state funding would provide a basic resource allocation to all schools, and that wealthier communities could supplement this funding with additional resources. To encourage wealthier schools to accept poorer students, the national department developed a fee exemptions policy. However, the department did not provide additional funding to cover costs to the schools when students were granted exemptions.

In terms of equity, this policy had a negative effect that had not been anticipated: it *increased* inequalities within the education system. Schools in wealthier communities, mainly former white schools, were able to charge fees of thousands of rands, while schools in poor communities were barely able to collect fees at all. Through charging high fees, privileged schools were selective on the basis of class. Patterns of privilege and disadvantage were carried forward into the post-apartheid system, this time driven by wealth rather than race. Most of the former white schools became racially mixed, and most white children attended former white schools. But because of population size and location, most black schools remained segregated. And the poor schools remained poor.

In spite of fee exemption policies, many poor children could not afford fees and were excluded from schooling. High fee schools remained beyond the reach of most poor children. Although it was against the law to turn away children who could not pay, schools often did so. Principals used several methods to force parents to pay fees, including withholding results – even though this was explicitly against government policy.

In 2007, the government adjusted this policy to introduce a number of fee-free schools and to increase exemptions. But the principle of charging fees remains in place, although the government has discussed possibilities of changing this, and of compensating schools for exemptions. Fee-free schools are schools for the poor, at the edge of the system. And inequalities within the system are entrenched.

As a result: Private fees brought additional funding into the system, but the policy counteracted the equity measures that were introduced. The result was that deep inequalities remained in the system. The fee policy benefited wealthier schools by enabling them to raise additional funding, but it brought no direct benefits for the poorest schools. Parents, SGBs and principals were able to act in ways not anticipated by policy makers – including not complying with regulations. The fee policy brought hardship for poor communities and cut across the constitutional rights of children to education.

On the other hand, Gustafsson and Patel (2006) argue that overall, the expenditure on education is more equitable than it was before 1994. They point out that the government is spending less per white child than it was under apartheid, without detrimental effects on quality, and it is spending much more per black child. The additional money brought into the system through fees thus enables equity measures to operate without quality being diminished. (Quality is an issue we return to later.)

Clearly, there are arguments to be made on both sides of the issue.

► Personnel costs and teacher deployment

In education budgets, personnel costs make up the bulk of expenditure. The government needed to equalise teacher salaries and working conditions for equity reasons, but at the same time it also wanted to bring down the overall personnel costs. These costs were high – up to 90% of some provincial budgets – and this left little money over for other educational expenses. In 1997, teacher salary scales were made equal for all races. To bring overall costs down and to equalise learner – educator ratios within and between provinces, the government introduced measures to ‘rightsize’ and ‘redeploy’ the teaching force. But the process was poorly managed, and was met with resistance from teacher organisations and in some cases school governing bodies. Teachers were offered voluntary severance packages, which many took. The result was that teachers left the system at their own choice, instead of in a planned way, and at greater cost than the government had anticipated. Many teachers with scarce skills, such as mathematics and science teachers, were lost to the system. Moreover, the government’s redeployment policies were challenged in court, and its powers were weakened.

As a result: The personnel situation took some time to stabilise. In 1998, agreements were reached with unions allowing for different class sizes, and new national ‘post provisioning’ norms were set out for provinces. By 2005, personnel expenditure was reduced to 82% of the budget. However, the government’s capacity to redeploy teachers and thus to control the personnel budget was limited by court decisions. Groups outside of government have been able to act against the government in unforeseen ways to secure their own interests.

► School-based management and markets in education

School-based management takes different forms in different countries. The new policy dispensation in South Africa gave considerable financial and management powers to individual schools. Under conditions of market competition, schools become responsible for looking after their

own individual interests. In the logic of market individualism, each school takes care of itself and its client group (the school community), without considering the needs of other schools or the system as a whole. Equity and equality are not part of market logic. In fact, schools may come to view equity and equality as luxuries they cannot afford.

School-based management gives powers to schools without necessarily ensuring that they have the capacity to use these properly. It tends to favour schools with parent bodies that have resources over those that do not. Some schools have powerful SGBs which are able to muster resources to the school's benefit. Others have SGBs whose members are too poor to afford the transport to attend meetings.

As a result: A competitive individualism at the school level tends to work against building a common system of good quality education for all. And in practice it draws schools further apart in their capacities to function.

Other examples

The examples given have focused on the framework of policies for school funding, but there are many other examples of contradictory effects and unintended consequences of the policies that were outlined earlier. Some of these are listed below:

- ▶ Curriculum 2005 was put in place as a new outcomes-based curriculum, but syllabuses and workplans were not developed to accompany the outcomes statements. Well-trained and well-resourced teachers were able to take advantage of the freedom and flexibility this offered them. While less well-trained teachers were under-resourced for teaching the new curriculum. There were insufficient libraries and other materials to support teachers, and in-service training was inadequate. The unintended consequence was to strengthen the most privileged parts of the system, and further disadvantage the least privileged. (This is discussed further in Chapter 6.)
- ▶ Policies were developed to mainstream learners with special education needs. But there were inadequate resources for schools and teachers to support these students in mainstream schools. This leaves learners with special education needs in a potentially more vulnerable position than before.
- ▶ In an attempt to raise the quality of teaching and learning in schools throughout the country – as well as the quality of education system in general – two teacher monitoring systems were drawn up:

Developmental Appraisal (DA), which was intended as a form of peer review to improve performance; and Performance Measurement (PM), which was intended to evaluate teachers for promotion and salary increases. For schools, a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) system was developed, which was intended to evaluate the overall effectiveness of schools – including teaching and learning.

However, there were major problems in the conceptualisation and implementation of these systems. The three initiatives overlapped and proved to be confusing. In particular, there was confusion between the requirements of teacher development/improvement (DA) and teacher performance measurement (PM). These two approaches were in tension, pulling in contradictory directions. In many cases, DA and PM were not actually carried out, but simply ‘signed off’. In effect, many schools and classrooms were not adequately monitored for quality.

In a move to bring greater coherence and reduce logjams, these three initiatives were brought together in the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) in 2003. This was a formal agreement between the Education Department and teacher organisations reached in the Education Labour Relations Council – which makes it hard to adjust when problems become evident. The IQMS is a complex set of procedures. It is by no means certain that it will be able to resolve the contradictions or to bring effective monitoring into the system. Moreover, as the educationist Everard Weber (2005) notes, accountability is directed at schools and teachers – but what about the accountability of the Education Department?

- ▶ The supply and deployment of teachers has proved to be a difficult task. Policy makers had anticipated that teachers would need to move from former white schools to overcrowded township schools. However, they did not anticipate that parents would exercise their choice to take their children out of poorly performing township schools and send them to schools they thought were better, either in townships or in suburbs. It was not anticipated that there would be empty township schools, alongside overcrowded township schools. Initial calculations of an oversupply of teachers gave way to calculations of teacher shortages.

IS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION ONLY 'SYMBOLIC'?

The right to education was affirmed in the Constitution of 1996 and repeated in White Paper One, which stated:

Everyone shall have the right: (a) to basic education, including adult education; and (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.

As well as these rights, the White Paper stated the right of equal access to educational institutions, protection from unfair discrimination, and rights to language, culture and religion.

In practice, however, the right to education turned out to be a symbolic policy, rather than a substantive one. The government did not provide free, basic education for all. Instead, the policy that everyone should pay fees or apply for fee exemptions resulted in children being excluded from schooling, and thereby denied their rights. Moreover, although the policy of equal rights means that discrimination on the basis of race is not allowed, it is mainly black children who are denied their rights to education. Thus, 'equal rights' masks the fact that discrimination continues in a racial form.

What this illustrates is that statements of rights do not, in themselves, deliver rights in practice. In fact, declarations of equality and rights have a poor record of delivery in many modern states. As the sociologist Bryan Turner (1986) has pointed out, modern states profess to support equality, but they remain places of profound social and economic inequalities. These inequalities are widespread and very difficult to shift.

And in times of globalisation, these inequalities are increasing, not decreasing.

In other words, statements of rights are not what they seem initially. In fact, it is necessary to go beyond statements of rights to achieve social change. Modernist discourses of rights and citizenship seem to imply certainty. But on closer examination, their certainty fades, and they turn into 'essentially contested concepts' which do not have single, set meanings. They are not as straightforward as they appear.

Rather than assuming that declarations actually provide rights, it may be more useful to view them as providing frameworks for action. Declarations

of rights open up spaces for legitimate struggle to achieve them. Rights are won (and lost) through human agency in historical contests as structures form and change.

To sum up ...

This section has illustrated the contested nature of the policy process, and the difficulties in driving changes from the top. Competing logics, such as political equity versus financial self-reliance, produced unforeseen results. In the implementation of policies, ‘vertical activities’ of interest groups (such as parent bodies and teacher unions) were able to influence outcomes. These mixed results suggest that while policy holds many possibilities for change, it also has its limits.

4 WEIGHING UP THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIRST 10 YEARS

In judging the policy achievements and failures of the first 10 years of democratic government, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that system change is cumbersome and takes time. It would be unrealistic to expect that policy could achieve the miracle of undoing the profoundly unequal apartheid system and replacing it with a high quality, equitable system in a matter of 10 years.

So, what did policies achieve during this period?

First, they provided the vision and plans for a redesigned education system. The policies erased the racial and ethnic identities that apartheid had enshrined in law. Instead, all people would share the common identity of a modern citizen, vested with rights in a constitutional state. Education would be non-racial and there would be rights to basic education, language and culture. These rights were, in the first instance, more symbolic than material, but they changed the ground rules for what people could claim and work towards.

Second, new policies provided a more equal distribution of government resources for schools, which was a major achievement. The poorest schools received attention in terms of facilities. Comparing the situation between 1996 (when the Schools Register of Needs was compiled) with the situation four years later, big strides had been made, as the following table shows. However, enormous backlogs of provisioning still remained.

Province	Telephone		Water		Electricity		Toilets		Schools with classroom shortages	
	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000
Eastern Cape	19	59	57	59	22	40	75	81	65	47
Free State	26	59	61	68	42	54	83	87	24	16
Gauteng	91	96	94	97	86	93	98	99	26	26
KwaZulu-Natal	35	68	65	68	38	43	90	94	61	48
Mpumalanga	39	52	73	62	51	51	88	93	50	55
Northern Cape	76	92	90	97	81	88	98	98	16	10
Limpopo	38	49	34	63	21	51	91	93	66	49
North West	37	57	82	89	45	64	95	92	42	28
Western Cape	94	98	94	98	88	95	100	100	16	17
National	40	64	65	71	42	55	88	91	50	40

Source: DoE, 2004:11

Percentage of schools with telephones, water, electricity and classrooms.

Third, new policies brought more children into school. In comparing 1996 with 2001, Statistics South Africa (2005) points to a number of findings:

- ▶ Enrolment rates increased between 1996 and 2001.
- ▶ The majority of students aged seven to 15 were in school in 2001.
- ▶ Primary school enrolments were almost complete.
- ▶ Secondary school enrolments had increased, but enrolments were dropping off in later years.

However, Statistics South Africa also noted persistent inequalities within the system. In its words:

In general, the quality of teaching in schools in different areas of the country requires further examination. As would be expected, children are moving through the education system at differing rates, which vary noticeably by population group. In particular, some black African children in the more rural provinces are moving through the system rather slowly. Some coloured children are also moving rather slowly through the system. The quality of education in schools, especially those in the former homelands, requires further research. (2005:62)

Most former white schools became desegregated – but the same did not hold true for former black schools, particularly in rural areas.

Fourth, in terms of *quality*, policies brought mixed results. This is particularly clear in terms of South African students' performance in comparative international tests as well as national tests. For example:

- ▶ In the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), testing maths and science proficiency at Grade 8 level, South Africa came last of the 50 participating countries. Top performers were Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Moreover, in the TIMSS test, the best South African performances were only equal to average Singaporean performances. In the 1999 TIMSS test, South Africa came last of 39 countries. Less than 0.5% of South Africa's students reached the top 10% international benchmark. (Howie, 2001)
- ▶ On tests administered by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) in 2005, South Africa scored ninth out of 14 countries in the region. Top performers were Seychelles, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. South Africa's results were worse than those of Swaziland, Botswana and Mozambique, but better than Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia and Malawi. Yet many of the countries that performed better than South Africa spent less on their education systems.
- ▶ In the UNESCO Monitoring Learner Assessment (MLA) tests for Grade 4 in 1999, South Africa's numeracy score was 30%, a lower score than Mauritius, Senegal and Malawi (Reddy, 2005).
- ▶ The National Education Policy Act also provides for South Africa to undertake 'systemic evaluations' on a regular basis at key points (Grades 3, 6 and 9). The Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation (2001) found low achievements across all provinces in literacy and numeracy (Kanjee, 2007). The Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation (2004) also pointed to low levels of performance across Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), maths and science. It found a big difference in performance between urban and rural students, and between those whose LOLT was the same as their home language, and those for whom the LOLT was different.

A major problem is that on closer analysis, overall test results fall clearly into two groups. The best results are achieved by historically privileged schools, and there is a big gap between these and historically disadvantaged schools. This suggests that while South Africa has improved access to schooling, it has not provided access to quality schooling for the majority of the population. It suggests that 'quality schooling' is provided for a minority of the population – and even here, the quality of achievements does not measure well against international benchmarks.

Based on statistical analysis of 1993 survey data, the researchers Servaas van der Berg, Louise Wood and Neil le Roux (2002) noted that inequalities in black education remained profound. In their words:

The problem does not lie in the performance of black learners from better socio-economic backgrounds, which was still not particularly good compared with children of other race groups. Rather, it lies in the abysmal performance of the largest part of the former black school system and its failure to improve educational outcomes rapidly among the poor so as to overcome the legacies of the past. Policy makers appear to be insufficiently aware of this. (2002:305, emphasis added)

The issue of quality is one of the most pressing concerns on South Africa's education policy agenda. Accountability, testing and evaluation are key policy activities now that the policy framework is in place.

5 THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF POLICY CHANGE IN EDUCATION

This chapter began by looking at theories of policy and the policy process. It suggested that policy is a form of governance that is characteristic of modern states. As South Africa took on the hallmarks of modernity through its 1996 Constitution, it used conventional policy processes to bring about changes in its education system.

It is tempting to assume that policy processes in modern states operate rationally, and that governments are able to bring about the changes they envisage through following appropriate policy steps. This is partly true, but partly misleading. To recap on some points about implementing policy:

- ▶ Governments are not the only social actors who influence outcomes, even if they are, at least in theory, the most powerful. Other social actors play a powerful role in shaping policy outcomes.
- ▶ The policy process is not a smooth, rational, unfolding sequence. Policy makers may have limited knowledge and capacity, or competing values and priorities. Policies may bring unanticipated consequences, and they may unintentionally hamper change.
- ▶ Policies – particularly one-size-fits-all policies – may not match contexts of implementation. Contexts of implementation have a great influence

on policy practice, and contexts themselves vary greatly. (The significance of different contexts is well highlighted by the differences in test performances, particularly in terms of historically disadvantaged schools.) Policies that work in one context may fail in another.

