HAS EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION DEEPENED

DEMOCRACY IN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS?

YOLANDE H. DAMONS

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Supervisor: Professor Y. Waghid

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment 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.

SIGNATURE:

YOLANDE H. DAMONS

DATE:

ABSTRACT

The process of educational transformation in South Africa was characterised by the creation of a coherent policy and legislative framework (e.g. Constitution; *South African Schools Act*, 1996) that would form the basis for systematic changes. My concern is *if* or *to what extend* the transformational goals of access, redress, equality, quality, freedom and participation manifest itself in public high schools, particularly those schools from historically disadvantaged communities.

Engaging in an interpretive and critical analysis of data (*South African Schools Act*, 1996 and diverse educator voices), I explore the conceptual and pragmatic links between different nuances of democracy in schools. There seem to be huge gaps between policy and practice. As the transformation of the education system is inseparable from the total transformation of our nation, I contend that the education landscape needs to be reviewed. A rigorous multi-facetted approach by all role players is necessary in order to meet the complexity of challenges to the process of transforming the education system of South Africa, in order to bring about a *deep* democracy.

KEY WORDS: Education, transformation, democracy, participation, equality and quality.

ABSTRAK

Die proses van onderwys-transformasie in Suid-Afrika is gekenmerk deur die daarstelling van 'n koherente beleids-en wetgewende raamwerk (o.a. Konstitusie; *Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet*, 1996), wat die grondslag van sistematiese veranderinge sou vorm. My besorgdheid is *of*, en *tot watter mate* die transformasie-doelwitte van toeganklikheid, regstelling, gelykheid, kwaliteit, vryheid en deelname in publieke hoërskole gemanifesteer word – veral dié skole in histories benadeelde samelewings.

Verbind tot 'n interpretatiewe- en kritiese data-analise van die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet en menings van diverse onderwyslui, ondersoek ek die konseptuele en pragmatiese skakeling tussen verskillende nuanses aangaande demokrasie in skole. Daar blyk groot gapings tussen beleid en praktyk te wees. Omdat die transformasie van die onderwysstelsel onlosmaaklik deel vorm van die totale transformasie van ons nasie, voer ek aan dat die opvoedkundige landskap dringend in heroënskou geneem moet word. 'n Daadwerklike, multi-fassettige benadering deur alle rolspelers is nodig ten einde die komplekse uitdagings ten opsigte van die transformasie van die Suid-Afrikaanse onderwys die hoof te bied, en sodoende 'n *diep* demokrasie tot stand te bring.

SLEUTELWOORDE: Onderwys, transformasie, demokrasie, deelname, gelykheid en kwaliteit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

CHARTING OUT MY RESEARCH INTO AN ASPECT OF EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES

1.1   TITLE

Has educational transformation deepened democracy in high schools?

1.2   RESEARCH PURPOSE

After South Africa's first democratic government came into power in 1994, a new racially integrated education system has been established to replace the previously race-based system. We now have one national non-racial education system, which replaces the previously fractured and racially divided one. The new government's vision for education prioritises equal access for all to quality public education. Among the backlogs that had to be redressed are the unequal provision of resources for school education for the different population groups and the widely differing learner-educator ratios. The past few years of transformation in education was characterised by the creation of a coherent policy and legislative framework that would form the basis for systematic changes. Transformation had to be implemented amidst high levels of poverty, significant lack of human, infrastructural and monetary resources and the social, ethical, racial and psychological damage of the past.

In the light of transformation being implemented, we as change agents in education need to collaborate in order to cope with it. Transformation is a process, which means that the democratisation of education needs to occur in relation to evaluations from time to time in order to identify possible gaps between policy and practice. If there are gaps, we need to deal with the problem at hand – devise strategies, skills and techniques in order to reach the transformational goals of access, redress, equality, quality, freedom and participation. For government to only focus on the development of policy at a

political level is insufficient, because the effective transformation of education in schools lies in the practical implementation of these policies.

This does not mean denying the important gains we made in education since 1994. We just need to ask *if* or *to what extent* democracy in education has been established. Are we moving closer to the goal of democracy in education? Are we moving, but within circles because of a lack of strategic direction? These are questions this research assignment aims to answer.

1.3   RESEARCH QUESTION

The locus of my research question is premised on the following concerns:

- Have the plans and actions that were geared by the new democratic government to deepen democratic practices in public high schools been effective with regard to school infrastructure, access, user fees, learning support material, curriculum choices, sports, arts and culture, educator-learner-ratio, support staff, school funding and gender?

- If democratic practices in public high schools have not been deepened, what are the shortfalls and challenges that we are still facing?

- Are we perhaps less committed to transformation now that we have moved beyond 1994?

- Are we seemingly trapped in a particular model of having to instrumentally drive educational transformation?

- To what extend are the transformational goals of access, redress, equity and quality still the target, and how is the attainment of these goals being ensured?

1.4   RESEARCH PARADIGM

Before I expound on the paradigm I intend using in my research assignment, first a word about the concept. A paradigm refers to the world vision (thoughts or ways of understanding and seeing the world or the philosophical framework within which research will be conducted. It is also referred to as a 'grammar of

thinking', a 'form of discourse', a 'shape of consciousness' or a 'form of rationality' (Morrow, 1995).

Particular frameworks of thinking constitute research methodology as well as educational research. For the purpose of my educational research, the interpretive theory and critical theory will be used as frameworks of understanding.

1.4.1 The interpretive paradigm

Working in the interpretive paradigm, I contend that analysis involves more than observation. The crucial point of analysis is to reach the self-understanding of the person acting in the situation, analysing and understanding his or her reasons for their actions (Fay, 1975). I shall engage with respondents (high school teachers) in their natural school contexts, in order to understand and to construct their feelings, experiences and performances so as to get to the root of human activity. The same procedure will be followed with an official from the Educational Management and Development Centre (EMDC-Centre).

1.4.2 Critical paradigm

Forthcoming from the interpretive understanding of the data, I would also like to generate critical action, with the practical intention to make a contribution towards change in an unsatisfactory educational situation. Driven by the emancipatory interest, my purpose is "to engender self-reflective enquiry amongst individuals to bring about the clear articulation of arguments in an atmosphere of openness…" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986:162). In the process of critically evaluating the emancipatory nature of the data, I also wish to emphasise the importance of empowerment as a key element in the transformation of education.

1.5   RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

The researches techniques that I shall make use of include sampling, data collection and analysis (Durrheim, 1999: 44) as outlined as follows:

- Education Policy Analysis (South African Schools Act, 1996)

- Data Collection: One Black public high school (English medium); one Coloured public high school (Afrikaans medium); and two predominantly White high schools (respectively Afrikaans and English medium) will be used in my research. The sample represents learners from different social and cultural backgrounds. (Nota Bena: No Muslim school in the Southern Cape Region). The main emphasis will be on the experiences and perceptions of the principal or deputy principal and a School Governing Body member per school regarding education transformation as they experience it in their schools.

1.5.1 Sampling

I shall use probability sampling as far as the selection of individual schools and educators are concerned, whereby every element in my 'sampling frame' has a chance of being selected into the sample. By means of a random selection procedure, individual schools and educators will be included in the sample. This means that I have very little say in the sample-choice and therefore cannot bias the selection process. The sample will be representative of the population, which means that I shall be able to generalise the findings of the study from the sample to the population as a whole.

Comparisons will be drawn between the two sets of generalised findings. As far as the EMDC-Centre (George / Karoo) is concerned, an educational official will also be interviewed. In this way I can get a better insight in the broader context in which high schools in the Western Cape are functioning.

With reference to education policy, in particular the South Africans Schools Act of 1996, I shall make an interpretive as well as a critical analysis of the research data.

1.5.2 Data Production

The 'data' (the valid basic material with which I am working), would be the result of observation (Terreblanche and Durrheim, 2000: 127). The question is: How would I judge the extent to which the revolutionary redesign of the education system has been successful? This brings me to a discussion of my specific ways of data production in this research project.

1.5.2.1   Policy Analysis

My policy analysis will be interpretive as well as critical, in order to identify possible gaps between policy and practice.

1.5.2.2   Interviewing

Interacting with respondents in a naturalistic way will make it possible to understand their viewpoints from the 'inside out' and from the 'outside in', in order to actively interpret their voices. Within an open relation I can better understand their deepest thoughts and feelings regarding democracy in education. I shall therefore plan for a semi-structured interview, whereby a list of key topics will be developed in advance.

1.5.2.3   Participant observation

I shall engage the transformation process I am researching, so as to make first-hand observations under 'normal' circumstances. In doing so, my very process of observing transformation regarding democracy, would have minimal impact on that specific transformation.

1.5.3 Data Analysis

According to Terreblanche and Durrheim (1999: 140), I shall be involved in activities of breaking the data down (thematising and categorising) and in building it up again in novel ways (elaborating and interpreting). My use of interpretive analysis can be seen as a back-and-forth movement between the strange and the familiar, as well as between description and interpretation,

foreground and background, part and whole. I shall be 'in close contact' with the constructed data, in order to interpret it extensively and rigorously.

However, it is not enough for philosophers to only interpret the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it. Therefore I shall also make a critical analysis of the data. Critical analysis of data will be made against the background that our social world is unjust by design – it reflects the differences and inequities that are historically embedded. A critical emancipatory approach entails an attack on the status quo in our schools, in order to *transform* and *improve* social relations. This approach will thus be action-orientated. The goal is to make our school-world a better place for all.

By means of qualitative practice I shall do some comparative analysis which involves taking several possibilities or explanations into account, one of which is my own impact on the context of study and on the development of the interpretive account. According to what Smaling (1992) calls 'transferential validity', I have to make sure of my research account providing answers in other contexts.

1.5.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

My first step is to generate an intersection set, that is an identification of key concepts and aspects that describe and set the parameters of the research topic, for example, education, schooling, transformation, democracy, equity, etcetera. Secondly, I shall explore key concepts, pursue discussions with my supervisor, analyse policy documents, and embark upon a literature study and Internet search.

1.6   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

My research objectives involves the following practices:

- To review present policies relating to education in order to ensure that it serves the reality and the best interest of all South African learners;

- To identify priorities, key challenges and initiatives that would lead to effective implementation and delivery of quality public education;

- To develop and define strategies to empower educational leaders to effectively deliver quality public education;

- To provide strategic direction by means of a clear implementation plan with regard to education transformation (importance of empowerment and stakeholder participation); and

- To aim at socialising participants at high school level with knowledge of educational discourse and democracy and to encourage them to inquire critically as 'self-creating individuals' (Rorty, 1999: 118).

Instead of viewing research as a recipe for democratic change, it may be more useful to conceive of it as a process that could embody democratic values. More importantly, that it is a process in which democratic values can be re-constructed and re-imagined. Research as praxis in which the internal goods (democratic values) of the research activity are constantly revised, is a meaningful concept in this respect. Further exploration of its usefulness in various research processes could be beneficial to all of us involved in processes of knowledge production (Le Grange, 2000: 76).

With legislation in place, policy objectives have to be further developed in practice. This includes an ongoing process of reconsidering policy objectives and making adjustments where necessary. It is to such an initiative that this research project hopes to make a contribution.

CHAPTER 2

EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION IN SCHOOLS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The extend to which the challenge of 'education for democratic participation' is addressed, depends on the conceptual and structural conditions (context) which, in turn, determine the pace of educational transformation. Knowing that any context or situation explains and shapes a concept in a particular way, I would now try to explain how educational transformation as human engagement, if used in relation with the transformative goods such as equity, equality and quality, can shape our understanding of whether or not democracy in high schools has been deepened since 1994.

