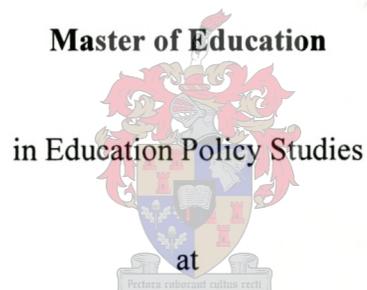# FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO: DEMOCRATIC OR NOT?

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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ABSTRACT

The central question of this thesis is whether free and compulsory primary education in primary government schools of Lesotho has the potential to be thickly democratic. I hold that the Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy is a less democratic project because it is characterised by principles of thin democracy. My claim is that free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho can be more democratic if there is balance in the demand for equity of access in the FPE (2000) project.

I hold that in order to succeed in further democratising the Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) programme, the whole process, but primarily the structures of education, should be anchored within thick democratic principles. Although primary education is regarded to have changed, this change has been illusory or superficial (meaning that it is still essentially the same as the colonial one), as it did not affect the structure and value systems governing the delivery of education. The reported conflicts that have come to the fore after independence have been mostly on matters of strategy rather than differences in terms of the values that drive the delivery of education in Lesotho. The focus of Lesotho's education has remained on an elitist and outwardly looking minority. This powerful minority remains geared towards the acquisition of a Western type of education driven by Western values. Lessons and opportunities that could have been learnt from Sotho (pre-colonial) educational experiences and which were regarded as democratic have been lost. I contend that a democratically driven education system has to draw its inspiration from the principles of thick democratic education.

An effective and transformational educational system requires the commitment of those in political leadership as well as those in charge of education. This commitment must include a desire to implement an education system that transforms people's worldview qualitatively to put them at the service of their nation. I hold that the value of education in Lesotho can be successful when it is capable of producing men and women of the highest integrity, honesty, tolerance, responsibility and accountability.

The education system should produce individuals who are hard working, patriotic, well mannered and committed to serving their society. Education should be able to equip each and everyone to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. Finally, the teaching of thick democratic attributes must be founded on the bedrock of a successful education system in Lesotho from the lowest classes or grades.

OPSOMMING

Die belangrike vraag in hierdie tesis is of gratis en verpligte primêre onderwys in primêre skole in Lesotho die potensiaal het om "dik" demokraties te is. Myns insiens is die beleid van gratis en verpligte primêre onderwys (2000) 'n minder demokratiese projek aangesien dit deur die beginsels van onvoldoende ("dun") demokrasie gekenmerk word. Ek voer aan dat gratis en verpligte primêre onderwys in Lesotho meer demokraties kan wees indien daar 'n balans in die vraag na gelyke toegang in die Gratis Primêre Onderwys-projek (2000) bestaan.

Ek meen verder dat die hele proses, maar hoofsaaklik die onderwysstrukture, in demokratiese beginsels veranker behoort te wees ten einde die verdemokratisering van die program vir gratis en verpligte primêre onderwys (2000) suksesvol deur te voer. Alhoewel daar gereken word dat primêre onderwys verander het, was hierdie verandering denkbeeldig of oppervlakkig (waarmee bedoel word dat dit steeds wesenlik dieselfde is as die koloniale onderwysstelsel), aangesien dit nie 'n invloed gehad het op die struktuur en waardestelsel wat die lewering van onderwys beheer nie. Die konflikte wat aangemeld is ná onafhanklikwording het meestal te make gehad met kwessies ten opsigte van strategie eerder as verskille met betrekking tot die waardes wat die lewering van onderwys in Lesotho beheer. Die fokus op onderwys in Lesotho het gerig gebly op 'n elitistiese en uitwaartse invloedryke minderheid wat ingeskakel het by die verwerwing van 'n Westerse soort onderwys wat deur Westerse waardes gedryf word. Lesse en geleenthede wat uit prekoloniale Sotho-onderwyservaringe geleer kon word en wat as demokraties beskou kon word, het verlore gegaan. Myns insiens moet 'n demokraties-gedrewe onderwysstelsel sy inspirasie uit die beginsels van demokratiese onderwys kan put.

'n Doeltreffende en transformasionele onderwysstelsel vereis die verbintenis van diegene aan die roer van sake ten opsigte van leierskap in die gemeenskap sowel as diegene in beheer van onderwys. Hierdie verbintenis moet getemper word deur 'n behoefte aan die implementering van onderwys wat mense se wêreldbeskouing op kwalitatiewe wyse transformeer ten einde hulle in diens te stel van hulle nasie en die mense. Die waarde van onderwys in Lesotho kan slegs gesien word wanneer dit in staat is om mans en vroue van die hoogste integriteit, eerlikheid, verdraagsaamheid,

verantwoordelikheid en aanspreeklikheid te lewer – hardwerkende, patriotiese, goedgemanierde mense wat daaraan toegewy is om hulle samelewing te dien. Onderwys behoort in staat te wees om 'n ieder en 'n elk toe te rus om op betekenisvolle wyse tot die ontwikkeling van die nasie by te dra. Laastens, die onderrig van "dik" demokratiese eienskappe moet gebou word op die basis van 'n suksesvolle onderwysstelsel in Lesotho vanaf die laagste klasse of grade.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Gratis en verpligte onderwys, demokratiese onderwys, kwaliteit onderwys, gelyke onderwys, "dik" en "dun" demokrasie in Lesotho.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY IN LESOTHO

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The missionaries owned, controlled and maintained all schools in Lesotho from the 19th into the 20th centuries. All those schools charged school fees. This meant that the majority of Basotho children did not attend school and some dropped out before finishing their elementary education. The government of Lesotho realised that these children ultimately became workers (child-minders and herd boys), or took to the streets, or they fell victim to diseases (Mosisisli, 2003: 2). To eliminate that problem in the 1980s the government introduced the Textbook Rental Policy, whereby they reserved the right to prescribe and approve the textbooks used in primary schools. However, the scheme faced the following challenges: (a) the implications were that additional funds were required to finance the new text books because of the additional subjects in the primary school curriculum; and (b) the scheme was not very effective because some children were still out of school (Mokhokhoba, 2003: 2).

Against this background, it was essential that Lesotho's newly found democracy[1] established in 1993 initiates an education system grounded in acceptable principles of democracy. The first goal of the newly elected government regarding educational change is reflected in the Education Act (Act No. 10 of 1995). The primary purposes of the Act are to ensure that (a) every child be given opportunities an facilities to enable him or her to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy, normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity; (b) a child who is physically and mentally handicapped be given special care; (c) the best interests of the child be given priority on the part of those responsible for education and guidance; (d) parents make sure that children regularly attend school to receive a full education; (e) every child be protected from racial discrimination and prejudice; (f) tolerance, friendship, peace and unity are fostered amongst people (Act No. 10 of 1995: 6-7). After this, the government of Lesotho

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[1] Basutoland was renamed the Kingdom of Lesotho upon independence from the UK in 1966. King Moshoeshoe was exiled in 1990. Constitutional government was restored in 1993 after 23 years of military rule. In 1998, violent protests and a military mutiny following a contentious election prompted a brief but bloody South African military intervention. Constitutional reforms have since restored political stability; peaceful parliamentary elections were held in 2002.

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introduced another policy, which is "The Free and Compulsory Primary Education" (FPE) (2000) programme, where the aim is to alleviate and ultimately eradicate poverty in Lesotho by making basic education accessible to all Basotho children and ensuring that all of them have an equal opportunity to receive basic education (Ministry of Education, 2001: 11). Akindele and Gill (2002: 5) assert that the government of Lesotho considers primary education as the foundation to the whole education system and the key to education's success or failure.

The Lesotho Ministry of Education (2001: 9-10) asserts that the desirability of the introduction of universal primary education was first mooted at the National Education Dialogue of 1978, but the unaffordability of such a venture has been the main obstacle to its implementation. In March 1990 Lesotho joined the rest of the international community in endorsing the convention on Education for all in Jomtein, Thailand. The Lesotho Ministry of Education further points out that Lesotho went further to ratify the United Nation Convention on The Rights of the Child in 1990, thereby pledging to make primary education compulsory and available to all. Additionally, the Lesotho Ministry of Education goes further by showing that the Education For All Assessment Study (1999) revealed a drastic decline in net enrolment in schools due to deepening poverty, which served only to crystallise the resolve of the government that a Declaration of Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) in Lesotho was long overdue. On 24 April 1999 the Prime Minister of Lesotho, the Right Honorable Mr Pakalitha Mosisili, announced the government's intention to introduce The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) programme from January 2000 (Ministry of Education, 2001: 10).

This study provides an analysis of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) programme in Lesotho. It is an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of whether this policy in primary government schools[2] is thickly or thinly democratic[3]. In this chapter I shall firstly explore the theoretical framework for this study.

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[2] In Lesotho there are three types of primary schools, namely church schools, private schools and government schools. In this study I focus in government schools since the free and compulsory education programme would not pay for teachers in private schools, and the fact that church schools are managed by church owners although their curricula are the same as government schools.

[3] I distinguish between thick and thin democracy. Thick democracy implies that constitutive features of democracy such as liberty and equality, freedom and participation are practised. Thin democracy means that these meanings and others such as deliberation and difference are not always adhered to.

1.2 RATIONALE OF STUDY

My study is basically conceptual in nature because it attempts to explore whether The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in primary government schools is thickly or thinly democratic – that is, highly or less democratic. In order to explore whether these schools function according to thick democracy, I shall focus on a key policy document which is the Free and Compulsory Primary Education policy document of 2000.

Besides the fact that The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in Lesotho is not clearly communicated to the majority of the Basotho nation, evidence also exists that some of the Basotho children who come to school through this programme are locked out of school gates and are not allowed to use school toilets and tap water on school campuses (Akindele & Gill, 2002: 6). This is apparently the case because of the costs involved and, in any event, most parents cannot afford to pay for tuition fees, books and uniforms. For these reasons it seems as if democracy in Lesotho primary schools is thin. Why? In the first instance to discriminate unfairly against children because of a lack of finances is clearly an intolerant act. Furthermore denying children access to school also prevents them from building friendship, solidarity and peace. And for the reason that the Act announces the importance of establishing tolerance, friendship, solidarity and peace one can claim that a lack of these practices could prevent democracy from flourishing. But first, I need to look at the scope for this study.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Education Act No. 10 of 1995 and The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in primary government schools in Lesotho have been designed to cultivate democratic practices in schools. Moreover, the government of Lesotho introduced this "education policy" with the aim to overcome the financial barriers experienced by parents and as part of the initiative to alleviate poverty in Lesotho (MoE, 2001: 13). The government of Lesotho states that it will make basic education accessible to all Basotho by ensuring that all children have equal opportunities to basic education. This involves providing quality delivery in all the centres of basic education in Lesotho, providing learners with life skills relevant to their context, and forging appropriate linkages for the success of Lesotho's primary education system (MoE, 2001: 13). However, as pointed out earlier, the possibility exists that firstly, these education polices

might not be adhered to and secondly, if implemented it might be substantially watered down. If so, thin democracy would flourish over thick democracy for the reason that change should not only be procedural in terms of making policy work, but also substantive, that is, ensuring that policies are implemented at all levels of the education system, especially in schools. For this reason this study will investigate whether practices are thinly or thickly democratic with the aim to highlight weaknesses in order to make suggestions as to how these weaknesses can be overcome.

Education in Lesotho has the features typical of a developing country such as no compulsory school attendance and low enrolment at primary level (above all in rural areas). Only about 50% of boys and 60% of girls attend primary school. Less than 20% of all pupils in Lesotho receive secondary education (MoE, 2001: i). Of these, only 35% pass the university entrance examination. The education system in Lesotho is largely church-sponsored but is increasingly receiving state funding. In the academic year 2000, Lesotho introduced free primary-school attendance from class one onwards (MoE, 2001: ii). The country has a university with some 2,300 students in six faculties, namely the National University of Lesotho (NUL) founded in 1945. There are many more students reading social science or education than there are studying engineering, economics or science subjects. The NUL is currently engaging in reform with a view to increasing quality and efficiency and to gearing the education and research activities of the university more to the economic and social development needs of the country. A major problem for the NUL is the permanent brain-drain of qualified academic staff to South Africa (MoE, 2001: 5-7). All these factors about the education provision in Lesotho, especially the fact that less that 20% receive secondary education vindicate the government's urgency to make education at the primary level free and compulsory.

When the Government of Lesotho (GoL) made education free and compulsory it had the following aspects in mind: (a) to eliminate the financial obstacles of parents in order to enable all Basotho children to receive basic primary education for seven years. Although education is free of charge the GoL will not assist private schools, purchase uniforms for pupils, directly pay any amount of cash to schools, and pay salaries for any other school employees apart from teachers; and (b) all Basotho children between the ages of 6 and 12 will receive a compulsory education which focuses on reading, writing and arithmetic along with an elementary introduction to other

subjects (MoE, 2003: 1).[4] At the end of the seventh year, pupils sit for the external examination from which they are awarded the Primary School leaving Examination (PSLE) certificate (MoE, 2003: 1). Moreover, the government of Lesotho will be responsible for the following expenses under this programme: physical accessibility, which includes textbook rental fee, stationary for both teachers and learners and feeding for students. It further asserts that it will assist in the establishment of new community schools, build additional classrooms in selected schools and provide classroom furniture. As part of its free and compulsory education agenda the government of Lesotho will provide additional training for primary school principals and teachers in order to cope with the new demands of its new education agenda. It will recruit, train and deploy para-professional teachers (semi-qualified / unqualified teachers) (MoE, 2001: 11-12).

The aim of the Lesotho government is to provide the Basotho with an education that is relevant to their context. Akindele and Gill (2002) explain that through education the national educational objectives can be achieved. Through these objectives the nation is expected to be conscious and united. Additionally, they inculcate the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individuals of Basotho society by training the mind in the understanding of the world around them; and facilitate the acquisition of the appropriate skills, abilities and both mental and physical competence (Akindele & Gill, 2002: 4). These national educational objectives have the potential to be achieved as long as the education system is democratic. However, where international markets overwhelmingly influence the education system it has the potential to become less democratic (thinly democratic). This is so, because thick democracy (as I shall show later on) implies that practices are done for the sake of improvement and development, whereas thin democracy has the effect whereby satisfying market factors seems to do things for the sake of external gain only.

For our schools to promote democracy, they have to secure all the legitimate interests of all pupils whether as individuals or as a community. I shall argue that some teachers in some schools in Lesotho do not necessarily secure these legitimate interests; hence, my investigation aims to explain and clarify how teachers (at primary government schools) understand and experience democratic education, with emphasis on equality in education and quality education. The notion of democracy and its ideals will be explored in chapter three, while quality education

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[4] The education system in Lesotho is structured according to six levels: level 0 (pre-primary education), level 1 (primary education), level 2 (lower secondary education), level 3 (higher secondary non-tertiary education) and level 4 (post-secondary non tertiary education) and level 5 (university education).

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for all learners and inclusion in education will be explored in Chapter Two. There is abundant literature on the link between free and compulsory primary education and democracy (Tomasevski, 2003: 1-3). I need to present a working understanding of democracy, as it is the key concept of this study, although it is going to be explored in detail in Chapter Three.

As noted by Torres (1998: 432), democracy is a messy system, but it has survived because there is scope for debates and a set of rules that people follow even if they do not benefit from them. When Waghid (2001: 83) interprets this concept, he states that democracy emphasises three aspects: a system of government; a sphere for debate; and a set of general principles. My intention is to investigate whether The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in the schools agenda is commensurate with the principles of democracy as comprising a set of general principles.

Waghid (2003b: 83) posits that for the democratisation of education to take place "individuals work together in the same public sphere with meanings and interpretations that must continuously be explored, and where subordinate groups develop their voices and articulate their needs in an atmosphere of tolerance, solidarity and the recognition of diversity". Steyn, de Klerk, du Plessis and Taylor (1999: 90) indicate that democratic education is characterised by human activities, free participation, consultation, engagement and co-operation by all role-players involved in the education system. It is essential for one to understand the constitutive meanings of democracy, because the impression is created that only undermining the principles mentioned above by Steyn *et.al.* will bring democracy into dispute (Adams, 2002: 7). The aim of the study is to investigate free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho and how these concepts of free and compulsory education link with constitutive meanings of democracy for the reason that these meanings make democratic education what it is. Although it is arguably a difficult task to determine all the constitutive meanings of democracy, for the purpose of this study I explore the concepts of solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, free participation and engagement because they have a direct bearing on my thesis. I say this in the sense that the GoL aims to cultivate friendship, care, freedom, dignity, tolerance, peace and unity through its free and compulsory primary education project. And, for the reason that solidarity, tolerance and recognition of diversity, and free participation and engagement have the potential to enhance virtues of friendship, care, freedom, dignity, peace and unity, free participation and engagement in primary schools, my reason for focusing on these constitutive meanings of democracy seems justified. The point I am making, is solidarity, tolerance and recognition of diversity, and free

participation and engagement can engender opportunities for Basotho children in primary schools to learn and experience freedom, dignity, care, friendship, peace and unity.