- ▶ There are many layers in education systems, and policies pass through many hands as they are implemented. Policy ideals are always changed in practice by people's actions. In the policy narrative provided above, there are a number of examples of human agents acting 'unpredictably'.
- ▶ Richard Elmore (1996) talks of policy as 'additive', 'layered' and 'filtered', words that capture the sense that policies are never pure and undiluted as they are implemented. Policies are not put in place on clean slates, and they always interact with other policies. Economic, political and social influences shape policy ideas in unpredictable ways as they move into practice.
- ▶ Policies need to be continually monitored and changed as new issues and priorities emerge. Whereas the immediate priorities of the post-apartheid government were to expand access as a means to achieve equity, a priority that subsequently emerged was improving quality.

Considering the limitations of policy, educationists such as Michael Fullan (1993) and Milbrey McLaughlin (1987) make the following point:

'Policy cannot mandate what matters.'

In other words, policy cannot *command* or *order* that quality teaching and learning will happen in schools and classrooms.

This is not to say that policy is not important. On the contrary, public policies are an indispensable part of all government education systems. Policies provide the regulatory framework on which education systems depend. They are master narratives that provide visions and principles, rules and regulations, frameworks for funding, governance, curriculum and assessment, qualifications, and conditions of work for teachers. Without policies on these matters, it is hard to imagine how the education system of a modern state would function.

Policies are important, but they are not all-powerful. Policies offer possibilities for educational change, but these have limits. They often turn out to be blunt tools which cannot bring fine-tuned results. There are many reasons for this.

Importantly, policy outcomes depend on the actions of human beings, who interpret them in different ways, and respond in ways that make sense to them. Though policy makers may prefer to emphasise structural changes, they cannot sidestep human agency and its influence on policy outcomes.

Ultimately, education policies reflect the broad social, economic and political contexts in which they are formed. It is unrealistic to imagine that education policies could change the overall structures of state and society. Yet these structures often depend on education policies for their maintenance or change. The policies that were formulated in the 1990s – the post-apartheid period – need to be understood as part of the dynamics and parameters of the government and society of the times.

The challenge is to understand the *limitations* as well as the *possibilities* of policy in bringing about change in education systems. Policy studies over many decades have generated useful knowledge about policy, policy implementation and educational change. Let's now look briefly at some of these insights from experience, and consider the situation in South Africa in the light of these insights.

Insights from experience

A number of significant research studies provide insights that assist in assessing where policies have succeeded as levers of change, and where they have not succeeded. What follows are examples of insights generated by research over recent decades:

Insight 1: Committed governments and consistent policy make a difference

UNESCO's *Global Monitoring Report* of 2005 provides useful pointers about the difference that policy is able to make. It compares four countries that have achieved Education For All (EFA) goals, with seven countries that have not, but that are committed to achieving them.

- ▶ Countries that *perform well* on EFA have three common characteristics:
 - ▶ They have a teaching profession held in high esteem, with high expectations of quality and well-developed pre-service and in-service training.
 - ▶ There is continuity of policy over time.
 - ▶ There is a high level of public commitment to education, emanating from a strong political vision.
- ▶ Countries that are trying to, but have not yet reached EFA targets, appear to show the following:
 - ▶ Concerns with achieving access are attended to before concerns for quality. Concerns for quality appear to come after efforts to

expand access. These countries show more progress on indicators of gender and resource provision than on indicators of student learning outcomes.

- ▶ Governments appear to play less of a leading role in providing a long-term vision for education.
- ▶ The supply of well-supported and motivated teachers seems less well established.

The UNESCO findings suggest that government commitment and leadership is crucial for education policy success. Given the differences between countries, the EFA Report concludes that there is unlikely to be a single general theory of successful educational change. However, it is clear that vision, consistent policy and leadership from governments make a difference to educational outcomes.

How does South Africa fare in relation to this insight?

This is a matter of debate. Supporters of government policy might argue that it fits the first scenario above (performing well), in that the government is working towards all of these points. However, critics would find ample evidence that it fits the second scenario better. Deciding which is correct is a matter of weighing arguments and evidence – and it is also a matter of perspective and judgement.

Insight 2: It is very difficult to change the ‘core’ activities of schooling, particularly through policy

Several theorists, including Elmore, have pointed out that it is extremely difficult to change classroom practices and the structures that support these. Elmore (1996) calls this the ‘core’ of educational practice, defined as:

- ▶ how teachers understand the nature of knowledge
- ▶ how teachers understand the students’ role in learning
- ▶ how these ideas about knowledge and learning are put into practice in teaching and classwork
- ▶ the structural arrangements that support teaching and learning, such as the physical layout of classrooms, teachers’ responsibilities for groups of students, processes for assessing student learning, and so on.

These core activities are very hard to change, particularly by government action.

Elmore (1995) also points out that it is easier to change school governance arrangements than it is to change classroom practices.

Structural changes, he suggests, have high symbolic value and are relatively easy to make. They give the appearance of change, without actually bringing changes to teaching and learning practices.

Though Elmore does not say this, the same may be true of elaborate reporting and accountability procedures such as those used for quality monitoring. They may give the appearance of tackling quality issues, without actually changing conditions in schools and classrooms. They may consume time and energy which would be better spent on actual classroom activities.

Changing what teachers do in classrooms involves not only policy change. It also involves teachers *learning* how to do things differently. This means providing support to teachers, and also holding them accountable (a point we discuss in Chapter 6).

How does South Africa fare in relation to this insight?

Again, this is a matter of debate. Certainly, the government has favoured structural changes with high symbolic value. It has introduced many regulations in attempting to solve problems. And available evidence shows that classroom quality has not improved to the desired extent. In fact, it would be fair to say that the government has not managed to change ‘the core’ activities of education through its policies. And the core activities reflect deep inequalities in students’ experiences of schooling, and their achievements.

Insight 3: Policy implementation needs to be anticipated – policy implementers always influence policy outcomes

In her article entitled ‘Learning from experience: lessons from policy implementation’, Milbrey McLaughlin (1987) suggests a number of lessons that can be learnt from past experience:

- ▶ The first lesson is that policy implementation is extremely difficult. In her words: ‘It is incredibly hard to make something happen, most especially across layers of government and institutions’ (1987:172). Policy makers need to anticipate difficulties and blockages, rather than be surprised by them.
- ▶ The second lesson is that policy implementation depends partly on people’s *ability* to do what is required (McLaughlin terms this ‘*capacity*’). It also depends partly on people’s *motivation* (McLaughlin terms this ‘*will*’). It is easier to build capacity (for example, through training) than it is to persuade people to support new policies.

- ▶ The third lesson is that policy implementation requires a strategic balance of *pressure* and *support*. Pressure may be used to achieve changes in behaviour (for example, a rule that staff and students must come to school on time). But pressure seldom changes people's beliefs and values (for example, whether staff and students are enthusiastic about coming to school). Pressure is important in focusing attention on what is required, but it needs to be accompanied by support. Support may be used to build capacity and will (motivation). But experience shows that support alone is not enough to change people's practices. According to McLaughlin, a combination of pressure and support is essential for policy change.
- ▶ The fourth lesson, according to McLaughlin, is that 'change is ultimately a matter of the *smallest unit*' (1987:174). It is individuals, not institutions, who implement policies. Individuals are not motivated only by institutional incentives, but by their personal and professional beliefs. McLaughlin also suggests that teachers' 'resistance' to new policies may, in some cases, reflect their professional judgement that new policies are no better than what already exists.
- ▶ The fifth lesson is that policy effects are always indirect, and policies are always transformed by 'the implementing unit'. This leads McLaughlin and others to suggest that *bargaining* and negotiation are inevitable activities in the policy process. This is very similar to Colebatch's notion of 'horizontal' policy activity – that negotiation and consensus-building are important so that participants share the same understandings of policy. It is also compatible with Fataar's (2006) approach which shows how networks of human activity shape policy and its outcomes. Policy implementation is not about 'transmission' but about participation and negotiation.

McLaughlin points out that discourse at the macro-level of the system is different from discourse at the micro-level of the classroom. She suggests that the discourses of policy makers tend to engage with macro-analyses of the system as a whole, and emphasise organisational processes and structures. However, the discourses of schools and teachers often engage with micro-level, individual concerns, such as the day-to-day activities of schools. These two discourses emphasise different logics and perspectives, and *both* are necessary for policy to work. It is not a matter of choosing one over the other. It is a matter of engaging with *both*.

How does South Africa fare in relation to these insights?

Again, the answer to this is debatable. What has been suggested so far, though, is that the government has favoured top-down rather than participative policy approaches. It has not viewed policy implementation as a matter of bargaining or negotiation.

Critics might argue that the government has assumed that ‘policy can mandate what matters’. Of course, supporters would disagree, and might point to the importance of the new policy design as a basis for implementing change.

Again, this is a matter to be weighed up. Argument, evidence, perspective and judgement come into play.

Insight 4: ‘Backward mapping’ is a useful analytic approach to policy change

Richard Elmore (1979/80) provides a powerful analytical tool for addressing the differences between top-down, macro-level approaches to change, and bottom-up, micro-level approaches. He describes the first as ‘forward mapping’ and the second as ‘backward mapping’.

Policy makers usually use a ‘forward mapping’ approach. This approach –

...begins at the top of the process, with as clear a statement as possible of the policymaker’s intent, and proceeds through a sequence of increasingly more specific steps to define what is expected of implementers at each level. At the bottom of the process one states, again with as much precision as possible, the original statement of intent. (1979/80:602)

Elmore argues, however, that it is a myth to think that implementation is controlled from the top. In practice, he argues for the opposite process – thinking backwards from the point of change (the smallest unit) and analysing what would be required for this unit to change. ‘Backward mapping’, he says:

...begins not at the top of the implementation process but at the last possible stage [the smallest unit]... It begins not with a statement of intent, but with a statement of the specific behaviour at the lowest level of the implementation process that generates the need for a policy ... Having described a relatively precise target at the lowest

level of the system, the analysis backs up through the structure of implementing agencies, asking at each level two questions: What is the ability of this unit to affect the behaviour that is the target of the policy? And what resources does this unit require in order to have that effect? (1979/80:604)

Forward mapping, suggests Elmore, is an analytic solution that stresses formal organisational structures, rules and regulations, and favours ‘formal devices of command and control’ such as organisational structures, rules and regulations, and lines of authority. Backward mapping, in contrast, is an analytic solution that focuses attention on factors that influence lower-level implementers: their knowledge and problem-solving abilities, and what motivates them. These are what McLaughlin would term ‘capacity and will’.

How does South Africa fare in relation to this insight?

It would be hard to find evidence of backward mapping in the development of education policy in South Africa. A backward mapping approach, for example, would start with existing conditions in schools, and work out how to change them.

Supporters of the government’s policy approach are likely to say that backward mapping is not a practical approach for policy makers. Critics might respond, using McLaughlin’s points, that policy makers need to use *both* the macro-logic of systems and the micro-logic of classrooms.

To sum up so far ...

One of the themes running across the examples of research findings above is that policies provide a framework within which a range of implementation activities take place. Rather than trying to control implementation, and failing, it may be more useful for policy makers to plan for implementers to bargain and change policies to suit their own circumstances.

This is partly based on the recognition that the smallest units of education policy change – teachers and students in classrooms – are far away from bureaucrats in education departments. And they operate with logics that are tantalisingly out of reach of policy mandates. (It is these logics that will be the focus of the next chapter.)

5 CONCLUSION: POLICIES FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This chapter has used the framework of policy to explore educational change in South Africa. Policy operates on the scale of the nation state as a form of goal-directed decision-making. Policy and policy discourses contribute an indispensable approach to understanding educational change, but it is important to recognise that policy and policy discourses are not as straightforward as they may seem.

As Connolly (1974) has pointed out, political concepts may appear to be clear, but in practice most of them are essentially contested concepts. The policy process may appear to be rational and sequential, but in practice it is contested and sometimes confused. Policies for schooling may appear to be logical and authoritative, but in practice they are implemented beyond the direct reach of policy mandates.

Policies for equity in education in South Africa reflect all of these complexities. They also reflect the possibilities and limitations of their context – South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy. Education policy change in South Africa cannot be understood apart from this context, which sets the foundations and parameters for educational change. The overriding feature of the new order is that it was the product of negotiation and compromise. What was achieved was the establishment of a modern constitutional state: a parliamentary democracy with equal rights and common citizenship. The new state was a capitalist state which aimed to participate in neoliberal globalisation. As mentioned earlier, a modernist democracy and a market economy are not fundamentally transformative in terms of redistribution or equity, and this is reflected in the education policies of this period.

This chapter has suggested that the South African government adopted conventional ways of thinking about education, the policy process and the nature of change. The education system it designed reflected ideas drawn from advanced western democracies rather than ideas designed to engage with actual conditions in schools and classrooms. The policy process it used emphasised parliamentary conventions and 'vertical' logic, rather than capacity building and 'horizontal' engagement. And the changes it achieved were additive rather than transformative.

'Thinking like a government'

One way of understanding what was entailed in the political transition is provided by Foucault's concept of 'governmentality'. Put briefly,

governmentality means thinking and acting like the government of a modern state. Governments in modern states have particular procedures and techniques of power (which Foucault terms ‘regimes of practices’) and draw on complex domains of knowledge (which Foucault terms ‘savoirs’). Policy is part of this governmentality; Foucault refers to policy as a ‘rational art of governing’ (1991:70). Put simply, a governmentality approach suggests that the nature of being in government in a modern state entails engaging with particular practices and ways of thinking. These tend to influence thought and action in certain ways. They ‘normalise’ what people in government can and cannot say through their regimes of practices and their savoirs, and these tend to rule out radical speech and action. These practices and ways of thinking do not operate deterministically. Rather, they set the boundaries of ‘common sense’ so that social actors who come into government start to ‘think like a government’.

A good example is provided by Blade Nzimande, leader of the South African Communist Party and head of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee at the time of White Paper One and the South African Schools Act. Nzimande (who left parliament shortly afterwards to work in civil society) wrote as follows about White Paper One:

It is important to understand that, from the perspective of the ANC and the Portfolio Committee, this was the first White Paper on Education and Training. We saw it as a crucial document that would formally collapse the apartheid edifice in education. We wanted a triumphalist White Paper that celebrated in formal policy terms the victory of education struggles. For this reason, the first draft of the White Paper, released as a discussion document, generated intense resistance and defiance among National Party politicians. They attacked what they saw as the document’s militant language. The matter was so contentious that it actually brought Mandela and de Klerk together for serious bilateral discussions

We decided that the language of the White Paper could be changed and made more acceptable to these groups without giving ground on the actual goals we wanted to achieve through the new education policy. We therefore changed the language of policy without losing ground....

It is important to understand our actions as ANC parliamentarians in the context of the times. Remember these were the days of the Government of National Unity (GNU). It was important at that time

to secure the transition. The situation was explosive and we were on the brink of civil war. Our policies were therefore crafted in a context where ensuring a smooth transition was as important as developing policies for social transformation.... (2001:41)

Opening the doors of learning?