This brings me to a discussion of education transformation post-1994.

2.2   EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION SINCE 1994

As a result of South Africa's first democratic election held in April 1994, a government of national unity took office with the African National Congress (ANC) as the leading party. The transition from the ethos of an apartheid education system to one of transformation and democratic discourse initiated a drastic policy shift towards equal and quality education for all South Africans.

The educational perspective of the African National Congress (ANC) is based on the goals and principles of the 1955 *Freedom Charter*. This includes the replacement of all bodies of minority rule by democratic organs of government, equality before the law, equal human rights and free, compulsory, universal and equal education for all children, as well as the abolition of the colour bar in cultural life, sport and education (ANC, 1995).

In its *Discussion on Educational Policy* the ANC states that the primary aim of educational policy should be to link the education system with the broad social goal of a democratic society in which there is political and social justice for all (ANC, 1991: 11). With legislation in place, policy objectives have to be further developed in practice. This includes an ongoing process of reconsidering policy objectives and adjustments where necessary (Du Plessis, 2000: 64).

However, policy development at political level does not ensure the effective transformation of education in schools. Waghid (2000 b: 85) argues that there is a need to establish conceptual and pragmatic links between nuances of sustainable living and proposed policy transformation in schools. These nuances include diversity, equality and liberty, and participation which, in conjunction with the policy imperatives of the new education system, can enhance the transformation process in South African schools.

Education transformation as a process cannot successfully be carried out unless there is political and philosophical clarity concerning the way forward on the part of all involved. The government's vision for education, which includes Early Childhood Development, Higher Education and Adult Basic Education, prioritises equal access for all to public education. In order to make this a reality, we need well-trained, motivated and professional teachers who are empowered to deliver quality public education, manageable class sizes, adequate access to learning support materials, adequate physical infrastructure and a curriculum which is coherent and relevant to the needs of learners, the broad society and the labour market.

In the process of overcoming the gap between policy and practice, the education landscape needs to be reviewed. The question we therefore have to ask ourselves is: How far have we come since 1994? What is happening in schools in terms of the implementation of change in education? What still needs to be

done to transform the education system in South Africa? What are the shortcomings and challenges we are still facing?

One of South Africa's most difficult challenges is to transform all spheres of public life so as to establish enabling conditions for a thriving democracy (Pendlebury, 1998). Making fundamental changes and shifts in the education system, is complex. The declaration of policy is worlds apart from the implementation and the achievement thereof. According to Jansen (1999), attention needs to be given to the complexity of varying contexts and support systems needed to move from policy enunciation to policy enactment within schools.

The transformation of education is a daunting task lying ahead; a lengthy process. What is needed, are detailed plans, followed by massive commitment and the mobilisation of human and financial resources, in order to concretise our plans. With the rigorous engagement of all stakeholders to put policy into practice, we can regard ourselves to be "... on course ... to give birth to something new, good and beautiful" (Mbeki, 1999).

I shall now do a conceptual analysis of key concepts relevant to my research project.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

People construct concepts for different reasons and from different points of view. According to Morrow (1989), education is a notion formed from a moral point of view. Among other things, this implies that it is formed from the point of view of anyone, that it provides rules not only for our thought about it but also for our behaviour. In my analysis of the concepts education, schooling, transformation and democracy, I shall not only focus on the distinctive characteristics thereof, but also refer to the interrelatedness of these concepts.

2.3.1 Education

South Africa is experiencing transformation at all levels, including transformative paradigm shifts in education. South African education had been at the centre of the anti-apartheid struggle, with the task of social transformation resting heavily on the new government. Education forms part of the day-to-day lives of teachers, yet they are appalled when asked to define 'education' and find that they cannot, or do not know where to start. Even educational 'experts' find great difficulty in defining education.

Education does not exist in a vacuum, but in a social, economic and political context. Education is part of the wider society – it cannot be isolated from the play of various forces. Holding a believe that education is a method of existing that is independent of the cultural milieu, is to subscribe to one of the most dangerous of fallacies. Therefore, we need to see education as a means to an end, and not an end in itself. The transformation of the education system is inseparable from the total transformation of our country and our people (Madisha, 2000).

But what is education? Education is a human practice; a social construct constituted by meanings. Constitutive meanings of 'values' of sustainable living, which hold much promise for educational transformation in schools, include diversity, equality and freedom, and participation (Waghid, 2000 c). He further argues that in education the facts ('knowing-that') and skills (knowing-how') needs to be supplemented by the notion of dialogical *agape* (love) which allows space for transformatory learning, respect for persons and 'imaginative reconstructions' of learning that can move beyond the boundaries of socially negotiated outcomes (Waghid, 2000 c).

Education can be regarded as a powerful means to produce a society where everybody has equal human dignity and equal share of the wealth of the country.

Education is not merely a boon conferred by democracy, but a condition of its survival and becoming *that* which it undertakes to be. Democracy is that form of social organisation which most depend on personal character and moral autonomy. Democratic education is therefore a peculiar ambitious education. We dare not force education into an ill-fitting harness, thinking that it is useless if not bringing forth certain predicted outcomes. Learners not only acquire knowledge and understanding ('know-that'), but also 'know-how', that is, skill and judgement in the quest of developing new possibilities for their individual and social actions (Waghid, 2000 c). Education … is learning to look, to listen, to think, to feel, to imagine, to believe, to understand, to choose and to wish (Oakeshott, 1998: 285). Moreover, learners are not empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Rather they approach each learning task with a set of personal beliefs, motivations, and conceptions about the subject area and about knowledge itself.

The current public education crisis which is centred around issues of equity, transformation, lower teacher moral, unemployment and poverty - to name but a few - forces us to rethink our strategies in a complicated political context. According to Edwin Pillar, Deputy President of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the public education crisis operates on at least three different parallel tracks. On the one level there is a very real crisis facing our public schools (violence, breakdown of discipline, sexual abuse - to name but a few). On the other level, a crisis, especially as it is portrayed in the media and those who owned it, is manufactured as part of a broader political move to privatise and defund our public education system. At the third level, the level of government, its macro-economic strategy, the MTEF (Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, 1997) and other budgetary processes, together with its neglect of the Nedlac Public Finance Chamber, point to a gradual but distinct agenda to reduce funding in education, to continually promote a 'maintenance budget' as against a 'developmental and transformation budget' (COSATU, 2000).

Education is never an isolated activity; it is always an important part of the complete social reality. Through education we seek to achieve the maximum enlightenment possible – to emancipate and empower the individual and society at large with the knowledge, skills, understanding and choices that will promote the interest of all. Therefore education that is democratic is inclusive of other identities, without the bias that characterised the apartheid epistemology. Such education is transformative, and such a 'unity with diversity' approach is likely to eventually transform the country as a whole. In approaching the transformational task at hand, we need to bear in mind the implicit messages that education portrait. It can both be a means of oppression and of liberation.

2.3.2 Schooling

The democratisation of education in South Africa involves not only the broad area of schooling policy, but also our practices as educators. Challenged by a new form of discourse, we need to re-evaluate where we stand or in what direction we are moving.

Education and schooling are not the same as each other. However, this is not because education 'covers' more than schooling – it is just that they are different kinds of concepts with different uses. In the words of Morrow, 1989):

> There is no logical (or internal) connection between education and schooling. The connection is contingent, or historical. Schooling might or might not contribute to education, some schooling might indeed be profoundly anti-educative, and 'Departments of Education' are parts of the bureaucratic structure for the administration of schooling, not sources of wisdom about education.

Schooling has economic, social and political functions. In preparing people for positions in society (might it be social, political and so on), schooling is one of the principal agencies for the distribution of the 'goods' of society. If 'different'

schooling is provided for 'different' people, it will be to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. This would be unjust.

Schooling is culturally specific – it is located in specific societies. Any schooling system, which distinguishes between people on 'cultural' grounds, will hinder the transformation process. According to the principle of equality, people should not be treated differently unless there are relevant grounds for such differences. Sadly, in the sphere of schooling, the 'relevant grounds' for different treatment appear to be culture, class, gender religion, and so on. The fact remains that separate cannot be equal (Morrow, 1989).

Schools are embedded in the economic and political structures of society, therefore schooling policies must reflect that. The fact is that schooling policy in SA has generated, sustained and perpetuated lots of inequalities – gross injustices we are faced with even in this transformation era. When it comes to 'schooling policy', people's fundamental differences are confronting each other. These differences are culturally embedded and difficult (if possible) to reconcile. 'Cultural difference' is a product of the social context in which one lives. Yet, to say that schooling policies should respect cultural differences does not imply that learners of 'different cultures' should be provided with different 'kinds of education'. Education must lead to a better understanding of a person's life and the world (including the cultural world) in which he / she lives.

Trying to use schools as instruments of social policy is a difficult step. There is usually overt resistance to change, or to abandon the 'tried and tested' practices in favour of what might be the 'latest fashion'. Another reason why schools cannot be viewed as instruments of social policy, is because society is not fixed and unchanging (Morrow, 1989). Society is dynamic, and continually being generated and modified by members of society. Schools will thus be one of the sites at which society will be constituted or transformed.

Against the background of our historical situation, our schooling system is in a far from healthy state. Vast inequalities exist with regard to school infrastructure, access, user fees, learning support material, curriculum choices, educator-learner-ratio, school funding and so on. Acknowledging the fact that the main cause of this has been political, one cannot just assume that the remedies, therefore, will only be of a political nature. Paquet (1990) warns as follows:

> If education can be used not as a political tool, but as tool to equalise ... intellectual growth and academic knowledge, the present seemingly hopeless scenario can - because of a mutual desire for peace and harmony - be turned to good. If, however, the classroom remains the battleground for political game and power, yet another generation will become ... academically handicapped and the full potential of a united South Africa will remain a utopian dream.

Key change agents in the success of any schooling system are the professional teachers who work in it. Their commitment, competence and quality are necessary ingredients of its success. It is important for educators to realise that they are part of a discourse and power structure, and that their actions and work have long-term social implications. They must become transformative intellectuals. The focus of schooling should shift from a focus upon teaching to a focus upon learning, with learning leading to self-empowerment. The bottom line, however, is that changing classroom practices only will not achieve equity. Educational reform needs also to address the more comprehensive socio-cultural, political and economic issues.

In essence, schools are functionally related to society – they are potentially powerful instruments to be used in achieving social ends.

2.3.3 Transformation

South Africa is undergoing rapid social, political, economic and educational change – in some cases more radical than in other. The education system is

inseparable from the total transformation of our country and its people. It is a means to an end, not an end in itself. Therefore genuine education has to be in line with generally accepted values and to economic, social and political needs of the people it serves. Mangena (2001) warns us against becoming trapped in a particular model of driving transformation or of falling into patterned responses towards it. Instead, we have to be creative, innovative, actively engaging in risk-taking and empowerment of others and ourselves.

What does transformation mean? The word 'transformation' is synonymous with change, alteration, revolution, innovation and conversion – synonyms that imply active processes of risk-taking and radical change. According to Enslin and Pendlebury (1998), transformation is an open-textured concept, and is understood differently by different people. They regard the following meanings as crucial in the transformation of education: The removal of inequalities in access and resources in education provision; democratisation of the education system and the improvement of the quality of education (Enslin & Pendlebury, 1998).