1.3.1 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.3.1.1 Solidarity

Solidarity involves shared, collective human practices. West *et. al.* (in Waghid 2003b: 85) relate solidarity to feelings and experiences of people in certain different ways "to protect their bodies, their labour, their communities and their way of life; so that they can be associated with people who ascribe values to them; and for purposes of recognition, to feel as if one actually belongs to a group, a clan, a tribe, a community". In this case solidarity can be considered an educational practice because it involves shared ideas, experiences, association and community, which makes it a social activity. Torres (in Waghid, 2003b: 85) describes it as a "salient process of understanding and meaning making by individuals attempting to understand the conditions of their lives". This means that solidarity involves practices whereby people engage in a transaction and through which they critically, rationally, imaginatively and compassionately strive to achieve the "good life" (Torres in Waghid, 2003b: 85). Shared and collective experience of meaning making depends on the way people relate to each other, build each other's ideas, and recognise and interpret each other's self-understanding in relation to the context in which they find themselves (Waghid, 2003b: 85).

1.3.1.2 Tolerance

In the sense used by Waghid (2003b: 83), tolerance implies that people have to be prepared and willing to listen to one another's conflicting views and differences. This means that people have to be prepared to listen to what others, with whom they disagree, have to say. This implies that they are tolerant towards one another, even if they express divergent views. Likewise, in the wake of conflict and severe differences of opinion amongst people, the chances of confrontation would be ruled out if all participants in education are willing to talk to each other (Waghid, 2003b: 83). He further points out that tolerance resonates with the idea that educational practices occur in an atmosphere of mutual respect and thus invoke the integrity of all participants. It discourages a situation in which one participant has to prove him/herself right or others wrong. Instead, one has to prove one's point of view so that participants understand one's point clearly.

Participants have to be critical thinkers, where the weight of others' opinion is considered and this involves making informed choices about the issue under debate (Waghid, 2003b: 83).

1.3.1.3 Recognition of diversity

Recognition of diversity implies that people have to engage rationally, imaginatively and compassionately in an educational practice, which offers space for diversity. By implication, subordinate groups in an educational practice can develop their voices and articulate their needs because they have their own spaces. Hernandez posits that any attempt at democratising education has to consider the voices of the voiceless rather than absorbing them into "a consensual overarching public sphere" (Hernandez in Waghid, 2003b: 86). This recognition of diversity opens up the possibility for different social groups to work together in the same territory or public sphere. This implies that educational practice is an arena of conflicting interest groups in a society, rather than of the overarching representation of the choices of individuals who pursue their separate interests. Fletcha (in Waghid, 2003b: 86) posits that diversity provides the conditions for subordinate groups to articulate their needs and deepens the emancipatory possibilities of different social groups in transactions. These groups maintain, promote and develop their own culture and identity in a process of empowerment that allows them to reflect on their experiences within the wider society (Fraser in Waghid, 2003: 86). In addition, Hernandez posits that recognition of diversity through democratisation of education constitutes a space in which people come to consciousness, deliberately transforming not only knowledge about themselves and their reality, but also transforming their own subjectivities (Hernandez, 1997: 58).

1.3.1.4 Free participation

Free participation means that citizens have the implicit right to influence the social spaces which influence their lives. Participation is an activity which involves taking part with others in some social process, game, sport or joint endeavour. It can either be direct where citizens have an opportunity to take part in the decision-making process or through representatives, where citizens choose the representatives to undertake collective decisions in their name. It is a prerequisite for thick democracy, for without community or mass participation, a system could hardly claim to be highly democratic. Individuals have to willfully and actively support, or are

party to a particular practice, so that the practice can be claimed to be democratic. Participation is, therefore a constitutive principle of democracy (Birch, 1993: 80).

1.3.1.5 Engagement

According to Nussbaum and Glover (1995: 78) and Nussbaum (2000: 79 & 1986: 89), engagement is the same as practical reasoning, because it is where all human beings participate (or try to) in the planning and managing of their lives, where questions are asked and answered about what is good and how one should live. Moreover, human individuals (social beings) are interconnected with those around them and act together and are also able to choose, evaluate and to function accordingly (Shockley, 2004: 131). This general capacity has many concrete forms and is related in complex ways to the other capacities, emotional, imaginative and intellectual (Nussbaum, 2000: 79 & 1986: 89 and Nussbaum & Glover, 1995: 78). MacIntyre (in Waghid, 2003b: 25) supports this view by asserting that reasoning together does not solely consist of engagement in social relationships or practices, but also involves the ability one has to show, and willingness to evaluate the reasons for actions advanced to one by others (MacIntyre in Waghid, 2003b: 25).

I shall expound further on these constitutive meanings of democracy in Chapter Three in relation to the implementation of free and compulsory primary education in schools. To understand the constitutive principles of democracy and how, in the implementation of this policy, individuals might undermine these meanings is of interest to me in my quest to determine whether selected primary schools necessarily enact democratic principles as advocated by The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy. I shall argue that this policy has the potential to lead to democratic practices. However, these practices would reflect thin democracy and not thick for reasons that will be developed in the thesis with specific reference to teaching and learning.

I shall now proceed to clarify briefly the situation before the implementation of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy to understand how the education system in schools transformed in Lesotho. I shall give a general overview of educational transformation from the 19th century and from there proceed to the different phases in the historical development of education in Lesotho. These phases are distinguished by the clear shift of perspective and circumstances from pre-colonial to colonial and post-colonial.

1.3.2 Education policy shifts in Lesotho

Developments in Lesotho's education system have been categorised into three periods, namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. The post-colonial period is often referred to as the post-independence period.

Pre-colonial Sesotho education evolved around the initiation schools and informal the intention of this education was to produce a responsible person who is committed to serving his/her society and meeting family requirements (Mats'ela in Muzvidziwa, 2002: 2). Formal education system "Christian education" that replaced informal education provided literacy to the Basotho nation, although it seemed to have undermined the indigenous Sesotho education system (Bohloko in Muzvidziwa, 2002: 3).

In 1868 Lesotho became a British colony, and the colonial government supported "Christian education" missionary education and streamlined it by formulating education policy the Comprehensive Education Act, which defined the roles and responsibility of government and the churches in the management of policy in schools. Secondly, it provided an education policy for the chiefs, churches and government. Lesotho planned its own education system in 1953. The content and form of education offered little in terms of orientating the curricula towards indigenous Sesotho culture (Clark Commission in Muzvidziwa, 2002: 3).

According to the third Five-Year Plan (1970), Lesotho attempted to restructure the education system to respond to national development, but faced difficulties in ideas and in the limited number of experts who could fulfill the aspirations of the government. On the one hand, because Lesotho's education system was inadequate as a consequence of a shortage of teaching materials, physical facilities and equipment, and a lack of practical skills the country faced delinquency and truancy in education. On the other hand, the majority of the Basotho children did not attend school and some dropped out before finishing their elementary education due to financial constraints (MoE, 2001: 9).

The government introduced a Textbook Rental Policy (in 1983) to eliminate these problems, but it failed because some children were still out of school (Mokhokhoba, 2003: 2). In 1988 the government wanted to transform school governance and emphasise self-reliance, but it also

failed because of the hidden agendas that "donor agencies" had in Lesotho education (Mateka, 1994: 2).

On the 24th of April 1999 the government of Lesotho announced that The Free and Compulsory Primary Education policy was to be effected starting with the first grade at primary level from January 2000 (MoE, 2001: 2). Churches and other political parties opposed this positive attempt at reform. This did not change the nature of Lesotho's education system (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 7). It is this policy, which I wish to analyse in a Chapter 4 in order to ascertain whether it holds a thick democratic potential for Lesotho's primary school education.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this section I shall discuss the following: research question, research method and methodology.

1.4.1 Research Question

The key research question for this study is: "Does the free and compulsory primary education policy in Lesotho have the potential to engender thick democracy?" This question guides the study of free and compulsory primary education at the primary government schools in Lesotho. These three schools do not have a regional connection. The first group of schools is in an urban area and the second group is in a rural area. One is a church school, the other is a "private" school, and the last one is a government school. Next, I shall discuss the research method and the methodology for this study.

1.4.2 Research method

According to Harding (in Gough, 2000: 3) and Harvey (1990: 1), method refers to the technique for gathering empirical evidence. Harvey further explains that method ranges from asking questions and reading documents to observation of both controlled and uncontrolled situations (Harvey, 1990: 1). The research method that I am going to use is conceptual analysis.

Before I explain conceptual analysis, I have to ask this question "What does the term conceptual analysis entail?" Briefly, analysis refers to "the elucidation of the meaning of any concept, idea

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or unit of thought that we employ in seeking to understand ourselves and our world, by reducing it, breaking it down, into more basic concepts that constitute it and thereby showing its relationship to a network of other concepts or discovering what the concept denotes" (Hirst & White in Van Wyk, 2004a: 3). For instance, if one wants to understand what education means, one has to search for or uncover meanings which constitute education or meanings which give education its distinctive character. According to Peters (1970: 25), education is an activity or process that lay down criteria to which these activities and processes have to conform. "It implies that something worthwhile is being or has been intentionally transmitted in a morally acceptable manner" (Peters, 1970: 25). In this case, the meanings that constitute education involve purposive human actions and moral behaviour for achieving the common good. These are called the constitutive meanings of education for they make education what it is and they give education its distinct character.

However, to uncover the constitutive meanings of education, one has to search for those meanings which one thinks might best explain what the concept is. Searching for the underlying meanings of a concept is a practice of looking for conditions, which give a concept its meaning, style and appearance (Hirst & Peters, 1998: 33). In essence, when one analyses a concept one would be searching for conditions which make up a concept. If these conditions are not present, then one would not understand the meaning of the concept. That is why Hirst and Peters claim that:

> If, therefore, we are trying to analyse a concept it is important to realise that this cannot be done adequately by just examining the use of words in a self-contained way. We have to study carefully their relation to other words (concepts) and their use in different types of sentences (context). An understanding of their use in sentences does not come just by the study of grammar; it is also necessary to understand the different sorts of purposes (general principle or logically necessary conditions) that lie behind the use of sentences. Moreover, this requires reflection on different purposes, both linguistic and non-linguistic, that human beings share in social life (Hirst & Peters, 1998: 33).

Therefore, if one wants to know what constitutes free and compulsory education, one has to look for conditions (constitutive meanings), which surround such an understanding. Constitutive meanings for this concept of free and compulsory education are freedom, equality and equity. For one to choose these meanings as principles of the concept of free and compulsory education,

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one has to have good reasons for referring to them as necessary conditions. This is how one engages in conceptual analysis.

Furthermore, to do conceptual analysis is not just restricted to finding conditions that make a concept what it is. A concept, such as free and compulsory education, like any other concept is framed in a social or historical context. For one to do well one does not need to know the history of the concept of good, neither does one have to know the social conventions or rules that have given rise to the formation of the word "goodness". Nevertheless, if one wants to know "goodness" in an informed way, one has to know its historical context. In this way, one will be searching for the historical context, which shapes concepts as a matter of "diachronic causation". In this way one would be able to know in a more articulate and substantiated way as to what a concept means when one refers to the concept in its historical context (Taylor, 1985: 87).

Similarly, if one wants to know how "free and compulsory primary education" came into being; it would make sense to know something related to the manner in which the concept has developed historically. Only then one can have a clearer and defensible understanding of the concept of "free and compulsory primary education". In essence, conceptual analysis allows one to know the necessary conditions that make a concept what it is, as well as the historical and social contexts that have given rise to the formulation and existence of the concept. It is with such an understanding of conceptual analysis that I shall explore the constitutive meanings that make up the concept of free and compulsory primary education, as well as its historical context which shaped and guided this perspective of free and compulsory primary education.

Referring to another aspect that informs the practice of analysing concepts will conclude this elucidation of conceptual analysis. For instance, if one wants to search for necessary conditions which could frame a concept, one invariably refers to relational concepts. That is, one has to refer to the use of a concept in relation to other words or concepts (Taylor, 1985: 87). Even Wittgenstein (1953: 76) shows that one gets to know the meaning of a concept if one relates it to the use of other concepts. Therefore, for one to understand the concept "goodness" one has to relate the use of "goodness" to other concepts like openness, justice, equality, fairness, and liberty, as well as the ways in which these concepts are used in practice, otherwise one does not know what one is talking about. When one explains the concept "goodness" in relation to these concepts, one gets to know how the concept is used relationally and contextually. In my view, uncovering the constitutive meanings of the notion of free and compulsory primary education,

one not only understands the relational concepts which give meaning to free and compulsory education, but also the way in which the concept is attuned to other concepts.

Having discussed the research method, in this case conceptual analysis, the following is a discussion of research methodology. The methodology that I intend using is critical theory, because I want to gain knowledge to empower myself and, it seems to me, critical theory has an emancipatory thrust. Part of the rationalisation of this thesis is to liberate the Basotho nation and other education communities (stakeholders) from social injustice and constraints, because it encourages people to analyse and criticize ideological discourses imposed on them, in this case the implementation of free and compulsory education. Critical theory also encourages people to participate equally to understand one another through argument and debate with the aim of reaching consensus.

1.4.3 Research methodology

Methodology refers to reasoning that informs particular ways of doing research, or the principles that inform the organisation of research activity. It is termed a paradigm and sometimes is called a grammar of thinking, because it provides a rationale for educational research (Gough, 2000: 3; Waghid, 2002: 42). In addition, Harvey (1990: 1-2) views methodology as the interface between methodic practice, substantive theory and epistemological underpinnings. Epistemology is used here to refer to the presuppositions about the nature of knowledge and of science that inform practical inquiry. He further points out that methodology is the point at which method, theory and epistemology coalesce in an overt way in the process of directly investigating specific instances within the social world. According to him, methodology makes explicit the presuppositions that inform the knowledge that is generated by the enquiry (Harvey, 1990: 1-2).

In this study I shall indicate why critical theory is an appropriate methodology to do research by analysing The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy of the Lesotho Ministry of Education. This theory is geared towards bringing about change in people's self-understanding and their practices. It is with such an understanding that I contend that this theory is suitable for this research.

Critical theory is the most suitable for this research, because it provides opportunities both to criticise and change the social world. Fay (in Waghid, 2002: 49) posits that "the truth or falsity

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of theories will be partially determined by whether they are in fact translated into practices". In this instance, it refers to the practices of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education in Lesotho, because people will need to understand what had happened in Lesotho before The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy was implemented, so that they can be helped to change an unsatisfactory situation. Critical theory is the most suitable theory for this study, because it can effect change and support the kind of reflection that leads to emancipation during and after the research process.

In addition, in a Habermasian sense, critical theory has to be grounded in the notion of an "organisation of enlightenment", with its three dimensions. Firstly, the "ideal pedagogical speech situation" concerns the mutual communicative relationship between the educator and learners. In this situation the learner is able rationally to assess views, or at least, come to hold them in a manner open to rational assessment. It seems as if The Free and Compulsory Primary Education policy (2000) is organised for the purpose of enlightenment and not indoctrination. Teachers at Lesotho primary schools are prevented from dominating their learners; they both produce and reproduce the rules of the epistemological discourse, which include "researchers drawing on educators and learners' experiences to explain how a situation can be changed, and educators and learners contributing towards the critical assessment of their own performance in the school" (Habermas in Waghid, 2002: 51).

Furthermore, Habermas' second dimension involves reforming institutions. He shows that critical theory has to bring about decentralising the needs of administration and freeing institutions from bureaucratic and technical interests. In essence, the school principal should allow and encourage other education members to participate in the education of their children who come to school in the free and compulsory education programme. In short, schools have to be managed at a community level. The third dimension of Habermas's account is that critical theory relates to the organisation of action. The idea is that communicative interaction between education policy researchers, educators, learners, policy analysts and communities has to result in new knowledge which needs to be "systematically incorporated in the process of change" (Young in Waghid, 2002: 51).

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1.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have outlined the situations which prevailed during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases of Lesotho's educational history. I showed how these educational developments informed the present education system. I also explored conceptual analysis as a philosophical tool to study The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy of Lesotho. I highlighted how conceptual analysis helps in understanding what makes "free and compulsory education" what it is. For instance, conceptual analysis helps one to search for necessary conditions and understand how a concept is used in relation with other concepts in different contexts. I concluded the chapter by discussing the theoretical framework for this study, which is critical theory.

1.6 PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY

In **Chapter One** I provide an introduction to the study as well as an orientation in terms of scope, research method and methodology.

