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# Editorial

Wayne Hugo

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## Developing Education in South Africa

Beeby's *Stages in the Growth of a Primary Education System* (1962) is one of the founding articles attempting to grapple with how to improve education within a developing context and it speaks directly to our current situation and the articles of this edition of JoE. Beeby points to two main drivers that affect the ability of an education system to improve the level of general education of the teachers in the system and the amount and quality of the teacher training they have received (1962, p.6). Both focus on the teacher, but the first points to the quality of their general education, the second to their training. Four stages of growth in how schools qualitatively develop are derived from this. At the lowest level schools start off with ill educated and untrained teachers working in ways that are unorganised, teaching very narrow subject content in a meaningless way, memorising being all important. Beeby provides the following account:

The bulk of teachers are ill educated. . .the syllabus is vague. . .teachers fall back on the very narrow subject content they remember from their own school days. It consists of little but the completely mechanical drill of the 3 Rs and memorizing of relatively meaningless symbols occupies most of the time. . .all except the brightest children cease to make progress (p.6).

This account resonates with what our current research is telling us about the state of education in most of South Africa's primary schools. Beeby then goes on to make a crucial recommendation that these kinds of schools should not jump straight into constructivist pedagogies. What is needed initially is more formalism. It might seem ideal to take teachers at this level and introduce them straight into teaching practically and directly from the world they know so well, using their own context to facilitate learners making meaning of the syllabus. However, this kind of learner-centred teaching is based on complex and sophisticated ideas of learning and pedagogy. The problem with schools at this level is that they are confusedly and inefficiently formal. They have "*all the defects of formalism and none of its virtues*" (p.6). More formalism is what is needed, not less – this from an arch constructivist.

It is impossible to take the whole teaching cadre and provide them with the full education needed to be able to teach in a rich and deep way. Teachers are

marked by how they themselves were educated. A teacher needs to be both well educated and well trained to perform at a sophisticated level. What can be done is to intervene at a training level and accept that training can only do so much. At stage two poorly educated but trained teachers work with rigid methods that have a 'one best way' mentality, with one textbook. It is a bridge too far to expect teachers at this level to mesh specialised knowledge forms with everyday life experiences. Basic mastery of the first is needed, otherwise teachers fall into everyday life discussions that are poorly related to knowledge forms. Basic but crucial knowledge forms and strategies need to become embedded in practice. External examinations and inspections need to be carried out to ensure that these key basic forms are taught and learnt.

In the third stage, with teachers better educated and trained, there can be more focus on meaning, but this is weakly carried out with little variation from the syllabus and textbooks. There is the beginning of experimentation, debate and engagement. Finally, in the fourth stage (and here I am moving into Beeby's canonical book *The Quality of Education in Developing Countries* published four years later), well educated and well-trained teachers work towards meaning and understanding within a wider curriculum that has a variety of content and caters for individual differences. Creativity and activity methods and problem solving are emphasised along with emotional and aesthetic well being (Beeby 1966, p.72).

It is a model that has been much critiqued for its evolutionary stage model and placing of constructivist education as the final attractor or endpoint of educational development (Guthrie, 1980). Beeby has accepted some of the criticisms and partly reworked the model into a more neutral description (Beeby, 1980). His major point is that these stages are hierarchical. It is impossible to jump from stage one to four without moving through two and three. Interventions must be directed specifically at the type of school involved and tailored accordingly. Retrospectively, this model speaks powerfully to South African education where we attempted to jump from levels one and two straight into the learner centred OBE of stage four. Many of the suggestions coming from the developing world and South Africa about improving quality in education are currently making suggestions that resonate strongly with level two – get a quality textbook and a specific method that works with poor learners in their home language and then externally examine and inspect. It is how founding texts like Beeby's work, they are foundational and force one to circulate around them and come back to them, no matter how profound the critique. In South Africa we are currently circulating around the

implications of this stage model as we begin to understand that we have a bimodal schooling system with a massive chasm between stages one and two (historically black and impoverished schools) and stages three and four (historically white and enriched schools). Policy makers and school development experts are beginning to argue that schools located at different levels need very different kinds of interventions and the attempt to treat all schools equally is resulting in a massive drainage of resources and waste of human endeavour. Beeby's stage model indicates what level must be aimed at to get schools functioning at level 1 (narrow subject matters meaninglessly taught in rote memorisation) to level 2 (one best way, one textbook, strict examination and inspection) to level 3 (more focus on meaning, begin to experiment with different methods) to level 4 (creative and activity-based learning in a wholesome classroom environment). The difficulty is that as the education system evolves it begins to have all of the stages within its ambit, and the attempt to push it too quickly or slowly can result in failure as either the newer or older teachers become disillusioned or disheartened. There is an angle to reform – the art is to not make it too sharp or flat.