Although transformation in education takes time, there is no time to waste. Transformative education should involve:

- An education system which develops the potential of all learners, and which is relevant to the political, social and economic needs of the wider society;
- Development of educators as key to unlocking the current education crisis and to develop a culture of learning, teaching and service;
- Equal access for all to equal public education as the realisation of 'People's Education for People's Power';
- Equal access to resources (educators, support staff, infrastructure and learning materials and finances);
- Equal access for all children to quality Early Childhood Development provision;

- The need for inclusivity, equity and redress in relation to race, gender, class and disability;
- To prioritise the needs of Learners with Special Educational Needs;
- The promotion of a culture of human rights, security from violence and democracy;
- The promotion of indigenous knowledge, multi-culturalism and diversity, and multi-lingualism;
- To eradicate gender disparities in the profession, and to ensure that promotional posts are distributed equitable on the basis of race, gender and disability;
- To strive to improve the status of teachers and maintain high standards in the profession; to combat low teacher morale and to ensure that all educators are well trained and motivated (SADTU, 2001).

Transformation is an ongoing process; not a goal in itself. Transformation in education includes a new vision for the future regarding values, expectations, opportunities, strategies and outcomes. Transformation, in the South African context refers to:

- The removal of inequalities and the move towards equal education;
- The shift away from a monocultural educational system;
- The shift from content-based education to outcomes-based education;
- The democratisation of education; and
- The improvement of the quality of education (Steyn, 2000).

All stakeholders in education should participate as change agents and have to collaborate in order to cope with the changes that need to be brought about. One of the greatest challenges we are facing is to devise strategies, skills and techniques as we go along in order to reach our goals; the reason being that the context in which these goals were conceived and are to be achieved, differs immensely. We therefore must stay committed to the transformational goals of access, redress, equity and quality. The stigma of quality education being the

privilege of only a particular group, needs to be destroyed. Instead, the new, transformative approach to education must expand opportunity for all to quality education. Thus, in the process of searching for solutions, we must not become short-sighted in just focussing on motion, because this movement, without the necessary strategic direction, can be unsuccessful – in circles.

Transformation is explicitly linked to democracy and education should be transformed to reflect democratic values (South African Schools Act of 1996). I shall now address this claim in detail with an exposition of key concepts.

2.3.4 Democracy

A new era of democracy has arrived. The creation and consolidation of a democratic political framework is an essential condition for transformation to take place. Democracy, like other concepts, has many meanings, depending on the social location of the individual or group. Democracy is an indivisible concept – it cannot be fragmented or construed so as to have meaning only for a fraction of society. It has to be 'all-embracing' and profound in its content: 'majoritarian' in character in that it seeks to maximise the public good, yet it must be equally attentive to the needs of the minorities. Democracy, in order to be morally and philosophically sound, should inform all practices at all levels.

According to Waghid (2000 b: 3) there are two broad conceptions of democracy: democracy as a representative system of decision-making and democracy whereby people have equal opportunities to self-fulfilment and self-determination. Democracy, in the true sense of the word, implies that all groups in society should be empowered to participate in the transformation process. In so doing, people-orientated policies in education emerge, which implies continuing policy dialogues on matters concerning quality education in public schools. Democracy requires representation as well as participation. Maximising human participation opens up new possibilities; possibilities of understanding the actions of others. In this sense, democratic discourse "begins where certainty ends, that is,

democracy is reflexive; it liberates thought and practices to that which offers more choice, freedom and possibilities for emancipatory politics" (Waghid, 2000 b: 32).

South Africa is still a very young democracy – in the process of transformation. This country has, only a few years ago, set on a journey towards democracy for all its people with much still to learn, to do, to change, to experience, to accomplish. Transformation had to be implemented amidst high levels of poverty, significant lack of human infrastructural and monetary resources and the social, ethical, racial and psychological damage of apartheid. What we need is not formal democracy, but *deep* democracy (Green, 1999), this means the respect for human rights and values, with freedom, equality, responsible participation, critical inquiry, individuality, morality, openness and cooperation as some of the cornerstones of democracy.

Democracy as a political system needs to become a way of life – the ideal is a harmonious state between national loyalty and human citizenship. We need "to live education for democracy from 'inside' "(Waghid, 2000 a: 31). Democracy, as a fragile system, can only survive where democratic values are deeply entrenched (O'Connell, 1999).

Bearing in mind the enormous demands and challenges posed by our new education dispensation, I regard Rorty's pragmatist philosophy as an important condition for the development of education for democracy. All stakeholders hereby need to be very imaginative, creative and innovative in approaching old problems or unexpected situations. This critical inquiry includes risk-taking, because "an education for democracy should prepare people to go beyond the present and be able to respond to a future which cannot be imagined" (Rorty in Waghid, 2000 a: 34). Now that I have explored the use of democracy in the literature and debates, I need to show how democracy and education for democracy in particular can be used to ensure equity, equality and quality.

2.4 EQUITY, EQUALITY AND QUALITY AS TRANSFORMATIVE GOODS

Democracy implies that we have to strive towards building a national culture, to the ideal of a nation free of all inequities and discrimination. This means developing a core of common cultural practices, beliefs and customs – a core that is derived from different social, religious, cultural and other groups. But why should democracy enact equity in education?

2.4.1 Equity

The principle of equity has been central to education transformation. By 'equity' I mean equal access for all citizens to quality public education. Not only must the access to education be equal, but also the education offered must be of equal quality.

Educational equity is an evolutionary concept. Over the years, legislation, court decisions, research and practice have expanded its meaning, and the concept has grown from its original goal of ensuring equal access to courses, facilities, and programmes regardless of race, sex or national origin to include equitable treatment of and proportionate outcomes for all students. Educational equity also encompasses specific remedies that students with diverse educational needs (for example students with limited English proficiency) can use to access school curricula (Harris, 2000: 20).

Equity has to do with fairness and justice. This can be problematic: where there has been a history of discrimination, justice may require providing special encouragement and support for those who were disadvantaged in the past. The point is to help the disadvantaged groups to join in – not to keep them out. To achieve equity or justice may therefore, at least temporarily, require transforming require structured inequalities. Achieving equal access is a first step towards achieving equity and hence, democracy.

In the South African context we made important gains in education since 1994. Firstly we implemented Curriculum 2005, guided by the principles of Outcomes-based Education, to make education relevant to the needs of the learner, our democratic society and the labour market. Our second milestone is the fact that we now have one national non-racial education system, which replaces the previously fractured and racially divided education system. Still we need to ask whether the inequalities of the past have been redressed. To what extend are we closer to the goal of equity in education? If not close, what are the main obstacles? In order to answer these questions, I need to say something about equality.

2.4.2 Equality

Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms by people, regardless of race, gender, sex, disability, culture and so on (South African Constitution, 1996). It is more a state of mind. The equality clause in the Bill of Rights is based on 'substantive' equality. This means that it examines the differences between different people or groups of people. Where these differences create inequalities/disparities between people, then these differences will have to be addressed.

Equality has to do with sameness, or in public policy, with non-discrimination. For example, equality in the classroom has to do with making sure that some learners do not receive more or better textbooks, or are preferentially promoted because of their race, gender and class. Equality does not imply similarity; nor does it guarantee equal outcomes, because of the uniqueness of people as human beings. People differ not only culturally and historically, but also as far as talents and interests are concerned. The concept of equality is one of the most vague concepts in social philosophy and philosophical discussions of equality are notorious for their ambiguity. The reason for the ambiguity of the concept of equality is, among other things, the lack of a shared understanding amongst those involved in the debate.

Equality of opportunity can be regarded as one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. It encompasses aspects such as:

- Equal access to educational institutions with non-discriminatory entrance requirement;
- Equal per capita expenditure on education;
- Equal access to knowledge;
- Equal career opportunities;
- Equal access to quality education;
- Success in the world of work;
- Economic privilege and progress; and
- Advance in the social hierarchy (De Klerk, 2000: 41).

Where there is equality of opportunity, it gives an account of effective movement in the right direction. Therefore, equality must include equitable expenditure per learner and equal share of educational resources by all learners irrespective of irrelevant criteria such as race, social background, religion, sex, inherited wealth, and so on. Equality in the provision of resources is a *sine quo non* as far as the removal of the most visible effects of the apartheid policies is concerned (Steyn, 1999: 66). An equitable distribution of resources – material, human and financial – is crucial to achieve the removal of disparities. Yet, Coleman (1968) argued that schools are too weak an agency to put right the ills of society and that complete equality of opportunity can only be reached if all the divergent out-of-school influences vanish. His argument is that schools cannot compensate for inequalities in society, because inequalities are multi-causal and multi-facetted. However, equality of opportunity requires the removal of hindrances to the development of individual talent, which has to be effected through the educational system.

2.4.3 Quality

The debate surrounding quality education and equality in education is a major concern in South Africa, especially in the context of educational transformation to a democratic life style. The whole issue is complex and may even be characterised as a dilemma (Steyn, 2000). Democracy and transformation provide a backdrop to our reflection on quality and equality (Steyn, 2000). In the South African context, the great inequalities and disparities are damaging to democracy and to quality education. The dilemma is to bridge the gap between quality and equality in a meaningful way as part of our educational transformation to build a culture of democracy.

Both quality and equality can be viewed as two important core values in education in a democratic society (De Klerk, 2000: 39), and ought to be equally emphasised in this period of transformation in South Africa. However, at this stage in our education, it is a matter of equality before quality. The challenge is to find a balance between these two simultaneous processes in order to bring about transformation in education.

Quality education should bring about positive changes; outcomes that fit with the goals valued by those participating in the educational process (Van Zyl, 1992). To my mind quality education is about empowering learners through good education, by giving them the opportunities to develop their potential as best as possible. They need to be enabled to think critically and rationally. Quality education also puts strong emphasis on moral values such as self-control, excellence, diligence and discipline. If only quality could become more of a reality in our schools in general, we would be moving in the right direction of becoming a stable democracy. According to Hartshorne (1992), quality education depends on internationally accepted factors such as available resources, the quality of teachers, the relevance of learning material and a sound-learning environment. Other indicators include training, strategies to

involve role players, a commitment of all members of the school organisation and quality management. External factors such as financial means and school environment also have an impact on quality education.

Schools must see the production of quality education as a challenge; also as a continuous process. As we commit ourselves to education transformation, we as educators need to become more resourceful and innovative in ensuring quality education. The improvement in quality of education must form an integral part of education transformation.

Education will always be a political issue, with education policies being framed in the hegemonic but unproblematised vocabulary of race. There is consequently the danger that while the new government may meet the technical criteria for the achievement of equality in terms of race, it may overlook embedded inequalities, which flow from class, gender, culture, religious and language disparities. Given the diversity and commonality of social experience, the challenge is to reconcile the interests of equality ('sameness' of treatment and opportunity) and equity (defined as justice) (Steyn, 1999). Now that I have explored transformative goods of education for democracy, I need to extend my earlier claim as to why transformation is central to enact change in schools.

2.5 TRANSFORMATION AS HUMAN ENGAGEMENT

Our understanding of educational transformation is shaped by constitutive meanings that include the democratisation of the education system. This includes decentralisation (devolving power to make decisions at implementation level) – the empowerment of people to bring about change at institutional level. Not only does decentralisation offers educational leaders the challenge to extend democracy at institutional level, but also to remove inequalities in access and resources, and improve the quality of education.