Chapter Two provides a conceptual analysis of the notion of free and compulsory primary education. Having concluded in Chapter One that conceptual analysis consists in looking for conditions for the use of a concept, I shall attempt to construct the conditions of free and compulsory education, which is the key concept in this chapter. Key features of such conditions will be elaborated upon.

In **Chapter Three** I shall provide an analysis of another key concept, which is democracy. I shall also attempt to construct conditions of democracy. I argue that this concept is a messy concept that is difficult to define. I then explore conceptions of democracy, namely representative or thin democracy and strong (thick) democracy; finally, I explore the constitutive meanings of democratic education related to free and compulsory education in Lesotho.

Chapter Four provides an analysis of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) document, in order to determine what it pronounces on the conditions I identified in Chapter Two. My rationale for analysing this policy document is to determine what this policy pronounces in terms of addressing the needs of the Basotho children in education. The aim is to

uncover whether this policy has the potential to engender thick democracy in primary government schools in Lesotho.

Chapter Five attempts to frame the possibilities that the government and other education stakeholders have to consider for future improvements in implementing education policy documents for democratising in a thick manner the education system in Lesotho. I conclude with the idea that free and compulsory primary education can provide education practitioners with a conceptual frame to organise their discourses in such a way as to contribute towards thickly democratising their activities and their institutions (schools). In this way they might achieve more when addressing the demands for improved access, equity, quality and relevance in the primary government schools in Lesotho.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I shall explain the notion of "free and compulsory primary education" as the government of Lesotho understands it. I then proceed to answer the question whether free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho has the potential to bring about thick or thin democratic practices. The first step is to look at educational developments in Lesotho and connect those developments to democracy. By doing so, I shall attempt to explain what constitutes "free and compulsory education". This is important because understanding the concept better entails also knowing its history, that is, the structural and conceptual processes which led to the development of the concept.

The Lesotho primary education system is categorised into three periods, namely a pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era. Pre-colonial Sesotho education was informal and was meant to produce a person characterised by social responsibility and committed to serving society and meeting family requirements (Mats'ela in Muzvidziwa, 2002: 2). According to Mohapeloa (1982: 140), later the missionaries' education, which was formal, replaced informal education. He further argues that their education was bookish because they were interested only in Basotho who could read the Bible. The British who colonised Lesotho favoured the missionaries' education, which continued throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods (Mohapeloa, 1982: 140).

The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy document addresses the following issues: (a) access - improved access, enrolment and retention up to standard 7; (b) equity - development of equality of opportunity and equity of achievement; (c) quality - improvement in the quality of teaching, the learning process and nature of classroom interaction; (d) relevance - development of a curriculum and modes of assessment which ensure the human, practical and vocational relevance of basic education; (e) delivery - simultaneous development and decentralisation of the existing infrastructure and human resource base which supports the

delivery of primary education; and (f) linkage - which is the creation of appropriate linkages between primary education and other sub-sectors in order to ultimately establish sector-wide planning.

In this chapter I shall examine The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy document and what it means in Lesotho. I shall also consider several aspects of free and compulsory education. First, equality in education and the values that are taught in schools to promote equality in schools, as well as gender equality in schools and in classrooms. Second, quality education and the five perspectives that we use to judge quality in education. Finally, I discuss quality education for all and compulsory education in the South African context. I also and explore how South Africa perceives this education.

2.2 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, formal education in Lesotho was developed through a partnership between the government and the Christian missionaries. Lesotho's primary education system provided Basotho children with eight years of primary education (Mohapeloa, 1982: 140). There were between 1200 and 1500 church schools. These schools charged parents enormous fees for enrolment (Gill, 1994: 107). The state paid the salaries of teachers. The Ministry of Education was established in 1927. The role of the Ministry of Education was to formulate a uniform syllabus and a system of school inspections (MoE, 2001: 8-9).

The missionaries who established Lesotho's primary education in 1833 were not seen as colonisers and were accepted as citizens of Moshoeshoe's Kingdom. Later (in 1868) Lesotho became a British colony (GoL, 2004b: 2). Lesotho's education then adopted the British education system, which was irrelevant to the context of the Basotho children. In 1966 Lesotho became politically independent and immediately after independence the Kingdom of Lesotho drafted the Constitution of the country, which states that "Lesotho shall be a sovereign democratic kingdom"; section 4(1) of the Constitution of Lesotho order No. 1966 declares "the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms" (GoL, 1966). Among the listed rights and freedoms, there is no fundamental human right for education, which is my main concern in this study. However, the then Prime Minister suspended the 1966 Constitution because he was defeated at the 1970 poll. Certain cabinet ministers then threatened the prime minister, nullified

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the elections, declared a state of emergency, and arrested opposition leaders and the king (GoL, 2004b: 6).

Between 1973 and 1985 significant strides were made in Lesotho in expanding the schools and health systems, upgrading roads and communications, training government workers and securing foreign aid for a multitude of projects. The military ruled in Lesotho for the period 1986-1993. In 1990 the King's loyalists were removed, and the King was dethroned and forced into exile (Hermann, 1999: 1151). Three years later the 1966 constitution was revised in order to prepare for the 1993 general elections. The GoL had the task of re-establishing a truly democratic structure and spirit in government both at the national and local level. In mid-October of 1999 the government and its opposition parties negotiated towards new elections in order to achieve a political compromise and avoid a descent into political chaos after alleged irregularities in elections in 1998 (GoL, 2004b: 6-8).

The attendance of Basotho children was satisfactory in the early 1990s. Things changed badly in the late 1990s when most primary school children remained out of school (Sebatane, 1998: 9). The primary cause of the decrease in enrolment was the inability of parents to pay school fees (Sebatane, 1998: 9). Two further systemic issues were pertinent: the lack of quality of the education provision and the fact that most teachers were either underqualified or unqualified. As a result, some children dropped out of school, repeated classes, and the promotion rate was low.[5] The general perception is that primary education in Lesotho does not adequately prepare children for the world of work and does not equip them sufficiently with life skills. Sebatane *et al.* (in MoE, 2001: 9) make the point that these unadequately prepared children cannot get jobs in society and do not contribute towards building the economy of the country.

Against this background it was essential that Lesotho's government initiate an education system grounded in the principles of democracy. On the 24 April 1999 the government of Lesotho announced that free and compulsory primary education was to be introduced, starting with the first grade at primary level from January 2000 (MoE, 2001: 2). Currently, the education system consists of seven years of primary education, in other words a basic education that comprises reading, writing and arithmetic along with an elementary introduction to other subjects. This first level of education comprises standards one to seven and the official entry and completion ages

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[5] Those children who were promoted in most cases were not doing very well in Form A (which is known as Grade 8 in South Africa), and proportionally fewer made it in Form C (Grade 10).

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are 6 and 12 respectively (MoE, 2003: 1). At the end of end of seventh year, learners sit for the external examination and are awarded certificates (Sebatane, 1998: 1). This brings me to an analysis of free and compulsory education in Lesotho.

2.3 ANALYSIS OF FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

In this section I shall attempt to analyse "free education" and "compulsory education". The term "free education" has been described as education provided free of charge (Bray in Berkhout, 1993: 105). This is so, despite the fact that nothing is free or at least education in the sense of somebody having to pay for it. Berkhout (1993: 105) elaborates on this when she points out that "free education" is understood differently in varying contexts. For instances, she points that in a case where the government finances "free" education it means that most of the costs for education is covered by the government and fewer costs such as uniforms or text books by the parents (Berkhout, 1993: 105). In the case of Lesotho, free education means the provision of basic primary education from standard one up to standard seven to all Basotho children, whereby the government guarantees access to primary education without fees charged to parents, while the government aims at providing minimum and basic resources and facilities to enable Basotho children to enter and complete the primary education (Motholo, 2000: 1).

Squelch (1993: 228) posits that in countries like Israel, Canada, America and Switzerland, mandatory education is free. She explains that in Japan education is free and compulsory up to secondary school (for learners up to 15 years of age) which ensures that all children receive a basic education (Squelch, 1993: 228). This discussion of the concept "free education" provides some indicators into the meaning of "free and compulsory education". In other words, we cannot talk about free education without what in the education provision is "free" and what costs have to be covered by parents. In essence, "free" education means that the government is responsible for the majority of expenses incurred, whereas parents have to come up with the remaining costs. The main aim of providing "free" education to learners is that parents cannot prevent them from acquiring a basic primary education, in the case of Lesotho.

What makes education "compulsory"? Dekker and van Schalkwyk (in Squelch, 1993: 228), explain that compulsory education in South Africa is based on an obligation to attend school as opposed to a right to education. This means that children are required to attend school from the first school day of the year at the age of 6-7 years up to age of 16 years or until the twelfth level

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(Grade 12) has been completed. They further indicate that schools are charged with the duty of educating the child. Failing this, legal steps will be taken against parents, guardians and others, who do not comply with the requirements set out in the Education Act, except in a case where there are valid reasons like serious ill health (Dekker & Schalkwyk in Squelch, 1993: 228). In addition, Haydon (1977: 235-243) supports this understanding by showing that compulsory education simply means compulsory schooling, although some people understand it as punishment. Haydon argues that compulsory education is the most appropriate way that a government can protect the rights of individuals to education within the state (Haydon, 1977: 235-243). Hence, compulsory education imposes a responsibility on parents and guardians to ensure that their children are afforded opportunities to a basic education. Compulsory education means that no child should be denied access to schooling on the grounds of insufficient finances or being disabled.

Thus, combining the ideas of "free" and "compulsory" education, I conclude that education is paid for by the government up to the age of 12 in Lesotho. During learners' duration of seven years of schooling in Lesotho, the government is responsible for most of their education except for the payment of children's school uniforms. The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy document addresses the following issues: (a) access - improved access, enrolment and retention up to standard 7; (b) equity - development of equality of opportunity and equity of achievement; (c) quality - improvement in the quality of teaching, the learning process and nature of classroom interaction; (d) relevance - development of a curriculum and modes of assessment which ensure the human, practical and vocational relevance of basic education; (e) delivery - simultaneous development and decentralisation of the existing infrastructure and human resource base which supports the delivery of primary education; and (f) linkage - which is the creation of appropriate linkages between primary education and other sub-sectors in order to ultimately establish sector-wide planning. In the next section I shall limit my discussion to equality and quality in primary government schools for the reason that access and equity relate to equality, and relevance, delivery and linkages link up with quality education in Lesotho.

2.3.1 EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

What does equality in education mean? According to Steyn (2000: 47), equality in education refers to equal per capita expenditure on education; equal access to knowledge power; and equal participation in educational decision-making procedures. To address this issue of equality, the

government of Lesotho intends to supply books and stationery for pupils; provide feeding services for pupils; provide maintenance services; supply sporting facilities and equipment; assist in the establishment of new community schools; build additional classrooms in selected schools and provide classroom furniture; erect temporary structures such as tents in selected schools; provide teachers' stationery; pay teachers' salaries; and provide teaching and learning materials. One can understand that the government of Lesotho is trying to give all Basotho children equal treatment and an opportunity to get a quality education. This action of the government is not geared towards certain schools only, but for church and community schools that have joined The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy agenda.

The rationale that underpins the practice of equalising education is the social democratic paradigm, which emphasises equality, communality, a common value system, and centralisation and state control of the services. Social democrats place particular emphasis on the community at large, and the welfare of the community is the top priority; they stress common values and the usefulness of the community in the interests of society and equal access to educational institutions (Steyn, 2000: 47). To achieve the afore-mentioned instances of equalising education effectively one has to bear in mind that equality has to do with what de Klerk (2001: 41) calls the values that underpin equality. According to Article 28 Lesotho primary education is directed to the full development of the human personality, including a sense of dignity and strengthening the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of learners. The cluster of values underlying equality in education include: respect for others; openness; empathy; recognition of human dignity; gentleness; cooperation; tolerance; partnership; sharing; kindness; and peaceful coexistence (de Klerk, 2000: 47). I contend that if these values are instilled in the entire education community in Lesotho, then primary education will achieve its goals.

In addition, the following values are going to be discussed in detail: equity; tolerance; multilingualism; openness; accountability; and social honour. Schools are encouraged to teach them in order to promote equality. According to Waghid these values would contribute towards producing an inclusive critical learner population capable of solving problems (Waghid, 2003b: 77).

According to MoE (2001), equity refers to the development of equality of opportunity in order that learners perform and achieve according to the capacities (MoE, 2001). Equity as a concept underlying equality entails eradicating or removing the inequalities in education experienced by

pupils and teachers from different schools in Lesotho in terms of facilities, maintenance and allocation of teachers as well as salaries. 20% of teachers were unqualified and schools were charging different fees, depending on the needs of individual schools. Consequently, the cost of education became a barrier for some Basotho children.

2.3.2 QUALITY EDUCATION

According to de Klerk (2001: 40), quality is the texture of something; an institution, for example, must be measured against certain criteria to judge the quality of education it provides. The values underlying quality are excellence, diligence, punctuality, self-control, independence, critical thinking, creativity and discipline. She further posits that quality and standards are different concepts, which may overlap. Standards are specified and usually measurable outcome indicators used for comparative purposes. For Steyn (2001: 22) quality is an entity that cannot be separated from equality; these two entities are features of democratic education. He advocates quality education as an education that has to be linked to the improvement of processes of positive change to enhance transformation processes and outcomes that fit the goals valued by participants in the educational processes (Steyn, 2001: 23). Quality as understood by liberal democrats has to provide for opportunities to enable learners to develop their potential and has to make sense to all the relevant stakeholders. The schools at this point have to provide for the 'best' development of each learner and quality education has to empower learners.

The government of Lesotho links quality of education to the improvement of processes of positive change. It provides resources that are needed for the education of Basotho children; empowers its teachers by training principals and Standard One teachers countrywide; recruits, deploys and trains unqualified teachers for quality assurance (MoE, 2001). Harvey suggests five perspectives to be considered when measuring quality of education. These perspectives are quality as excellence, as perfection, as adequacy, as value for money and as transformation. Below is a glimpse of these notions.

2.3.2.1 Quality as excellence (exceptional) approach

Harvey posits that exceptional approach emphasises the maintenance of academic standards, the assessment of knowledge and some "higher level" skills. It presumes an implicit, normative "good standard" or "golden standards" for learning and it advocates merit/elitism even within a

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mass education system. He further points out that quality of teaching is associated with instruction of "the best" teachers and their teaching methods. I think only a certain number of teachers can teach in this manner, and these teachers count among the "top" or "exceptional" teachers. Even in a mass education system like FPE (2000). It is my contention that pockets of excellence are necessary and needed, even though it sounds like intellectual elitism.

2.3.2.2 Quality as perfection (consistency) approach

According to Harvey (1996: 206) the approach of consistency emphasises consistency in external quality monitoring of academic and competence standards. Their aim of producing a defect-free output is, however, not consistent with the nature of pupils, because learners are not perfect or consistent. I contend that teachers are also not perfect or consistent; because they are human beings they make mistakes. Only a certain number of teachers can teach with fewer mistakes.

2.3.2.3 Quality as adequacy (fitness for purpose) approach

This approach relates standards to specific purpose-related objectives. It tends towards explicit specification of skills and abilities and requires clear evidence by which to identify threshold standards. In my understanding, teaching only gives evidence of quality where learning outcomes can be measurable and demonstrated. I believe that this kind of quality is theoretically within everybody's reach.

2.3.2.4 Quality as value for money approach

This approach places the emphasis on a 'good deal' for the client/customer, usually government, employer, learners or parents. It prioritises efficiency and accountability to 'clients/customers'. In education the notion of accountability is at the heart of the value for money approach. Parents and business leaders emphasise this more (de Klerk, 2001: 40). Quality teaching is valuable if there are returns on investments – either in terms of per capita spending, pass rates, or in other ways. I think these are indicators of quality teaching. In this case learning objectives have to be reached with the minimum cost. For instance, FPE (2000) has to benefit and empower learners even if fees are absorbed by the government.

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2.3.2.5 Quality as transformation approach

Quality is a process of change and therefore accentuates academic knowledge accompanied by a broader set of transformative skills such as analysis, critical thinking, innovation and communication. This approach enhances the abilities of learners and empowers them so that they may be able to make a meaningful contribution to the processes of transformation (Harvey, 1996: 205-212). My understanding is that quality education is judged by the extent to which change is effected within learners whether they can be creative, innovative to foster in-depth learning.

This brings me to the question: How do the above understandings of quality relate to education in Lesotho? Quality according to the government of Lesotho refers to the improvement of teaching, learning, and classroom interaction between teachers and learners (MoE, 2001: 15). The GoL intends to achieve these by launching curriculum development and reform initiatives, aimed at improving in-service and pre-service training for underqualified and unqualified teachers by renewing and developing textbooks, teaching and learning material, and strengthening the system of pupil evaluation (MoE, 2001: 15-16). The government of Lesotho intends to achieve quality education by addressing the following aspects: (a) class size and teacher morale; (b) instructional material; (c) school building and facilities; (d) the language of instruction; and (e) the nutrition and health of children.