An important achievement of the post-apartheid government was its ability to keep the schooling system functioning at a time of enormous changes. A new template for the system was set in place. Under the new education policies, the system was expanded, modernised, and de-racialised. Access was increased. After 10 years, most children were in school, and participation rates were improving. A degree of stability was achieved. Yet in terms of quality, the system confronts major problems. Old and new patterns of inequality run deeply through the education system, impacting on the quality of the system overall. Schools serving poor communities are very different to those serving the wealthy, and racial inequalities still saturate the system. Equity measures have been limited and have not been adequate to the task of providing quality education for all. Equity and quality were part of the vision for the post-apartheid system, but policy achievements in this regard were limited.

Certainly, the government did not redesign the education system to open the doors of learning to all in the short term. Its approach has been more cautious and incremental than that.

Has the new policy template provided an adequate grounding for an education system in which the doors of learning might be opened to all in the future? The answer remains to be seen.

Within the framework of policy set in place by the post-apartheid government, the next chapter moves to another scale to examine the smallest and most important units of education systems: teachers and students in schools and classrooms.

LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

Since 1994, a number of policies have been implemented and legislation promulgated to create a framework for transformation in education and training. A summary of key policies and legislation follows:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) which requires education to be transformed and democratized in accordance with the values of human dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. It guarantees access to basic education for all, with the provision that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education. The fundamental policy framework of the Ministry of Education is stated in the Ministry's first White Paper: Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System February (1995). This document adopted as its point of departure the 1994 education policy framework of the African National Congress. After extensive consultation, negotiations and revision, it was approved by Cabinet and has served as a fundamental reference for subsequent policy and legislative development.
2. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996) was designed to inscribe in law the policies, as well as the legislative and monitoring responsibilities, of the Minister of Education and to formalise the relations between national and provincial authorities. It laid the foundation for the establishment of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), as well as the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), as intergovernmental forums to collaborate in developing a new education system. As such, it provides for the formulation of national policies in general and further education and training for, inter alia, curriculum, assessment and language policy, as well as quality assurance. NEPA embodies the principle of co-operative governance, elaborated upon in Schedule Three of the Constitution.
3. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) promotes access, quality and democratic governance in the schooling system. It ensures that all learners have right of access to access to quality education without discrimination, and makes schooling compulsory for children aged 7 to 14. It provides for two types of schools – independent schools and public schools. The provision in the Act for democratic school governance through school governing bodies, is now in place in public schools country-wide. The school funding norms, outlined in SASA, prioritise redress and target poverty with regard to the allocation of funds for the public schooling system. SASA has been amended by Education Laws Amendment Act 24 of 2005 so as to authorise the declaration of schools in poverty stricken areas as “no fee schools”.
4. The Further Education and Training Act (1998), Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998), and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001). The latter provides the basis for the development of a nationally co-ordinated further education and training system, comprising the senior secondary component of schooling and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. It requires the FET institutions, established in terms of the new legislation, to develop institutional plans, while making provision for programme-based funding and a national curriculum for learning and teaching.
5. The Higher Education Act (1997) provides for a unified and nationally planned system of higher education. It furthermore gave the green light for a statutory Council on Higher Education (CHE), which advises the Minister while being responsible for quality assurance and promotion. The Higher Education Act and Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (1999) formed the basis for the transformation of the higher education sector, with implementation being informed by the National Plan for Higher Education (2001).
6. A whole spectrum of legislation, including the Employment of Educators Act (1998), to regulate the professional, moral and ethical responsibilities of educators, as well as the competency requirements for teachers. The historically divided teaching force is now governed by one Act of Parliament and one professional council – the South African Council of Educators (SACE).
7. The Adult Basic Education and Training Act (ABET) (2000) provides for the establishment of public and private adult learning centres, funding for ABET, the governance of public centres, as well as quality assurance mechanisms for this sector.
8. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (1995) provides for the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which forms the scaffolding for a national learning system that integrates education and training at all levels. The joint launch of the Human Resources Development Strategy by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education on 23 April 2001 reinforces the resolve to establish an integrated education, training and development strategy that will harness the potential of our adult learners.
9. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Grades R-12) embodies the vision for general education to move away from a racist, apartheid, rote model of learning and teaching, to a liberating, and nation-building and learner-centred outcomes-based initiative. In line with training strategies, the reformulation is intended to allow greater mobility between different levels and between institutional sites, as well as to promote the integration of knowledge and skills through learning pathways. Its assessment, qualifications, competency and skills-based framework encourage the development of curriculum models that are aligned to the NQF in theory and practice.
10. The Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development (2000) provides for the expansion and full participation of 5-year-olds in pre-school reception grade education by 2010 as well as for an improvement in the quality of programmes, curricula and teacher development for 0 to 4-year-olds, and 6 to 9-year-olds.
11. The Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, 2001, explains the intention of the Department of Education to implement inclusive education at all levels in the system by 2020. Such an inclusive system will allow for the inclusion of vulnerable learners and reduce the barriers to learning by means of targeted support structures and mechanisms. This, in turn, will improve the participation and retention levels of learners in the education system, particularly with regard to those learners who are prone to dropping out.
12. The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, Act 58 of 2001, provides for the establishment of Umalusi, which is charged with the provision of quality assurance in general and further education and training, the issuing of certificates at the various exit points, control over norms and standards of curricula and assessment, as well conducting the actual assessment.
13. The National Financial Aid Scheme Act, Act 56 of 1999, provides for the granting of loans and bursaries to eligible students at public higher education institutions, as well as the administration of such loans and bursaries.
14. The Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act 16 of 2006) provides for the regulation of further education and training, the establishment of governance and funding of public further education and training colleges, in Further Education and Training, the registration of private further education and training colleges, and the promotion of quality in further education and training.

Source: Extract from the Department of Education's Annual Report, 2006/07

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CHAPTER 6

Schools and classrooms as places of learning

This chapter uses the scale of schools and classrooms to explore how the doors of learning might be opened to all students. Education policy making, which operates on the scale of state and civil society, and deals with government intention and action, often struggles 'to mandate what matters' on the terrain of schools and classrooms. This chapter answers the question: 'What will make a difference to the learning outcomes and experiences of different students at school?' It provides answers in terms of what students bring with them from their homes and families; which schools they attend; how well their schools function and how effective their teachers are; and what happens inside the classroom in terms of teaching, learning and assessment. The chapter makes a case for schools to teach formal knowledge codes to all students, and proposes a pedagogy that provides for structured and active teaching as well as more open approaches. It provides an example of the 'Productive Pedagogies' model. The challenge is for South Africa to offer schooling experiences to all its students, that meet the goals explored earlier in this book: systematic teaching and learning; active participation in the world; and individual development. In terms of social justice, both recognition and redistribution are needed. No less than this is required if the doors of learning are to be opened for all.

WHAT WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF DIFFERENT STUDENTS AT SCHOOL?

Each school is a place of its own. It has its own ‘feel’, and its students have their own distinctive experiences, even though they share a common place called ‘school’. Some of their most important experiences will be about other students – friends, or people that they don’t like. Everyone will remember one or two teachers who have made an impact on them – good or bad. Everyone will remember something they liked or didn’t like about learning in school.

Some students will succeed at school, and others won’t. For some students, school will be a stepping stone to further education, or a job. Others will repeat grades, fail, or drop out. What makes the difference? While it is true that every student’s experience is unique, it is also the case that there are shared patterns of experiences and outcomes. To use C Wright Mills’s analysis, each person lives their own biography within shared social structures (such as schools). To understand our individual lives, we need to understand the times in which we live and the circumstances of other people like ourselves. Sometimes, success and failure is mainly a personal matter, but sometimes it is more about structural opportunities.

Research on schools in South Africa and elsewhere over many decades shows that there are patterns to success and failure in schooling. In very broad terms, we know the answer to the question of ‘What will make a difference to the learning experiences and outcomes of different students at school?’ In broad terms, what makes a difference are:

- ▶ What students bring with them to school from their homes and families
- ▶ Which schools they attend
- ▶ How well their schools function and how effective their teachers are
- ▶ What happens inside the classroom, in terms of teaching, learning and assessment.

Let’s look at each of these in turn. And at the same time, let’s also consider what can be done about them.

1 WHAT STUDENTS BRING TO SCHOOL FROM THEIR HOMES AND FAMILIES

For many decades, researchers, educators and policy makers have recognised that schools do not produce equal outcomes for all students. They have tried to understand why this is so. Over the years, different theories have offered different explanations for the unequal outcomes of schooling. Different theories and discourses make different assumptions about why this is so and what may be done (what ‘the problem’ is and what its ‘solutions’ are). Implicit in each theory or discourse are assumptions about structure, agency and social power.

Let’s look at a few of these.

Individual ability and ‘meritocracy’

Theories which focus on individual students and their abilities have an enduring appeal. We tend to assume that unequal outcomes are a reflection of unequal abilities. Success at school is the result of individual merit. Those who did well at school and rise to the top are those with most ability and merit.

However, the theory of ‘meritocracy’ cannot explain why success and failure in school are not random. They reflect broader social patterns. Closer analysis of students’ performance at school shows that it relates to their social backgrounds. Middle class students tend to do better than their working class counterparts. Wealth and poverty make a difference. Whether or not the culture of the home matches the culture of the school makes a difference. Gender also makes a difference. In other words, schools generally mirror the patterns of privilege and disadvantage of the broader society, rather than remedy them – though there are always individual exceptions.

The Coleman Report: the school’s failure to equalise opportunities

One of the most notable studies to link school performance with students’ social backgrounds was the 1966 Coleman Report on *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. This was a major research study, commissioned by the US Congress to investigate why public schools were not offering equal educational opportunities to all individuals. In particular, it was concerned about why African American (then called ‘Negro’) students

were performing poorly in school achievement tests. The Coleman Report was an enormous study: it tested 570 000 students and surveyed 60 000 teachers in 4 000 schools across the United States of America.

The expectation was that the research would identify problems with the schools that African American students attended. Instead, the Coleman Report found disturbing results: it was not schools, but students' personal and family characteristics that had the most influence on their performance. In the words of the report:

The inequalities imposed on children by their home, neighbourhood and peer environment are carried along to become the inequalities with which they confront adult life at the end of school. (Coleman et al., 1966:325)

This was a controversial finding, because it appeared to place the responsibility for poor results onto students and their families – or, perhaps, onto the wider social structure. Neither reason was welcome to those who assumed that inequality could be remedied through schooling. In other words, if 'the problem' lay with individual families, or with the social structure, schooling would not be 'the solution'. The implication that schooling made little difference to students' life chances was not palatable for many people. The report was widely criticised, and remains controversial to this day. It has been criticised for its methodology, for the definitions and indicators it used to measure equality of opportunity, and for the ways it interpreted its findings. Nevertheless, it remains a study of great significance.

A closer reading of the findings of the Coleman Report provides many interesting insights into schooling and social inequality. In particular, it throws light on some of the taken-for-granted assumptions about schooling and its consequences.

First: In looking at students' achievement in school, Coleman and his colleagues made a key point about achievement tests and schooling. They noted that there are links between what schools teach, what tests measure, and what the workplace requires for success. Schools, they noted, 'teach certain intellectual skills such as reading, writing, calculating, and problem solving' (1966:20). These are the skills that are measured by standard achievement tests – and they are the skills that are rewarded in the workplace. Importantly, Coleman and colleagues pointed out, these skills are not neutral nor culture free. Talking of achievement tests, the Coleman Report stated:

These tests do not measure intelligence, nor attitudes, nor qualities of character. Furthermore, they are not, nor are they intended to be, "culture free". Quite the reverse: they are culture bound. What they measure are the skills which are among the most important in our society for getting a good job and moving up to a better one, and for full participation in an increasingly technical world...

In other words, achievement tests and the intellectual skills on which they are based already reflect cultural assumptions. And the cultural assumptions they reflect are linked to social power and social success.

Second: The report pointed out that schooling did not help disadvantaged students to catch up with others. It did not help them to overcome their initial disadvantage. Instead, these inequalities widened as students moved through school. They tended to perform poorly, lagged behind their more privileged counterparts, and often dropped out. The report noted the following:

Whatever may be the combination of nonschool factors – poverty, community attitudes, low educational level of parents – which put minority children at a disadvantage in verbal and nonverbal skills when they enter the first grade, the fact is the schools have not overcome it. (Coleman et al., 1966:22)

For educators, this raised the question of whether different forms of classroom instruction might help to build the skills of children who come to school without them – a point we'll return to later in the chapter.

Third: The report showed without doubt that students' personal and family characteristics were more influential than schools in affecting students' life chances. But having established this as the overriding effect, the report also found that schooling had differential effects. It made the most difference for low achieving students and for those who came to school least prepared in terms of what schooling demanded. Facilities, curriculum and particularly teachers had a greater effect on these students. The Report concluded, therefore, that:

It is for the most disadvantaged children that improvements in school quality will make the most difference in achievement. (1966:22)

Furthermore, the feature of schooling found to have the most significant effect on achievement for all students was good teachers. Again, their

effect was greatest on children whose backgrounds were most educationally disadvantaged. Again, the report stated a clear implication:

A given investment in upgrading teacher quality will have the most effect on achievement in underprivileged areas. (1966:317)

In other words, the Coleman Report found that schools *did* make a difference for disadvantaged students, although this was not an overriding difference. It suggested that provision of good teachers and upgrading of teacher quality would be likely to improve student achievement in disadvantaged areas. And education systems could make a difference through supplying well-prepared teachers to disadvantaged schools and supporting them to do their work.

Fourth: Two other findings of the Coleman Report are worth mentioning:

- ▶ The report found that ‘the extent to which an individual feels that he [or she] has some control over his [or her] own destiny’ (1966:23) made more of a difference than all of the school factors put together. (This is what we call ‘agency’ in this book.)

When disadvantaged students possessed a sense of control or agency, this worked powerfully to their advantage:

Minority pupils have far less conviction than whites that they can affect their own environments and their futures. When they do, however, their achievement is higher than that of whites who lack that conviction. (1966:321)

- ▶ The report found that peers had a strong influence on students’ attitudes and achievements:

Finally, it appears that a pupil’s achievement is strongly related to the educational backgrounds and aspirations of other students in the school. (1966:22)

The Coleman Report was contentious at the time, and its findings are still disputed today. We need to take care when research findings are translated from one context to another, and cannot assume that the findings apply in a different time or place. Nonetheless, the Coleman Report provides an important set of research findings that have been widely debated, and have generated further research. Also, the report gives some ideas about how to

improve the school experiences of disadvantaged students – particularly in terms of teachers. These ideas may be well worth investigating in the South African context.

Culture of poverty

Let's turn to another theory of how home backgrounds influence student achievement. A theory that became prominent in the 1950s and 1960s (and is still used today) is that poor people live in a 'culture of poverty'. The logic of this theory is that a culture of poverty traps poor people into cycles of low achievement and low expectations which are passed on from generation to generation. Poor school achievement is part of this cycle. Social inequality is the result.

In short, this theory sees 'the problem' as a cultural one, related to individuals and their families, and its 'solution' lies in compensating students for their 'deficits'.