A fundamental principal of democracy is that anyone who will be affected by a policy or decision, has the right to participate in its making, unless there is a good reason to show that this is inappropriate. Once it is accepted that education aims to generate 'democratic agents', then it is clear to understand that education can never be undemocratic … if it *is* education.

Moreover, education can only be transformed through human engagement. This process explicitly rejects the separation of growth and development – utilising the energies and enhancing the knowledge of the mass of the population. The argument is that this approach to development will be both more effective and more equitable than when distribution is conceived as a passive form of 'trickle down' benefit.

Yet at present, policy formulation seems to be in the hands of 'experts', politicians not accountable to those affected by their decisions and bureaucracies of schooling. Because education involves large-scale organisation, it is inevitably bureaucratised. Yet People's Education is not opposed to organisation or to bureaucracy as such, especially if *that* form of bureaucracy does not subvert democracy. It is rather shaped and controlled by community organisations. Change needs to be managed in a systematic, inclusive and fully participatory manner. The job description of individuals needs to be aligned with the capacity to deliver. It must also include the re-aligning of the capacity of people with future needs of the educational practice.

Educative relationships are participatory relationships, that is, they are relationships between persons, but not necessarily between equals. While relationships between equals might provide the model for participatory relationships, not all participatory relationships are relationships between equals. Schools need to create a 'culture of democracy' at two levels – the classroom and the school itself. Instead of the traditional, formal didactic classroom practices, learners should be guided to become more aware, critical,

independently minded, participative and capable of social and political action (Morrow, 1996). Anything that deprives the learners of their participatory initiatives deprives them of the possibility of education. This implies that there can be no proper education in the absence of democracy, and there can be no distinction between education for, and participation in, a democratic society. In educating learners for democratic participation, educators should treat them as *persons* – through listening, hearing and respecting what they are saying, with no intention to control or manipulate them. Teachers that deprive their learners of their critical judgement, deprive them of becoming more educated. It is in this context that one can argue that education for, and participation in, democracy are different processes, but they are not logically independent. Acknowledging the fact that education, by its very nature, is a mass activity, we need to mobilise the mass of our people to lead the transformation process in education. There is no single group with regard to race, gender or class that can bring about transformation.

2.6   SUMMARY

Educational transformation is constituted by meanings such as to ensure that equality in access and resources are ensured, education is democratised, role players at institutional level are empowered and the quality of education in schools is improved. The emancipation of different role players in their particular social and historical contexts should also involve improving their practices (contexts) and ensuring their freedom, social upliftment and economic empowerment. The democratic discourse may serve as watchward for transformation, but its deployment in schools might not necessarily result in quality educational practice (Enslin & Pendlebury, 1998).

The question I would therefore wish to answer, is to what an extend the new education paradigm succeeded in ensuring a democratic, equal, transparent and accountable system which provides equity and redress for disadvantaged high school communities. To answer this question, I shall, in the following chapter,

engage in an analysis of certain aspects of the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the interpretation of educator voices with regard to the implementation of this transformative education policy in their different school contexts.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION POLICY DISCOURSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 PROCESS AND POLICY FORMULATION

It is expected of education and training to constitute the decisive forces in bringing about a transformed society. We (educators) therefore need ensure that existing policies and programmes are carried out with the necessary urgency and commitment in order to guarantee success for all. Rigorous measures need to be taken to mobilise the people, especially the educators, parents and broader society in order to meet the challenge of nation building.

What I describe as 'policy' regarding South Africa appears to be fields of governmental activity and involvement. But this is only a starting point, for 'policy' covers past, current and potential activities. We all tend to view policies and policy-making through our own 'conceptual lens'. However, my intention is to compare and contrast policy initiatives regarding education transformation with the manifestation thereof in practice (voices of role players in education), but not without any understanding or sympathy for the essentially political nature of the policy process.

To start off: In 1994 the ANC-led government drew up a policy document entitled: *ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training* – later known as the '*Yellow Book*'. The educational goals and commitments, include the following:

- To build a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist country – an education system that is relevant, just, accessible to all, addresses equity and ensures quality education for all;
- To reconstruct the education bureaucracy, governance and management and to create a single national non-racial system;
- To promote participation of all stakeholders, especially teachers, in transforming the curriculum;

- To establish a national system of Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), along with an increased demand for new teachers to facilitate this programme;

- To address the Apartheid backlog regarding schools infrastructure and resources, in order to build "… a just and equitable system which provides good quality education and training to learners, young and old, throughout the country …" (Department of Education, 1995). In terms of the new democratic Constitution, all law and conduct in education must be in line with the supreme Constitution of South Africa. All role players in the democratic education system have to work within the parameters of the law and of policies. Appropriate education and training can empower people to participate effectively in all the processes of a democratic society, economic activity, cultural expression and community life, and can help citizens build a nation free of race, gender and every form of discrimination (Department of Education, 1995). In the process of designing new policies for South African schools, we have the dilemma of reconciling aspirations with reality. Aspirations relate to the hopes and expectations generated by past inequities, whereas reality relates to the availability of resources – human, financial and material.

Experts designed the current curriculum policy, with educators only involved in the last phases of the process, that of implementation. The biggest challenge is the way in which policies are interpreted and put into practice at the implementation level, mainly because of the exclusion of educators during policy formulation regarding educational transformation. It is indeed very unfortunate that educators have, up till now, not been able to actively engage in the process of transformation. This situation needs to be reversed, for teacher participation in the adoption and implementation of, for example Curriculum 2005, is critical for the success thereof. Educators should become the vanguard of the envisaged democratic, systemic and holistic approach to the task of education transformation. Educators have also been excluded from participation and

consultation during the process of Curriculum Review under the guidance of Prof. Linda Chisholm during the year 2000. In the same way the conference on Values and Democracy in Education by the Department of Education was held and attended only by bureaucrats and academic experts. These 'experts' are worlds apart from the classroom reality, yet they set the rules as to *what* and *how* in the teaching profession.

Because educators have been excluded from participation in the process of curriculum change, they are interpreting education policies according to the reality they face on the ground. One can take Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-based Education as an example of how the implementation level impacts on the practice of policy. Although the principles and philosophy underlying Curriculum 2005 have been widely discussed by academic experts and policy makers, and 'adopted' by educators, there have been varying responses to it in practice. For example: In many a school the key concept of 'continuous assessment' is interpreted as collective formal tests and examinations. Secondly, the new learner-centred approach to delivery includes a move towards group-work and an independent, critical approach towards learning. Asking educators about this teaching method, most admit that the 'chalk-and-talk' method is still dominating in their class practices, because of certain restraints at school: lack of accommodation; high educator: learner ratios; lack of information centres (library, computer lab, science laboratory); disciplinary problems, etcetera. When they are merely facilitating at times, chaos erupts because most learners perceive the situation as having absolute freedom. It is therefore very important to find a balance between freedom and authority. If the teacher provides too much guidance and is too authoritarian, the learner is liable to find himself (herself) on a path with the sun in his eyes, blinding him (her) and preventing him (her) from picking out the route for himself (herself). On the other hand, if the teacher gives no guidance, the child finds himself (herself) on the same path, this time in total darkness, without even the minimal light necessary to see his way. In this case the learner's 'freedom' becomes more of an obstacle than an advantage.

Some other major obstacles that cause tensions between policy formulation and the reality of the classroom, are a lack of resources (human, material and financial), authoritarian management styles by principals, high learner-teacher ratios, under-qualified teachers – to name a few (Jansen, 1998). Despite these realities, the classroom situation within Outcomes-based Education is expected to involve active learners, critical thinking, reflection in action, interactive learning and learning that is relevant and connected to real-life situations (Department of Education 1997: 7). This seems to be a most challenging task, bearing in mind that education policy seems, in many instances, to be out of touch with the reality that previously disadvantaged schools are experiencing on a daily basis. I shall now engage in an interpretive and critical analysis of the South African Schools Act of 1996, in order to highlight some gaps between policy and practice.

3.2 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS ACT – 1996: GAPS BETWEEN POLICY AND PRACTICE

Policy instruments such as the South African Schools Act, Curriculum 2005 and the Norms and Standards for Teacher Education of 2000 confirm the removal of inequalities of access to a better education for all. However, policy will have to take account of both the contexts and the transformative role educational leaders will have to play in the future education system. The South African Schools Act, 1996 came into effect on 1 January 1997. The principal objective of the Act is to provide for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools. Equality in the provision of all educational resources within the public schools on institutional level can only be achieved by means of rather rigid national norms and standards for the funding of public and independent schools to be determined by the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Steyn, 1999). The Act provides that:

> The State must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to

education and the redress of past inequalities in educational provision (Section 34 (i)).

The reduction in government funds for public high schools causes an increasing reliance on private effort and voluntary contributions to make effective education in public high schools possible. Yet there are differences in the capacity of communities to contribute or raise money in this manner. The realities are complex. Government should develop more needs-based funding formulae for the decentralisation of budgets.

When it comes to the allocation of funding to public high schools, government should seriously take past inequalities into account. In terms of resources, white public high schools seem to remain quite a few steps ahead. For instance, high school fees at predominantly white public schools can offer better prepared and better paid teachers, lower learner-educator ratios, well-equipped libraries, laboratories and computer centres – and eventually quality education. The differentiator is money rather than race, which, to a large extend, provides some 'protection' for white parents and educators who want to preserve their 'elitism'. Dewey, as early as 1916 said:

> What the best and wisest (or richest) parent want for his (her) own child, *that* must the community want for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; acted upon, it destroys our democracy.

This implies the provision of and access to schooling that meets the needs of all learners, regardless of socio-economic, religious, gender or other circumstances. Many white parents – in general having more education and money – intervene more on their children's behalf (Lareau, 1989). Lareau posits that they sometimes even tend to sway educators to favour their children through convincing arguments of deservedness. Or they threaten legal action or negative publicity.

This does not necessarily mean that lower socio-economic status parents of learners attending white schools are less involved in their children's education. Rather, these parents act out their involvement in ways that fit their skills and knowledge (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). I agree that educators can hardly be expected to remedy the educational and economic disparities of the families they serve. They should however, be aware of how they respond to parents and learners from different backgrounds, and this includes all educators in all school contexts.

It is very unfortunate that educators at previously disadvantaged schools are getting the short end of the stick, for they cannot count on their parents to supplement the financial shortfall with high school fees. On the other hand, the policy of 'voluntary fee paying', which was intended to assist the government with parents financially contributing to their children's education, allowed certain schools to defend their privileged positions by placing the barrier of income and social class in the way of poor parents. Opposite to the struggle for democracy in education, this 'system' causes even further division between rich and poor. This dilemma leads me to the discussion of the functioning role of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) in particular what they are doing to remedy the current situation in schools.

According to the South African Schools Act - Section 23(1, 2), the governance of every public school is vested in its governing body (Section 16(1)). It can be interpreted as a mandate for increasing the accountability of School Governing Bodies. These school organisations now have the power to make school policies related to issues such as admission, religion, school fees and language of instruction.

During my interview with an official from the Educational Management and Development Centre (George / Karoo Region), it came across that at most white public high schools in this region, the dominant white group still enjoys a 'cultural

advantage'. Not only are the educators and School Governing Body members, without any exception, representative of the dominant group, but also the whole school ethos is based on the values and ideas of this particular group. It emphasises majority group rights over the rights of, for example, the black individual learner when it comes to language of instruction, subject choice and extra-mural activities. I am also, through first-hand experience and observation, of the opinion that the dominant group uses culture to legitimate hegemony over or control of minority groups. Representing itself as the culture, this group tries to define and contain all other cultures in a very subtle way.