Firstly, regarding teacher training and use of teachers it has been recommend by the GoL that in primary schools the pupil-teacher ratio has to range between 25 and 50 (Conable, 1988: 40). Currently, the class size is 60: 1 (MoE, 2001: 2). Moreover, to improve quality in education the GoL aims to train primary school principals and teachers. So far it has trained 180 principals. Of about 1,800 underqualified and unqualified teachers, it trained 460 primary teachers through distance education in a period of two years (MoE, 2001: 27). According to Conable (1988: 41) this in-service training seems to be the most reliable means of training for Lesotho teachers because it seems to be cost-effective. Other primary teachers are trained through pre-service training in a period of three years (MoE, 2003: 1). About the morale of teachers the GoL has vowed to increase teachers' salaries through performance appraisal mechanisms (Conable, 1988: 41). The other issue that the government of Lesotho is looking at is the provision of teaching and learning materials, and better support and supervisory services from inspectorates and ministries to improve the quality of working conditions, especially for those who work in the mountainous

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areas (Conable, 1998: 41). To my mind, the GoL seems to be committed to achieving quality education along the lines of transformation for the reason that it wants to improve the academic knowledge and skills of teachers through its training programmes, as well as enhancing the abilities of learners through active participation in primary school classrooms.

Secondly, regarding the design, development and production of instructional materials, the GoL aims to make the content learner-centred (Conable, 1988: 42). In this way, quality as transformation is clearly evident since the former can be linked to ensuring a greater sense of learner-directedness.

Thirdly, improving school buildings and facilities would invariably establish conditions conducive to better teaching and learning.

Fourthly, learners would be taught in their mother tongue in the first two grades of primary schooling (Conable, 1998: 44). This suggests an improvement in the quality of education since quality is connected to learners receiving instruction in the language they are familiar with.

Fifthly, school programmes aimed at minimising health problems and lack of nutrition, have the potential to improve the intellectual development of learners (Conable, 1988: 45). In this regard quality education would be enhanced since intellectual progress links with quality education.

2.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explained the concept of "free and compulsory education", which is promoted as quality education for all by the government of Lesotho. I have shown how the government of Lesotho perceives it. I explained features of quality education for all, which are freedom, "quality" and "equality" in education. From this chapter I discovered that free and compulsory education has the potential to engender democratic practices in primary education. Now that I have attempted to explain the issue of quality education for all, in the next chapter I shall explore the concept of democracy (thick and thin) and how they can enhance solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, free participation and engagement in Lesotho primary government schools.

CHAPTER THREE

DEMOCRACY AND FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I introduced the concept of free and compulsory primary education, which is promoted as quality education for all by the Government of Lesoth (GoL). In this chapter I shall extend upon my analysis of free and compulsory education in Lesotho with the aim to establish links with constitutive meanings of democratic education. I do this in the light of my aim to investigate whether the free and compulsory primary education policy of Lesotho has the potential to engender thick democratic practices – an issue I shall address in the next chapter.

The basic call for democracy and democratic participation in Lesotho in general, and particularly in education, has been met in the implementation of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in Lesotho. The policy strives towards advancing the concept of democracy in Lesotho. Even the Constitution of Lesotho (of 1991), in Chapter three Section 28: 42 states that: "Primary education in Lesotho shall be compulsory and available to all Basotho children". It is necessary to further analyse meanings associated with this policy as understood by the Lesotho government. I then draw on certain sections of this policy document that have a bearing on democratic education. My intention is to establish whether the implementation of FPE has the potential to engender thick democratic practices. In the preamble to the FPE (2000) the following is stated:

> Free primary education means that the GoL will provide basic education to the Basotho children. In doing so, GoL will guarantee access to primary education without fees charged to parents. The main goal for FPE is to provide minimum and basic resources and facilities to enable Basotho children to enter and complete their primary education (Motholo, 2004: 1).

My interest in this study is to examine whether the FPE policy can lead to thick democratic practices in primary schools. I shall now proceed with the clarification of the concept of democracy. Thereafter I shall explore the difference between thick and thin conceptions of

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democracy before moving on to a discussion as to how these meanings (thick and thin) relate to the Free and Compulsory Education policy of Lesotho.

3.2 DEMOCRACY

Defining the term democracy is not an easy task. According to Stromberg (in Adams, 2002: 47), "democracy is a fuzzy term". He further claims that the word is constantly "used to define our culture and to shape our policies toward others who are said to be delinquent if they are undemocratic. It is as a cure-all for troubled people and lands, but its failures or inadequacies are also frequently deplored" (Stromberg in Adams, 2002: 47). Torres emphasises the "fuzziness of the term" democracy when he points that it "is a messy system, but it has survived because there is a sphere for debates and a set of rules that people have to follow" (Torres in Waghid, 2002: 26). To add to this, Bobbio (in Yturbe, 1997: 380) understands democracy as a set of procedures assuring the citizens' direct or indirect participation along the different stages of the decision-making processes, while Dahl (in Yturbe, 1997: 380) also supports this view when he refers democracies to "polyarchies". Le Grange (2001: 72) posits that the term "democracy" is polysemous and a complex area of human understanding that cannot be reduced to a simple, fixed, definite definition.

This highlights how problematic the term is. Birch (1993: 46) posits that there are two sources of confusion when it comes to defining the term "democracy". Firstly, the term has been used not only to describe a system of government, but also to describe other social relations. Secondly, the term "democratic" is used to indicate a degree of social equality, not a form of government. This confusion manifests itself where different governments call themselves democracies, for instance, the governments in the USSR and East Block Countries, which pretended to be democratic; totalitarian states and military regimes, and governments in South Africa including the apartheid government, cast themselves as democracies (Steyn, 1997b: 2). There seems not to be an absolute meaning of what constitutes democracy. In this context, I agree with Steyn when he states that this is a buzzword because it is popular all over the world, but because of its fuzziness does not have a fixed meaning. What follows below is a brief discussion of the origin of the term, after which I shall analyse the concept of "democracy".

Democracy is a term that has its origins in the languages of the ancient Greeks. The word *demokratika* originally meant power to the Athenian people, excluding women and slaves

(Steyn, 1997b: 3). It is derived from the Greek word "demos" (meaning the people) and the word 'kratos' (meaning to rule or govern) (Carr and Hartnett, 1996: 39). Literally, the word democracy means the "rule of the people" (Birch, 1993:47 and Miller *et. al.*, 1997: 163). Cloete (in Steyn, 1997b: 4) describes it "as a system of government in which the ruling power of the state is legally vested in the people … it is a matter of values essential for a way of life characterised by equality of opportunities for all, respect for the dignity and rights of everyone and freedom of suppression" (Bobbio in Yturbe, 1997: 380 and Norman, 1993: 254).

It has been shown above that democracy is a term that is "fuzzy" and popular, although most people and countries have different viewpoints about the meaning and significance of this term. Democracy originated in the city-states of ancient Greece and those democratic ideals have been handed down to us from that time. Dahl (in Adams, 2002: 47) explains that the transformation that was occurring in Greece and Rome led people to a new understanding of the world and its possibilities. However, assertion (understanding the meaning of the term) does not help because the Greeks did not provide us with a model of democracy; they only gave us the word. One might think that this is so because the Greeks had little or no idea of the rights of the individual, an idea that is tied up within the modern concept of democracy.

Birch confirms the origin of democracy and refers to it as rule by the people. In truth, however, this is an unhelpful definition because people have different interpretations of this concept. He further indicates that the assumptions and practices of the Greeks were very different from those of modern democrats. To look at modern democrats, it is evident that people's views have undergone sweeping changes since the origin of the concept of democracy. This is because life is complex and democracy has evolved into several different meanings (Birch, 1993: 47). Furthermore, Le Grange (2001: 72) quotes Gough when he argues that "we can no more provide a precise three-line definition of [democracy] than of everyday words like "love" or "justice" - these are terms that will always be the subject of exploration, speculation and debate". He argues that there is also a danger that the term democracy could be rendered meaningless if it becomes too fuzzy to convey anything useful. Miller *et. al.* (1997: 163) support this view when they indicate that democracy can have different meanings with numerous implications for a variety of social values and institutional arrangements. That is why all defenders of any kind of regime and victorious allies claim that they are democracies. The term democracy in its modern sense came into use during the course of the nineteenth century to describe a system of representative

government in which the representatives are chosen by free competitive elections and most male citizens were entitled to vote.

Below I shall attempt to develop a broader understanding of how democracy is perceived by different countries and people. What democracy is cannot be separated from what democracy should be. Sartori (in Adams, 2002: 47) claims that "a democracy exists insofar as its ideals and values bring it into being". Before I explore the concept "democracy", I shall ascertain what the opposite of democracy is, that is what democracy is not. A good opposite of "democracy" is "autocracy" where power is descending from above, while in democracy power ascends from below (Yturbe, 1997: 379). One might want to understand to what extent a political system is not a democracy. Yutrbe reflects that this would be in a "manner of degrees", meaning that one system could be further from democracy than another as these systems of counter-democracy are numerous such as tyranny, despotism, absolutism, dictatorship, authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

The opposites of democracy to be discussed below are authoritarianism, absolutism, dictatorship and totalitarianism. Authoritarianism is understood as an abuse of authority where the oppressive authority crushes liberty. Additionally, Birch (1993: 47) indicates that under authoritarianism there is an official monopoly of power by one party. According to Birch, authority is "the right to command or give an ultimate decision". I agree with Adams when he states that this understanding of power is not necessarily foreign to a democracy, because the legal monopoly to use force is acceptable in a democracy. Why then is authoritarianism said to be undemocratic? The reason is that it does not provide sufficient political information or level of mass and elitist discourse for average citizens to form stable and meaningful opinions on political issues, and provides some limited opportunities for democratic participation among the citizenry (Miller *et. al.,* 1997: 160-165).

According to Yturbe (1997), democracy is power ascending from below; in essence, there is freedom in a democracy and this freedom acknowledges authority to the extent that it can be said that a democracy is flourishing, depending on the degree to which authority is popularly accepted. Under authoritarianism, power is used without considering the legitimacy of authority (in the democratic sense). In this sense authoritarianism is an act of enforcement. Therefore, in this regard power that is used without authority is oppressive power, while democracy aims to transform power into authority. In my understanding this system is only partially democratic,

because it provides most of everything insufficiently; on the contrary, authoritarianism is closer to totalitarianism since it undermines some democratic ideals. I move on to discuss absolutism after which I explore the notions of dictatorship and totalitarianism.

Absolutism relies on power which is limitless or "unbounded by law", meaning that power holders are not restrained by a system of checks and balances. Individuals are superior to the constitution, that is some people retain the supreme power (Padover in Birch, 1993: 49). Through frequent elections people try to prevent corruption; plunder and waste as they keep politicians in check. The reason for all these checks is (as Dahl explains) that a man naturally loves power, especially those who have power in their hands will always increase it when they can, that is they do not want to loose that power to other people (Dahl in Birch, 1993).

Dictatorship is a non-democratic system that came to replace tyranny and it is more totalitarian than democracy. Dictatorship is a refusal of government by general consent. Sartori posits that a dictatorship is when "the rulers make a sham of a pre-existing constitution or they write a constitution that empowers them to do whatever they wish" (Sartori in Adams, 2002: 52).

Lastly, totalitarianism is an example of autocracy. It is regarded as "the imprisonment of the whole society within the state, all-pervasive or insidious domination over the extra-political life of man" (Sartori in Adams, 2002: 50). Totalitarianism demonstrates the reality of evil. This situation ignores the moral and analytical categories that liberals believe in. It also dismisses more technocratic and fundamentally secular strands of the enlightenment - and keeps away all information that can put the society in light of what was happening during their ruling times. In addition, George Orwell shows in his novel (1984) that if a totalitarian government wants to communicate with people to reinforce its evil reality, it uses the following components: intent to control thought and behaviour through language; exaltation of the state over the individual; violence and vilification; euphemism; special political terminology; and failure of words to reflect reality (Young, 1991: 60-61).

The conclusion that can be drawn from these words is that the country that practices these forms of government undermines liberty and negates democracy. In this kind of situation if people survive, they do so on sufferance from the government, which at any time and for any reason may control, invade and take them over. The governments in countries that are totalitarian can

enforce any required outcome by the use of their technical instruments. Nisbet views this as the ultimate invasion of privacy (Nisbet in Adams, 2002: 50).

However, totalitarianism is different from other varieties of dictatorship because of its uniqueness (distinctiveness) and use of power. This kind of regime is founded to create fear through cruelly suppressing whatever cannot be handled by means of persuasion. Totalitarianism is a complete imprisonment of its citizens. It destroys all subsystems and it is the furthest away from democracy. The other systems such as despotism, absolutism, dictatorship and authoritarianism, although undemocratic, incoperate qualities of democracy, but this does not mean that they are closer to democracy; on the contrary they are closer to totalitarianism.

Having discussed what democracy will not claim to be, I proceed to give some idea of what democracy can be. Steyn (2001: 21) asserts that democracy is a very popular word all over the world and everyone would declare himself or herself currently in favour of democracy, because democracy is a sound system and it is fashionable to be a democrat. He further claims that systems like totalitarianism, dictatorship, absolutism and authoritarianism call themselves democracies. O'Connell confirms this when he shows that from these examples of political systems it is clear that democracy is a fragile system, and can only survive where democratic values are deeply entrenched (O'Connell in Steyn, 2001: 21). Democracy could be rendered meaningless, however, if it becomes so "fuzzy as a concept" that it cannot convey anything useful.

My contention is that democracy cannot mean "nothing" or be meaningless. As Torres (in Waghid 2002: 26) notes, "democracy is a messy system, but it survived because there is a sphere for debates and a set of rules that people follow even if they do not benefit from them". As has been stated earlier, this interpretation of democracy emphasises three interrelated aspects: a system, a sphere for debates and democracy as a set of rules. The first two aspects of democracy can be linked to two extensive conceptions of democracy. Firstly, democracy is a representative system of political decision-making, and secondly, democracy is a sphere for social and political life in which people enjoy equal opportunities and are engaged in self-development, self-fulfilment and self-determination (Carr and Hartnett in Waghid, 2002: 26). On the one hand, democracy as a sphere for social and political life is constituted by values of positive liberty (freedom and self-development) and political equality. I want to emphasise the notion of democracy as a sphere for social and political life in which people enjoy equal opportunities and

are engaged in self-development, self-fulfilment and self-determination (as a sphere for social relationships), for this is specifically what free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho is about. The different education communities, including learners, will inevitably relate to each other socially. In this respect, Birch (1993: 46) posits that democratic society undermines class distinctions and advocates equality of opportunities for all citizens. This understanding of social democracy may possibly include equality in class, racial, ethnic and gender interactions. In addition, social democracy is primarily aimed at welfare-oriented reforms within a market-related capitalist society. On the other hand, Pateman (in Waghid, 2002: 26) views social democracy as entailing an emphasis on participation on the grounds of equality and liberty. This means that people have the right to control their own lives, and become competent at self-management and self-governance. It is in this respect that social democracy (as an emphasis on participation on the grounds of equality and liberty) informs my understanding of democracy with reference to free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho.

Moreover, democracy is also viewed as a representative system of government. I turn to MacPherson (in Waghid, 2002: 26), who identifies three models of democratic representative systems of political decision-making:

1. Western liberal democracy came into being to serve the needs of the competitive market society – a product of successfully developing capitalist market societies. Liberal representative democracy created by capitalism relocates power and domination from the state to civil society, to private property and the compulsions of the market. Liberal democracy emphasises the predominance of individual rights over collective rights, power of the people over any other regulatory institution, and equal rights for all citizens. The right to property is to be secured against interference by the state.

2. Non-liberal communist democracy created a class state by the proletarian revolution, which had the job of holding down the old ruling class, while transforming the whole of society in such a way that there would be no more basis for exploitative classes and no more need for a class state, thus paving the way for a fully human society;

3. Non-liberal, non-communist democracy in the Third World states rejects the competitive ethos of the market society and sees no need for the competitive system of political parties. It sees the possibility of a classless society and state (MacPherson in Waghid, 2002: 27).