However, as critics point out, this approach does not explain why poor people are poor in the first place, or why a society produces poverty. 'Culture' is not a concept that explains social and economic conditions – though it may help to explain the beliefs people have or the meanings they make of their situations.

An explanation such as this implies that poor people have themselves to blame for their circumstances. It suggests that the reasons for poverty are to be found in the attitudes and behaviour of the poor themselves, who are seen as 'deficient' or 'lacking in capacity'. Poverty is portrayed as a problem experienced by individuals, to which they and their families contribute. However, when poverty is widespread, an alternative approach (in Mills's terms) would be to view it as a *social problem*, not simply a personal one. Poverty as a social problem relates to the structure of opportunities available to people. It cannot be understood or solved at the level of individual psychology or capacity. An approach that 'blames the victim' is ultimately unhelpful. It does not help people to address the causes and possible remedies for their condition, and thus may disempower them further.

Applied to education, the culture of poverty is a deficit model, which sees children as requiring 'compensation' for their 'deficient' backgrounds. It runs the danger of stereotyping and stigmatising children, and devaluing what they do have and what they bring to school. This is not to deny that poor children may need food, clothing and health services to be provided for them through the schooling system to improve their chances

of successful learning. They may also need specific teaching to assist their chances of success. But the reasons for this are not due to their personal qualities or deficiencies; the reasons lie in social conditions beyond their making.

Theories of structural reproduction and post-structural power/knowledge

An alternative set of theories highlights social structure rather than individual behaviour. In this approach, inequalities stem from the structures of society. Under capitalism, the inequalities of ownership result in unequal class relations. According to reproduction theories, schools reproduce, rather than change, the class inequalities of capitalism. Famous reproduction theorists like Althusser (1971) and Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that middle and upper class children stayed on at school longer, to be prepared for white collar and professional work. Working class children dropped out of school sooner, to be left with unskilled work or unemployment. A significant study by Willis (1977) showed how working class 'lads' left school willingly to embrace their fate as their choice. Other structuralist theories showed that schooling perpetuates social inequalities of race and gender.

Structuralist theories such as these move the focus away from individuals and emphasise social structures as the cause of inequalities. However, as critics point out, there is a danger that these theories may over-emphasise structure (thus being deterministic), and give too little space for human agency. By locating 'the problem' and its 'solution' squarely in broader social structures, they leave little or no role for individuals or schools to improve conditions. The implication is that little can be done about schooling until broader social relations are changed – a position that could lead to pessimism and inactivity.

Poststructuralist theories have favoured less 'totalising' accounts of schools and inequality. Instead, they argue that different discourses operate to create different subject positions and power/knowledge relationships. Language functions to construct what is 'normal', and to position people as subjects in unequal relationships to others. Discourses are always partial accounts, and it is always possible to work against them. Discourses have cracks and weak points, which offer possibilities for change. Discourses of inequalities work in particular ways to construct 'problems' and offer 'solutions'. We have seen, for example, how different discourses approach the issue of student performance. By highlighting the ways in which discourses relate to power and knowledge, poststructuralist theorists try to

open spaces and to rupture ‘common sense’ understandings. In these cracks and ruptures, it is possible to work for something different.

Summing up so far ...

Different theories look at and understand inequality in different ways. Whatever theories are used, there is, by now, little room to deny that there is a link between schooling outcomes *in general*, and the patterns of privilege and disadvantage in societies. The question is how best to understand this link and work ethically towards greater social justice. This requires multiple approaches and actions.

How may critical educators work with structural inequalities in schooling? There is no single answer. In terms of debates on structure and agency, it is important to remember that social patterns do change through human action over time. On the one hand, it is important not to view individuals and whole groups as having no choice but to live out their predetermined social fates. On the other hand, it is important not to assume that individuals have the power to change the conditions of their lives simply because they would like to. We need to recognise that individuals and their actions are able to make a difference, and at the same time recognise that social patterns are entrenched in ways that limit free choice. Both positions need to be held in tension in working for social justice.

At this point, it is useful to look at concepts of social justice alongside concepts of structure and agency. The work of the US feminist philosopher, Nancy Fraser, offers particular insights on the forms and possible remedies of injustice.

Redistribution and recognition

Fraser (1995) proposes that there are two major forms of injustice in society, though the two very often intertwine. These two forms of injustice stem from different sources, and call for different remedies:

- ▶ The first is *socioeconomic* injustice. Examples are exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation or poverty. These injustices stem from the political and economic framework of society. The remedy for socioeconomic injustice is *redistribution*. This may take moderate (or ‘affirmative’) forms such as welfare measures, which do not change the underlying political and economic framework. Or it may take a radical form, where the underlying framework of economic structures is transformed.

- ▶ The second is *cultural or symbolic* injustice. Examples are cultural domination, non-recognition or disrespect. These injustices stem from social patterns of representation or status. The remedy for cultural or symbolic injustice is *recognition*. This may take either a moderate ('affirmative') form, such as multiculturalism, which recognises or values cultural difference without attempting to change the social framework; or it may take a transformative form that would change the whole framework of identity. An example of this is South Africa's shift from the splintered apartheid identities based on race, to the common identity of equal citizenship with a bill of rights.

Although these two forms of injustice very often go together, it is nonetheless useful to identify which is at work, and in what ways. This serves as a basis for understanding what remedies might be applied.

In terms of schooling ...

Schooling systems may easily reflect both forms of injustice. Socioeconomic injustices are evident where differences of wealth and poverty affect the resources that are available to students in their social networks, and the quality of schools they attend. Cultural injustices are evident in race and gender discrimination, or when home languages are devalued. Fraser's point is that the remedies of recognition will not help if the injustices are socioeconomic. And the remedies of redistribution will not be appropriate if the injustices are about cultural disrespect. This is well illustrated in South Africa where the recognition of equal rights to education does not mean the redistribution of sufficient resources to give education to all. Similarly, a 'multicultural' approach (recognition) does not remedy injustices that stem from poverty; these require remedies of redistribution. In other words, recognition and redistribution are different remedies for different injustices. In very many cases, both injustices are evident, and both remedies are necessary. However, conceptual clarity enables remedies to be better targeted.

Generally, however, schooling offers few remedies to social problems, unless specific efforts are made. And it is more likely to offer more moderate (or 'affirmative') remedies than 'transformative' ones. Broader social inequalities ripple through schools in complex ways – inequalities of poverty, class, race, gender and region – and schooling tends to perpetuate both forms of injustice if they are features of the broader society. In fact,

the most effective way for schooling to do this is to act as if these injustices did not exist by treating everyone the same. However, it needs to be remembered that schools and particularly teachers can, and do, make a difference – even if transformation is unlikely.

Working with and against inequality

There is no simple way to work with the tensions between individual and social inequalities, between determinism and people's capacity to change their circumstances, between redistribution and recognition. Instead of attempting to resolve these tensions, the approach taken here is to recognise the power of both positions, to hold both, and to work within these spaces towards greater equity and justice.

The French theorist, Pierre Bourdieu, captures this 'space of tension' well. Bourdieu, a well-known reproduction theorist, developed the concept of 'cultural capital' as a means of analysing class-based inequalities. This concept brings together socioeconomic *and* symbolic power. Unlike 'culture of poverty' explanations, it focuses on social structure *and* individual effects. In using Bourdieu, the challenge is to work against the determinism of reproduction and to explore spaces for intervention for change.

Bourdieu argues that middle class students come to school with cultural resources of all sorts that give them advantages at school. These include what he calls 'crude' privileges: 'having the right contacts, help with studies, extra teaching, information on the education system and job outlets' (1976:110). They also possess, from their home backgrounds, a particular 'cultural capital': particular values, attitudes and tastes, an ethos of social mobility, and a range of cultural artefacts such as books, musical instruments and so on. Schools draw heavily on the cultural capital and ethos of the middle classes, so that for these students, there are continuities between home and school. These students are able to turn their social advantage into educational advantage, as their social heritage becomes scholastic achievement. In Bourdieu's words, the 'social gift' of cultural heritage appears to be the 'natural gift' of ability or intelligence (1976:110). In contrast, for students who do not have these advantages, failure to achieve is often interpreted as 'lack of ability'. That said, schools do provide the possibility that some of these students may, with effort, acquire what others are given by their home backgrounds.

For Bourdieu, all social groups possess cultural capital in terms of internalised values, attitudes and dispositions. But the cultural capital of dominant social groups is associated with power and regarded as the most valuable. It is their symbolic systems and cultural practices that are imposed through schooling. Bourdieu terms this cultural imposition 'symbolic violence'.

However, he does not suggest that schools should be dismantled to end this symbolic violence. Rather, he calls for this to be recognised and worked with. He points out that the simplest way for schools to perpetuate inequalities would be to ignore initial inequalities and treat everyone as equals. If the teaching and assessment methods of schools treat everyone as equal, they automatically produce unequal results which perpetuate inequalities. In contrast, a 'really universal pedagogy', Bourdieu argues, would 'take nothing for granted', and would be 'organised with the explicit aim of providing all with the means of acquiring that which ... is only given to the children of the educated classes' (1976:113). (These are points we'll return to later in the chapter.)

Of course, Bourdieu was writing about social class in France, and this cannot automatically be mapped onto all forms of inequality everywhere else. In particular, it should not simply be mapped onto racial inequality in South Africa without careful thought. Nonetheless, Bourdieu's analysis of cultural capital and the symbolic violence of structural inequalities provide useful concepts to work with. It is also worth being alert to his point that inequalities are most easily perpetuated when they are not recognised to exist.

That said, it is important to work critically and reflectively with all theories. While Bourdieu was an important reproduction theorist, it would be incorrect to read his work as simply determinist without recognising the possibilities for change that he offers. In this regard, it is worth remembering that his later scholarship, in particular, worked against what he saw as the inhumane effects of a neoliberal political economy.

The various theorists we have mentioned so far give different explanations of educational inequality. What they have in common is the recognition that schools as they stand do not remedy inequality. Bourdieu and the Coleman Report show particularly clearly that if schools are left as they are, they will certainly perpetuate inequalities under the guise of equal treatment and meritocracy. But both suggest that it is possible to work against what seems inevitable. In particular, there are spaces to work with in relation to teaching and learning.

The case of South Africa

It is clear that apartheid imposed racially-based inequalities in schooling, and the system also produced inequalities of social class, gender and region. Apartheid education, in this sense, was a special case of structural inequality and symbolic violence – as well as a coercive social system. Its injustices required remedies of both redistribution and recognition.

After apartheid, schooling was deracialised and simultaneously opened up to choice and the market. The tight link between race and class was severed. With this, inequalities shifted in nature to emphasise social class. Recognition rights were won, on a formal level at least if not in daily practice. On the one hand, this means that middle class black children are able to enter formerly white schools. This opens up questions of whose ‘cultural capital’ is dominant, and what ‘symbolic violence’ is carried out (bearing in mind that the social context is different to Bourdieu’s, and the situation is a historically changing one). On the other hand, large numbers of children (mainly black) continue to live in poverty, which illustrates that redistribution has not taken place. The extent of poverty and inequality raises questions about whether inequalities in schooling could ever be reduced without substantial measures for redistribution.

In terms of schooling itself, there are questions of what teachers are able to achieve under these different circumstances, and what adjustments would be required for ‘a really universal pedagogy’ that ‘took nothing for granted’. For, as the educationist Basil Bernstein succinctly stated in the 1970s, ‘Education cannot compensate for society’, and schools, if left alone, are likely to perpetuate inequalities under the guise of treating everyone the same.

Summing up so far ...

What children bring with them to school from their homes makes a difference to their experiences and performance at school. Having recognised this, it is important to find ways of working against patterns of disadvantage that do not stereotype and stigmatise, thereby disempowering schools, teachers and students. Indeed, having low expectations of students in disadvantaged communities is a sure way of contributing to poor outcomes for these students.

In considering what children bring with them to school from homes and families, a group of researchers working in rural South Africa usefully talk of ‘the constellation of social relationships’ that children are part of. In the words of these researchers, Nicholas Townsend, Sangeetha Madhavan, Stephen Tollman, Michel Garenne and Kathleen Kahn:

The well-being of children and adults is affected in important ways by the constellation of social relationships within which they live. These relationships govern their access to physical, social, and cultural resources as diverse as food and shelter, employers, land and productive goods, direct care, information and education. Some of the most important of these relationships are the mutually supportive ones of residential household or domestic unit.... However, many familial determinants of children's education are ultimately linked to poverty. (2002:215-16)

The social relationships within which children live are important in terms of their material conditions. They are also important in terms of the networks that children are able to link into and the opportunities that are, and aren't, available to them. Children's access to schooling is influenced by these networks. This includes the initiatives that are taken – or not taken – around choosing schools.

This leads to the second answer proposed to the question of 'What will make a difference to the learning experiences and outcomes of different students at school?' The answer is: The school they attend is likely to make some difference to the experiences they have, and the outcomes they achieve.

2 WHICH SCHOOLS STUDENTS ATTEND

In the past, when there were fewer schools and even fewer secondary schools, simply attending school meant that students were placed at a social advantage. Now, in industrialised countries with mass schooling, the situation has changed. Schools themselves are more differentiated, with some producing better results than others in fairly predictable patterns. This means that it makes a big difference 'which school' a student attends.

The Australian researchers, Richard Teese and John Polesel (2003), argue that there are consistent differences between schools serving rich and poor communities. Their book, *Undemocratic Schooling: equity and quality in mass secondary education in Australia*, illustrates how schools themselves have become part of structural inequalities in a democracy. These researchers are able to show that schools serving rich communities have concentrations of material and symbolic advantage as they face the demands of the curriculum. They term these schools 'fortified sites'. Schools serving poor communities have few advantages in facing the demands of the curriculum and are, in contrast, 'exposed sites'. Teese and Polesel put this as follows:

- ▶ Fortified sites: Parents of high economic status will choose schools to maximise the advantage for their children. They will move suburbs, or pay high fees, in order for their children to attend particular schools. The schools they choose generally have well-trained teachers, particularly in mathematics and physics. The strategy used by these parents is to ‘pool their resources’ in schools such as these, in order to maximise the individual advantages of their children. Through the pooled material and symbolic resources of parent communities, these schools are ‘fortified’ against the demands of the academic curriculum. As Teese and Polesel point out, these schools ‘employ highly qualified and experienced staff, have well-stocked libraries and extensive electronic data resources; they employ remedial teachers and counsellors, train their students in exam techniques, provide smaller classes, filter and stream their intakes, and offer optimum teaching conditions’ (2003:197).

Teese and Polesel argue that there is no parallel strategy in working class communities to these ‘fortified sites’ with their pooled resources.

- ▶ Exposed sites: Schools serving working class and poor communities are ‘exposed sites’ in terms of the academic curriculum.