Beeby worried about the attempt to introduce quality education for all without the wherewithal in the system to cope. Such a project, he maintained, would be 'infinitely harder' than anything the older Western nations had to deal with educationally (1962, p10). It is in precisely such an infinitely hard project that we are currently engaged.

Nick Taylor has systematically squared up to this infinite project for almost two decades now. Usefully located in a network and organisation that has influential intellectuals, policy makers and funders working synergistically together, he has consistently argued for interventions that work realistically at a level South African education can absorb. This involves a hard look at what is currently wrong with South African schools and then working accordingly. We asked Nick to break the account up into three separate papers. The first paper gives an account of how poorly the South African education system is working with time. Teachers do not arrive on time if they arrive at all, learners do not go to class on time, once in class teachers do not do much teaching and when they do the pace is very slow, working at the level of the slowest learner. Tightening up how the education system works with time is the first key measure that can be taken to address the poor performance of learners. The issue is how to effect the transformation, how to get a whole culture of schooling to shift into a consciousness of time as vital, precious, in short supply, of how to use time to specialise consciousness.

If Taylor deals with Time, then Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli aggressively argue the case for extended mother tongue instruction in an African language as a key element to improving the quality of education in South Africa. It is not the replacement of English they want, more the establishment of more rigorous and sustained forms of bilingual education. The patron saint of South African educational research, E G Malherbe reached a similar conclusion seventy years ago. The power of dual medium instruction was established beyond any doubt by Thomas and Collier in 1997. That we are still struggling with the political, cultural, economic and educational will to provide primary education in the major home languages of our citizens is an indictment on our ability to forge ahead with policies we know are right but cannot see how to implement without making everyone happy, or to be specific, the middle classes happy. The poor performance of our learners has as much to do with their learning in a foreign language as it has to do with the paltry amount of time they actually do get taught. Let's put it more strongly, when the majority of our learners finally do manage to get taught, then it happens in a foreign language with teachers who cannot properly speak it in the first place. Dalvit, Murray and Terzoli mount one of the most sustained arguments yet as to why dominant African home languages should be used as the medium of instruction and assessment. One of the trajectories that has obscured the key importance of this recommendation is that learners initially do fairly well in learning the basics of a new language, especially when still young, but as soon as the nature of the language becomes more specialised (around grade 5) performance decreases and drop out rates increase. On the other hand, learners that stay with their home language through primary school are able to learn the complex lexis and grammar in their own language and in English. This only becomes apparent over a ten-year trajectory.

We see exactly this tragically played out in Heila Lotz's interesting paper on epistemological access. A 12-year-old learner from her farm asks for help with homework, struggles to understand concepts in a 'foreign language' and eventually drops out. A number of such stories are told, each pointing to inadequacies in how teachers working in poor communities tackle epistemological access. Attempting to find a way of dealing with these inadequacies, Heila points to realist epistemologies that offer some assistance in working towards more satisfactory forms of epistemological access. Contrasted to Beeby and Taylor one could observe that these realist recommendations are not necessarily realistic, given the massiveness of the task facing us in South Africa, that what is needed is a brutal cutting down of complexity, of a honing in on basics and formalism rather than an embrace of



fallibility and open-endedness. That this is the end point is not the question, it's just not the beginning. In the beginning was just a word.

Although South Africa is a schizoid bimodal educational system, there are beacons of hope throughout the country where quality education is being delivered in high poverty conditions. These schools are increasingly coming into focus as the schools we can learn most from, almost in a survival of the fittest way, they are the outliers that point the way. They are also in high demand in terms of funding, where bang for buck means development organisations want already functioning schools that have potential for investment. Parents within townships seek out such schools for their children if they cannot afford schools outside the township or actively decide to educationally stay within a local context. This means that certain schools with a good reputation in the townships find their numbers growing while more ineffective schools find enrolment figures dwindle and eventually, thankfully, they close down. Msila makes the point that poor parents in the local communities know which schools are performing relatively well or poorly, which schools have a functioning culture of learning and teaching, which schools are well run or corrupt and then actively make decisions based on this information. Often the choice is between really dysfunctional schools and barely functional ones, but it is a choice nevertheless. It is a glimpse of hope, one made all the more poignant by the glory of the initial vision of our post apartheid educational world. Msila points the way in terms of levels of focus and discrimination. At whatever level one is working with there are grades of quality, those working at that level know what they are. It is our task to illuminate not only the basic default lines, but the many storied levels within the mansion.