Bobbio, Dahl, and Sartori (in Yturbe, 1997: 381) posit that "the only way to save democracy is by taking it as it is, with a realistic spirit, without deluding oneself or others". Bobbio further shows that it is essential to consider the rules of the game (democracy is a set of rules) which govern the members of a community and connect the people among themselves. The rules of democracy facilitate the widest participation of the majority of citizens; in other words to be a citizen is to enjoy rights to personal security, to freedom of speech, and to vote (Waghid, 2003a: 159). In the resolution of conflicts in the political sphere, democracy is "the sphere in which the decisions are taken that most affect the community as a whole" (Yturbe, 1997: 381). My contention is that children who receive schooling under Free and Compulsory Education are younger than 18 years olds; therefore, they cannot participate at the voting polls and provide any resolution of the conflicts in the political sphere or decide on what has to be taught – even though they are inhabitants of the country. Yet they still enjoy representation and in specific circumstances can influence decisions.

One has to explore the issue of the values upon which democracy is based, particularly as to the role of equality as a founding principle and the ways of identifying the empirical dimensions of the values of democracy. As mentioned before, for one to describe democracy it is necessary to refer to a set of rules that facilitate the participation of citizens in decision making. The process of democracy operates within a domain of conflicts in the political sphere in which common decision-making becomes the rule in the resolution of the conflicts. Therefore values have to come into play. According to Yturbe (1997: 381), democracy refers to "the procedures through which decisions are taken so that different social and economic policies can be adopted depending on the will of the majority" (Yturbe, 1997: 381).

This brings me to a discussion of thick and thin democracy.

3.2.1 THICK AND THIN CONCEPTIONS OF DEMOCRACY

3.2.1.1 Thin democracy

According to Barber (1984: 218), representative or thin democracy conceives the civic bond as an original contract that authorises the sovereign to govern individuals on their behalf and in their name. In other words, thin democracy implies a form of representation whereby individuals' legitimate political interests are served indirectly by others – their proxies.

Individuals do not directly participate in political processes but are represented by others. In representative (thin) democracies people have a voice through others persons whom they have chosen to be their second-selves (Barber, 1984: 218). The chief device for accountability is representation. Thin democracy is an institution that permits public watchdogs to spend most of their time pursuing private business while delegates and representatives minister to the public business. Hindess (2000: 38-39) adds to this idea by showing that participation of people is severely limited in part by the practical impossibility of direct democracy, and in part by the ignorance and political apathy of the majority. Roberts (in Hindess, 2000: 39-40) also adds to this by focusing on the supposed apathy, ignorance and narrowly self-interested character of the relatively poor and uneducated majority.

3.2.1.1.1 Thin democracy at school level

Bak (2004: 47) shows that the teacher/learner relationship is unequal and undemocratic, and there is a great gap between the knowledge that teacher possesses as opposed to that of the learner. At this stage the teacher knows more about the subject (that is taught than) the learner. This inequality of subject expertise is constituted by the teacher's superior knowledge of content, as well as the competence of the teacher to use the subject concepts effectively as tools. Bak further points out that the point of teaching is to transfer the epistemic expertise to the learner. This is in line with what Freire calls "banking education" (Freire, 1985: 100). In this situation, the learner is socialised or initiated into the body of received ideas. The teacher tries to inculcate in the learner the intellectual, moral and political common sense of the society as it is. The educator has to communicate enough of what is held to be true, so that the pupil can become a responsible and competent citizen and a member of the society. According to Bak, "the aim is conscious social reproduction" (Bak, 2004: 47). At this point, the educator has to convey everything that he/she thinks is true without harbouring any doubts that it is a lie (Bak, 2004: 43).

Bak further posits that a learner's authority is limited and shallow in the sense that the concepts and skills with which he/she approaches a phenomenon differ in scope and power from the educator's. The learner approaches a phenomena with a set of basic concepts and skills that form the base for development, but the teacher approaches a phenomena with sound reasons for the knowledge he tries to transmit (and teacher's own professional actions), while the learner has not yet attained the expertise that will confer full epistemological legitimacy (Bak, 2004: 48). In this

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sense, the learner's participation becomes limited, because to be socialised into a set of received ideas is to be told what one did not construct by oneself – a matter of thin democracy. For the learner to gain mastery, the way to use tools and concepts needs to be practised under systematic supervision by the educator, who can intervene when things go awry. Even though the learner is participating in the learning process itself, other areas of learner participation, like curriculum decision-making, should be limited in both scope and depth. This would constitute a case of "thin" democracy since the learner does not participate directly in the process of educational decision making – decisions are made on behalf of what is perceived to be good for learners (Bak, 2004: 49-50). In essence, thin democracy implies that learners do not participate directly in the processes of educational decision making that affect them – decisions are made for them in which they need to be socialised.

3.2.1.2 Thick (Strong) democracy

Barber (1984: 223) indicates that strong democracy places the democratic process itself at the centre of its definition of citizenship. In this perspective voluntary will is an active and continuing function of politics that becomes critical to the civic tie. Citizens are neighbours bound together by their common concerns and common participation in the search for common solutions to common conflicts.

He further states that in this realm citizenship is a dynamic relationship among strangers who are transformed into neighbours, whose commonality derives from expanding consciousness rather than geographical proximity. There is no sharp distinction that separates the government and citizenry as in representative systems. The civic bond under strong democracy is neither vertical nor horizontal, but circular and dialectical. Individuals become involved in government by participating in the common institutions of self-government and become involved with one another by virtue of their common engagement in politics. The ties of common activity unite citizens and common consciousness. Ties that are willed rather than given by blood or heritage or prior consensus on beliefs and that thus depend for their preservation and growth on constant commitment and ongoing political activity. I agree with Barber (1984: 223) who states that such latent virtues such as accountability permit common ties to wither, whereas virtues as powerful and unitary as fraternity make ties rigid and immutable, and place them beyond the pale of individual volition.

The political style that emerges from this dialectic of common association is one of activity and cooperation, and the civic virtue that distinguishes that style from other styles is civility itself. Strong democracy promotes reciprocal empathy and mutual respect, whereas thin democracy promotes reciprocal control. Civility under strong democracy is rooted in the idea that consciousness is a socially conditioned intelligence that takes into account the reality of other consciousnesses operating in a shared world. Oakeshott (in Barber, 1984: 223) supports this idea by suggesting that "civility has to assume free agents who are roughly equal, not necessarily by nature or right, but by virtue of their shared consciousnesses". He further posits that "citizens are free agents whose responses to one another's actions and utterances is of understanding; and civil association … an understood relationship of intelligent agents" (in Barber, 1984: 223).

Citizens in a strong democracy imagine themselves becoming "neighbours'. Barber points out that "theirs is a neighbourhood of creative consciousness struggling with material conflicts, in which the necessity to be commonly conceived disciplines the adversary competition of the divided and plural present" (Barber, 1984: 224). In addition, the civic role is *primus inter pares*. Citizenship is the moral identity par excellence. For it is as citizens that the individual confronts the other and adjusts his or her own life plans to the dictates of a shared world. Furthermore, the citizen develops common measures by which private wants and needs can be transformed into public goods and ends (Barber, 1984: 224).

Moreover, in a strong democratic community, the individuals are transformed through direct participation in common seeing and common work into citizens. Citizens are autonomous people who participate with a capacity for common vision. What Rousseau regards as important in a democratic community is that it "produces a remarkable change in man" that is through participation in it, man's "faculties are exercised and developed, his ideas broadened, his feelings ennobled, and his whole soul elevated" (Rousseau in Barber, 1984: 232). While thin democracy leaves people as it finds them, because it demands of men (women) only the self-interested bargain, and of community only that it provide and protect market mechanisms. A thin community creates a common force by destroying autonomy and individuality altogether. Only in strong democratic communities are individuals transformed. Their autonomy is preserved because their vision of their own freedom and interest has been enlarged to include others, and their obedience to the common force is rendered legitimate because their enlarged vision enables them to perceive in the common force the working of their own wills.

3.2.1.2.1 Strong democracy at school level

At this level, according to Bak (2004: 51) the process of individuation, in which learners have gained mastery of more and more concepts and are developing their epistemic expertise through growing familiarity with and competence in the subject, the corresponding broadening scope and depth of democratic principle is appropriate. She further posits that the gap of initial epistemic inequality narrows as the learner becomes more informed and competent. "With greater epistemic equality comes greater epistemic authority, which in turn justifies greater learner autonomy (and participation)" (Bak, 2004: 51).

Moreover, the pupil is expected to furnish sound reasons for his/her claims and to be able to use their mastery of the tools to challenge, modify, extend, develop or reject the very ideas into which they have been socialised. The rejection of ideas must be based on sound arguments and substantiated premises. This means that the conceptual tools that they have acquired need to be used effectively as instruments of questioning, challenging and adaptation.

Furthermore, advantage is taken of diversity and uncertainty to allow flexibility in order to give control over change and an uncertain future, tolerance to cope with diversity and openness to nurture truth. The learner is gaining greater epistemic legitimacy. The learners are also encouraged to make informed autonomous choices based on sound arguments and reasons that can be interrogated, and are urged towards wider and deeper levels of active intellectual participation so that the learner contributes to the store of inherited ideas. The education that the learner gets has to equip her/him with the means to be able to cope with changes and steer new changes that overcome the limitations of inherited ideas, because the future is not determined. Bak shows that this lies in the recognition that no one person knows what is best, and that every individual is a legitimate source of claims and arguments (Bak, 2004: 51).

A democratic environment allows for variety and flexibility. The argument is not based on moral considerations, but on much more prudential reasons. This leads to less error and misery for people (in general) in the long term. By equipping the learner with the means to shape the future, the learner is less likely to be a mere victim of it (Bak, 2004: 51).

I shall now examine thick democratic practices in relation to education – a matter of finding out what constitutes (thick) democratic education for the reason that I shall investigate later on

whether the free and compulsory primary education policy of Lesotho has the potential to engender thick democratic practices – with reference to achieving greater friendship, tolerance, solidarity and peace.

3.2.2 THICK DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

In the first chapter I have claimed that solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, and free participation and engagement can engender opportunities for Basotho children to acquire and experience virtues such as freedom, dignity, care, friendship, peace and unity – all virtues which the free and compulsory primary education agenda of the GoL advocate. To my mind, thin democracy relates to the achievement of tolerance whereas thick democracy has a direct relation with solidarity, diversity, free participation and engagement. This is so considering that thick democracy involves direct participation which can strengthen the solidarity amongst participants who freely (willingly) engage and recognise the differences of others who participate. In thin democracy people do not have an opportunity to engage directly which brings into question whether solidarity and the recognition of diversity would enjoy prominence. Of course one can share in solidarity, tolerate others, respect their diversity and engage critically with their ideas if they are not in direct contact with one. However, in such a situation the level of democratic participation has the potential to be thin for the reason that active participation would not be possible at all. Only when people actively engage and share one another's difference then the potential for greater tolerance and solidarity are more likely. For this reason, solidarity, tolerance, diversity, participation and engagement have a better chance of being realized through thick democratic practices – direct participation. If so, the potential to cultivate virtues such as freedom, dignity, care, friendship, peace and unity as announced by the GoL in its free and compulsory primary education programme, becomes highly likely.

However, before thick democratic practices can begin to shape primary school education in Lesotho learners and teachers have to acquire habits of the heart and mind that are conducive to the healthy functioning of the democratic education system. These include: civility, open-mindedness, willingness to compromise, civic-mindedness and the willingness on appropriate occasions to place the common good above personal interest, patience and persistence in the pursuit of public goals, compassion to others, generosity toward others and the community at large, and loyalty to the republic and its values and principles (Madison, 2002: 2). For instance,

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teaching subjects and teaching character can be mutually reinforcing tasks, if a teacher is patient, diligent, responsible, reflective, and honest, because these intellectual virtues are critical to the development of each student's academic potential. Consequently, the teaching of personal virtue is often a contribution to the development of civic virtue, because if a teacher teaches academic subjects well, certain virtues relevant to personal and civic life are also taught.

Additionally, Aristotle (in Bosin, 2004: 1) states "humans take pleasure in virtue". Virtue, both civic and moral, is the way in which humans achieve their greatest happiness. He further holds that humans have to know about these virtues before they can hope to better the community. Aristotle maintains that it is easier to teach a person who has been "well brought up" about the virtues. By implication the education of virtue, both civic and moral, has to begin at home before children are sent to school, particularly those learners who come to school through the free and compulsory primary education programme, because there are more of them now than before education became free and compulsory. Madison (2002: 3-4) states that it is not easy to make a sharp distinction between personal and public virtues and between teaching academic subjects and teaching character. For instance, a person possesses the personal virtue of honesty when that person can be counted on to be consistently honest in dealing with others. Alternatively, a person possesses the civic virtue of respect for the worth and dignity of others when he/she can be counted on to behave in a manner consistent with that value. It is clear that honesty and respect for others are relevant to both civic and private life. In order to achieve these, schools have to provide students with a rich knowledge and understanding of their own responsibilities as citizens in a democracy. This knowledge has to be accompanied by opportunities for them to develop the disposition to act virtuously in their private and public lives. Young people have to be exposed to attractive models of civic virtue and have the opportunities to practice civic virtue in a meaningful and rewarding manner, because Madison shows that adequate knowledge that learners have of their responsibilities does not help them live out these ideals, meaning that they fail. Therefore, the schools have to recognise the different learning processes shaping the civic "habits of heart", so that they can live out these ideals.

Moreover, thick democratic practices would not stand a chance of being realised in primary government schools in Lesotho if teachers and learners do not develop the capacity of active listening, that is, not to how something is said but also to what is said. Nussbaum (2001: 327-328) posits that public education at all levels has to cultivate the ability to imagine the experiences of others and to participate in their sufferings. In other words children from

elementary school gradually master more and more of the appropriate judgements and become able to extend their empathy to more people and different types of people. She further indicates that they enrich human life and understanding because there is already exercise for the imagination of the inner world of another. A child learns to endow strange forms of life and need to imagine, and to attribute life, emotion and thought to a form of whose insides are hidden from her. A child who is empathetic is psychologically able to have concerns about people outside herself/himself. The child is also encouraged to notice the sufferings of living creatures with a new keenness: the sight of blood, the death of animals, the distress of parents and friends will become sources of disturbance. Nussbaum shows that the child will have a good wish toward the object, if the child received a basically loving upbringing. The vocabulary of the child grows as the child masters the rudiments of her society's emotion. At this time a child become more ready to be exposed to stories that display the vulnerabilities of human life more plainly, and he/she becomes "acquainted with illness, death, slavery, rape, war, betrayal, loss of country" (Nussbaum, 2001: 327-8).

Furthermore, thick democratic practices have little opportunity of being realised if mutual respect is not exercised between teachers and learners. According to Gutmann (in Pendlebury, 1995: 2), mutual respect is a civic virtue which comes in complete and incomplete versions. In its incomplete version, mutual respect rests only on the recognition of diversity, in other words mutual respect has to occur between educators, learners and parents. For completion as a virtue, mutual respect also require a willingness and ability to deliberate (Gutmann in Pendlebury, 1995: 2) This respect, according to Waghid (2002: 111), is constitutive of interactionist engagement and demands what Fay in Waghid calls "holding others to the intellectual and moral standards that we apply to our friends and ourselves". If I interpret his words correctly, he posits that we should not deny other people their right to do whatever they feel is good for them, no matter how ill-informed or ungrounded that may be, we have to respect them. He argues that we "honor others by challenging them when we think they are wrong and by thoughtfully taking their (justifiable) criticisms of us" (Waghid, 2002: 111). Fay further maintains that "if teachers lack effective interpersonal communication, leadership and negotiation skills and as a result are unable to motivate parents and learners to become involved in democratic school governance, or educators are unable to handle conflict in schools or are even guilty of not implementing the democratic principles of the school's policy, their actions should not be … beyond the pale of critical judgement" (Fay in Waghid, 2002: 111). By implication, respect does not mean acceptance of everything educators, learners and parents do. It means that educators, students

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and parents have to be held responsible to support and implement justifiable decisions taken by the school governing bodies. Mutual respect also requires a willingness and ability to deliberate; in other words people who have mutual respect reason together, their voices are equal for all citizens, regardless of their social position or power, and citizens come to a problem with an open mind about a solution. They put forward proposals and criticise them, and each consents to a conclusion only because of what Young refers to as the "force of the better argument" (Young, 1996: 122). Moreover, for MacIntyre practical reasoning requires that one show the ability and the willingness to evaluate the reasons for actions advanced to one by others; in this case one makes oneself accountable for one's endorsements of the practical conclusions of others as well as for one's own conclusions (MacIntyre in Waghid, 2003b: 25).

Furthermore, mutual respect is a principle that operates within the domain of practical reasoning, for it guides us in answering the questions of what we should do and how we should do it, given our commitment to sustaining or building democracy. In the domain of practical reasoning principles are not rules because they have application and are interpreted in the light of particular circumstances. In some circumstances where there is conflict or where education was segregated Gutmann's principle of mutual respect may provide a solution, because it is regarded as a principle of integration. Mutual respect requires that people be respected irrespective of race, religion, sex (to name a few potentially divisive aspects). Mutual respect fosters a deliberative citizenry (Pendlebury, 1995: 3-4).