Despite many appeals in the media from the Minister of Education, Prof Kader Asmal, to make parents in School Governing Bodies representative of the learners at a particular school, my interviews in this regard brought to light that none of the individual parents of learners from other cultural communities who are attending ex Model C schools, are participating in the governance of these schools. Knowing that change is inevitable, interviewees are faced with the challenge of integration as far as their School Governing Bodies as well as their educator-representation is concerned. Whatever explanations principals are giving for the status quo, I think that they, in a very obscure manner, are 'steering' the direction in which the school must move. The 'elite' parents, most of whom have experience in governance, dominate the scene, resulting in a schooling system that reflect and practice the values and ideas of this group.

This leads me to give an input on the functioning of School Governing Bodies at disadvantaged schools. The overall impression I got through engaging with interviewees, is that School Governing Bodies are not functioning in a manner that improves the quality of teaching and learning; some can even be described as non-existent. To function effectively, each member has to fully participate in the governance processes. They need to understand the issues affecting their function; they must be trained; they need to be readily available; they have to attend School Governing Body meetings regularly. And this is, according to some

principals in my case study, where the problem in many black and coloured schools lies – School Governing Body members being incompetent, let alone accountable. Many members lack the skills, capacity and political will to govern the school, even transforming the education system in schools. It has been conveyed that there is, from time to time, widespread in-fighting in these structures, often motivated by personal rivalries. Some individuals even sometimes use their positions to promote nepotism, or their decisions are often motivated by hidden agendas. When asked how they handle these problematic situations, principals seem to have no clear plan of action, the reason being that these discriminatory reasons are difficult to prove, because they are often 'unspoken' – not stated openly. But merely because they are unspoken, does not remove the overwhelming conviction in their (principals') minds that the 'real reasons' for the decision are motivated by prejudice.

This brings me to another point of discussion. Educational reforms have empowered School Governing Bodies, though some principals (especially at historically disadvantaged public high schools) are complaining that many governing body members find it difficult to give an account, both individually and as a team. On the other hand, the complaint from one governing body chairperson in my case study is that they are sometimes very frustrated because their functions (through subtle manipulation by principals) include only the discussing of issues / ideas that have been put forward by the principal, and reaching consensus accordingly. However, the other extreme that I have observed is where School Governing Bodies tend to overplay their role by interfering in the day-to-day running of the school, which is the main responsibility of the principal and senior management team.

The bottom line is that there is a need for training members of School Governing Bodies, especially with regard to financial management, as many of them are either illiterate or unfamiliar with legal terminology. Ironically, principals tend to agree that the least knowledgeable members are usually the most troublesome –

they are the instigators of in-fighting, friction and frustration in the organisation. Under these circumstances they cannot be expected to govern schools effectively.

Section 24 of the South African Schools Act, 1996 specifies the categories of members of a governing body. A governing body may be composed of *ex-officio* members (such as the principal) and co-opted members. It would be incorrect for co-opted members to become the chairperson of the governing body. This would undermine democracy. Secondly it would be incorrect for *ex-officio* members, like the principal, to be the chairperson or even the treasurer of the School Governing Body. But then again – some principals of disadvantaged schools are of the opinion that difficult circumstances sometimes force them to occupy these positions, because of a lack of knowledge or competence amongst members. However, this is not a long-term solution. We need to educate our parents, because I suggest that the chairperson should at least be an elected member of the School Governing Body. If not, we are once again putting too much power in the hands of principals, and '... absolute power corrupts absolutely'.

In terms of Section 16(3) of the South African Schools Act, principals have formal legal authority with regard to school management. The implication hereof is that decision-making practices still adhere to formal lines of authority, with the principal retaining authority over management and decision-making. This is totally in contrast with transformational leadership. School-based management (SBM) is based on the decentralisation of decision-making from the provincial level down to the lowest level in the school (including educators and learners). It is therefore an attempt to transform schools into communities where appropriate people participate constructively in major decisions that affect them (David, 1995: 4). For this ideal to manifest itself in school practices, we need visionary school leaders.

In an era of democratic accountability in schooling, school leaders are judged to be the providers of strategic vision and articulators of fundamental principles. But within the conceptualisation of school-based management, autonomy is presented not so much as a basic right of teachers, but rather as a privilege granted by principals on certain terms and conditions. Principals are often guilty of hanging on to their power. Amongst other, they are committing the following undemocratic 'offences':

- Creating the impression of consultation while retaining power;
- Restricting debate on key or contentious issues;
- Setting up restricted channels of participation;
- Depriving staff of information; and
- Discouraging staff from criticising and challenging decisions (Beckman & Blom, 2000).

At the end of the day it is the learner – the most important person in the education debate, who is suffering.

The South African Schools Act recognises learners as an important group of stakeholders who need to be included in the decision-making processes in public high schools. It should be noted, however, that despite the inclusion of learners in the School Governing Bodies of public high schools, all of them under the age of 21 are restricted from participating in the financial management, because of their legal status as minors (RSA, 1996: 12).

- The Act lacks in logic, because it includes learners in structures they will never be allowed to fully participate in;
- There was a lack of consultation when the Act was formulated, as learners were neither informed thereof nor consulted for their personal views. Without any right to vote when financial decisions are being made within governing bodies, learners are rendered powerless members. Their dissatisfaction with the status quo may hamper the functioning of governing bodies;

- Learners constitute the main source of income at school (although their parents are paying their school fees), yet they (learners) are denied the right of any say with regard to the application thereof. During general elections they are allowed to vote at the age of 18 – why are they excluded when it comes to voting on school governing bodies? But this is only one example of an undemocratic practice, namely that children (learners) should be seen, not heard.

Another aspect of discriminatory practices in public high schools is the issue of the language of instruction. In many instances, the choice of language of instruction in public high schools is a political choice – it is all about power. In some white schools, for example, it serves as a means of separating the elites from the masses. It may be argued that the pursuit of quality education "… has become a catch cry limiting the influence of black students on the existing practises of historically privileged schools" (Christie, 1993: 11) and hence it is a "…process that has been used to slam doors in their faces" (Hartshorne, 1992: 7). This makes quality education the privilege of only the historically privileged.

However, there is another phenomenon to consider: at traditionally black high schools the language of instruction is normally English, which is not the learners' first language. Such an approach makes a heavy demand on the language ability of the learners. Their major learning problem is linguistically related which means that policy-makers need to devote themselves to African languages as languages of instruction. If not, 'education for all' becomes an empty concept, because it overlooks the linguistic environment of the black learner. To eradicate this problem may be a lengthy and costly process, but in the long run it will pay off in the sense that it widely opened the doors to knowledge for millions of black learners. It would also have narrowed one of the many gaps between policy and practice.

The educational legislation that the South African democratic government has passed since 1994 covered a wide spectrum of major aspects in education. In retrospect, there has in many cases been a huge gap between policy formulation and the implementation thereof. According to the Research Triangle Institute (RTI, 2001), the possible reasons for the gap between policy formulation and implementation are:

- Policy overload, with insufficient prioritisation;

- No clear, unified vision of where the country as a whole is going;

- Contradictions: some policies are inconsistent with each other, or seem to be impossible to implement due to serious constraints. This includes insufficient systemic analysis of how policies fit with each other and with the limits to policy implementation;

- Lack of consensus reached at every management level and with all stakeholders (for example parents, unions and school managers) (RTI, 2001).

I shall now highlight more possible reasons for the gap between policy and practice:

- A clash between some government policies and the intuitive beliefs of the people on the ground level. For example, the policy that learners cannot be expelled from attending school if they cannot afford to pay the school fees, versus certain school communities' beliefs that those learners should not be allowed to attend school. However, we have to accept the fact that all citizens of South Africa, irrespective of personal and / or organisational values, are bound by our Constitution. Without community support we would negatively impact on the overall transformation of education;

- We are trapped in a patterned response of transformative activities, which includes, envisioning, observing, diagnosing and planning. There is a general lack of innovation, creativity, calculated risk-taking and true empowerment of people;

- Many people see transformation policy as rigid and bureaucratic, for example the implementation of Curriculum 2005. For the education system to serve all equitably, it has to be the property of everyone involved;

- Bureaucrats on discussion and debate of policies spend too much valuable time; and

- Implementation of policies will always be a problem in the absence of consultation and consensus with all stakeholders – from provincial level through to institutional level (where implementation is designed to happen). Very little account was taken of the expectations and needs of role-players such as teachers, learners and parents at institutional level with regard to the educational system.

As far as school governance is concerned, the South African Schools Act includes the aspirations as stated in the 'Yellow Book' (ANC, 1994) in recognising the rights of learners, parents and teachers. This document is also laying the basis for real community based partnerships to drive education transformation. I, however, contend that effective policy making should anticipate implementation problems. In so doing, they (policymakers) can strategise accordingly and influence or constrain the agents at implementation level. Thus far, the process of educational transformation has not been effective in redressing the legacy of inequalities in education.

3.3   REDRESSING PAST INEQUALITIES

In the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) as well as in the South African Schools Act, 1996, the government committed itself to the elimination of inequities in education. However, policy intentions seldom define classroom practice. Fullan (1991: 117) also reminds us that change does not involve putting the latest policy into practice, but depends on what principals and educators *do* and *think* about the change process, which involves the following:

- To ensure equity in their schools, principals must be sensitive to the variety of ethnic groups within their school communities. The potential of the minority ethnic group(s) must be recognised. Principals must understand who these learners are and where they come from. They must lead the way to higher expectations, equal access and adequate support for teachers and learners. It would be difficult to celebrate a monoculture without appreciating the richness of the diverse cultural heritage and cultural roots. The more we know and learn about diverse cultures, the more we can appreciate it and the more we can be enriched and be equipped to deal with cultural diversities in the outside world. At the same time sufficient prominence should be given to communalities amongst diverse cultural groups – or learners for that matter. Once the school climate is established, all learners can benefit from a rigorous academic curriculum. First, students, teachers, parents and the community must understand the rationale for such a curriculum. These stakeholders must be encouraged to buy into the programme by involving them in planning from the beginning.

- Principals at white schools can forge partnerships with other schools, using skilled teachers within the school to conduct professional development activities, and in so doing they are empowering others. With an educational philosophy of providing support wherever and whenever it is needed, these schools can play a significant transformative role.

- Learners need to be better prepared for the world of work, and some of the key ingredients in the process is the acquisition of good language, mathematics and science capabilities. In black schools this is a general curriculum concern. The more immediate challenge is vastly improved mathematical and scientific instruction at the majority of these schools. Inequalities in qualifications create serious problems that unfortunately stand in the way of quality education. Bearing in mind that privileged schools are favoured with a wide variety of subject offerings, equity

indicators need to be developed in this regard. Key subjects need to be introduced in disadvantaged schools, bearing in mind its relevance to the learner, the society and the labour market.

- In 1995 the Minister of Education started a process to ensure equitable learner-educator ratios (40:1 at primary schools level and 35:1 at high school level). Provincial allocations for education for the financial years 1995/6 and 1996/7 facilitated the attainment of this equity goal. The controversial rationalisation process, whereby educators were offered Voluntary Severance Packages (VSPs), was also introduced in 1996 to support the phasing in of the ratios mentioned earlier. It, however, closed posts that were much needed and it also resulted in a "brain drain". Drastically reducing the number of teachers in government schools through VSPs, is seen by some as evidence of an attack on public schools. The high educator-learner-ratios in predominantly black schools are definitely of the bigger concerns, because such ratios negatively affect the quality of education.