Stepping away from the overarching theme of quality in South African schools, Sivil and Yurkivska provide a powerful analysis of the strike at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in February 2006, already three years hence. Those involved on the ground remember it somewhat wistfully and tell stories somewhat closer to 1968 than 2006. Not so Sivil and Yurkivska, who update us on the very real current issues being faced by universities, globally, nationally and locally, although, it has to be noted, their language is very '68. Here is the all or nothing nature of their analysis:

The very nature of the university has been fundamentally transformed through the 'university on the market' trope. And this change transforms everything that 'the university is and stands for' (Higgins, 2007)

You have to admire just how powerful post structuralism makes tropes and a longing for Marx comes through the back door. Very real economic changes have swept through the world and as always these have moved faster than the cultural superstructure can cope with, even the cultural superstructure of the universities. It is hard sometimes not to read the radical discourses with a sense that they are outdated, behind the times, and that Marx would have been asking what are the discourses emerging from the new, warning against the Luddites, chasing the forces nascent within the new logic, wanting to go through it to see what is on the other side. But then I go to a performance management seminar that does not have a clue what academic work is and everything that Sivil and Yurkivska say rings true.

If we had a competition for the most understated first sentence to an article, then Theron, Mabitsela and Esterhuizen would probably win. ‘Many educators who are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, report that they are negatively impacted’ is the opening line. Within this lies the grief and suffering of a major part of our teaching cadre tensely combined with a severe strain on the resources of the system as a whole. Theron, Mabitsela and Esterhuizen provide an account of a supportive intervention for teachers affected by the pandemic and what they have learnt from it. Resilience is what is encouraged and developed – the process of functioning relatively well despite adverse circumstances. Participatory group processes combined with useful programme content focused on the development of protective resources and skills, acceptance of the status quo and a development of communities of like-minded individuals. Although only a nascent study, it does point the way forward in terms of both research and intervention in a key factor impacting on our capacity to provide a quality education for all within the country.

If understatement characterised Theron *et al.*’s paper then *Theorising Researcher Self-effacement and Youth Deep-insiders in HIV/AIDS Research: An Awkward Binary* by Ronicka Mudaly wins the most impressive title award. Young researchers were enabled to become HIV/AIDS researchers. The idea is simple, get the young researchers to interview participants who they thought were sexually active and with whom they had been associated with and find out sensitive private candid explicit stuff about their sex lives and sexuality. The accounts are contained in an appendix at the end of the journal. Mudaly provides a complex account of what this process entailed as well as her own self effacement and angst as the young researchers frantically went off and gathered the data. She also charts her chagrin at the youngsters not being able to use the research equipment correctly, her surprise at just how active the

youngsters were and sadly, that the youngsters doing the research were out of synch, even nerdy, in comparison to the interviewees doing the sex. Seems like some of the patterns holding thirty years ago when I was a young researcher still hold today.

Oh, I was joking about the appendix

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# The state of South African schools

## Part 1: Time and the regulation of consciousness

Nick Taylor

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### Introduction

The very low value for money provided by the South African schooling system has become well known in the 15 years since the fall of apartheid. Unfortunately, how to improve the quality of schooling is far less clear, despite the activities of NGOs and donors, both international and local, directed toward this end for well over two decades, and of government since 1994. The starting assumption of the present paper is that weaknesses at every level of the system – classroom, school and administrative structure – contribute to the crisis in schooling. The purpose of the paper is to identify the key problems which occur at each of these levels, as a prerequisite for designing more effective school improvement interventions.

The evidence on which this analysis is based varies from strong, generalisable data derived from representative national surveys, to small scale descriptive studies based on a handful of classrooms. Much of the data, therefore, despite the ring of authenticity it may have for anyone who has spent time in South African schools and classrooms, requires verification before it can serve as the basis for a firm national picture. Nevertheless, it illustrates the range of considerations which need to go into the design of any reform effort.