In these schools, there are high concentrations of learners who struggle with the curriculum. It is not cultural advantage that is pooled at these sites, but multiple disadvantage – poor language skills, fragmented family lives, poverty, low levels of parental education, lack of facilities, leisure that is distracting rather than supportive of school. These are indeed ‘exposed sites’ in which effective learning depends very largely on the capacity of teachers to make up for the gap between what the academic curriculum assumes about students and who students really are. (Teese and Polesel, 2003:123)

By carefully studying the results of each school in their study, Teese and Polesel are able to draw up a grid which plots socioeconomic status against achievement. They call this ‘the institutional geography of schools’. On the grid, schools serving rich and poor communities are widely set apart in terms of both social level and academic achievement. Schools’ positions on the grid are generally predictable and largely stable. Of course, single schools may jump out of line in terms of student achievement, thus breaking the pattern of their institutional geography, but this is unlikely to happen on a large scale. And it is unlikely to lead to systemic changes in broader patterns of social inequality.

The consequences of these differences between schools in terms of institutional geography (where they are predictably located in relation to other schools) are considerable. As Teese and Polesel go on to argue:

Where a school fits into the institutional geography of the school system is a major issue for the morale of the teachers, their expectations of students, the kind of support they receive from parents, and the economic inducements they can offer students to work hard. Where favourable conditions are met, staff cohesion and purposive leadership are much more likely to occur. Where, on the other hand, there are concentrations of disadvantage, the tensions experienced by both teaching staff and students as they grapple with the curriculum may weaken cohesion and shared sense of purpose, depress expectations, and lead to persistent behavioural problems ... In general, the lower the level of attainment in a school, the lower the level of student motivation and the weaker the rapport between students and teachers. (2003:188)

Teese and Polesel point out that schools serving poor communities are more likely to be able to provide supportive social environments than high achievement on the academic curriculum. Their response is to advocate strong equity measures in terms of redistribution to achieve greater social justice. They argue that schools should be resourced on the basis of children's educational needs. In their words:

The total resources available to a child at school should be relative to the educational effort which must be made on behalf of the child. Where more teaching is needed, more resources should be provided. (2003:218)

This, they suggest, is an easier equity measure than tackling the curriculum itself.

The case of South Africa

Under apartheid, the institutional geography of schools was determined by racial classification. Racially based departments provided different resources for schooling, different levels of teacher qualification, and different learning outcomes.

With the end of apartheid, and the opening of schools to all races, many black parents with resources sought out 'fortified schools' with pooled

resources to maximise the individual chances of their children. Formerly white schools – most of them already fortified sites – were able to take in black students with resources, thus maintaining a privileged status (there were some exceptions to this). Fees have allowed these schools to pool resources, reflecting the relative wealth of their communities. A small number of black schools have managed to rise on the grid. For all that, the institutional geography is by now likely to be reasonably stable.

The schools serving poor communities – the ‘exposed sites’ – received some improvements from the government, particularly in terms of basic services such as electricity and toilets. The Equitable Shares Model directed additional funding to them – a pro-poor step, although related only to the non-personnel budget. As argued in Chapter 5, the redistribution of funds from rich to poor provinces and schools has not worked powerfully enough to make up for initial differences between schools. In the main, formerly black schools remain ‘exposed sites’ in relation to the academic demands of schooling.

These ‘exposed sites’ are not only the poorest of the poor in the bottom quintile, but schools in higher quintiles too. In fact, the economist Servaas van der Berg estimates the scale of the problem as follows:

Educational quality in historically black schools – which constitute 80% of enrolment and are thus central to educational progress – has not improved significantly since political transition. (2005:1)

Van der Berg’s research shows that school results in South Africa are ‘bimodal’, namely, there are two patterns of scores on the graph, one for ‘affluent schools’ (fortified sites) and one for ‘the resource-scarce black schooling system’ (exposed sites) (2005:2). Clearly, it makes a difference which schools children are able to attend.

The consequences of having such a high percentage of ‘exposed’ schools become evident in the next section.

Summing up so far ...

Schools are woven into broader social patterns of inequality in historically changing ways. Schools themselves are not equal to each other, and do not offer the same learning experiences to the communities they serve. Which school students attend makes a difference to their learning experiences. This is partly the result of actions taken by people to achieve social advantage for their children through schooling. It is also the result of government policies, including policies for school funding and resourcing, and for teacher provisioning.

There is a tension here that needs to be worked with. On the one hand, schools and teachers cannot be expected to change large-scale social patterns, or remedy social situations that are beyond their control. On the other hand, it is not possible to predetermine the success or failure of individual schools, teachers and students. Social groups are able to use schools in their own networks of identity and meaning. And what happens inside schools, especially in terms of teaching and learning, may make the most difference for disadvantaged students.

In terms of the central mandate of schools – to be places of teaching and learning – it could be argued that meeting this mandate is even more important for students who do not have privileged cultural capital from their homes. Maintaining a focus on teaching and learning – albeit under unequal social circumstances – is a central goal for teachers and students to work towards. There are steps that schools and teachers can take to achieve this, and it is important for education departments to support them in doing so. The examples in this chapter suggest steps that are worth considering.

- ▶ The advice of the Coleman Report would be to support disadvantaged schools by supplying them with well-prepared teachers.
- ▶ Bourdieu’s advice would be to work for a ‘really universal pedagogy’ which ‘took nothing for granted’ and was geared towards giving all students the access that currently only some students have.
- ▶ Teese and Polesel’s advice would be that governments that are concerned with social justice should redistribute resources on a scale that meets the needs of children to learn. To repeat their words: ‘the total resources available to a child at school should be relative to the educational effort which must be made on behalf of the child’ (2003:218).
- ▶ And, in overall terms, Fraser’s advice would be that measures for both redistribution and recognition are necessary to redress different sources of social injustice. Such measures may be affirmative or transformative.

Ultimately, the government has a responsibility to provide a sound policy framework and adequate resources for all schools to operate as places of learning. This is essential both to achieve the constitutional right of all children to education, and to achieve ethical goals of equity in schooling. And principals, teachers and students have a responsibility to ensure that schools are places of learning.

This leads to the third answer proposed to the question of ‘What will make a difference to the learning experiences and outcomes of different students at school?’ The answer is: How well the school is run and how effective the teachers are.

3 FUNCTIONING SCHOOLS AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

Following the Coleman Report, a number of researchers in different countries tried to refute the findings that school effects were less important than family background in determining students' life chances. Researchers in the 'school effectiveness' movement compared schools and attempted to define what the features were of schools that were more 'effective' in terms of student achievement. (For a summary of these studies and debates see McBeath and Mortimore, 2001, and Thrupp, 1999.) Numerous research studies came up with a largely common set of features for 'effective schools':

- ▶ strong leadership with a curriculum focus
- ▶ clear goals and high expectations of staff and students
- ▶ an emphasis on quality of teaching and learning
- ▶ a supportive school environment
- ▶ a culture of monitoring and evaluation
- ▶ parental involvement and support.

Research in the school effectiveness tradition highlighted differences between developing and industrialised countries. They found, for example, that schools have greater effects in developing countries (Heneveld and Craig, 1996). In addition to the list of factors identified in richer countries, studies in developing countries identified the importance of adequate material resourcing and pedagogical support, language of instruction, and health of students. Also added to the list was the will of communities to provide education for their children (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991).

The effective schools approach drew many critics, who were not convinced of its worth. The list of features held no surprises and seemed like 'common sense'. And the research gave no suggestions about how these features might be developed in schools that did not possess them. Most of all, however, effective schools research was criticised for turning a blind eye to the fact that the overriding effects were not due to schools but to the unequal social structures of the broader society.

In reply, supporters of the effective schools tradition argued that there could be no doubt that some schools were more effective than others. Knowing more about this would assist in improving quality of schooling. They also pointed out that it was undeniably better for students to attend effective, rather than ineffective schools.

Over time, these researchers developed more sophisticated analyses of 'school effects'. Over time, studies consistently showed that schools

do have an effect, but it is not large; classrooms have a greater effect, while individual teachers have the greatest effects – but these are not the determining effects in terms of student achievement.

An accompanying, but different, strand of research on schools is ‘school improvement research’ carried out by educationists like Michael Fullan (1993, 2001), Andy Hargreaves (1994, 2003), David Hopkins (1994, 2001), Louise Stoll and Dean Fink (1996). This research addresses the complexities of day-to-day activities in schools and how schools might be improved.

One implication of this research is that we need a closer analysis of individual schools and their needs if we are to understand and improve their patterns of performance. It is likely that different treatment would be required for different circumstances, rather than one-size-fits-all approaches. This is a point we return to later.

The case of South Africa

Again, under apartheid, the effects of schooling were over-determined by apartheid structures. It was assumed that the effectiveness of schools reflected their racial ranking: with white schools being most effective, followed by Indian, Coloured and African schools. In the dying days of apartheid, many township schools were barely functioning, particularly urban secondary schools. However, little research in the effectiveness or improvement traditions was carried out until the last days of apartheid.

As the South African system changed, questions of effectiveness and efficiency assumed greater importance. A central question was: how could the schooling system be changed so that it worked well for all its students? Apart from the new policy framework, what interventions might improve the functioning of schools? Several studies have been carried out in the effectiveness and improvement traditions, particularly with attempts to improve poorly performing schools, mostly formerly African schools. These are well reviewed by Nick Taylor, Johan Muller and Penny Vinjevoid (2003) in their study *Getting Schools Working*.

It has now become clear, particularly with international tests and comparisons such as TIMSS, that South African schooling is not particularly effective in terms of the student results it achieves (as we saw in Chapter 5). Even the best performing parts of the system are no more than average in comparison with the world’s top performers. And overall, South Africa performs less well than most of its neighbours, who spend less on their education systems. These are major concerns for policy makers and educationists.

Reviewing mathematics results in 2006, Nick Taylor judged that at most 20% of South Africa's schools were functioning adequately. The other 80% of schools – schools serving poor African communities – were, in Taylor's view, 'essentially dysfunctional'. This led him to conclude that South Africa faced a serious problem: 'the inability of most schools to provide young people with the attitudes and intellectual skills required to build a modern state' (2006:2).

Research carried out by Taylor and his project team suggests five major factors that optimise learning, and which could be used to improve school results if applied more broadly:

- ▶ *Home factors, including language.* When schools teach in the language of the home, especially in early years, learning is improved. Learning is also improved when children read at home and do their homework.
- ▶ *Time management.* Many teaching hours are lost through absenteeism, lack of punctuality, and the scheduling of activities such as choir and sports competitions. Increasing teaching hours would bring notable improvements.
- ▶ *Curriculum leadership.* This entails the principal or heads of departments ensuring that the curriculum is covered, monitoring student assessment and undertaking quality assurance measures, as well as managing books and stationery. Sound curriculum leadership would improve the functioning of schools.
- ▶ *The teaching of reading.* Taylor's project also highlighted the importance of teaching reading. In many cases, confusion over curriculum requirements meant that teachers were not actually teaching basic reading and writing.
- ▶ *Teacher knowledge.* Taylor's research suggests that teachers need stronger content knowledge, as well as the knowledge of how to teach particular subjects.

As with effectiveness studies elsewhere, it is clear that the overriding effects of schools are linked to broader social patterns of advantage and disadvantage. Whether or not Taylor's pessimism is accurate, his findings support those of other scholars (such as Reddy, 2006; Howie, 2001; van der Berg, 2005; and Case and Deaton, 1999) that a large proportion of schools are not performing according to expectations. This suggests that South Africa faces a schooling crisis of major proportions.

It is important to take all possible measures to support schools. However, correcting dysfunction on this scale lies beyond the capacity of effectiveness interventions, and is government's responsibility.

Summing up so far ...

Evidence continues to illustrate the overwhelming influence of social context on learning outcomes. However, a number of studies have confirmed that practices within schools may have considerable effects on student learning outcomes. As a result of this research, a lot more is known about different dimensions of schools that influence student achievement – as well as the limitations of schools in achieving improved student outcomes.

This is important, particularly for policy makers, in that it identifies points for intervention to improve schools. However, as we have noted before, schools are notoriously difficult to change, and change takes time. Nonetheless, the schooling crisis in South Africa is so deep that it is unlikely to be reduced without imaginative interventions by government. In particular, these are likely to require the redistribution of resources, and building of expertise, including pedagogical and management expertise, to improve the quality of learning.

This leads us to the fourth answer proposed to the question of ‘What will make a difference to the learning experiences and outcomes of different students at school?’ The answer is: The difference lies in what happens inside the classroom, in terms of teaching, learning and assessment.

4 CLASSROOM PRACTICES: TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Let’s now move inside the classroom, to ask what makes a difference to students’ learning outcomes. Students have very different experiences of learning in classrooms in South Africa. In some classrooms, there is active instruction by teachers who have strong content knowledge and a range of pedagogical skills and resources. At the other extreme, there are classrooms where teachers are absent and students copy notes from the board and from each other, in routines that have very little substance or content. What then makes a difference to students’ learning outcomes? The answers lie in the interactions between students and teachers with materials, the learning activities they undertake, and how they use their time.

The ‘message systems’ of schooling

Basil Bernstein (1971b) famously referred to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as the ‘three message systems’ of schooling:

- ▶ Curriculum refers to the selection of knowledge to be taught and to whom it is taught.
- ▶ Pedagogy refers to the activities of teaching and learning.
- ▶ Assessment refers to the evaluation of what has been learnt.

It is the particular task of teachers to work with these three message systems in the context of classrooms, and for schools to support them to do so. The core issues in providing quality education are what to teach to whom, how to teach, and how to assess.

Ideally, the message systems should be ‘aligned’: teaching methods should suit the content of what is being taught, and assessment should test what is learnt. However, this is often not the case. It is quite possible for a lesson to have worthwhile subject matter which is poorly taught, or good teaching methods with incorrect facts in the subject matter. Assessment systems are often misaligned, as, for example, when a curriculum that aims to encourage critical thinking is assessed in ways that test only memorisation.

As well as these three message systems and their alignment, there is another issue to consider: the context. Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment take place in schools in very different contexts, and as we have seen in this chapter this makes a difference to students’ experiences. This applies not only to South African schools but also on an international scale, as Robin Alexander (2000) shows in his major study, *Culture and Pedagogy*, which looks at schools and classrooms in six different countries.

Given these many differences, what sorts of classroom practices may provide worthwhile learning experiences that prepare *all* students for their lives beyond school?

One way to come to grips with the many questions of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, is to relate them to the goals and purposes of schooling.

Classroom practices to meet the goals of schooling

In earlier chapters of this book, we summed up the goals and purposes of schooling as follows:

- ▶ systematic teaching and learning
- ▶ active participation in the world
- ▶ individual development.

Let’s look at each of these in relation to the school curriculum and classroom practices.

Systematic teaching and learning

A theme we have returned to several times in this book is the mandate of schools to be places of systematic teaching and learning for young people. Of course, people learn much of what they know outside of schools. Even in schools, a lot of learning happens informally, outside of classrooms, and with peer groups. Nonetheless, schools should be places of learning, rather than places which simply look after children, or 'warehouse' them.

Western schooling follows a particular model – a single adult teaching, in recognisable ways, to a group of similar-age students. This has become a symbol of modernity. However, it is quite possible for schools to have the same outward forms, with classrooms with students and teachers inside, but this does not necessarily mean that learning is taking place. What happens inside schools and classrooms may simply be an empty mimicry of what it should be. Bruce Fuller (1991) shows this well in his study of schools in Malawi, entitled *Growing-Up Modern: the western state builds third-world schools*. Fuller shows that schools have the outward forms of modernity, but inside, they do not teach in the same ways, or to the same standards, as western schools. Heather Jacklin's (2004) study of classroom pedagogy in Cape Town entitled *Repetition and Difference*, also shows that students may mimic the outward patterns of what classroom teaching looks like, even when the teacher is not present. And even when teachers are present, it may be the case that very little teaching and learning is actually taking place.