- Large classes are the rule rather than the exception in disadvantaged schools, usually because of a lack of staff, finance, capacity and classrooms. Another element in the market critique is the reliance on private effort and so-called voluntary contributions to sustain the program in government schools. Despite such challenges, teachers need to be armed with strategies for teaching large classes and working in groups. Strategies also need to be put in place in order to provide all learners with much needed learner support materials. It goes without saying that, unless there is buy-in from those involved in the implementation process, the system will be hamstrung. Strategic and management planning that involves all role players, has become a necessity.

- A serious gender issue that needs to be addressed is the fact that women dominate the educational sector in terms of numbers, whilst men, in terms of decision-making and management, are dominating

the same arena. This gender inequity needs to be seriously addressed. In this regard more definite Departmental steps should be taken to ensure that promotional posts are being distributed on an equitable gender basis. We also need to address the 'hidden curriculum' (the things we mainly 'teach' by the example we 'unintentionally' set), so as to ensure a balance with regard to the treatment and the roles of boys and girls or men and women at institutional level. These differences, however, are not deliberate attempts by teachers to be inequitable; in most cases teachers do not even realise they are treating boys and girls differentially. The tendency is to believe that boys' behaviour needs more monitoring than that of girls. Teachers have to make conscious decisions about interacting on a more equitable basis with both male and female learners. A very important step in the right direction would also be to entrench strong gender awareness in the new curriculum, because it definitely does not emphasise gender issues effectively, which can be achieved taken the following points into account:

- Democratic approaches to school management should involve an increase in teacher participation in decision-making processes. Unfortunately this is not the case in most school practices. On the one hand teachers are 'allowed' to participate in certain decision-making processes, but without "the granting and gaining of the legitimate authority to do so" (Aspin, 1995: 31). They are not equal partners. This reminds me of Plato's (1942) viewpoint, that only some people, whom he refers to as the guardians in a society, have the capacity to lay down the broad policies; the remainder just have to implement their decisions. On the other hand, principals from all different public schools experience that teachers sometimes tend to assume a greater role in decision-making processes and management, without accepting equal responsibility for the outcomes thereof. Greater authority and responsibility demand greater accountability.

- The contention is that Outcomes-based Education and C2005 offer a framework within which to develop the potential of the individual learner in terms of lifelong learning and are more relevant to the needs of the South African democratic society. However beneficial this new approach to teaching may be, it can have disastrous results if the educator is insufficiently educated and the resources are lacking. The tension between the need for a freer type of teaching and the constraints of the classroom situation due to lack of resources, need to be urgently addressed. In the meantime these educators need to adopt an imaginative and challenging type of classroom climate that can produce effective learning under the circumstances.

- The Review Committee (2000) under Professor Chisholm has recommended streamlining the process of curriculum transformation in order to make the implementation process less complicated. Poor training and uneven levels of resources were serious hindrances to implementation. If the Implementation Working Group (2001) has its way there will be a significant improvement in the manner in which the streamlined curriculum will be approached. Great emphasis has been placed on adequate teacher development. According to the draft document, no less than twenty days of in-depth training should be completed by teachers already in service. It is anticipated that training will kick off with the orientation process in April 2002 and will culminate in in-depth training in May and June 2002. Furthermore it is recommended that Learning Area working groups and specialists collaborate to prepare educator support materials. These materials should cover, amongst other important elements, the skills development, planning and timetabling, and managing of diversity in the classroom.

- There is no doubt that Information, Communication and Technology is an effective tool in education for both teachers and learners. So far,

access to this has been the preserve of a few, therefore equitable access to and use of technology in the school setting is an issue that needs thorough research. While the white schools in my case study are fully equipped with computer labs (including Internet), one of their coloured counterparts, (with an enrolment of ± 1450 learners), only have access to 12 computers. How long before these fast inequalities are to be redressed? As a short-term intervention the Implementation Working Group (Review Committee) recommends that each district should have at least one common station where teachers can have access to the Internet and e-mail facilities.

- Lack of resources, however, are not the only reason for schools being ineffective. No doubt there are things in many schools that should be changed to improve performance and achievement for educators and learners. Some schools appear to have no clear vision – and are either stagnating or going backwards. Entrusted with the mission of leading their schools through a time of unprecedented change, school leaders must start by celebrating the positives/strengths. In so doing, they can narrow the field of what truly needs to be changed. They have to define their challenges and set realistic goals, despite the obstacles hampering the teaching and learning process. Although limited to the resources of time, staffing and funding, the transformation process cannot be derailed. School leaders need to create a passion in all their stakeholders for change that allows for risk-taking and further exploration. An atmosphere that encourage and supports personal learning, should also be created, in order to stimulate and enhance capacity building and a culture of teaching and learning.

- There is a constant reference to 'standards'. I am sure that all parents and communities want excellence with regard to educational standards. But whose standards are they? Definitely the standards laid down by educational 'experts'; standards of maximum academic achievement that historically white schools can easily live up to.

Translating those standards into effective practice, is not that simple for their black counterpart who has insufficient access to resources (human, financial and information) and professional development in order to reach those standards. Standards should be logically developed targets to reach toward, not rigid hurdles that penalise schools and communities. Since standards imply time lines, so we expect that every learner meets these at exactly the same time in exactly the same manner from community to community across the nation.

- My problem with 'standardization' is the fact that it does not take the diversity of our learners (for example culture, class, language, gender etcetera) into account. As an example of 'standards': Matric exams create undue pressure on learners, teachers and schools. The image of the school is at stake (despite so many obstacles and inequalities that some schools are experiencing). All that matters, to the education authorities, are good test results at any cost – even if it delivers learners with filled heads and empty hearts, knowing but uncaring. Learners (notwithstanding the phasing in of Outcomes-based Education) are tested to the point of absurdity in the name of 'accountability', which turns out to be a code word for more control over what happens in classrooms by people who are not in classrooms (Kohn, 2000). Kohn also comments that every hour spent drilling students to excell in exams is an hour not spent helping them becomes creative, critical and curious learners.

Worthwhile practices to follow in order to give strategic direction to disadvantaged schools, include:
- Constancy of purpose – a school wide purpose / shared vision that is aligned to the established purpose of the community;
- The most important step in the change process is for the principal to create a passion in all stakeholders for change that allows for risk-taking

and exploration. But before this can be done and there needs to be an atmosphere that encourages and supports personal growth and professional development;

- Teacher 'study' groups – to focus on education issues directly related to learner needs. Guidance and support from principals, outside facilitators, Education Management and Development Centre – officials and teachers from other schools;

- In-service workshops – focussed on the school's vision. Principal participation is vital, because it provides the staff members with the instructional knowledge base needed for leadership;

- Follow up: Support by principals to professional development activities through mentoring, discussion groups and additional training, in order to ensure long-term impact; and

- Job-embedded professional development in order to function as a team (Marshall *et al*, 2001: 64).

As far as their learners are concerned, all schools should:

- Give their learners access to, and the opportunity to acquire, practise and apply those knowledge, competences, skills and attitudes that will prepare them for life in today's complex society;

- Promote high standards of individual and institutional aspiration, achievement and conduct in all aspects of its activities;

- Be democratic, equitable and just;

- Develop in learners a sense of independence and self-worth; and

- Prepare learners to have a concern for the cultural diversity as a form of social, moral and economic enrichment.

The ideology of equal educational opportunities has been a persistent theme in the process of education transformation in South Africa since 1994, yet it has not manifested in the majority of school practices. Despite policy having been put in place, black education is still inferior in quality and quantity to that of other

groups. The struggle for educational transformation is integrally linked to that of the working class, of which the majority of the learners and teachers in our schools form a part. Therefore the educational needs of the working class need to be prioritised. It is only when the needs of the social group have been met, that we can make progress towards quality public education for all learners.

3.4 STRUGGLE FOR QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION

The concept 'quality' helps to structure and define the direction and aims of educational policy and practice. I have discerned a number of core values that might be said to be typical of quality schools. Such schools should be inspired by a shared vision; a collaborative understanding of where they are now and how their preferred future evolves (Hough & Paine, 1997: 107). The achievement of excellence is a long-term process, which needs the cooperative planning of all staff members, parents and partners. All these role players must jointly set the priorities and establish the means to achieve the vision. In some schools, unfortunately, the 'shared vision' is taken for granted as simply a statement, instead of being out there in the school, energising, inspiring and giving meaning and focus to our work (Hough & Paine, 1997: 178).

Schools are part of the larger community, and effective schools (principals and educators) are involved in those communities. High-quality professional development provides the infrastructure for building excellent schools. Professional development is job-embedded in high quality schools. Involvement in training is an expected part of contracted, professional activity, not an add-on requirement (Marshall, *et al.* 1990). Effective principals need to be 'walking encyclopaedias' of school reform, but they need to communicate clearly what they believe, expect and in what direction they want to go. Such principals see schooling as a team activity, where collaboration among all staff members is emphasised. The time has gone when principals single-handedly engaged in decision-making. Effective management means delegating authority and freedom to operate to all members of the management team. In order to create a structure

and system of management for policy implementation, leadership is required which provides clear goals and high expectations.

The issue of 'Quality Education and Equality in Education' (Steyn, 2000) is constantly raised in the present educational debate, in order to secure a bright future for education in South Africa. Thus far it seemed as if the state "is merely paying lip service to the principle of quality education … in official circles and in the ranks of the policy makers" (Steyn, 2000: 48). The emphasis is too much in favour of the equality paradigm, resulting in learners not being adequately prepared for full participation in the global arena. In the meantime the majority of schools are experiencing a lack of resources; unfavourable learner-teacher ratios; textbook shortages, low teacher-qualifications, low teacher morale and many other obstacles.

As I have stated earlier, there needs to be a fine balance between quality and equality in order to make a democracy a reality. This is the essence of transformation – to transform our education system from a system of inequality to one where equality and quality prevail. To my mind these two ideals can, with great care, be simultaneously accommodated in order to institutionalise democratic values in public high schools. Quality education, in my opinion, should include amongst other:

- The best possible development and empowerment of each child;
- Equal per capita expenditure on education;
- Equal participation in decision making processes;
- Equal access to knowledge and other sources of information; and
- Adequate, effective learning material and resources in a relevant curriculum.

3.5   SUMMARY

A new paradigm for public policy in school education has emerged. The idea was that the new paradigm answers the 'public good' test through the commitment of

public resources, curriculum, standards and accountability mechanisms, with each unique school setting requiring a high level of self-management that extends to local decision on the allocation of resources and building the capacity of the school to meet high expectation for success for all students. Underpinning the concept of 'public good' should be an unwavering commitment to achieve the highest level of attainment for every student regardless of circumstance. The responsibility rests heavily on especially disadvantaged schools to be infinitely adaptable and imaginative amidst many obstacles. What counts is what works.

It is a fact that society and life are characterised by inequalities. The fundamental aspect of inequality is the economic aspect. However, the belief is that a democratic society should make equality of opportunity in education a reality. While government has a clear commitment towards tackling inequalities in our education system for example The South African Schools Act and Outcomes-based Education, more rigorously applied measurements are needed. Whether democracy in education has been deepened since 1994, I shall try to explain in the light of insights gained during my conceptual analysis, in conjunction with the case study I engaged with.