### Learner performance

The poor performance of South African schools compared to those in both developed and developing countries has been established at primary level in mathematics and reading (Moloi and Strauss, 2005; Howie, Venter, Van Staden, Zimmerman, Long, Scherman and Archer, 2007) and at secondary level in mathematics and science (Howie, 2001; Reddy, 2006; see also Taylor,

Fleisch and Shindler, 2007). The SACMEQ<sup>1</sup> scores for mathematics at Grade 6 level starkly illustrate the point (Table 1). These figures are important for at least two reasons. Most obviously, they show that South Africa is outperformed by eight surrounding countries, many of which, including Mozambique, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, are much poorer, with gross domestic products in the order of one-tenth to one-fifth of South Africa's. This is a demonstration of the lesson that, while in general, poverty is strongly associated with performance, many school systems achieve higher quality with far fewer resources than South Africa has.

A second reason why the patterns shown in Table 1 are important arises from an analysis of the maths scores by quintile. Even amongst the richest 20 per cent of schools (quintile 5), South Africa is outperformed by Mauritius and Kenya, and in all the other quintiles the South African mean scores fall below those of the SACMEQ all-country means. Clearly, a culture of complacency and low expectation permeates the entire South African system, including those schools which were privileged under apartheid and which continue to enjoy levels of resourcing well in excess of those which pertain in the majority of schools.

**Table 1: SACMEQ II scores for Grade 6 math, 2000**

QUINTILE	1	2	3	4	5	Mean
Botswana	491	499	510	508	557	<b>513</b>
Kenya	540	545	555	565	611	<b>563</b>
Lesotho	443	448	448	445	452	<b>447</b>
Malawi	422	427	435	433	447	<b>433</b>
Mauritius	519	564	587	620	640	<b>584</b>
Mozambique	526	525	531	530	538	<b>530</b>
Namibia	403	402	411	425	513	<b>431</b>
Seychelles	520	541	555	576	579	<b>544</b>
South Africa	442	445	454	491	597	<b>486</b>
Swaziland	506	511	511	513	541	<b>517</b>
Tanzania	484	511	529	528	560	<b>522</b>
Uganda	484	497	498	509	543	<b>506</b>
Zambia	414	425	436	434	466	<b>435</b>
Zanzibar	478	472	478	479	484	<b>478</b>
<b>Mean</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>468</b>

Source: Van der Berg and Louw, 2006a

<sup>1</sup>

Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality.

Table 2 shows the relative performance of South African high schools in 2004, indicating that some 80 per cent of schools are highly ineffective, producing only 15 per cent of higher grade (HG) passes in mathematics in the Senior Certificate (SC) examinations, compared with 66 per cent produced by only 7 per cent of the country's top performing schools.

**Table 2: Distribution of high schools by performance in Senior Certificate mathematics, 2004**

	Formerly privileged*	African	Total	Proportion of total	Proportion of HG math passes
Top performing**	380	34	414	7%	66%
Moderately performing	254	573	827	14%	19%
Poor performing	600	4 277	4 877	79%	15%
Total	1 234	4 884	6 118		

\* Under apartheid these schools were administered by the House of Assembly (for whites), House of Representatives ('Coloured') or House of Delegates (Asian)

\*\* Top performers produce at least 30 maths passes in the SC examination, with at least 20 per cent at the higher grade (HG); moderately performing schools produce at least 30 maths passes, mostly at standard grade (SG), while poorly performing schools fail to achieve 30 passes in maths.

Source: Simkins, 2005

Table 2 also holds two main lessons. First, there are massive disparities in performance between schools within the South African system, to a large extent structured by a history of poverty and deprivation, with African schools overwhelmingly represented in the poor performing category. Indeed, South Africa has the highest levels of between-school inequality<sup>2</sup> of performance in both mathematics and reading, by a large margin, among SACMEQ countries (Van der Berg, 2005). The point is emphasised by disaggregating Grade 6 reading scores in the Western Cape (Table 3), which are assessed in all schools in the province every two years.

<sup>2</sup> As measured by the intraclass correlation coefficient rho ( $\rho$ ), which expresses the variance in performance between schools as a proportion of overall variance.