School knowledge is by no means the only knowledge a society possesses. It is, in fact, simply a selection of all the knowledge that is available. As we have seen in earlier chapters (particularly Chapters 2 and 3), school knowledge tends to be structured in particular ways: sorted and sequenced; made abstract and formal; and directed towards particular ways of thinking and problem-solving. Schools transmit the formal symbol systems of culture – reading, writing and number systems – and they do so in recognisable formats and relationships.

How does the selection of knowledge for the curriculum happen? Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are partly a matter of tradition. But they are also matters of social power and policy. The selection of curriculum knowledge is not a neutral or technical process; it is deeply immersed in social perspectives and values. And, as we have seen, curriculum knowledge is not equally available to everyone. In similar vein to Bourdieu, the US educator, Lisa Delpit, makes the following comment in terms of race:

The upper and middle classes send their children to school with all the accoutrements [attire and trappings] of the culture of power; children from other kinds of families operate within perfectly wonderful and viable cultures but not cultures that carry the codes of power. (1995:25)

Delpit points out that schools teach other people's knowledge to other people's children. Often, teachers seem unaware of this.

Language of instruction poses similar dilemmas (as we mentioned in Chapter 3). It is well known that students learn best in their mother tongue, at least in the early years of schooling. But this is not always what communities want. Some languages have more social power than others, and children who speak those languages are at an advantage. This is a complex problem which remains unresolved in South Africa.

In short, the content knowledge and language of the school curriculum are tied to social power, and this cannot be easily sidestepped. What may be done about this? There are different answers to this question:

- ▶ One answer is to ensure that the codes of powerful knowledge are taught to all students.
- ▶ Another answer is to teach students knowledge that they will find useful in their various social settings (such as rural knowledge for rural children).
- ▶ Another answer is to provide strong vocational pathways as alternatives to academic pathways.
- ▶ And, of course, some combination of options is possible.

There is no single solution to the dilemma of power/knowledge, valid for all times and places. Several scholars, including Delpit and Bourdieu, support the teaching of formal codes of knowledge. Bourdieu, for example, has defended the powers of abstract thinking that the traditional French curriculum made available. In writing about the curriculum, he stated that he thought it was 'absolutely necessary' to ensure that certain 'fundamental processes' are taught: 'the deductive, the experimental, the historical as well as the critical and reflective' (1990:309). (These fundamental ways of thinking are often associated with knowledge disciplines.) Bourdieu went on to propose the methodical transmission of 'the technology of intellectual enquiry', giving as examples the use of dictionaries, the rhetoric of communication, the preparation of a manuscript, and the reading of numerical and graphical tables. In his words,

If all pupils were given the technology of intellectual enquiry, and if in general they were given rational ways of working (such as the art of choosing between compulsory tasks and of spreading them over time), then an important way of reducing inequalities based on cultural inheritance would have been achieved. (1990:309)

In other words, the school curriculum, encompasses bodies of knowledge (such as disciplines), as well as forms of thinking and techniques of working with knowledge. If students are to have access to the codes of western power/knowledge, they need to be exposed to this knowledge, forms of thinking, and techniques of working with knowledge. And, as suggested in Chapter 3, participation in global technologies requires multiliteracies as well as the basic building blocks of established knowledge. However, this position comes at a cost.

The formal curriculum of schooling is open to criticism, as we have seen in earlier chapters. For example:

- ▶ De-schoolers and radical critics argue that it *prevents* people from thinking freely, or thinking for themselves.
- ▶ Postcolonial thinkers criticise the curriculum for suppressing indigenous knowledge and languages.
- ▶ Other social critics argue that it damages self-esteem and life chances of those who fail, while devaluing the options that *are* open to them.

Bearing these strong criticisms in mind, we take the position that schools should focus on formal teaching and learning as their main goal. They should be responsible for teaching formal knowledge codes to *all* students, while recognising the diversity of students, schools and social contexts. Acknowledging that some students are advantaged over others in relation to these codes, schools should nonetheless find ways of ensuring that this knowledge and modes of thinking are made accessible to *all*. Bourdieu, Delpit and others suggest that this is likely to require explicit instruction (a point we'll return to). As Bourdieu recognises, this approach may well involve symbolic violence in relation to some students' cultural and linguistic capital. However, if schools do not give *all* students access to the dominant capital which *some* students have by virtue of social privilege, they perpetuate a fundamental form of inequality. As far as possible, schools need to give students access to the symbol systems, imaginaries and identities for participating in both their local worlds, and in global knowledge societies. Participation, in this sense, involves the capacity to

critically engage with these worlds as active agents, and to shape them. Arguably, if schools operate on the basis of these knowledge systems, but fail to open access to them to *all* students, they commit a second act of symbolic violence.

The position advocated here should not be confused with simple assimilationism, which assumes that all students should fit the existing curriculum and its power relations. Rather, it is a position where the power relations of knowledge need to be explicitly acknowledged and worked with. It opens for consideration the social basis of all knowledge and the dominance that this makes possible for some, with the specific goal of working against this by giving access to powerful knowledge to all. (This position is illustrated more fully in the Productive Pedagogies Model, which is presented later in this chapter.)

Given the breadth of debates in the curriculum field, there are many positions to take. What is important in deciding on a position is the strength of intellectual argument that can be made for the position, and its ethical implications. This book encourages exploration across the broad field, while making its own position clear.

The same applies to the second goal mentioned above:

Active participation in the world

A second goal of schooling, which may be related to Bernstein's three message systems, is that of active participation in the institutions of public life, including the world of work. In terms of public life, it is important for schooling to contribute towards building an active democracy, as well as a shared public identity and sense of common purpose.

What does this entail in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment?

The French theorist Etienne Balibar uses Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence in discussing the role of schooling in citizenship and public life. Balibar argues that the school holds a particular 'place of transition' between private life and public life. One of the functions of the school is to prepare students for entering the public sphere of citizenship. Students need to step aside from their primary identities as private individuals, to assume a secondary identity as citizens of the modern state. For all students in modern states, schools are part of a major shift in identity from personal to public, which may involve symbolic violence (although, drawing on Bourdieu's analysis, Balibar suggests that this is less disruptive for some than for others). Balibar writes that the school

has to virtually detach individuals from their primary identities (which is in fact a very violent process – a sort of dismemberment, a separation from their identities, but which then ideally allows these identities to be claimed, though from the “distance” implied by the primacy of the second, common political identity). (2004:358)

Preparation for citizenship in a common public life means access to dominant codes and ways of thinking. What happens to other cultural and linguistic capital? This is a complex issue that keeps raising its head. South Africa’s modernist constitution gives equal rights to language and culture to everyone – rights of recognition. But these rights do not automatically translate into equal treatment. In some cases, students learn in their home language at school. In other cases, there is almost no written material in students’ home language, and students learn in a second or third language. To support these languages would require additional resources (in other words, redistribution of resources). There is little doubt that this lack of written resources impedes students’ learning, particularly in the early years. Though South Africa offers rich possibilities for multilingual learning, multilingual classrooms are not emphasised in policy terms. Instead, in many classrooms students and teachers switch between languages, or use the mother tongue of the students, regardless of the formal medium of instruction.

It could be argued that the ability to ‘code-switch’ – to operate in more than one code – is a major advantage in a multilingual society and cosmopolitan, global world. But the danger is that students could find themselves with inadequate capacity in both codes, unless school codes are well taught and other cultural codes are sufficiently supported. What is clear, is that Balibar’s ‘second, common, political identity’ must be built for all South Africans, regardless of their language and cultural capital. Without this, the common project of social cohesion will suffer – the sense of common purpose and shared future.

In terms of the world of work, an abiding concern of curriculum theorists is the relationship between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’ knowledge. Again, the position taken here is to be wary of dichotomies – and to acknowledge that these are matters of debate, without entering the debates further. Suffice it to say that a legitimate goal of schooling – alongside other goals – is preparation for the world of work, and what this might mean in terms of knowledge is an important consideration for the curriculum.

Let’s look briefly at our third goal:

Individual development

Ideally, schools build rhythms of learning and teaching, both formal and informal, structured and unstructured. Formal, structured learning is the object of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Recognising that students come unequally into the shared space of the classroom requires the effort to build a pedagogy that is inclusive, ‘that takes nothing for granted’, and that commits itself to achieving high quality learning for all students as individuals and the identity groups they are part of.

The common space of the classroom is an important one for shaping individual identity in relation to others. It offers opportunities to engage with the ethical question of how individuals might best live with others, particularly those whose languages and cultures are different to their own. In this regard, it offers opportunities to understand economic and cultural/symbolic power relations, and work towards recognition and redistribution. (This is a point we return to in Chapter 7.)

As mentioned in earlier chapters, people possess the creative capacity to change the world and themselves through their actions. Ideally, the school curriculum should help people to understand themselves in relation to the cultural and natural worlds in which they live, and to act to change those worlds in ethical ways. This sense of agency links to one of the findings of the Coleman Report, discussed earlier in this chapter. The Report found that when students had a sense that they could influence their environments and their futures – that they had some control over their own destinies – this made more of a difference to their results than all of the school factors put together. This may in turn be linked to the ‘sociological imagination’, discussed in Chapter 1. As C Wright Mills expressed, the sociological imagination brings an understanding of how individual lives (biographies) interact with social structures in time and place. Ideally, the school curriculum should offer opportunities to build this imagination, as well as the accompanying sense of agency and being able to act in the world. At the very least, the curriculum should not stifle this.

Classroom practices that support student learning

What classroom practices best support student learning?

Many years of research on teaching suggest that there is no ‘one right way’ or ‘one general theory’ of teaching or pedagogy. There are many such theories, some supporting each other, some in contradiction. However, across the theories there is general agreement that good classroom practice

is about the interactions of students with teachers, resources and time. As David Hopkins puts it:

Teaching is more than just presenting material, it is about infusing curriculum content with appropriate instructional strategies that are selected in order to achieve the learning goals the teacher has for her students. (2001:73)

The educationist Martial Dembélé (2005), writing for the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), usefully sets out a spectrum of different approaches to pedagogy. At the one end of the spectrum are those pedagogies that support ‘open-ended teaching’, at the other end are those that support ‘structured instruction’.

- ▶ **Open-ended teaching** is associated with terms like ‘constructivism’ (where students are induced to construct knowledge for themselves through intensive enquiry), ‘active learning’ (where students are involved in discovering knowledge themselves rather than passively receiving it from teachers), and ‘situated cognition’ (learning from real-life situations). Other terms associated with open-ended teaching are ‘problem-solving’ approaches, ‘child-centred’ learning, ‘discovery learning’ and ‘adventurous pedagogy’. Open-ended teaching places student activities at the centre of classroom practices, with the teacher as facilitator of student learning. Clearly, this requires well-prepared, knowledgeable teachers, who understand how students learn and how to prepare tasks for them to learn as independently as possible.
- ▶ **Structured instruction** (at the opposite end of the spectrum) is associated with approaches such as ‘direct instruction’, ‘mastery learning’ and ‘explicit teaching’. These approaches favour structured learning activities which are actively directed by teachers. Structured instruction requires consistent teacher practices such as checking homework to see what students have learnt; presentation of content and skills in sequenced steps; teachers modelling good practice; students undertaking guided practice followed by independent practice; and teachers giving corrective feedback.

Some advocates of structured instruction aim to explicitly teach the cognitive processes that are involved in doing a particular task or using a particular skill. They argue that instruction of this sort benefits students who are disadvantaged in relation to school knowledge (see Dembélé, 2005:173).

There is much debate about whether ‘open-ended teaching’ or ‘structured instruction’ is more powerful for student learning. Dembélé’s position is that we should not see these two extreme positions as dichotomies. Rather, he says, there should be room for both student-centredness and teacher directivity in classroom practices. This is a position supported by others as well. The New Zealander, Stuart McNaughton (2002), for example, argues for a wide curriculum which enables students to share experiences that build on their home and community resources, as well as explicit teaching of the knowledge and skills that students need to gain access to curriculum knowledge, and standard English.

The case for explicit teaching

As mentioned earlier, a number of educationists have argued that explicit teaching is important for providing equitable access to school knowledge to students from diverse backgrounds. Explicit teaching involves presenting lessons so that purposes are clear to students, as well as the nature of the tasks they are required to undertake. It opens the language of required tasks, including the meanings of instructional words, content words and performance words. It specifically teaches skills such as reading, summarising, interpreting diagrams, building arguments, sequencing ideas, and so on. It provides a sequential programme of instruction with systematic opportunities for self-reflection and assessment.

For example, the Australian literacy teacher, Christine Edwards-Groves (2003), provides a framework for explicit instruction for literacy lessons:

She argues strongly that explicit instruction should not to be confused with lock-step, narrow, teacher-dominated instruction. Instead, she argues, explicit teaching is ‘a key aspect of social constructivism’ (2003:18). Focused and explicit instructional talk and scaffolding open up learning situations in ways that give more power to students to know what they are doing, how to do it, and why.

In classrooms where students speak different languages and come from different educational backgrounds, explicit instruction is a means of addressing what the learning requirements are and what successful completion of tasks entails. These strategies can be used in whole group instruction, combined with small needs-based groups. Such strategies also assist in building classroom interactions which focus on learning.

A Framework for Explicit Instruction Focused Literacy Lessons

Maintenance of the specific literacy learning focus

Introduction	Elaboration	Practice	Review
Brief Lesson Orientation Setting up focused lessons in terms of specific aspects of literacy Overview of new learning Purposes of assessment tasks are made clear Review of relevant prior learning	Linking new to known concepts; re-teaching if necessary Clarifying Demonstration and modelling Guided Instruction using Guided reading/writing, Reciprocal Teaching or Co-operative Reading Guided Student Practice	Independent practice Skills, knowledge and use of aspects of literacy Application of new learning	Summary, Review and Reflection of specific literacy learning (oral and /or written) Student reformulation and articulation of learning

Formative assessment through monitoring of the talk is ongoing across the phases of the lesson

A Framework for explicit instruction focused literacy lessons (Edwards-Groves, 2003)

James Paul Gee (2004) provides a simple and convincing set of statements about the need for explicit language teaching in his book *Situated Language and Learning*. Gee points out that learning in academic contexts requires academic varieties of language that are linked to ways of thinking. These need to be explicitly taught by schools – yet very often they are not. Gee argues as follows:

1. What is hard about school is not learning to read, but learning to read and learn in academic contexts such as mathematics, social studies and science.
2. What is hard about learning in academic content areas is that each area is tied to academic specialist varieties of language (and other specialised symbol systems) that are complex, technical and initially alienating to many learners... These varieties of language are significantly different from people’s everyday varieties of language.
3. Privileged children (children from well-off, educated homes) often get an important head start before school, at home, on the acquisition of such academic varieties of language; whereas less privileged children often do not.
4. Schools do a very poor job at teaching children academic varieties of language. Indeed, many schools are barely aware they exist, that they have to be learned, and that the acquisition process must start early. (2004:3-4, adapted excerpts)

Gee goes on to make the point that all children can easily learn specialist varieties of language and ways of thinking when these are part of popular culture. Children exhibit these sorts of skills when they play video games and computer games. In fact, he argues, these games often teach children more effectively than teachers in classrooms do – and teachers have a lot to learn about learning from them!