CHAPTER 4

HAS DEMOCRACY BEEN DEEPENED?

4.1   HAS DEMOCRACY BEEN DEEPENED?

In terms of policy formulation, much has changed in our country and more specifically in our education system since the 1994 elections, but many would argue that not enough has changed on the ground.   Decades of apartheid education have paralysed our schools and systematically broken down the culture of teaching and learning. Many of our public high schools are debilitated by a lack of clear leadership, lack of effective planning, poor management, low teacher morale, lack of confidence in many teachers to cope with the plethora of new demands made on them, resistance to change, lack of discipline, lack of professionalism, lack of parental involvement, conflict, vandalism, violence and abuse, lack of resources and lack of coherent support.

All learners have the basic human right to be educated. But they need to be given the chance to develop as far as their interests and ambitions take them. They need equal educational opportunities and effective teaching and learning styles to allow them to advance in all different domains. Quality education is where all learners are empowered through education to influence their own future and that of the community at large in a personal, social, political and moral way. Empowerment must bring all learners to the point at which they can exercise their freedom in a responsible manner, in order to achieve the highest possible goals in life. This is the ultimate outcome that I believe every learner in South Africa is entitled to, irrespective of race, class, language or other differences.

In terms of the government's economic plan, I believe, however, that they are unintentionally slowing down the transformation process. The South African government follows an economic policy that is largely based on free market principles, which include tight control over government spending. This policy of

fiscal prudence has had a vicious effect on education in the Western Cape, where especially whites were in a more privileged position due to the policies of the previous government. The political economy still privileges the white learners and recently also the emerging black middle-class students in accessing the 'best' schools available. Aggravating the problem are the high costs attached to school fees, uniforms and extra-mural activities. In general these schools also have the better infrastructure, facilities and equipment, and highly skilled teachers. Rather than breaking the barriers that impede access to schools, learners are labelled and channelled into different social classes, thus reproducing social inequalities.

The need for multicultural education is demonstrated by the rapid changes in our socio-political context. Research evidence suggests that, contrary to claims made by some schools, most attempts at providing equitable quality education for all learners from diverse backgrounds, interests and abilities, are falling short. Most schools adopt an assimilation approach, whereby learners are expected to adapt to the existing ethos of the school. This approach is hardly transformative. A second way in which schools maintain their ethos, is the 'colour-blind' approach, whereby teachers claim 'not to see' race or colour, and even refuse to deal with anything in this regard. In the meantime these 'colour-blind' practices have the underlying implication that all newcomers are from culturally and educationally inferior backgrounds.

These newcomers are often regarded as merely intruders into the white 'comfort zone'. Many school principals, educators, parents and learners from predominantly white schools feel uncertain about what the changes in the education system will mean for their schools and themselves. Those who are accustomed to stable schools which have close links with the social, cultural and religious life of their communities and traditions, may feel that what is precious to them is threatened by unknown changes which they will be unable to influence or control. Therefore they have ways and means of protecting their exclusive

grounds. Knowing that a democratically elected government cannot be expected to fund their privileges, may be particularly worrying to them. It is nevertheless a fact that the fees of such schools entail some degree of sosio-economic selectivity. One cannot but realise the potency of social class membership in determining and setting these inequalities.

The South African Schools Act of 1996 and Outcomes-based Education (OBE) do not make clear provision for multicultural education. A study made by Vally and Dalamba (1999), observe that the critical outcomes encompassed in Curriculum 2005, failed to include skills and values that are essential to a transformed education system in South Africa. The authors further note that the outcomes do include the need to collaborate and work together. However, it fail to examine the importance of critically understanding the unequal power relations between individuals and groups and the impact of our differently constituted identities on our everyday interactions with one another as well as in the teaching and learning environment. Outcomes-based Education was perhaps driven too much by the skills required in the labour market. (In the meantime I am unaware of a national plan for teacher development). Gross inequalities in teacher:learner ratios is also still a stumbling block, despite the new national norms for educators to high schools – that is a teacher : learner ratio of 1:35. Furthermore the unequal distribution of infrastructure, learning support materials, curriculum choice and teaching staff, were and are still major obstacles in the way of disadvantaged learners' knowledge acquisition.

Apartheid education became unsustainable as a result of its structuralist obsession with finality in knowledge production, control of people, and unwillingness to foster participation among people (Waghid, 2000 b: 89). This scenario still seems to dominate the educational arena. In public schools, for example, educators and learners have little say as to what 'relevant knowledge' is. Matric results are still used as the most important indicator of quality teaching and learning, regardless of the socio-economic factors that impede the progress

of poorer learners. It is questionable whether this 'knowledge' acquisition does lead to critical thinking, lifelong, independent learning or to transforming and liberating people.

Knowledge is context-specific, relevant and "emerge … out of social conventions …" (McLaren, 1991: 10). My finding is that Outcomes-based Education does not take the diverse contexts of learners into account. As an example: many learners from disadvantaged school communities have no extra stimulation at home by means of the Internet / parents / books; they also live in distressing home environments (malnutrition / alcoholism / drug abuse / overcrowding / unemployment) – to name a few. In most cases these learners are attending schools that are not equipped with libraries, computer labs, sporting facilities or support staff, to counter-act these setbacks. The high educator: learner ratios also make it almost impossible for educators to pay individual attention to learners. And so the vicious circle continuous. It is against this background that I doubt whether Outcomes-based Education offers a transformative approach to knowledge.

The aim of Outcomes-based Education is to get students to think beyond the given information – to bring knowledge, skills, and the power of imagination, understanding and experience together in problem solving activities and at the same time to prepare them for lifelong independent learning. Knowledge, with the fundamental aim of transforming and liberating people, is produced through engaging them critically in action. In this way people are self -critical, yet remain socially engaged – in constant participation with others (teachers, researchers, community etcetera) to address the most pressing social (educational) and political problems of their time (Giroux, 1991: 68). But does this 'knowledge utopia' does not manifest itself in our coloured and black public high schools. There are too many obstacles that first need to be overcome. And the economic reality is that the state does not have the financial means to bring about the

necessary changes to the public education sector (Collings, 2000:2). This brings me to the following issue in education – that of gender equality.

To a great extend the message of male superiority and female inferiority was imparted through education. Men have historically been described as rational, assertive, independent, aggressive, competitive, hierarchical and controlling beings. Women, on the other hand, were and are commonly viewed as dependant, emotional, intuitive, nurturing, compassionate, caring, relational, deferent and submissive. Through our history, all these stereotyped characteristics have negatively impacted on the role of women in society. Policy with regard to gender equity has been put in place, but the South African culture cannot thus far be termed gender conscious or encouraging enough of gender equality. The reality leaves a lot to be desired. Therefore educators (especially women) need to challenge the cultural stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality in education.

Whether decentralisation truly advances the process of democratic participation and decision-making, is questionable. The process of change unleashed vast expectations in education institutions, most of which have not been met due to a lack of resources (material, human, financial) available. Policy formulation by bureaucrats and academics are in many cases worlds apart from the realities in the classroom. These 'experts' are putting their own interpretations and meanings to intended policy and in the process will use their 'power' and 'discretion' to transform the original goals of policy makers (Collings, 2000). It is of utmost importance for educators to scrupulously expose inconsistencies between policy and practice and to accept nothing solely because an 'authority' says that it is so. All too often, policies and dogmatic statements are accepted in education because it 'origins' from those who are, or are considered to be, 'authorities' or 'experts'. However, these, 'authorities' are no more free from the demands to justify their claims than we are. Education bureaucrats also tend to focus on approaches and experiences towards education elsewhere in the world.

That is seldom, if ever, the solution to our unique educational situation in South Africa. In our strife towards liberation and empowerment, we are in constant battle to catch up with those running in front. It might just as well be a case of 'following the blind', because we as a country are reluctant to risk – to forge new paths – to lead in the education arena.

4.2 THE WAY FORWARD - CHALLENGES

The future of education in South Africa is indeed very challenging, because equality in education cannot be achieved overnight. Central policymaking, in collaboration with role players in the school practice, must form the foundation for transformation in order to make equal education for all a reality. Approval must be given to the value of equality of opportunity in education, and the related equal distribution of resources. Not only will it be beneficial to the individual at large, but also to the advantage of the nation as a whole.

In the South African context, conceptualisation of race (black, white and coloured), gender, class – to name a few - cannot be done as discrete entities. Our analyses of our experiences are social constructions, which are partial and incomplete; therefore we have to be sensitive to the many more dimensions to our world than we acknowledge. Hence there are many more grounds on which we are different. The challenge is, especially as educators, to be alert to these differences and to use them in constructive and non-hierarchical ways. In so doing, we are contributing to a radical multicultural approach to South African education. A discourse of equity in education could possibly begin when we realise that every learner, irrespective of race or class, brings with him or her a vast array of characteristics and experiences, many of which will either stand in the way of their development, or will enhance it.

A transformative approach to multiculturalism must be adopted, which aims to prepare learners from both the oppressed and the oppressor groups to become analytical and critical about their life circumstances (privilege or powerlessness)

and the social power relationships and stratifications that keep them oppressed or privileged at the expense of others. The ultimate aim is social justice for *all*, in which everybody participates equally and meaningfully in all spheres of life to eradicate racism, sexism and all other forms of discrimination. This implies that educators should create a philosophy of cultural democracy in order to facilitate a classroom climate in which all learners feel confident about their cultural identity and cultural voice (Goduka, 1999: 51). In the context of nation-building I am arguing for a holistic approach that validates all the identities, cultures and voices in our country, and aims to provide high quality, equitable and inclusive education for all.

We have to strife towards building a national culture, to the idea of a nation free of all inequities and discrimination. This means developing a core of common cultural practises, beliefs, and customs – a core that is derived from the entire different social, religious, cultural and other groups. Parents, teachers and students who have had to cope with appalling conditions as a result of decades of under-resourcing, instability, wasted human potential due to lack of equal access to quality education, therefore have high expectations from the democratic government to bring about redress. The education they want is an education that effectively serves the South African people as a whole; education that serves the purpose of national unity.

But change towards quality and equality in education cannot merely be seen as a primary responsibility of the state. It rests also on the shoulders of every stakeholder within the framework and functioning of individual schools. Role players at implementation level need to take ownership of policy in order to effectively put it into practice. However, because educators were ignored during discussion and debate, they lack the enthusiasm when it comes to policy implementation. Of principals as 'middle managers' are expected that they lead the implementation of new policies, and in the process they are often torn between satisfying the departmental bureaucrats on the one hand and the

teachers on the other. It is also assumed from department level that principals, by virtue of their position, automatically know how policy should be implemented. Structures need to be developed to enable participatory management through empowerment (information, skills and attitudes) at all school levels. Leadership and management training (on a continues basis) must become a priority.

The time has also come for all parents to mobilise themselves in order to seriously take ownership of the schools in their communities. All role players must commit themselves to instruction of the highest possible quality, so that all children reach challenging academic standards and a fair opportunity in the 'knowledge economy'. Schools must accept the challenge to produce quality education as a product through engaging in quality assurance as a process.