**Table 3: Western Cape literacy pass rates for Grade 6 by former department, 2003 and 2005**

Ex-Dept	Year		% Distribution of learners by Ex-Dept	
	2003	2005	2003	2005
CED	82.9	86.9	20.1	21.2
DET	3.70	4.70	13.6	14.3
HOR	26.6	35.5	65.8	64.2
<b>Total Province</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>42.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

CED: Cape Education Department; DET: Department of Education and Training; HOR: House of Representatives

*Source:* WCED Grade 6 Learner Assessment Study, 2003 and 2005, quoted in Fleisch, 2008.

The results powerfully illustrate the scale of the achievement gap. While more than four out of five children in former white schools are reading at the appropriate level, as defined by the national curriculum, the figure, while improving, was less than half in former Coloured schools, and in former DET schools only four children in a hundred read at grade level (Fleisch, 2008).

However, the second lesson to be drawn from Table 2 discerns a secondary pattern superimposed on the fundamental association between poverty and performance. This is a pattern which challenges a principal conclusion of Coleman's (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld and York, 1966) famous study, that schools cannot make a significant difference to pupils' lives because of the overriding effects of socio-economic status on school success. Table 2 shows that 14 per cent of African schools are classified as top- or moderately performing, defying their history of discrimination and deprivation. The findings by Christie, Butler and Potterton (2007) that pass rates in the SC exam show the full range of variation from 0 per cent to 100 per cent in schools classed in all five poverty quintiles, with the exception of quintile 5 where the lowest placed school achieved a rate of 4 per cent, provide a different route to the same conclusion: there is no deterministic relationship between performance and financial resources. This is not to imply that there is no threshold of poverty below which no school can operate effectively, nor that increased levels of resourcing are not generally associated with improved performance, nor is it in any way an argument to reduce spending on schools; rather, it is to emphasise that most South African schools can do far more with the resources at their disposal than they currently do.

The South African school sector can be characterised as a high cost, high



participation, low quality, low equity system (Taylor, 2007). What are the factors which result in such poor performance relative to other countries and in such massive disparities within-country? Both the poor comparative performance and the within-country inequities are, of course, traceable back to a history of 350 years of colonial selective development, exacerbated by the policies of systematic discrimination and isolation pursued between 1948 and 1994. The last 15 years have demonstrated just how difficult and slow it is to transform the school system, despite very thoroughgoing structural change. We pursue the argument below that the key to improved performance lies in fostering a culture of professional responsibility at all levels of the system, and that this task involves both a cultural sea change, and a technical dimension which would combine the use of focused accountability systems and professional development programmes. But first we examine the contributing causes of poor performance in the domains of school leadership and management, and teachers and teaching.

Learner performance in written tests is the dependent variable of schooling. A key research project is to identify the levers likely to improve performance. We address this task in three parts. Part 1, the present paper, discusses the role of *time* in the life of schools, and how the framing of time within the school shapes the consciousness of young citizens. The second part of this discussion looks at *text* and its role in the communication of knowledge in classrooms. Part 3 examines *knowledge* itself, the stuff that schools reproduce and recontextualise, and how teachers' orientation to knowledge shape their professional habitus. But first we outline some theoretical considerations which frame this discussion.

## Theory

The debate about schooling is such a fraught area, beset with conflicting languages and ideologies, that it seems wise to start any discussion on schooling by explicating the terms we will use. Data on schools and schooling can all too easily resemble a shopping list in which the relationships between individual elements are not always clear, and the central role of theory is to put the elements of the discussion into a relationship with each other, or to delineate the logic of schooling. We will attempt here to provide a description of the structures, systems and division of labour which constitute the exemplary school. In undertaking this task, we turn to the work of Basil Bernstein to outline the elements of what he called the pedagogic device,

which provides a mechanism for the production, reproduction and transformation of culture (Bernstein, 1990). For Bernstein, any pedagogic situation (for example, dentist and patient, mother and child, teacher and pupil) involves transmitters and acquirers. The school is only one of many pedagogical sites, but all share the central aim of the transmission and acquisition of attitudes, behavior, knowledge and skills. Pedagogy produces text, which in its most general sense is any pedagogic representation: spoken, written, visual, postural, sartorial, spatial; as a result of the pedagogic act, the acquirer thinks and behaves in new ways.