Elsewhere, Gee (1998) sets out a ‘Bill of Rights’ for children who find schools to be ‘risky places’. Children have the right to:

- ▶ extensive participation in authentic and meaningful social practices involving talk, texts, tools, and technologies and that these practices should not denigrate their own experiences from outside school
- ▶ overt instruction that provides them with guidance in, and scaffolding for, classroom practices
- ▶ awareness of the make-up of classroom tasks and how their own knowledge fits with what is expected in the performance of these tasks
- ▶ development of expertise in classroom activities that they can transform in ways that offer them the power to innovate for their own social, cultural, and political purposes.

Summing up ...

Debates on pedagogy such as these are important for teachers to consider and work with in their different classroom settings. Whether or not the curriculum is outcomes-based, learner- or teacher-centred, disciplinary or interdisciplinary, and whether or not the pedagogies are structured or open, the task of the classroom teacher is the same. The task of the classroom teacher is, as Hopkins (2001) put it, to infuse curriculum content with appropriate teaching strategies to achieve the intended learning goals.

‘Productive pedagogies’ as an example of classroom practice

Australian research on ‘Productive Pedagogies’ provides an example of classroom practices that focus on improving learning outcomes for *all* students (see Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006). This research highlights four dimensions of classroom practice that have made a difference to students’ learning. Each of the dimensions shows examples of different sorts of pedagogies, both open and explicit. Briefly, the four dimensions may be described as follows:

▶ Intellectual quality

Lessons that are high in intellectual quality engage students actively and critically with knowledge, including disciplinary knowledge and problem-solving approaches. They provide students with opportunities to learn about important concepts and processes in depth rather than superficially, and to use these in ways that shift their meaning (rather than simply reciting them). Contrasting and potentially conflicting forms of knowledge are presented. Students and teachers engage in substantive conversations. Some of these are conversations about how language works.

▶ Supportive classroom environments

Where pedagogy is supportive, students feel safe to take intellectual risks. They are able to regulate their own behaviour and stay on task. The teacher and students are respectful of others.

▶ Engagement with difference

Pedagogy which engages with difference draws on the beliefs, languages and ways of knowing of different cultures. There are deliberate attempts to increase the participation of different students, and to build inclusive classrooms.

▶ Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom

Pedagogies link to students' background knowledge and to events beyond the classroom. In doing this, however, they move to significant knowledge and concepts, and do not stay on the level of the everyday.

The next section shows the questions that guided classroom observations in the Productive Pedagogies research. The researchers argued that *all* students benefited from classroom practices that scored highly on all four dimensions.

Productive pedagogies

Intellectual quality

When observing for the Intellectual Quality items researchers asked the following questions:

- ▶ *Higher order thinking* – Are students required to manipulate information and ideas to arrive at new meanings? Is critical analysis occurring? Are students required to combine facts and ideas in order to synthesise, generalise, explain, hypothesise or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation?

- ▶ *Deep knowledge* – Does the lesson cover central ideas and concepts of the discipline or field in any depth? Are students able to develop relatively systematic, integrated or holistic understanding of concepts, or are they only able to recite fragmented pieces of information?
- ▶ *Deep understanding* – Do the work and responses of students provide evidence of depth of understanding of concepts or ideas? Are students discovering relationships, solving problems, constructing explanations, and drawing conclusions?
- ▶ *Knowledge problematic* – Are multiple, contrasting and potentially conflicting forms of knowledge represented, or is knowledge represented as facts or a body of truth to be acquired by students?
- ▶ *Substantive conversation* – Is the classroom interaction reciprocal, and does it promote coherent shared understanding? Does classroom talk break out of the initiation/ response/ evaluation pattern and lead to sustained dialogue between students, and between teachers and students?
- ▶ *Metalanguage* – Are there high levels of talk *about* talk and writing, about how written and spoken texts work, about specific technical vocabulary and words, about how sentences work or don't work (syntax/grammar), about meaning structures and text structures (semantics/genre), and about issues of how discourses and ideologies work in speech and writing?

Supportive classroom environment

When observing for the Supportive Classroom Environment items researchers asked the following questions:

- ▶ *Engagement* – Are students engaged and on task? Are they attentive, doing the assigned work, raising questions, contributing to group tasks and helping peers? Or are they sleeping, day-dreaming, making a noise or otherwise disrupting the class?
- ▶ *Student self-regulation* – Are students regulating their own behaviour, or is the teacher involved in giving directions on student behaviour?
- ▶ *Student direction of activities* – Do students have any say in the pace, direction or outcomes of the lesson?
- ▶ *Social support* – Is the classroom a socially supportive and positive environment? Does the teacher convey high expectations for all students, including the expectation that they take intellectual risks and try to master challenging academic work? Is there a climate of mutual respect?
- ▶ *Explicit criteria* – Are the criteria for judging student performances made explicit?

Engagement with difference

When observing for the Engagement with Difference elements researchers asked the following questions:

- ▶ *Cultural knowledge* – Are there explicit attempts to bring in beliefs, languages, practices and ways of knowing of non-dominant cultures? (e.g. In terms of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, economic status, sexuality or youth)
- ▶ *Inclusivity* – Are there deliberate attempts to increase the participation of students of different backgrounds?
- ▶ *Narrative* – Is the style of teaching principally narrative, or is it expository?
- ▶ *Group identities in a learning community* – Does the teaching build a sense of community and identity for different groups within the classroom?
- ▶ *Citizenship* – Are attempts made to foster active citizenship?

Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom

When observing for the Connectedness elements researchers asked the following questions:

- ▶ *Knowledge integration* – Are there explicit attempts to connect knowledge from different subject areas? Are there themes that integrate subject knowledge?
- ▶ *Background knowledge* – Are there opportunities for students to make connections between their daily experiences, culture and language, and the activities of the class? Are there attempts to explore students' prior knowledge?
- ▶ *Connectedness to the world* – Do the lesson and the assigned work have any resemblance or connection to real-life contexts?
- ▶ *Problem-based curriculum* – Is there a focus on identifying and solving intellectual and/or real world problems, that have no specified correct solution? (Compiled from Hayes et al., 2006, Chapter 2.)

The Productive Pedagogies research provides one approach to working with pedagogy as part of the teaching-learning process. There are others that may be used to good effect. What is important is that they are discourses of classroom practice. Thus they provide a means of talking about different activities that make a difference to student learning outcomes. They provide a language of practice.

The case of South Africa

The story of curriculum change in South Africa is a complex one, and only a short sketch will be provided here (see Fataar, 2006, for an account of the process).

Immediately after the 1994 election, the new government involved the stakeholder body, the National Education and Training Forum, to 'cleanse' the apartheid curriculum, removing the overtly racist language and other obvious problems.

In 1997, the new National Department of Education launched Curriculum 2005. This was an outcomes-based curriculum of mixed origins, which was hastily implemented on the basis of short inservice courses for teachers. Curriculum 2005 generated much comment. Jonathan Jansen, a major South African scholar and public intellectual, was harshly critical of Curriculum 2005 and its OBE link, arguing that the policy was symbolic, did not engage with actual classroom conditions, and was bound to fail. A range of other scholars engaged with the knowledge basis of the new curriculum – as constructivist and learner-centred – and they argued for or against these approaches (see Michelson, 2004; Muller, 2000; Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999).

The curriculum development process which underpinned Curriculum 2005, and the wide range of terminology it used, suggest that it was not well conceived theoretically. There is little evidence that its designers engaged in any deep way with curriculum debates around constructivism, interdisciplinarity, learner-centredness, and so on. Whereas the original design concept of OBE was derived from Australian debates, the new designers consulted William Spady whose concept of OBE was very different.

A major problem was that the curriculum documents provided outcome statements, but no specified content or pedagogy. The framework was complex and full of difficult terminology – but gave no guidance on what to teach, or how. Public statements and documentation talked about changes in pedagogy and assessment, but gave no real guidance on either aspect. Teachers were provided with short and inadequate in-service courses in preparation for a completely different classroom practice (see Jansen and Christie, 1999).

The curriculum failed to include elements of redress in the curriculum. There were no materials for teaching against racism or sexism, and there was no recognition of the very different circumstances in which teachers would be implementing the new curriculum. The result was that well-trained and well-resourced teachers were able to use the freedom given by the curriculum to introduce innovations – or to teach in the same ways as before. Poorly trained and poorly resourced teachers were not given enough support to provide lessons of high quality. A lot of confusion resulted (see Harley and Wedekind, 2004).

In 2000, Curriculum 2005 was reviewed in a process led by educationist and scholar, Linda Chisholm; and the Revised National Curriculum Statement was issued in 2002. This curriculum has been revised and amended and is the current basis of South Africa's National Curriculum Statements (see Chisholm, 2005a and 2005b).

What this brief outline illustrates is that changes to curriculum and pedagogy have been complex in South Africa, and the results have been uneven. Research on post-apartheid classrooms in poorer schools reveals major weaknesses in curriculum and pedagogy. (This is well captured in the work of Heather Jacklin, 2004; Ursula Hoadley, 2005; Lorraine Marneweck, 2002; and Cheryl Reeves, 2005.) In a nutshell, what is evident is classroom practice that does not engage students in work of intellectual quality, that would achieve low scores on almost every element of a scale such as Productive Pedagogies.

These studies suggest that the inequalities of post-apartheid education filter through into classroom practices in South Africa's poorly resourced schools. It is here that inequalities take their firmest effect, for, as Elmore and others have argued, this is the core of educational practice which is hardest to change. The education system fails the students who need it most: where students learn mainly by rote, or have no teachers present; where teachers do not know the subject matter or how to teach it; where codes of power/knowledge are not taught. This situation is reflected in the studies of van der Berg and Taylor referred to earlier.

This leaves us with the question: How might classroom practices be strengthened, to provide a more powerful learning experience for students?

What might be required for powerful classroom practices?

The suggestions here are brief, and warrant a fuller exploration than is possible here. (School reform needs another book of its own, as does student experiences of school!)

One way to approach thinking about answering the question from 'the bottom' is to adopt a backward mapping approach (drawing particularly on the ideas of Elmore and McLaughlin). This approach begins by looking at the smallest unit, namely teachers and students in classrooms. What sorts of changes are required, and how might they be supported at classroom and school level? Continuing to think backwards, what support might schools need from education departments in order to support the work of teachers and students? And what support might education departments need from

governments so that they are able to support desired outcomes at the smallest unit of the system, namely students and teachers in classrooms?

The following chain of backward mapping provides an example:

Students

Although this chapter has said almost nothing directly from the perspectives of students, they are the smallest unit of a schooling system, together with teachers in classrooms. An important starting point in a backward mapping approach is to consider the particular students in any classroom and what their educational backgrounds might require:

Who are the students? What constellations of social relationships do they live in? What are their particular circumstances and learning needs? (Consider, for example: community characteristics; networks of support; health, nutrition, wellness, HIV/AIDS effects; culture and language; distance from school and means of travel and so on). In terms of achieving social justice, what remedies of recognition or redistribution are required in particular instances?

Teachers

Studies since the Coleman Report have pointed to the importance of teachers, and the difference they are able to make, particularly for individual students, and students in disadvantaged contexts. What is required of teachers to put powerful classroom practices in place?

Teacher knowledge

What knowledge is necessary for good teaching? A group of US theorists have usefully addressed this question and specified a number of knowledge requirements (these theorists include Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2006; and Talbert and McLaughlin, 2001) Their suggestions for teacher knowledge are:

- ▶ subject content knowledge
- ▶ pedagogic content knowledge, that is, knowledge about how to teach particular subjects
- ▶ a repertoire of pedagogical skills that teachers are able to use and adapt
- ▶ knowledge of assessment
- ▶ knowledge of how students learn and different theories of learning
- ▶ knowledge of educational aims and purposes
- ▶ knowledge of educational contexts.

In the South African context, additional knowledge would be: how to work with cultural and linguistic diversity; how to teach students with different educational levels in the same classroom; how to deal with the complexities of HIV and AIDS; how to understand (and change) the challenges of recognition and redistribution in the complex South African context. The challenges of teaching for diversity are well set out in the work of of Relebohile Moletsane, Crispin Hemson and Anabanithi Mutukrishna (2004) on school integration.

Writing for ADEA in the African context, Martial Dembélé provides a list of what is required of *effective teachers*:

Effective teachers understand how children learn, are attuned to student thinking and learning, have high expectations for and care about all of their students, create and sustain an effective learning environment and community, plan regularly for instruction, use instructional time optimally, seek the active participation of students in learning, encourage them to share responsibility for their own learning and help them to do so, give frequent homework, carry out classroom assessment frequently and provide feedback, and reflect on their teaching. Most importantly, they try to build bridges between their sophisticated understanding of subject matter and their students' developing understanding and adapt instruction to the variations in ability and background presented by their students. (2005:175)

The requirements seem endless!

Teacher education

Ideally, teachers need good pre-service preparation which provides a foundation of the different knowledges for effective practice. They also need good in-service professional development, particularly as 'lifelong learners' in a knowledge age. Support for teacher learning and professional development brings benefits – provided this is targeted and focused on teacher needs and teacher knowledges. In part, this is about constructing a professional practice. But it is also about constructing a professional identity. Opportunities for professional discussions with other teachers – teacher professional learning communities – make a difference to teachers' professional practice, as the work of Karen Louis and colleagues has shown (1996). Teachers also need to be accountable for their practice – although, from what we have discussed in this chapter, this needs to be related to the contexts in which they work.

Much more could be said about teacher education, teacher identity, teacher status and morale, teacher recruitment and retention, and so on.

Stable and functioning schools

What institutional supports are required to support the work of teachers and students in classrooms? For powerful classroom practices to be sustained, well-functioning schools are required. These provide the conditions under which teachers can be motivated to do their work well, and be held accountable for doing so. This includes providing safe and secure environments, predictable rhythms of learning, adequate resourcing, learning materials, structures for time on task, effective leadership and management, sound governance, relationships across the boundaries of the school to allow for outside influences and resources, and so on (see Christie, 2001 and 1998). It also requires districts and government departments to play their role in supporting schools – and holding them accountable for their practices.

External support

What can education departments and governments best do to support the work of schools and teachers in providing quality learning experiences for students? It is worth recalling the findings of the UNESCO *Global Monitoring Report* of 2005, which identified the following characteristics of education in countries which achieve well on EFA goals:

- ▶ a teaching profession held in high esteem, with high expectations of quality and well-developed pre-service and in-service training
- ▶ continuity of policy over time
- ▶ a high level of public commitment to education, emanating from a strong political vision.