Waghid (2003b: 86-87) claims that mutual respect can be enhanced by tolerance, a sense of solidarity and recognition of diversity. He posits that respect for elders presupposes a particular way of interacting with people based on mutuality, thus invoking the integrity of all people in the social group, community organisation and family. He implies that mutual respect requires that individuals be or become tolerant. Gutmann (in Waghid) also claims that "no mortal (individual), no matter how wise, can legitimately impose the good life on people who cannot live that life from the inside". Waghid adds on this idea by pointing out that "similarly, people cannot cultivate the value of respect for elders if tolerance is not lived from inside of the individual" (Waghid, 2003b: 86-87). To support this argument I turn to Gutmann (in Waghid, 2002: 20), who argues that "the idea of respect for people is an important virtue of rational reflection because it:

… prevents the state, and all groups within it, from denying anyone an education good on grounds irrelevant to the legitimate social purpose of that good (Gutmann in Waghid, 2002: 20).

In essence, thick democratic practices have the best chance of being realised in primary government schools in Lesotho if conditions such as civic virtue, empathy and mutual respect are cultivated in these schools which can make the quest to harness solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, free participation and engagement in primary education. Only then, the possibility of realising the goals of free and compulsory primary education in relation to Basotho children experiencing freedom, dignity, care, friendship, peace and unity become extremely likely.

3.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored the concept of democracy, which I explained is a "fuzzy" term that cannot be pinned down to a specific definition. I showed why it is referred to a "messy system". I further referred to the conceptions of democracies namely: thin democracy at both national and school levels; and strong (thick) democracy at both national and school levels. The chapter is concluded by further clarification of the conditions which have to prevail before thick democratic practices can be realised in primary government schools in Lesotho. These include the following: civic virtue, empathy and mutual respect.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF FREE AND COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION (2000): THICKLY DEMOCRATIC OR THINLY DEMOCRATIC?

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2 I found that free and compulsory education lends itself to democratic practices, because its components – "freedom, quality and equality" – are components of democratic education. In Chapter 3 I analysed thick and thin democracy. In this chapter the focus is on different perceptions of FPE (2000). I shall analyse and reflect on them, then answer the question of this research whether the Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) document in Lesotho has the potential to enhance thick democratic practices.

4.2 PERCEPTIONS OF FPE (2000) ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO (GOL)

The government of Lesotho perceives free and compulsory primary education as follows:

- Access - improved access, enrolment and retention up to Standard 7;
- Equity - development of equality of opportunity and equity of achievement;
- Quality – improvement in the quality of teaching, the learning process and the nature of classroom integration;
- Relevance – development of a curriculum and modes of assessment which ensure the human, practical and vocational relevance of basic education;
- Delivery – simultaneous development and decentralisation of existing infrastructure and human resource base, which supports the delivery of primary education; and
- Linkages – creation of appropriate linkages between primary education and other sub-sectors in order to establish sector-wide planning. The Lesotho government addresses the above perceptions (objectives) in three stages, namely achieving short-, mid- and long-term objectives. I shall concentrate only on the mid-term objectives for the sake of this

study. I now proceed to analyse these perceptions in order to gain insight into its meanings. My idea is to link these perceptions to the mid-term objectives.

4.3 ANALYSIS OF FPE (2000) PERCEPTIONS

4.3.1 Access

According to the Lesotho Ministry of Education (MoE) (2001: 18), access means improved access, enrolment and retention up to Standard 7, in the sense that the MoE provides new schools on identified sites, additional classrooms according to prioritisation; and renovation of identified dilapidated classrooms. Additionally, it provides drinking water and toilets where necessary, it funds programmes and develops school-based initiatives to sustain the feeding programme on a long-term basis (MoE, 2001: 14). However, it points out that 714 schools have been phased out of the feeding programme, where Basotho men and women were contracted to cater for feeding Standard 1 pupils. Those cooks were paid M2 (two Maluti is equal to R2 or 200cents; this is Lesotho currency) per learner per day, while in 652 schools under the World Food Programme feeding scheme are still continuing at a rate of 70 cents per learner per day. One would like to understand why cooks were paid differently and why 714 schools have been phased out of the feeding programme. In this case there is inequality of treatment, in particular for learners and personnel (cooks/community). Already, one can infer that the access is being denied some pupils for the reason that conditions in some primary government schools are not conducive to effective learning. And, bearing in mind that effective learning is link to getting the conditions right (in terms of class size, teacher morale, facilities and nutritional means), one can argue that access would be undermined. Therefore the FPE project cannot be considered as thickly democratic because thick democracy ensures maximum and active participation of most if not all learners in the primary schooling process.

The Standard 1 enrolment increased from the estimated 100,000 to 118,843 pupils in 2000, and only 23 tents were provided by the end of 2000, and about 18,843 pupils were not catered for in that year. Even though GoL claims that access is improved, one third of Basotho children of school-going age are out of schools and are still unable to get access to basic education (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 11). These children become vulnerable (GoL, 2004a: 1); for example, Kelebone, a boy of six years is a herd boy. All these children are denied their basic right to education (Ralengau, 2004: 1). The Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisili, states in a

speech that denial of this basic need is denying our children their right to live (in Mosisili, 2003: 2). This in turn seems to undermine thick democracy since the latter is linked to ensuring that access is provided to most Basotho children to quality education.

Howe indicates that equal access is concerned more with "enabling good", whereby individuals acquire knowledge and skills associated with educational transformation meaning the least transformed become more transformed (Howe in Waghid, 2001: 117). The point is, if more Basotho children are denied access to primary education they would not acquire basic knowledge and skills and therefore prevented from quality education. In the FPE (2000), the GoL wants to reduce drop out and repetition rates, and raise quality of outcomes, this sounds more democratic – that is, thickly democratic. I agree with Waghid where he indicates that for an education system to be equitable it needs to be committed to initiating equal opportunities as far as access to education is concerned. He further shows that this idea of equality in education can be connected logically to a democratic practice (Waghid, 2001: 117).

Akindele and Gill (2001: 6) show that there are 1500 primary schools in Lesotho, which are mostly owned by the various churches (Akindele & Gill, 2001: 6). In 1999 the average learner/teacher ratio was 50:1 because of the increased number of learners in the year 2000 the average learner/teacher ratio increased to 60:1 (MoE, 2001). The Principal Secretary of Education confirms this, explaining that this is an attempt to minimise the increased demand for teachers and classrooms, because there was a shortage of classrooms, teachers, learning and teaching materials (Paneng, 2003: 1). Moreover, the government of Lesotho's intention was to establish 120 new community schools in villages where they are accessible to young children and to construct 500 classrooms in selected schools and supply 10,000 desks. However, it constructed 154 schools countrywide, 21 school offices, 3 kitchens and 330 latrines in 33 schools in January 2001. To my mind, the one third of Basotho children who are not in schools cannot all be accommodated in 154 schools, in other words, these schools are insufficient and the quality of education will be affected, because in an overcrowded classroom the quality of education declines and the demand also increases (Harber, 2001: 65) – thus, indicating a form of less or thin democracy. This is so for the reason that thin democracy undermines the direct participation of all or most Basotho learners in the educative process in primary schools due to overcrowded classes. One can argue that group work would reduce the dilemma of overcrowded classes but this does not ensure that all or most learners would participate in the educative process. Hence a

form of thin democracy for the reason that group work also has the potential to undermine or silence the voices of learners who are not so articulate in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, 57 erected tents have been supplied with pupils' and teachers' materials, and security was also provided (MoE, 2001: 13). The government of Lesotho claims that tents will be transferred to other schools as soon as the construction of schools and consequent improvement of access is completed. The question that comes to mind is: Where and how are other learners taught and what do they learn while they are waiting for books, tents and security? This equipment is provided as a package to schools. In this case, learners do not have equal access to education and their learning environment is different even though they are in the same context. According to Strydom and van der Westhuizen the option of access places the greatest emphasis on the need to balance the demand of equity of access with the need for the system to meet acceptable "quality standards" (Strydom & van der Westhuizen, 2001: 11).

My contention is that there is no balance in equality of access in Lesotho primary schools. This kind of a situation where the "playing field is not level" according to Bunting, there is no equality of opportunity (Bunting in Waghid, 2001: 115). Some learners and teachers are provided with resources, including tents for shelter, while others are still waiting for them. Some schools were phased out of the feeding programme, while in some schools it is continuing; even cooks are paid differently. The other issue is the geographical regions in Lesotho, since it is a mountainous country. Some children have to walk long distances to schools, especially in the rural areas. The government does not indicate how it caters for learners with special needs, those who have to cross rivers to schools in times of floods, those who are in detention, or teenage mothers. It is for these reasons that I contend that educational treatment is inconsistent and unequal. Hence, the concept of thick democracy seems to be further undermined.

4.3.2 Equity

GoL explains equity as the development of equality of opportunity and equity of achievement, where local individuals and communities are mobilised to identify special focus groups in the locality and launch appropriate school-based programmes. Paneng (2003: 2) indicates that the Ministry of Education in Lesotho will undertake intensive programmes as soon as guidelines have been prepared to explain the meaning of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education of Lesotho policy document and the value of education. Such programmes will include to persuade

parents to send their children to school; to pursue the children to go to school; to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders (school proprietors, parents, teachers, school management committees, school committees) and to find ways of strengthening the partnership (Paneng, 2003: 2). Thus, although it seems as if the policy document is at times highly democratic it seemingly fails to take into account the social conditions which might hinder the implementation of the policy. And, as I have argued for in the previous chapter, if conditions such as civic virtue or a serious commitment to want to change are not in place, it is very unlikely that thick democracy in primary government schools would be realizsd.

Moreover, Bunting refers to equity (equality) situation in the context of scarce resources as "a function of equality" in this way:

> If a resource is scarce, then equity (equality) can exist in a society provided that all citizens have been able to compete fairly for a share of the resource. The guarantors of a "fair competition" would in most circumstances be transparent competition rules and "level playing fields" - i.e. rules which are accessible and open to all, and "life chances" which are equal. If the playing field in a society were not level, then on such a liberal view of equality of opportunity, redress or affirmative action steps would be justified (Bunting in Waghid, 2001: 115).

When I analyse the FPE (2000) policy document I realise that the GoL upgrades selected schools according to prioritisation. If I understand Bunting correctly, all citizens have to be given a fair share of the resources, and that the needs of the disadvantaged should not be addressed at the expense of the advantaged. The point that I want to bring here is that all schools have to be upgraded, including churches and halls that are used as classrooms for the education of Basotho children in order to supplement the few primary government schools that are built so that more children can be accommodated in schools and be given fair opportunities and life chances to compete fairly. I think all learners have to be provided with materials from the first day of their schooling. All primary teachers need to be well trained to improve and empower themselves so that their teaching can be of good quality. If not, thick democracy has little chance of being achieved for the reason that the former requires that teachers and learners be critically empowered through a quality education system – both in terms of intellectual and material resources.

However, Strydom and van der Westhuizen (2001: 10) indicate that strategies designed to improve the system could in certain circumstances lead to a decline in the quality of the system, particularly if the demands of equity are taken to imply that all the resource allocations in the system must be equalised. This might further affect the socio-economic development of the country. They show that if equity is emphasised as opposed to quality, then this could lead to low economic growth (Strydom & van der Westhuizen, 2001: 10). For Lesotho to produce learners who would be able to compete in a greater Africa and World economy, these two principles have to be equally emphasised. It is my view that equity/equality initiates the process of educational transformation and quality promotes it. Nevertheless, where there are no teaching and learning materials, it is hardly surprising that one cannot get quality teaching and learning. The end result would be a form of thin democracy in primary government schools since conditions are not conducive to equalise opportunities for learners.

4.3.3 Quality

In relation to quality, the government confirms that quality is meant to achieve improvements in teaching, the learning process and the nature of classroom interaction, as well as in curriculum development and reform to enhance pre-service and in-service teacher training and the provision of improved teaching and learning materials designed to raise levels of learning achievement (MoE, 2001: 15 & 17). Moreover, GoL perceives quality as entailing the development of District Resource Centres (DRCs), and the identification and training of teachers to participate in a cluster-based peer-support system, identification of schools to act as cluster-based institutions for the peer support system, and the development and launching of a District Teacher Education Programme (DTEP).

MoE (2001: 13) shows that 180 principals were trained in 2000. Of 1,860 primary teachers, some are under-qualified and others unqualified and only 460 proposals for teachers have been submitted and are being considered for the training of both Standard 1 teachers and para-professionals. For the MoE to maintain quality and efficiency, these teachers are admitted into a new distance teacher's education programme (DTEP) annually for two years, while in-service training is an ongoing process (MoE, 2001: 27). The government of Lesotho shows that, as of 2001, about 25% of Lesotho's 8225 primary teachers are still not qualified (GoL, 2003: 1).

In terms of this option (quality), according to Strydom and van der Westhuizen (2001: 11), the system must become one which insists on quality and gives a high priority to science, technology and the country's capacity for technology transfer. The South African NEPI further shows that this assumes that institutions, while striving to maintain quality, will adopt standing equal-opportunity mechanisms (NEPI in Strydom & van der Westhuizen, 2001: 11). In Lesotho there are few schools that use computers as technological devices and/or where pupils are exposed to new means of communication (or cooking, in terms of domestic science appliances). These few schools are the so-called "private" schools, most of which are found in urban areas.

Furthermore, "The pursuit of the principle of quality means maintaining and applying academic and educational standards, both in the sense of specific expectations and requirements that should be complied with, and in the sense of ideas of excellence that should be aimed at. These expectations and ideals may differ from context to context, partly depending on the specific purposes pursued. Applying the principle of quality entails evaluating services and products against set standards, with a view to improvement, renewal or progress" (DoE, 1997: 7). For Lesotho to achieve quality in education, it has to prepare resources such as its teachers and materials so that teachers as well as learners can improve their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards cooperation and good communication. Quality teaching and the improved nature of classroom interaction can raise levels of learning achievement, where teachers are well-trained and materials are available, as the GoL aims to achieve. Under the programme of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) teachers are expected to be agents (and the success) of any educational change in Lesotho, therefore, it makes sense for the government of Lesotho to empower them as educational change is dependent on the effort of each educator.

In addition, in the case of Lesotho's FPE programme, the Ministry of Education considers "ideals of excellence" and the maintenance, application and evaluation of services and products against set academic and educational standards, "with a view to improvement in the teaching, learning processes and classroom interaction" (MoE, (2001: 15). Such understanding of quality in Lesotho primary education can develop thick democracy, particularly with view to classroom interaction. Why? In the first place this thesis attempts to examine whether the FPE initiative on the part of the GoL can cultivate thick democratic practices. And, as noted in Chapter I the primary goals of the FPE project involve engendering friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity among all Basotho learners and teachers in primary schools. So, when teaching and learning with specific reference to classroom interaction is improved it has a much better chance

of being realised through thick democratic practices such as enhancing solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, and free participation and engagement in primary classrooms. In other words, these thick democratic practices can lead to cultivating friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity among all Basotho learners and teachers in primary schools. In this sense the FPE project has the potential (if it strives to achieve quality education) to engender thick democratic practices.

4.3.4 Relevance

Relevance is another perception of free and compulsory primary education in Lesotho. According to GoL, this means the development of a curriculum and modes of assessment which ensure the human, practical and vocational relevance of basic education. In this regard the government intends to integrate a programme of curriculum development and reform, enhance pre- and in-service teacher training and renew teaching and learning materials with the specific focus on raising HIV/AIDS awareness issues. GoL also wants to equip learners with life skills that are relevant and useful within the context of Lesotho by incorporating technical and vocational elements into the primary school curriculum and related syllabi. The government of Lesotho also renews the curriculum with respect to relevance, subject clustering, practicality and the material needs of learners. According to Steyn *et. al.* (1999: 67), relevance is always relevant in relation to 'something'. It is therefore a matter of strong emotional interest and it is determined when various needs experienced by the entire population are to be addressed. The relevance of education relates to the totality of unique needs of society (Steyn *et. al.,* 1999: 67).

My focus is on curricula which can equip learners in primary government schools with life skills. If one considers that life skills require of one to co-exist in a participatory way and critically engage with teachers and learners then the potential exists that the acquisition of life skills could contribute to thick democratic classrooms practices. What follows then is that the FPE programme of the GoL has the potential to cultivate thick democracy in primary government schools.

This brings me to a discussion of how relevance can be analysed.