Any pedagogic relation places transmitters and acquirers in an asymmetrical relation, although in some pedagogical modalities (the so-called ‘invisible pedagogies’), this asymmetry may be disguised. Pedagogic practice acts as a cultural relay, which both reproduces dominant culture, and provides the space for contestation and recontextualisation of norms. According to Bernstein, three sets of rules govern pedagogic practice:

1. **Regulative (hierarchical) rules**, which are always dominant. The acquirer has to learn to be an acquirer, and the transmitter has to learn to be a transmitter. The asymmetrical nature of their relationship arises from the fact that the transmitter knows the curriculum to be transmitted and the acquirer is a seeker of knowledge. Through the regulative regime existing in the school acquirers learn the rules of social order, character and manner.
2. **Instructional (discursive) rules**, which consist of two kinds:
  - a. **Sequencing rules**, which ensure progression through the curriculum, and imply a certain pacing or rate of acquisition.
  - b. **Criteria rules**, which enable the acquirer to understand what counts as a legitimate or illegitimate communication, social relation or position. Criteria imply evaluation: in any teaching relation, the essence of the relation is to evaluate the competence of the acquirer. What is being evaluated is whether the criteria that have been made available to the acquirer have been achieved. Criteria may be regulative, in which case they are about appropriate conduct, character and manner. Or criteria may be instructional, in which case they are discursive and are concerned with solving a problem or producing a certain piece of writing or speech.

- 3. Recontextualizing rules.** Knowledge circulates, from zones of primary production through zones of reproduction, contestation and re-production (Taylor, Muller, Cloete, Narsing, 1989). In the process of circulation, knowledge is recontextualised: for example, school physics is not the same subject taught at university, while neither adequately mirror the work of practicing physicists. Those who *reproduce* legitimate knowledge (teachers, for example) institutionalize *the thinkable*, while those who *produce* legitimate new knowledge institutionalize *the unthinkable*.

Bernstein insists that the regulative discourse is not only always dominant, but is a precondition for instruction. All pedagogic practice first creates rules of order, relation and identity. Operating within this moral order, the aim of instructional discourse is to transmit specialized competences. In the present paper we will focus primarily on the *regulative* order common in South African schools with respect to time, and how this order is mirrored in the *sequencing rules* applied in classrooms. Part 2 will continue the discussion at classroom level, and examine how the relationship between the sequencing and pacing practices in SA classrooms are associated with a particular relation to *text*. Part 3 will look principally at the *criteria rules* for determining a legitimate text in any context, and how their relationship to knowledge reflects the *professional habitus* of teachers.

But first we need to say something about the content of schooling: what it is that is to be transmitted/acquired during pedagogy? In the most general terms, the primary purpose of the school is to transmit a certain way of making sense of the world. Bernstein's research led him to understand that, essentially, people make sense of things and describe them in one of two broadly defined ways. The perspective any person adopts is shaped by his/her social relations, and by class relations in particular. The dominant form of communication in everyday life, among all classes, takes a narrative structure, and the content largely relates to a specific, local material base (context-dependent). In addition, middle class families socialize their children into an analytical perspective, which is non-linear, and is concerned with commonalities, categories and distinctions between the objects of discussion; the content of analysis is less specifically related to the material base (context-independent). Since analysis is the dominant pedagogic code of the school, it is obvious why middle class children are generally more successful at school, and why poor children appear to be discriminated against by the school system. The challenge for all schools, therefore, is to provide access to all children to the analytical perspective. This is much harder to do for poor children than it is for the middle classes.

Bernstein used the terms ‘restricted code’ and ‘elaborated code’ to distinguish between narrative and analytical orientations, respectively. He defined a code as: “. . . a regulative principle, tacitly acquired, which selects and integrates relevant meanings, forms of realizations, and evoking contexts” (1990, p.101). Table 4 sets out the main differences between restricted and elaborated codes.

**Table 4: Distinction between restricted and elaborated codes**

	<b>Orientation to meaning</b>	
	<b>Restricted code</b>	<b>Elaborated code</b>
<b>Common term</b>	Public/everyday language	Formal language
<b>Relation to material base</b>	Specific, direct	Less specific, more indirect
<b>Communication modality</b>	Dominantly narrative	Analytical
<b>Relation to meaning</b>	Context dependent	Context independent
<b>Textual features</b>	Dominantly Lexical – one-word answers or short sentences, relaying individual facts/skills/operations	Dominantly Syntactic – relaying relationships, processes, and connections

*Source:* Compiled from Bernstein, 1990.