Michael Fullan's (2000) article, 'The three stories of educational reform', sums up the requirements for good school and classroom practice as three interwoven processes, all of which need to be present:

- ▶ Fullan's first story is about what happens inside schools. This story emphasises a culture of shared professionalism around pedagogy and assessment.
- ▶ The second story is about the external demands which bombard schools. Schools need to make sense of a range of external demands and engage with them if they are to perform well. These include the demands of

new technologies, of communities and parents, of business and labour markets. How schools engage with external demands, and relate to their communities and contexts, is the second story.

- ▶ And the third story is about what governments and external agencies might do to support schools so that the first two stories work well. Fullan's view is that governments should devolve as much responsibility as possible to schools – and then hold them strictly accountable for their performance.

That, in a nutshell, provides a brief answer to the question: How might good classroom practices be supported and spread, to ensure powerful learning experiences for all students?

5 CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This chapter has addressed the question: 'What will make a difference to the learning outcomes and experiences of different students at school?'

The chapter places the scale of schools and classrooms alongside other scales of analysis: global change; national development; and educational policy. It has shown that a number of answers are possible to the question: 'What makes a difference?' There is the broader social structure and its patterns of inequalities to consider. Within this, are networks of opportunity that parents and students engage with. Schools themselves are not equal and there is an institutional geography which is fairly stable. How well schools function and, ultimately, what happens in classroom practice, will make a difference to students' experiences and learning outcomes.

These answers may be easy to predict, but they are hard to change. As the various chapters of this book have shown, the quality of schooling in post-apartheid South African schooling is mixed – and in very many cases, it is poor. Nonetheless, this chapter has suggested at every point that interventions are possible. The challenge is for South Africa to offer schooling experiences of quality to *all* its students, that meet the goals explored earlier in this book: systematic teaching and learning; active participation in the world; and individual development. Achieving social justice in schooling requires engaging actively with the demands of both recognition and redistribution.

No less than this is required if the doors of learning are to be opened for all.

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CHAPTER 7

Facing the challenges: a framework of ethics

This book has foregrounded three broad goals and purposes for education. Each of these may be framed in terms of an ethical commitment for educational practice and change. This chapter provides an ethical framework to guide educators in approaching the task of improving teaching and learning outcomes for all students.

- ▶ *Systematic teaching and learning may be framed in terms of an ethics of commitment to intellectual rigour.*
- ▶ *Active participation in the world may be framed in terms of an ethics of civility in building the conditions for a democratic public space.*
- ▶ *Individual development may be framed in terms of an ethics of care for self, for others, and the world we share.*

Using different scales of analysis – global, nation state development, government policy, and schools and classrooms – the book has argued that schooling is a complex social activity. It has multiple, sometimes contradictory, goals. And change is hard to achieve. All of the chapters have shown that inequalities in South African education will not easily shift. These inequalities are part of broader social patterns that education, alone, cannot remedy. A more just and equitable education system will not emerge without difficult decisions and sustained effort.

- ▶ On a **global scale**, inequalities are increasing, and the jagged lines of access to internet technologies are dividing the world in new and unstable ways. Inequalities in South Africa are linked to global trends as well as local contexts. Castells argues that globalisation is taking place on the back of information and communication technologies, and those without access to networks and technologies are in danger of being radically excluded from global action. According to Appadurai, the changes being brought about by changing global flows and shifting landscapes call for a new imagination and different ways of thinking. Clearly, these global changes pose new challenges for education to address. At the same time, however, South Africa's transition to democracy occurred in a period when neoliberal capitalism was dominant on a global scale. Neoliberal capitalism is not sympathetic to redress measures, and favours market approaches in education. South Africa faces the challenge of meeting demands for equity in education, within a competitive market framework. The current state of play on the global scale is not favourable towards additional spending on education to open doors of learning.

- ▶ On the scale of **national development**, much is known about educational inequalities. Yet targets to meet improvements in education, health and other areas of social life are not being met. A history of development theories shows that education is linked to development, but not in simple functionalist ways. Where education prospers, as in the Asian developmental states, there is strong support from government and civil society; there are also strong expectations that principals, teachers and students will perform. South Africa's development policies in the first 10 years of change did not reduce poverty and inequality as hoped, and inequalities in education remain profound. The result is that we can identify 'two education systems', one serving a largely non-racial middle class, the other, almost exclusively black schools, serving the poor. While we need to recognise that

development is a complex challenge, we cannot sit back and wait for a more just and equitable society to emerge. Development history shows us that there will be no simple ‘unfolding’ of educational improvements towards greater equality on this scale.

- ▶ On the scale of **nation state** policies, what is evident is that South Africa has modelled its policy process on the practices of a modernist, democratic state, promoting the identity of common citizenship in place of apartheid’s racial and ethnic identities. Framework policies are enlightened on paper, but many have proven impossible to implement with current levels of resources and capacity. In particular, policies for equity have been hampered by fiscal restraint. ‘Acting like a government’ has resulted in compromises which have allowed the education system to continue to function in the old ways at a time of massive change. Measures to reduce inequalities have been put in place, but they have not been powerful enough to shift the legacy of the past in major ways. New policies set a basis for a better future, but the situation is still a long way from the vision of the Freedom Charter.

- ▶ On the scale of **schools and classrooms**, South Africa follows international patterns, where the inequalities that children bring to school tend to remain with them to affect their overall life chances. In schools serving richer communities, parents tend to pool their resources to strengthen their schools, for example by employing specialist teachers. These schools are ‘fortified’ for the demands of the academic curriculum. In contrast, schools serving poor communities do not have these additional benefits. They are ‘exposed sites’ in terms of the demands of the curriculum, and their students struggle to achieve academically. Studies of school performance in South Africa paint a depressing picture of poor quality in the majority of schools. Effectiveness studies suggest ways in which school performance may be improved, but the challenge remains of how to actually bring about changes. Classroom practice makes a crucial contribution to students’ learning outcomes, and needs to be constantly strengthened. Attempts to change classroom practices through Curriculum 2005 initially brought mixed results, but these are being continually addressed. However, as things currently stand, in most of South Africa’s schools, teaching and learning struggle to meet the high quality necessary to provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to participate in the global world.

Viewed in this way, while much has been achieved, much remains to be done. The logics and rationalities of government may well suggest that what exists is the best that can be done. But for educators concerned to provide meaningful learning to young people, this answer cannot be taken as good enough.

This book has argued for the importance of working continually for schools to be places of learning for *all* students. In the face of the apparent determinism of social structures, the book has argued that schools can make a difference, and that individuals and social groups can act ethically for change. The logics of governments – and global theorists and development theorists – are not the only logics available to critical intellectuals and educationists. Alternative logics need to be explored.

ETHICAL CHALLENGES

This book has foregrounded three broad goals and purposes for education. Each of these may be framed in terms of an ethical commitment for educational practice and change. What follows is an ethical framework to guide educators in approaching the task of improving teaching and learning outcomes for *all* students.

- ▶ *Systematic teaching and learning* may be framed in terms of an ethics of commitment to intellectual rigour.
- ▶ *Active participation in the world* may be framed in terms of an ethics of civility in building the conditions for a democratic public space.
- ▶ *Individual development* may be framed in terms of an ethics of care for self, for others, and for the world we share.

Each of these will be explored in turn.

An ethics of intellectual rigour

One of the goals of schooling is to provide systematic teaching and learning to young people. What might this look like in ethical terms? The US educator, Ted Sizer, states that schools should help students ‘to use their minds well’. This is a misleadingly simple but profound statement. One meaning is that education needs to develop habits of mind (and heart) that strive for intellectual rigour.

An ethics of intellectual rigour challenges students and teachers to build practices of learning and enquiry as habits and dispositions. It challenges them to strive always to be informed and aware, to weigh up evidence and argument, to engage with difficult and complex issues and emotions, to develop their own views in thoughtful ways, and to change them when appropriate.

This is not to argue for a particular political or theoretical position. Rather it is to argue for intellectual vigilance and integrity in addressing issues of power and knowledge. A commitment to intellectual rigour means a continuing willingness to recognise that human knowledge is partial, and its perspectives are limited – without surrendering to an irresponsible relativism where anything counts as knowledge. It entails continually pushing the boundaries of what we know, questioning the certainties, and exploring different worlds of experience. It entails building on existing scholarship, correcting ourselves when we make mistakes, and working to conceptualise possible futures.

An ethics of intellectual rigour goes some way towards understanding why it has been so hard to reduce educational inequalities in South Africa, without accepting easy answers, or allowing things to rest as they are.

An ethics of civility

One of the goals of education is to prepare young people for participation in public life. This raises the ethical question: How might we best live together in a shared public realm? The public realm cannot simply be taken for granted. It needs to be continually built and maintained. Building and maintaining the conditions for participation in public affairs is a central task for democracy. Etienne Balibar (2001) terms this ‘civility’ and warns that it is fragile and requires nurturing. Nurturing civility is a task that education rightly addresses.

Whereas an ethics of intellectual rigour may be an individual endeavour, an ethics of civility entails engaging in a shared public life. The political philosopher Hannah Arendt puts this well when she says that public life requires us to ‘think in the presence of others’ (2001:22). For Arendt, this is not about trying to put oneself in the position of another, or showing empathy. Rather, it is about acknowledging that there are standpoints other than one’s own in a public realm. We need to engage with other standpoints in order to communicate and come to agreement.

An ethics of civility challenges South Africans to give attention to what is shared and common in a country with a divided history. South Africa is a country where there are people of many languages and cultures

living side-by-side, in greatly different conditions of wealth and poverty. An ethics of civility is concerned with building and maintaining a shared public realm under these conditions. It suggests the need to continually reflect on the nature of the shared society and its relations of power, and to build a common public sphere and identity with respect for difference.

This position on difference is not to be confused with a simple ‘multiculturalism’, which runs the danger of assigning static identities to people and freezing groups and their cultures. A focus on culture easily takes attention away from the power relations and socioeconomic inequalities that so often accompany difference. In Fraser’s terms, social injustices need to be analysed and redressed in terms of *both* recognition *and* redistribution.

Education for an ethics of civility is not about ‘politicising’ teachers and students. Rather, it is about requiring them to be familiar with the practices, rights and responsibilities of democracy and active citizenship. It is about developing the capacity to ‘think in the presence of others’. Actively building the conditions for a shared public space – for civility – is an important task for an ethics of engagement in education.

An ethics of care

The previous ethical frameworks we have considered are concerned with an education which builds a disposition of enquiry and which supports thoughtful engagement in public life. The third ethical framework put forward here is to consider the individual human being, living with others in a shared world.

What is it to be human? This is a topic of much philosophical debate. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and his followers assume that there exists a common, universal human subject (see McIntyre, 1998/1966). This human subject (or person) is autonomous and capable of rational thought and action. Others, such as Judith Butler (a ‘post-foundationalist’ theorist) argue against assuming that there is a universally shared human nature which is essentially the same (1995). (She does go on to say, however, that certain experiences may bring us together as human beings, specifically, ‘our vulnerability to loss and the task of mourning that follows’ [2004:19]).

Whatever our position, it is clear that human experience is shaped in engagement with others; it is not a matter of the individual being alone. The relationship of self to other is integral to human experience.

How, then, might we understand the other? Iris Marion Young, the US feminist philosopher, usefully argues that in engaging with others,

we should not assume that we are able to stand inside their world and think like them. Engagement with others requires recognition of their separateness as ‘irreducible and irreversible’ (2001:216). This requires a moral humility which recognises that there is ‘much that I do not understand about the other person’s experience and perspective’ (2001:219). An ethical relation with others, she suggests, ‘is structured, not by a willingness to reverse positions with others, but by respectful distancing from and approach towards them’ (2001:217).

Again, this is not about simple multiculturalism. Rather, it is about an acceptance that ‘difference’ is part of the human experience. We are all ‘others’ to somebody.

The Talmudic philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas (who survived the Holocaust), makes a radical statement about what it is to be human. He argues that it entails the ethical responsibility to care for others. He makes the point that as human beings, we have the capacity to comprehend ‘being’. We also have the capacity to recognise another human being (‘the face of the other’), and the ethical response to this encounter, says Levinas, is one of responsibility. Even before we know or understand the other, we recognise a human face, and ethically, we cannot be indifferent. For Levinas, the shattering of indifference and having a sense of responsibility for another is the defining interhuman ethic.

Levinas argues that responsibility for the other comes before any judgement, or expectation of what they might do for us in return. He goes as far as to say that in the relationship of Face to Face: ‘at the outset I hardly care what the other is with respect to me, that is his [her] own business; for me, he [she] is above all the one I am responsible for’ (1998:105). In short, being human is expressed in the care of one for the other. In refusing to acknowledge the face of the other, or to care for the other as our first response, we deny ourselves the very basis of what it is to be human. Picking up on Levinas’s work, Judith Butler says:

To respond to the face, to understand its meaning, means to be awake to what is precarious in another life or, rather, the precariousness of life itself. (2004:134)

What does an ethics such as this mean for education? What is being proposed here is a radical ethics of care, not a simple one. It is an ethics that calls for deep reflection about living with others – who are different, always. It means valuing and nurturing a concern for a common humanness, expressed in care and responsibility for the other. To shatter

indifference to suffering, and to care for the other, are primary ethical tasks for all individuals. And they are ethical tasks for education.

An ethics of care such as this, is one of the ways in which human beings may come to understand themselves in a shared world, and to work to change the world and themselves.

What might this mean for the challenge of achieving greater equity in education in South Africa?

THE TASK OF CRITICAL EDUCATIONISTS IN OPENING THE DOORS OF LEARNING

As with other social activities, education contributes towards actively building the world we wish to live in, albeit in circumstances not of our own choosing. This book suggests that the role of critical intellectuals in education is to continue to question, probe and explore what exists. The challenge is not to view what exists as inevitable and unchanging – and not to underestimate the task of changing what exists. The task is to keep envisaging alternatives, to keep challenging with new ideas, and to keep pressing against the boundaries of common sense towards something better. The task is always to hold an ethical position on education, which entails a commitment to continuously thinking about how we may best live with others in the world we share. As educators, our task is to enrich debates from within educational discourses. We need to work with governments without ‘thinking like them’; to work with teachers and students; to explore the outermost edges of understanding; and to face rather than deny or accommodate what is in front of us.

To change schooling in South Africa, more radical measures are needed to reduce social injustices and work towards greater equity. We need more resources and support directed towards poor schools. We need support for teachers and principals to work towards building professionalism based on capacity as well as accountability. We need to acknowledge the power of the formal codes of knowledge, and to work to make them accessible to all students. We need to acknowledge other languages and ways of knowing. We need always to uphold an ethics of education as part of speaking truth to power, and speaking truth about power.

We need to expect that solutions will be hard, not easy. They will always be provisional, always ‘in the making’, as people create their own histories but not in circumstances of their own choosing.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
ELRA	Education Labour Relations Act
FET	Further Education and Training
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GNI	Gross National Income
GNU	Government of National Unity
HDI	Human Development Index
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NIES	Newly Industrialised Economies
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education

LIST OF ACRONYMS

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PM	Performance Measurement
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SASA	South Africa Schools Act
SGBs	School Governing Bodies
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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