4.3.4.1 Satisfying needs

To what extent does education meet the needs of the individual learner, society and nation? Some Basotho people indicate that this education system is corrupt and that children are misbehaving. M'ampaleng, a 78 year-old Mosotho woman explains, "We were happy that our children were going to have the wise people's education which would help them to work with their hands and heads. However, we have been disillusioned because instead they know things that we did not intend to teach them. Now we are failing to make our children do what we want, because of this education" (M'ampaleng, 2004: 2). Muzvidziwa points out that Lesotho's education "is that of an elitist education system driven by individualistic interests and the needs of the small but powerful outward-looking minority. Hence, the distortions within the education sector go beyond the limits of individuals groups, families, communities and the nation" (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 13). He further explains that the conflict that the government of Lesotho has with churches has made it difficult to reorient education to serve the needs of humanistic society (Muvzidziwa, 2002: 12).

Now certainly, the FPE programme encourages people to build peace and unity. Yet, it does seem as if many traditional Basotho parents are averse to an education system which seemingly makes learners more authoritative in the sense that they now question and challenge their parents which the latter believe could break down traditional familial ties. If this happens it seems very unlikely that peace and unity would be enhanced. In this sense, the FPE also lacks the potential to enhance thick democracy since the latter is aimed at encouraging tolerance, solidarity and the recognition of difference. To my mind, if the FPE programme is meant to serve the minority interests of a few in order to attend to an economy which requires skilled workers educated to make profit then such a programme has little chance of achieving unity in Lesotho. For this reason the concerns of some Basotho parents seem justified.

4.3.4.2 Adaptability

Is the education system sufficiently flexible to be able to adapt to new demands; that is, to identify new demands and make the necessary adjustments to be able to accommodate new demands. Especially changes in the field of technological development, political change and changing social needs pose great challenges of adaptability to education. *Mountain Voices* shows that this education is accompanied by a sense of sadness among adults, as their education in the

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land around them (knowledge of environment) will be of limited value (*Mountain Voices*, 2004: 1-2). Muzvidziwa also indicates that Lesotho's primary education is geared towards the acquisition of foreign values, skills and knowledge. He further points out that knowledge and skills are linked to the wage sector. It undermines the development of positive democratic values to enable young Basotho to be creative, innovative, patriotic, responsible, disciplined and oriented toward self-development and the development of their society (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 12). Thus, the idea of thin democracy is evident since the conditions do not allow the development of indigenous ways of knowing. I cannot imagine an education system working if it has been designed to serve a foreign purpose. From this point of view, one can understand that the system is not flexible enough to adapt to indigenous demands. However, I am not denying that foreign skills and knowledge are necessary for Basotho children, so that they can apply them in their context. But, then the education system should not ignore indigenous ways of knowing since this would undermine the kind of tolerance the FPE wants to achieve since tolerance involves respecting difference and the other. In this case, it does seem as if the FPE has some gaps in achieving its democratic agenda. The point I am making is that thick democracy might not be achieved.

4.3.4.3 Cost-effectiveness

Are the funds available to education judiciously applied in the best interests of education? There was a 72% increase in enrolments in Lesotho schools by the year 2000. The money that is used for The Free and Compulsory Primary Education policy and its programmatic implementation is a loan from the World Bank, therefore there is a real danger that this money can soon run out. The reason is that the GoL recruits and trains teachers and education inspectors who are at the same time getting salaries; this seems like double expenditure. I think the GoL has to focus on one issue at a time. It has to first train primary teachers and employ them later. I do not think that Lesotho has the money for such double expenditure. It does seem that the government should manage its finances more judiciously. It does seem as if the GoL does not "care". If so, then thick democracy could be undermined since one of its cornerstones, namely solidarity demands that people "care" and be considerate such as to spend their finances judiciously.

4.3.4.4 Realism

Is education being approached with realistic expectations? The Basotho expects education to produce beneficiaries not victims. When one looks at the education structure and content, it has deviated only minimally from what it was during the colonial period. It continues to train the youth by imparting foreign values to them. There is very little emphasis on matters pertaining to good citizenship and upholding sound principles drawn from African culture, which I consider to be principles underpinning thick democratic education in Lesotho for the reason that the latter is internally connected to recognition of diversity – that is, concern for the other, in this instance, African indigenous culture.

4.3.4.5 Effectiveness

Is the education system managed effectively/efficiently at all levels? Are the resources and input, finance, equipment, property, staff and learners wisely managed? This applies at individual school level as well as at provincial and national level. This once again emphasises the necessity for competent, well-qualified and efficient persons to be appointed in education and for them to perform their tasks with dedication. It further emphasises that the partners of a school should cooperate with the principal, the staff and governing body to ensure and improve the degree of effectiveness. Even more important is the fact that the government at local and national level should ensure through legislation, management and regulations, that scope is allowed for performance with regard to effectiveness in all areas of education. Muzvidziwa (2002: 12) claims that in Lesotho the struggle for control remains unresolved.

Therefore, there is a lack of a supportive environment conducive to the development of positive attributes in people. This was witnessed when Basotho children were locked out of school (Akindale & Gill, 2001: 6). Muzvidziwa further states that "the conflict in the area of education has been narrowly defined as that between the government as the representative and the churches as school proprietors. Nowhere is this conflict perceived as involving differences between individualistic and collective goals. The absence of effective, focused and dynamic democratic oriented leadership in Lesotho made it difficult to reorient education to serve the needs of humanistic society because the church-government conflict in terms of control of school and education has been a major stumbling block to effecting structural changes in education" (Muvzidziwa, 2002: 12). In some schools priests are school managers due to the fact that they

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are the school owners, therefore they manage almost everything in these schools. Once again, despite the fact that the FPE has many elements which could engender thick democratic practices in the primary schooling system, conditions seem to be unfavourable for this kind of thick democracy to take place. Critical engagement – a cornerstone of thick democracy – demands that people to not act with excessive power. Rather they engage others, that is, teachers, parents and learners in the decision making processes.

4.3.4.6 Maintenance and improvement of standards

Education is expected to produce the quality adult who will enhance national performance. It is most important for schools to maintain an adequate standard in respect of education in the various learning areas, character and morality, and generally produce well-qualified persons to meet the needs of society and the labour market. Lesotho wants to improve teaching and learning materials designed to raise levels of learning achievements. My contention is that the standard of education, whether in respect of an individual school or an entire system, does not remain constant. The education dispensation has the potential for raising standards, but unfortunately also the potential to lower them. It sometimes happens that a school or an entire system cannot succeed in maintaining standards. In my view, where teachers and other necessary resources are not well prepared, well-qualified people cannot be easily produced, meaning that the needs of society and the labour market also cannot be met. And, considering that thick democratic practices demand that teachers be equipped with skills to foster solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity and active participation, teachers lacking these skills would not do much to realize some of the goals of the FPE such as to engender friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity. The point is teachers have an important role to play in achieving democratic practices and should be well-trained and equipped to do so.

4.3.4.7 Provision for accompaniment to adulthood

All teachers, worldwide, strive to accompany their learners to successful adulthood. Education is always a purposeful activity. It does not aim to be an activity for the child as a child only, but focuses on the child as a future adult, who one day will have to be able to take his or her place in life. It is important for one to ask these questions: What kind of adult would we like the child to become? How should education be organised to produce this kind of adult? As far as Polaki (2004: 3) is concerned, the Lesotho Mathematics curriculum is poorly organised; that is why

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learners are performing poorly. My contention is that Lesotho's education curriculum has to empower and liberate its citizenry, and this can only be achieved if all subjects are rooted in Sesotho culture and history (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 10). Once again, ignoring the indigenous culture in curricula matters could minimize the attainment of thick democratic practices since the latter is connected to recognising diversity. And if one considers that building friendship, a key goal of the FPE, depends on how one perceives and respects the other, it seems unlikely that thick democratic practices in primary government schools could become a reality.

4.3.4.8 Educational anthropological criteria

In the midst of all the economic, sociological and political circumstances, and others that make claims on and pose challenges to education, what can easily be lost sight of is the fact that it is the teachers' primary function to accompany the child to adulthood. The learners, around whom the educational activities should be centred, should not be relegated to a position of being exposed to non-educational objectives. Education is a human activity calculated to educate the learner to become a better human being. This is why education (in this case educationists) should be aware of the realities of being a person, and then plan and organise educational objectives accordingly. Such an exploration will encompass the nature of being a full person with respect to the psychological, philosophical, religious and cultural context (Steyn *et. al.,* 1999: 71). Although the learner is believed to be well prepared when the above objectives are met, Freire (1987: 13) argues that these can be achieved if teachers are able to use liberating educational methods. These methods of dialogical education encourage people (learners) to have an intimate relationship with their community. He further argues that, "through critical dialogue about a text or a moment of society, the political and historical contexts of the material are revealed and unveiled to reveal the reasons for things being as they are. This for me is an act of knowing and knowing the truth". Therefore, he suggests that students should be provided with a liberating course that will "illuminate" reality. In this sense education should be a liberating experience which is rather a critical perspective on school and society and learning for social transformation (Freire, 1987: 13). I contend that if a curriculum is rooted in Sesotho culture, pupils will be in a position to know the truth about themselves in terms of their own politics and history, and therefore they will transform. And, if one considers that a key aspect of the FPE is to cultivate unity and friendship, it follows from this that dialogical action would be needed to do so – thus, a matter of drawing on thick democratic practices to achieve the main goals of the FPE. In this sense it seems as if achieving the goals of the FPE cannot be done without employing thick

democratic practices. In a sense, the FPE has the potential to engender thick democratic practices since one requires the latter to achieve the goals of friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity.

4.3.4.9 Curriculum planning and content

Curriculum content should be comprised of the material necessary for achieving the desired results. Similarly, the phases of curriculum design should meet the demands of relevance (Steyn *et. al.,* 1999: 71-72). Additionally, Carl shows that whatever the outcome of a curriculum may be, a school curriculum can be regarded as successful only if it involves the teacher in as many curriculum decisions as possible. In the past teachers were the mere implementers of curricula, but in a really democratic system, they must fulfill their roles as empowered agents (Carl in Steyn, 1997a: 71).

Some questions that one has to ask are: who exercises what sort of control over the curriculum? Is control centralised or decentralised? Steyn posits that in a highly centralised system curriculum decision-making may be best suited to address inequalities. However, direct state intervention may lead to the suppression of initiative and creativity. For democratic principles both centralised and decentralised curriculum designs are compatible. I want to agree with Steyn when he points out that curriculum policy, in a democratic system, should allow for greater openness and especially greater teacher participation (Steyn, 1997a: 73).

In a centralised decision-making policy, the role players are the different education departments, the organised teaching profession, perhaps employers and trade unions, perhaps parent organisations, but most definitely representatives from political groupings – especially from the ruling party. Although teachers are represented via teachers' unions, the freedom of the individual teacher to take responsibility for his or her own professional duties is not protected. In a democratic system curriculum design includes the planning done by departmental working groups, the design of acceptable models, criteria, the construction of a draft curriculum and the launching and implementation of the final curriculum (Steyn, 1997a: 74). Nevertheless, the question remains: what is the professional role and responsibility of the individual teacher – from the initial phase, a planning phase, a development phase, an implementing phase and eventually an evaluation phase?

As the teacher is expected to lead the individual learner onto the path of becoming a thickly democratic decision-maker, then surely it must be demonstrated in the way teachers exercise their professional duties in the whole educational environment, and especially in the classroom. Teachers who are empowered will be able to reflect on their own professional work and freedom; if they are allowed to involve themselves in the field of curriculum development. Teachers are key role players in dealing with curriculum challenges and therefore they must involve themselves in the decision-making process. Democracy also implies responsibility, meaning teachers should therefore accept responsibility for decisions they make (Steyn, 1997a: 75).

In a democratic system relevance invites and rates highly the opinions of all individuals – a form of thick democracy. The principle of freedom of speech and participation by all individuals in society is conducive to open and free communication. Thick democracy seeks out contributions from each member of society. Consultation comes naturally in the thick democratic approach. Open communication channels make possible a free flow of ideas, making known criticism and objections as well as proposals for improvement. It promotes consultation and input at all levels across society. This means that the authority (whether local or national government, policy makers, officials and school staff members) will regularly consult other stakeholders about any changes that are envisaged.

Participation by various stakeholders in education ensures that everybody's opinion can be heard. Respect for freedom of the press and allowing a free press will ensure that each individual's opinion have the possibility be heard, even if only by way of a letter to the editor published in a newspaper. Furthermore, it is important for education to meet the demand of relevance in a democratic sense. Democratically speaking, relevance means that the educational institution, specifically the school, will maintain democratic principles and promote democratic values (Steyn et. al., 1999: 74). Consultation (as one of the principles of thick democracy) with the civil society (representatives of the Basotho) is very unsatisfactory in FPE (2000), because civil society only participated in certain parts of the process (GoL, 2004a: 2). Polaki emphasises that the Lesotho curriculum is centralised; it is designed by the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), who are MoE officials and members of the teaching force, which includes vocational education, teaching development education and university education. He further points out that the curriculum is centralised to such an extent that only one textbook series is used in the schools (Polaki, 2004: 3). Thus, one can safely conclude that on the subject

of curriculum development possibilities for the promotion of thin democracy is prevalent in the policy. In fact what concerns me is the fact that people (teachers in particular) who have mostly been excluded from the policy decision making processes (concerning the design and development of the FPE programme) are now expected to drive this process. This could be problematic in the sense that teachers might subtly resist its implementation which does not augur well for thick democracy. The latter requires free and critical participation and engagement. If teachers are reluctant, it would not build the process of democratic educational change in Lesotho primary government schools.

Similarly, civil society that is linked to the grassroots level (representatives of the Basotho both at village and national levels) is represented in a very limited way (GoL, 2004a: 2). Lesotho's primary teachers who are the ones accompanying the child to adulthood are not represented or participating in curriculum planning and content choice. In this way, thick democracy seems to be absent.

Moreover, Lesotho teachers are only implementing curriculum policy. According to Rorty (in Bak, 2004: 43), this is a socialisation process because teachers are socialised by means of the curriculum and teaching methods, meaning that they are provided with ready designed curriculum and teaching methods. This view is supported by Polaki (2004: 5), who posits that for teachers the textbooks provide the subject matter and approaches to delivering the subject matter. In this case, the textbooks provided by the government represent the implemented curriculum, on the grounds that textbooks represent the curriculum in practice. Teachers and learners depend entirely on textbooks. The consequence is that their education is bookish and not relevant to everyday life experiences (Polaki, 2004: 5 & Muzvidziwa, 2002: 11). In this case, my understanding is that teachers are not fulfilling their roles and are not empowered agents. They are socialised by means of the curriculum and teaching methods of the Ministry of Education officials of Lesotho. Teachers just respond to the regime imposed on them. Lesotho curriculum officials become what Freire (1987: 124) calls "banking" curriculum developers, who sing the teachers to sleep while filling up empty accounts of the teachers' minds with deposits of subject matter and teaching methods. The voices of teachers in this case transfer the official curriculum to the learners. At the same time, this habituates them to taking orders and to denying their own critical thinking (Freire, 1987: 124). In this case, thick democracy seems to be ignored. I say this, because thick democracy demands that teachers act with respect and care when they engage their

learners in the educative process. The point is, this process might be ignored, considering their emphasising on "banking education".

Muzvidziwa (2002: 9) affirms that the content of most syllabi remains irrelevant to the needs of a developing country like Lesotho, because its curriculum has not changed much. It remains rooted in the Westminster-inspired curriculum. Matters pertaining to the development of patriotism, responsibility and accountability are not emphasized – this clearly confirms the lack of thick democracy. He further states that the education system in Lesotho ignores the centrality of people in development. It undermines the development of an empowered and liberated citizenry. "In the context of diversifying curriculum, Lesotho is seen as a case of the laggard bordering on failure" (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 9). It also failed to introduce a vocational curriculum in schools.

In addition, the Lesotho curriculum does not emphasise the development of values and Muzvidziwa points out that nowhere in any Lesotho planning documents and national vision on education is attainment of traits and values considered as critical factors in the country's development (Muzvidziwa, 2002: 10). This lack of value emphasis further undermines thick democracy in Lesotho's education policy.

4.3.5   Delivery and linkage

The fifth perception is delivery, but I shall incorporate linkage into it. Delivery is a simultaneous development and decentralisation of existing infrastructure and human resource base, which supports the delivery of primary education, and linkages. It is the creation of appropriate linkages between primary education and other sub-sectors in order to establish sector-wide planning. The government views these as introducing a nation-wide school health plan with an emphasis on monitoring and caring for the physical well-being of children and on strengthening management structures at all levels. It also continues the process of institutional reform, development and capacity building at national, district and school levels. For better delivery, the government is committed to further develop community participation in primary education and promote distance education as a vehicle for teaching and learning in schools and teacher training institutions. It also promotes the use of research and evaluation studies, as well as the use of the media to promote awareness about the programme.