Bernstein contends that social relations regulate the meanings we create, which means that the way we think and speak is shaped by our social position: for example, a dentist speaks quite differently to his patients than he does to other dentists, and quite differently still to his wife. These relations, in turn, are shaped essentially not by linguistic features, but by a semantic feature, an orientation to implicit meaning.

## Regulatory rules: school leadership and management

All pedagogic discourse creates a moral regulation of the social relations of transmission/acquisition. Such a moral order is prior to, and a condition for instruction, the transmission of competences. Agencies and agents operating in what Bernstein calls the field of symbolic control exercise explicit normalizing functions: they produce general norms for law, health (physical, mental and social), administration, education, and for the legitimate production and reproduction of discourse itself. The school is the predominant normalizing agency in the field of education. The aim of symbolic control is to inscribe what is legitimate. The outcome is never certain: for the prospective acquirer,

the pedagogic situation is always a condition for someone else's order, but it carries within itself the potential for transforming the order of the imposing other. "Socialization into norms. . . is . . . always socialization both into another's voice and into one's own 'yet to be voiced'" (Bernstein, 1990, p.159). Bernstein's pedagogic device, is thus a symbolic ruler of consciousness in its selective creation, positioning, and oppositioning of pedagogic subjects. Creating regulative order in the school is, in the first instance, the job of the principal and school management. Teachers carry a massive regulatory burden in the classroom, but this occurs within a school ethos and order: we will return to the regulatory role of the teacher in Part 2, and confine ourselves at this point to school managers.

As international attention in the last decade and more has focused on calls for schools to improve performance in general, and to increase the equity of student achievement in particular, so the debate around the role of school leaders in improving performance has intensified. New conceptions of leadership have been defined, and new polarities set up, as researchers strive to find the most appropriate combination of leadership qualities and activities to respond to heightened public expectations of schools. Thus, the notion of the principal as a charismatic individual who exercises authority in a hierarchical manner is counterposed to the concept of distributed leadership, where functions are shared by school managers and teachers; the term instructional leadership gives priority to the role of the principals in directing schools towards effective teaching and learning, while the concept of transformational leadership emphasises the function of leaders as agents of social change.

The loosely defined nature of many of these terms (Prestine and Nelson, 2005) and the paucity of empirical evidence supporting claims made on their behalf (Leithwood, Jantzi, Earl, Watson, Levin, and Fullan, 2004) have moved more than one commentator to adopt a rather jaundiced view of the leadership literature. For example, Levin notes the existence of a serious problem regarding the knowledge base on educational leadership: "There are many viewpoints in the field and very little solid research supporting them. Much of what parades as research is opinion garbed in the language of research" (2006, p.43). According to Levin: "(t)wo of the challenges to leadership research . . . were the complexity of the leadership phenomenon and the degree to which values and goals of authors, rather than the research evidence itself, dominate findings and recommendations." (2006, p.41).

Nevertheless, the importance of leadership to the success of schools is undeniable. In their evaluation of England's National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NLS and NNS), which they judge to be one of the most ambitious and successful examples of large-scale school reform in the world to date, Leithwood *et al.* (2004) conclude that the nature and quality of leadership was a key reason for its success. Based on a large survey of English schools and case studies in 10 of these, the authors add a layer of complexity to some of the easy dichotomies frequently heralded in the literature: they conclude that transformational leadership can play an important role in school improvement, that such leadership may be widely distributed throughout the school, but that hierarchical and distributed forms of leadership both have important roles to play. Distributed leadership assumes a division of labour within the schooling system and allocates functions according to where and by whom they are best performed: under these circumstances, the challenge for leadership is communication and the coordination of the component parts. According to Leithwood *et al.* (2004), school principals perform three broad kinds of leadership functions in implementing the NLS and NSS: setting direction (and in particular fostering high expectations), redesigning the organisation, and developing people.

While leadership effects on student learning generally account for less of the variance than teacher effects (in developed countries at least), leadership creates the conditions under which teachers can work effectively: in other words, a school environment conducive to teaching and learning is a prerequisite for good school performance. In the words of Elmore and Fuhrman (2001), this entails fostering among teachers within a school a shared set of values and understandings about such matters as what they expect of students academically, what constitutes good instructional practice, who is responsible for student learning, and how individual students and teachers account for their work and learning. This is Bernstein's regulatory discourse.