Amidst the educational crisis South Africans are experiencing, we have to guard against sheer destructiveness. The idea is not to expose every educational policy made by government, definitions of concepts or dogmatic statements made by 'experts' as false. Of course some of these claims, ideas or statements are more acceptable to us than are others. But we have to be reminded that all our minds are full of preconceived ideas, which determine our choices. Besides, things in life are never just as simple as distinguishing right from wrong; absolute solutions are not characteristic of philosophy. We need to seek for a balance between quality education and equal education (equivalent opportunities and access), for these two concepts are interrelated and are as well simultaneous processes in bringing about educational transformation. This is a huge obstacle to overcome in order to reach a deep democracy. In the light of policy changes in South African education, we must ascertain ourselves of the many challenges lying ahead in the process of deepening the educational transformation. It is therefore important to stimulate critical inquiry in stakeholders at school level, in order to get "a deeper understanding of education out of which could emerge unfamiliar possibilities for future democratic action in educational institutions" (Waghid, 2000 a: 30). We need to be actively involved through independent intelligent

thoughts and participating in bringing about transformation in education. It includes an element of freedom, of risk-taking and of 'hope', by seeking new ways of solving educational problems and reacting with courage to unpredictable situations (Waghid, 2000 a: 31).

The question arises: What can be done?

- The educational budget needs to be drastically increased in order to address infrastructural and other backlogs. Currently there is simply nothing left for transformation and redress. A re-prioritisation of the budget to prioritise wiping out educational backlogs in predominantly coloured and black public schools, can accelerate the transformation process. In the Minister of Education's Report on the Provinces to the President (October 2000: 5), he admitted that "…evidence of serious budget pressure is still evident throughout the system …". The provision of compensatory resources and opportunities for disadvantaged learners could be a positive step. Supplementary financing could also be given to these priority areas.

- Education is critical to the survival of the entire society. Therefore all sectors of society must realise that they have a role in and responsibility for the reconstruction of education. A massive programme of intra-alliance dialogue and partnership between government, unions, business and educational stakeholders need to be mobilised in order to tackle the backlogs due to apartheid. It will also depend on individual schools to develop partnerships with employers, trade unions and community organisations. Despite individual obstacles, schools have to take on the challenge of raising levels of achievement in order to contribute to the future economy of South Africa. At the same time, employers have to develop the commitment and capacity to deliver general education as well as occupationally specific skills. Bearing in mind the unique links that schools traditionally have with communities, the challenge now is to build

a sense of commonality – to break down the barriers that have separated schools as far as equity is concerned.

- Private sector education is growing rapidly and is a direct threat to quality public education in our country. Meanwhile we cannot just stand back and criticise or protest about the growing private sector in our country; we need to counter-act through hard work in the public education institution in order to deliver education of the highest possible quality under our unique circumstances. All stakeholders should play an active role in the implementation of policies and the enhancement of a work ethic in schools, in order to create high quality public schools.

- A key challenge facing educators during the process of curriculum transformation is to combat the ideologies of inequality with regard to race, gender and class. Educators need to be actively involved in shaping the new curriculum, so as to promote different values of the kind of society we would like to build. Educators need to be committed to total democracy and liberation in our schools and country. They need to take a firm stand in advancing this objective, and should not be intimidated by the power of the 'experts'. What is therefore important is for educators not to focus exclusively on their own needs and school conditions, but to focus on a broader perspective about the role of education and of educators in the national transformation process in education.

We need to commit ourselves more to the challenge of transforming education management. The objective of changing management to manage change must be pursued amidst full participation of educators. The focus should not entirely be on the sharing of power, but for educators and parents to share perspectives. A school where everyone cares and cooperates is conducive to learning.

School-based Management (SBM) is a way of developing appropriate decision-making powers to the schools in order that they take charge of their own destinies in a meaningful and purposeful way in pursuit of national and

provincial goals. School-based Management embraces administration (including financial management), curriculum and personal issues, and a self-managing school should have competence and authority in all three of these areas. And this is a problem-area in many schools – a lack of competence and authority with regard to administration, curriculum and personal issues. Massive development, upliftment and empowerment is needed in order for all public high schools to become learning organisations that are able to reflect on and learn from their own practices and move towards the future in a proactive and responsive manner. However, while School-based Management is a necessary requirement for schools to become learning organisations, it is not a sufficient condition for schools to become vibrant centres of learning. The following could be taken into consideration:

- Learner empowerment is a central factor in the emancipation of our people. They must be meaningful participants within the high school structures, otherwise we as educators are undermining their democratic rights.

- Founded upon the notion of critique, outcomes-based education brings into the epistemological discourse the elements of reflection, criticism and transformation. A critical approach to education is underpinned by an articulation of society's needs, encouraging learners to empower themselves, collaborative learning, dialogue, reflective-in-action and democratisation as noted by Stonyer:.

> If education is to respond to the challenges it currently faces, educators need to begin to take responsibility for enabling their students to deal critically and creatively in shaping education in the future political activity. (Stonyer, 1998: 290).

The gaps between policy and practice regarding Outcomes-based Education (OBE) are by no means an indication that it has failed. It rather points to an increasing need for educator support through development programmes in order to be skilfully armed for the challenges that they encounter. The following needs to be considered:

- The new government, although well meaning and aiming at transformation, has faced serious problems in its attempts to implement policies that can deal with the legacies of apartheid education. Against this background of Outcomes-based Education as a paradigm-shift is the path we have chosen to transform education in South Africa. We should therefore try to make it work in order to improve education in South Africa.

- There is an increasing demand on schools to prepare learners for the world of work, and to fulfil this demanding task, educators or schools can no longer work in isolation to help students meeting the challenges they face. The reality is that we are being asked to accomplish more with, in some cases, very limited or even no resources. Schools need to turn to their communities to establish a broad range of partnerships. In this regard some school communities still have to make a start. Partnership building takes time, clear communication, flexibility and constant attention. Schools can no longer pretend to create school partnerships; they must establish true alliances to reap the results required by this new demand in education. Partnership is not only about money. Corporate donations alone will not cure our education crisis. Shared responsibility is the key element in order "to foster the values that make a commitment to the lives of our youth" (Becton, 2001). In a time of increased educational demands and for student success, comprehensive partnerships in order to offer learners a full range of learning opportunities, has become a necessity.

- Despite policy initiatives that prohibit gender discrimination, there is still enough evidence that it exists. (It is for instance not co-incidental that none of the schools I visited has a female principal, or even a female deputy principal for that matter). This scenario is also not due to a lack of female competence. Men are still the gatekeepers when it comes to career progression – whether it is access to informal opportunities for development or more formal procedures leading to promotion and appointment. Mac and Ghaill (1994) are referring to the "power of masculinity as institutional force, operating to marginalize and exclude

women". Stereotyping is one of the main limitations on the career progress of women – simply because they are women. Despite minor changes, there is still a high level of discrimination-faced women who aspire to senior management.

- Principals need to be politically aware in the sense that they understand the complex political issues affecting their schools, but at the same time realize that resolutions and solutions are possible within the new education dispensation. They also need to be realistic in accepting that they cannot resolve all the sensitive political issues affecting their schools. The role of principal also includes being a manager, public relations expert, transformational leader, psychologist, motivator and administrator. That is why pre- and in-service leadership development programs are so very important. Educational leaders must also be courageous advocates for the teaching profession as a whole. They must speak up about conditions that limit their effectiveness, or policies that restrain their positive momentum. They must educate parents, community leaders and policy makers about what is or is not best for our learners and our schools.

- There is definitely a need for change in our education system – change that rests on flexibility and adaptability. But one of the requirements of change is certainly the recognition of the *need* to change. In the process of implementing change, schools must also remember to assess their strengths. By celebrating the many positives, they can narrow the field of what truly needs to be changed and validate existing positive practices (Sammon, 2001). In order to steer their schools away from the past (with its baggage of good and bad) into the future (with its promise of change, opportunity and prosperity), school leaders need to be visionary, inspiring and innovative. The desire to implement fundamental change must form an integral part of the transformational leader's mission. The principal leading in this challenging context must have a compelling passion for education and the school, in order to bring about change were change is needed. Because of the gap between policy and practice, principals and

teachers have to take charge of developments according to their unique school situations.

Much rethinking is necessary in order for public schools to become places of nation-building. No matter how painful, we all have to acknowledge the failure of public education throughout our history to play a sound role in this regard. But the current situation can and has to improve. There is no absolute map to point the way – each school and community must, according to their unique circumstances, forge their paths as they try to improve their school contexts.

4.3 CONCLUSION

South Africa's peaceful transition to majority rule impressed the world. But the shadow of the past cannot be ignored. The future will depend upon its citizens being equipped to contribute to the new South Africa. Policies according to which education can contribute towards the reconciliation of unity and diversity, must be reflected in all public schools. Education will always be a political issue, but we should seek not to make it the site of political conflict and debate for all the problems facing South Africa. The 'stigma' of quality education being the privilege of a particular group, needs to be destroyed. Instead, the new, transformative approach to education must expand opportunity for all to quality education.

Policy, practise and theory are interdependent. That is why the complexity of the challenges to the process of changing the education system requires a multi-faceted approach. We need to analyse the tension between the development of policy and the challenge of implementation. 'Policy coherence' is important, whereby policy in one sphere is being reinforced by policies elsewhere. South Africa is rather slowly transforming into 'something new', without having the financial and another resources to change direction at a more rapid pace. The country should seriously take into consideration the roots of its birth in order to realise that the levelling of past inequalities would be a very difficult task. The

introduction of a new curriculum for example, cannot lead to the education and learning population to overcome all its deeply rooted social and educational problems.

In his opening address at Parliament on 25 June 1999, President Thabo Mbeki recommitted the Government as follows:

> To work in partnership with all our people, inspired by the call – *Faranani* – to ensure that we draw on the energy and genius of the nation to give birth to something new, good and beautiful. At the dawn of a new life, our practical actions must ensure that none can challenge us when we say – we are a nation at work to build a better life!

In the process of transformation we need to be guided by the challenge to build a caring society that will guarantee the equal human rights of every citizen. The challenge of the reconstruction and development of our society into one that guarantees human dignity faces the entirety of our people.

The people of South Africa must voice their concerns regarding issues such as poverty and privatisation, racism and globalisation; landlessness and political and economic exclusion in the decision-making processes of the government. But what, one might ask, has these issues to do with education? My answer is: Everything, because education is about society and for society, not above it.

After seven years of democracy, our country is still a very unequal society. Coupled with inflation and population growth, our education budgets have dropped during the past few years. Little, if anything, is left for the eradication of the inequalities in our schools. The current crisis in education in our country is partially the result of policies enacted in the name of improving schools – specifically in the name of 'standards' and 'accountability'. People who do not always know much about the teaching and learning practice, made these policies. This top-down, standards-driven movement may be doing our learners more harm than good. This approach has less to do with excellence than with

turning schools into factories. What is described as more "rigorous" is sometimes merely more onerous (Kohn, 2000: 31). That is why we have to counter-act in order to promote learning that is genuinely rigorous.

There are undoubtedly many positive changes that have been introduced since 1994. There is, for instance, an end to racially segregated schools, and the constitutional right to basic education for all. But we have to focus on education as an instrument of total liberation and democracy. There are still too many features of apartheid education that needs to be dealt with, namely the legacy of inequalities in our schools and the lack of basic resources in the majority of black and coloured schools. These educational backlogs are serious obstacles when it comes to the implementation of our policies and the acceleration of the process of transformation in education.

I hope I succeeded in generating critical action in others, in order to replace one distorted set of practises with another and to offer guidance on rational and democratic decision making (Kohn, 2000). I realise that there are no perfect solutions to our educational crisis. There are no clear answers. At least our critical actions can eventually bring us nearer to the 'truth' as to whether democracy in education has truly been deepened in South Africa since 1994.

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