4.4   REFLECTION

The last part of this chapter reflects on whether The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) programme in Lesotho is thickly or thinly democratic. The GoL introduced this policy in 2000. It has been concerned about issues pertaining to access, equity, quality, relevance, delivery and linkage when providing education to the nation's children as a strategy towards poverty alleviation. Indeed, noticeable increases in enrolment were observed across cohorts of males and females in the following year. For Lesotho to transform education democratically (in a thick way), all these principles are necessary and should be addressed effectively. I shall only refer to four main approaches (aspects) in this section: access, equity, quality and relevance. Even though GoL is concerned about issues pertaining to access, equity, quality and relevance in primary education, there is too much inequality in The Free and Compulsory Primary Education of Lesotho provision. The point I am making, is that although the policy seems thickly democratic, the social conditions are not conducive to attain such a form of thick democracy – hence, a form of thin democracy seems to prevail.

Before the year 2000 most Basotho children had no access to basic education and some dropped out before finishing their schooling because of different factors, including financial barriers. Even now, one third of Basotho children of school-going age do not have meaningful access to education, meaning that there is uneven access (Muzvidziwa, 2002). Maintenance of schools is biased in the sense that churches and halls that are used as classrooms are not maintained, while they serve the same purpose as other schools that are maintained. Arrangements for learners with special needs are not specified so that they may have access to basic education. Provision of material is not done at the same time, meaning that some schools operate without the necessary materials, while others have the proper resources for teaching effectively. Empowerment of teachers is also not done at the same time, in the sense that they are not given equal opportunities, but teaching continues at the same time in the sense that all educators assume duty whether qualified or not. Feeding schemes in some schools are being phased out, while in some schools it is continuing and the payments of cooks are different. There is inequality of almost everything in this education system and there is no emphasis on the values underpinning equality in FPE (2000). That being the case, quality education is hardly going to be achieved. The content of what is taught is still irrelevant to the needs of the Basotho. In a stable democracy the values underpinning equality/equity and quality are highly emphasised, and a relevant curriculum is drawn up, where all education community members participate to reach the common good.

Values such as sharing, openness, tolerance, consultation, responsibility, accountability and mutual respect are also promoted.

When it comes to curriculum development, only officials are participating. Teachers, parents (community members) and learners are not participating. They only implement the curriculum in schools where an educator teaches and a learner learns. They are severely limited in their participation in part by the practical impossibility of direct democracy, but also in part through ignorance and the political apathy of the majority – this clearly shows a thin form of democracy, that is, the policy seems to be democratic but its implementation is hampered due to social constraints and inequalities. Teachers, community members and pupils are only socialised with FPE (2000) knowledge and educators with teaching subject matter and teaching methods by MoE officials. Educators are not responsible for their own duties as teachers, and their freedom is not protected. The relationship between curriculum development officials and other education community members like educators, parents and learners is less democratic (some would argue undemocratic) and unequal. This encourages the same kind of (less or undemocratic) relationship between teachers and learners. Therefore, where there is an unequal and less and or undemocratic relationship, the point is to transfer the epistemic expertise to other communities whose epistemic expertise is low.

Moreover, The Free and Compulsory Primary Education curriculum is poorly organised (Polaki, 2004). All subjects are not rooted in Sesotho culture. The curriculum ignores matters pertaining to the development of patriotism, responsibility and accountability – clearly a lack of thick democracy. It does not empower and liberate the citizens. Citizens are passive and the government does everything for them. This situation seems to undermine the thickly democratic agenda of the GoL. In fact, a lack of democratic values along which curricula need to be developed makes democracy thin.

4.5   CONCLUSION

There is no balance in the demand for equity of access (in the sense that, there is uneven access, unequal opportunities including resources and there is lack of relevance) in The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy document. Teachers, learners and other school personnel are treated unequally, and where equality is not emphasised, quality seems to be beyond reach. Therefore, the system becomes less democratic or thinly democratic. In my view,

it seems as if The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in Lesotho is at times thickly democratic (with some ambiguities of course). Then, its implementation or seeming lack thereof makes it thinly democratic. The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy document is characterised overwhelmingly by principles of thin democracy. For instance, a sovereign authority governs and controls other education stakeholders, and they perceive themselves as legal persons who are tied to the government as subjects or beneficiaries – a form of thin democracy. The relations of individuals are entirely private and have nothing of the civic anomie about them – again, thin democracy. The citizenry is a "watchdog" that waits with patience for the government to make mistakes, that is, thin democracy. They are passive in all other legitimate governmental activities such as curriculum planning and content, therefore citizenship deteriorates into a latent function – thin democracy. Civic virtue is defined by reciprocal control, because the government is responsible to and for the body of citizens, but is in no way comprised of that body. For instance, no primary teachers are participating in the National Curriculum Development Centre of Lesotho, only officials are – once again, thin democracy. Of course, in its ideal to provide "Education for All" the policy seems thickly democratic. But, in its mission to realise the policy it seems to teeter on the edge of thin democracy since the social and operational conditions are not in place to bring about thick democracy.

The Lesotho primary teachers (public) are passive and spend most of their time pursuing their private business (teaching only). Their participation is severely limited, partly by practical impossibility of direct democracy, but also through ignorance (because 22% of Lesotho primary educators are under-qualified and unqualified) and the political apathy of the majority (apathy, ignorance, narrow self-interested character of the poor and uneducated majority). This once again confirms a form of thin democracy.

The Lesotho government does not set an example by involving citizens (teachers and learners) into governmental activities such as curriculum decision-making. Therefore, this influences the thin democratic and unequal relationship at school level between teachers and learners, not because of epistemic inequality, but because of thin democratic practices.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT OF LESOTHO CAN DO TO INITIATE, IMPROVE AND SUSTAIN THICK DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE FPE (2000) PROGRAMME.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the foregoing information regarding the perceptions of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy in Lesotho, the conclusion drawn is that The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy (as text and process of implementation) in Lesotho is less democratic, or a thin democratic system. I shall therefore offer possibilities in this chapter of what the government of Lesotho can do to initiate, promote and sustain thick democracy resulting from The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) system. Lesotho's primary education is the foundation for the entire education system in Lesotho. The success or the failure of the whole education system relies on the effectiveness of primary education.

The government of Lesotho needs to implement the values underpinning equality/equity such as, for example consultation, patriotism/social honour, mutual respect, openness, responsibility/accountability and tolerance, which initiate the process of education transformation, where quality education can be achieved to promote education transformation. These can help the GoL to address issues concerning access, equity, quality and relevance for the FPE (2000) project effectively and efficiently.

5.2 FPE (2000) PERCEPTIONS AND POSSIBILITIES

The government of Lesotho tries to address issues concerning access, equity, quality and relevance in the provision of The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy. Below possibilities are offered on how to deal more "thickly" with these principles.

When the GoL attends to access, it indicates that it will improve access, enrolment and retention of learners up to Standard Seven. In terms of access, enrolment improved from an estimated 10,000 to 18,843 learners. Muzvidziwa (2002) indicates that one third of Basotho children of school going age still do not have access to basic education. In this situation one might think that the government of Lesotho did not do a thorough investigation to ascertain the number of

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learners who will be in primary schools in the year 2000, so that it could make sufficient preparations. In other words, while the government of Lesotho implements any policy it has to establish conditions which could expedite the implementation of their policy. The point is, if the FPE project is to be successfully implemented conditions such as adequate number of classes and teachers have to be present if the policy is to attain fruition.

In essence, this will obviate the problem of overcrowded classrooms; it also has to prepare teachers in advance, and provide and distribute the necessary materials in advance. Learners and educators should not wait for materials, because time is not always on their side. This can also help in reducing demand for classrooms, because Harber (2001) shows that where classrooms are overcrowded demand also increases.

Secondly, in 714 schools feeding is being phased out; at these schools cooks were paid M2 (two Maluti) per child per day, while in 652 schools feeding is continuing and cooks are paid 70 cents per child per day. Criteria that are used for determining food price per child per day and cooks payments are not explained, so that one does not understand why there is a difference. I think it would be better if cooks are paid at the same rate per child, and the government has to implement feeding schemes in all schools or phase out the whole programme from all schools – thus, establishing conditions for thick democracy. Because, if the aim of introducing feeding is to retain pupils in schools, it means that only pupils who are fed will be retained. Otherwise, the government will not achieve its goal of retaining learners up to Standard Seven.

Thirdly, every country has its own problems; Lesotho is not an exception. I think, however, that it does have learners with special educational needs and other citizens who have been disadvantaged in terms of geographical regions. It makes sense for the government of Lesotho to prepare the necessary materials for them, train educators for them and adjust building where necessary to accommodate all pupils, regardless of needs or interests, and for those learners who have to walk long distances or cross rivers schools need to be built within their reach.

Furthermore, the government shows that it will renovate buildings that are used as classrooms, except churches and halls. However, in my view it makes sense for the government to maintain all the buildings, because they are all used for the benefit of the whole nation's children and all citizens pay tax, not only the parents of those who are under The Free and Compulsory Primary

Education (2000) programme. This means that all dilapidated classrooms have to be maintained, so that the whole education community can benefit equally.

For the government of Lesotho to train personnel such as principals and Standard One educators is not enough, because primary education is not meant only for Standard One pupils. Well-trained teachers should acquire the skills to teach at all levels so that they can perform well. This means that all teachers have to exercise their right to empower themselves and get good training – a matter of making democracy thick or strong. The same thing applies to all learners who have a right to get quality education that will allow them to succeed. Moreover, schools and educators, including the pupils, have to be treated equally.

The Lesotho government will empower its citizens through providing quality education. That is why it is aiming at improving teaching and learning processes, by designing improved teaching and learning materials to raise the level of learning achievements. Additionally, it develops district resource centres, trains educators and encourages them to work as a team. However, it has been training teachers in groups of 500 people for 2 years through in-service training programmes. When the government of Lesotho deals with the issue of raising or maintaining quality and efficiency, it improves 500 teachers at a time. By the year 2007 25% of 8225 primary school teachers in Lesotho would have been trained. This means that there is a possibility that some pupils who are under this programme will complete their primary education before they experience being taught by qualified teachers. Quality teaching and efficiency by the year 2006 will not be reached when The Free and Compulsory Primary Education is entirely phased in at all levels. Even now, quality does not seem to be guaranteed.

Before implementing any policy like The Free and Compulsory Primary Education, the GoL has to prepare its resources including teachers, because the government shows that this commitment is overdue. The government of Lesotho was aware as early as 1978 that one day FPE (2000) would be in place. Therefore one would have thought that it would be better if GoL built well-resourced libraries in regions where a group of neighbouring schools can use them, and perhaps also well-equipped laboratories to minimise expenses. In addition, this can also enhance cluster grouping of schools as they will work together and perhaps use the library and laboratory on a rotation basis. The GoL has indicated that it has already identified sites.

For education to be thickly democratic, its relevance is a very important consideration. I think this is the way of knowing the interests of the citizenry in education. In my view education that is irrelevant is useless and a waste of money because it does not benefit the nation. When I analyse FPE (2000), I find that the government of Lesotho integrates curriculum development and the reform programme with the specific focus on raising HIV/AIDS awareness. It incorporates technical and vocational elements in the primary school curriculum and related syllabi, where the curriculum is represented in the textbooks. The question that I ask myself is: To what extent does FPE (2000) meet the needs of the individuals, community and nation – a matter of establishing thick democracy? From some published documents (a) *Mountain Voices* (2004: 2) and (b) Muzvidziwa (2002: 13) I deduce that the Basotho people's needs are not met. This education is of an elitist nature, driven by individualistic interests and the needs of the small but powerful outward-looking minority. That is why distortion within the education sector goes beyond the limits of individual groups, families, communities and the nation.

Moreover, for the government of Lesotho to apply available funds to education judiciously, it has to train FPE (2000) teachers gradually, but before they are employed. If they are trained while they are teaching, the GoL spends twice as much or teachers have to pay for their education because they have already taken up employment. They are doing something about empowering themselves.

Furthermore, some Lesotho citizens point out that because of conflict between the government of Lesotho and the churches (owners of the schools), there is an absence of effective, focused and dynamic democratically oriented leadership in Lesotho. This is why education is not reoriented to serve the needs of society and lacks a supportive environment. For leadership to be effective, focused and sustainable the people who are in charge of Lesotho's education must themselves acquire the appropriate democratic traits. They must understand that the foundation laid in education can contribute to the development of positive attitudes among the labour force. They must avoid destructive practices in various spheres of life, and these can also be minimised at the later stages of people's development, if a thick democratic foundation has been laid early in the education system, for instance, in FPE (2000). The emphasis in a democratically inspired education system (with an emphasis on thick democracy) is on hard work. The effort must be made to ensure that a thickly democratic educational programme and the related tasks are sustained.

To maintain and improve standards, there is also a need to introduce incentive schemes into the school system like essay competitions to promote thick democratic competence – participation, deliberation and reasoning. Learners must be assisted to acquire and apply democratic principles in their daily chores. In addition, the FPE (2000) curriculum has to empower and liberate the citizenry by aiming at producing a new citizen cadre as well as a new breed of democratically inspired leaders who must commit themselves and all whom they lead to a programme of activities directed at the development of democratic virtues such a practical reasoning, empathy and mutual respect. The emphasis must further be on the development of virtues such as trust, integrity, love, responsibility, accountability, loyalty and knowledge about what makes sustained democratically-centred discourse happens. It is through the pursuit of a democratically oriented education system that a lasting positive influence on the development of the Basotho nation can be expected.

For the FPE (2000) curriculum development to be thickly democratic and relevant (with an emphasis on participation and deliberation), the opinions of legitimate stakeholders (teacher unions, parent governing bodies and learner representatives) must be respected. The principle of freedom of speech and participation by all individuals in society is conducive to open and free communication. Thick democracy seeks out contributions from legitimate representations. Consultation comes naturally in a thick democratic dispensation. Open communication channels make possible a free flow of ideas, making known criticisms and objections as well as proposals for improvement. It promotes consultation and input at all levels across society. This means that the authority (whether local or national government, policy makers, officials and school staff members) will regularly consult other stakeholders about any changes that are envisaged.

Participation by various stakeholders in education ensures that everybody's opinion can be heard. Respect for freedom of the press will ensure that each individual's opinion will be heard, even if only by way of a letter to the editor published in a newspaper. Furthermore, it is important for education to meet the demand of relevance in a democratic sense. Democratically speaking relevance means that the educational institution, specifically the school, will maintain democratic principles and promote democratic values (Steyn *et. al.,* 1999: 74). The Free and Compulsory Primary Education curriculum has to be decentralised to allow participation of all stakeholders from the initial phase to the evaluation phase, so that everybody who participates can be responsible for his/her duties and his/her freedom is protected as an individual.

5.3 CONCLUSION

My main conclusion is that in order for structural reforms in Lesotho's education to succeed in thickly democratising The Free and Compulsory Primary Education (2000) policy and processes, the project, primarily the structures of education, should be anchored within thick democratic principles. Although primary education is noted to have changed, this change has been illusory or superficial (meaning that it was still the same as the colonial one), as it did not affect the structure and value system governing the delivery of education. The reported conflicts that have come to the fore after independence have been mostly on matters of strategy rather than differences in terms of the values that drive the delivery of education in Lesotho. The focus of Lesotho's education has remained on an elitist and outwardly-looking powerful minority. This powerful minority is geared towards the acquisition of a Western type of education driven by Western values. Basotho political leaders lost lessons and opportunities which were regarded as thickly democratic. These were lessons and opportunities that could have been learnt from Sesotho pre-colonial educational experiences. I think that a democratically driven education system has to draw its inspiration from the principles of thick democratic education.

For Lesotho educational system to be effective and transformational, it requires the commitment of those in the driving seat in terms of societal leadership as well as those in charge of education. This commitment must be tempered by a desire to implement an education that transforms people's worldview, qualitatively, to put them at the service of their nation and the people. Education should be able to equip each and every Mosotho child to contribute meaningfully to the development of the nation. The value of education in Lesotho can only be seen when it is capable of producing men and women of the highest integrity, honesty, tolerance, responsibility, accountability, hard working, patriotic, well-mannered and committed to serving their society. Finally, the teaching of positive democratic attributes must be made on the bedrock of a successful education system in Lesotho from the lowest grades.

In sum, I have argued that the free and compulsory primary education programme (2000) of the GoL has the potential to engender thick democratic practices. In other words, I have shown that solidarity, tolerance, recognition of diversity, free participation and engagement can be realised through the FPE project. This is so for the reason that some of the main goals of the FPE are to engender friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity in the Lesotho education system. Friendship, tolerance, peace, unity, care and dignity are virtues which can be linked internally to

solidarity, recognition of diversity and critical participation and engagement. Consequently, my argument that the FPE (not ignoring its limitations) has the potential to make primary education in government schools in Lesotho thickly democratic.

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