But what is it that successful leaders do to improve teaching and learning in their schools? What practical advice can research provide to principals striving to improve performance? Two issues have emerged in the South African literature: time management, and curriculum leadership.

### Time management and institutional culture

An analysis of data collected from principals and teachers during the



SACMEQ study revealed high levels of teacher absenteeism and latecoming, as reported by principals. This problem is particularly widespread in the four poorest quintiles of the system, where 97–100 per cent of principals reported it as a problem, but a substantial proportion of schools in the most affluent quintile (26 per cent) also report experiencing the same problem. A regression analysis reveals that the negative effect associated with teacher absenteeism is large (around 82 test point scores on a sample mean of 500) and highly statistically significant (Van der Berg and Louw, 2006b). Gustafsson (2005) has calculated that if this problem were eliminated then SACMEQ scores would improve by nearly 20 per cent in poor schools and by some 15 per cent across the system. Multivariate regressions for the other SACMEQ countries revealed that for close to half of the countries this is not a significant explanatory variable; moreover, the significance of the variable in the case of South Africa is substantially higher than for any other country. Gustafsson speculates that because the problem is widespread across both rural and non-rural schools, it is probably not attributable to transport problems and long distances.

These conclusions are supported by one of the findings of the PPP<sup>3</sup> study: one management level indicator which stands out is whether or not the school keeps an attendance register for teachers (Taylor, Van der Berg, Burger and Yu, forthcoming). Two other time related indicators worth noting are that in only around half of PPP schools do children return promptly after break, and that in fewer than three-quarters does school start on time in the morning.

When asked about the problem of absenteeism and latecoming among teachers, most principals tend to shrug and write off the practice to the unreliability of public transport, a lack of teacher commitment, or union militancy. The failure on the part of these principals to exert a tight time-management regime in their schools is symptomatic of a general failure to take responsibility and to exercise control over their own work environment. It would seem that South African teachers, managers and officials have not transcended the dependency culture fostered by successive authoritarian regimes over the last three centuries. Elmore (2004) notes that a culture of passivity and failure is present in schools where managers, teachers and pupils assign causality for success or failure to forces outside their control. In contrast, in two separate surveys commissioned by the Department of

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<sup>3</sup> The Pupil Progress Project (PPP) was a school effectiveness cross sectional study undertaken in 2003 in a stratified random sample of 90 primary schools in the Western Cape.

Education into the characteristics of poor high schools which perform well in the SC exams (Malcolm, Keane, Hoohlo, Kgaka, and Ovens, 2000; Christie, *et al.*, 2007), it was found that a sense of responsibility and shared enterprise, a culture of hard work, and high value attached to good performance were strongly evident throughout these institutions: principals were focused, teachers dedicated and pupils motivated. In the 18 successful schools studied by Christie *et al.*, none were found to have significant degrees of latecoming or absenteeism among either teachers or learners.

In the face of poor teacher attendance, it would seem that learner absenteeism is not a major problem in South African schools (CASE/JET, 2007). This is a very positive feature of what is otherwise a poorly functioning system. Unfortunately, although potential learners keep showing up at school, it has become obvious that the majority of schools are highly ineffective in fulfilling the promise presented by the country's children.

Another area of time management over which principals have a great deal of control is in timetabling. Figures from the PIRLS study<sup>4</sup> indicate that South African schools spend significantly less time on reading than the majority of other countries who participated. As shown in Table 5, while nearly three quarters of South African schools spend less than 3 hours a week on reading, well under half of the participating schools in other countries do so; significantly lower proportions of South African schools are also found in the categories of schools who spend more than 6 hours a week or between 3 and 6 hours a week on reading, than the PIRLS mean.

**Table 5: Time spent on reading**

	>6 h/week	3–6 h/week	<3 h/week
<b>International mean</b>	25%	37%	44%
<b>South Africa</b>	10%	18%	72%

*Source:* Howie *et al.*, 2007

Furthermore many South African teachers spend less than half their time at school teaching. This finding was identified by Chisholm, Hoadley, Kivilu, Brookes, Prinsloo, Kgobe, Mosia, Narsee and Rule (2005), who, through a national survey verified by case studies in 10 schools, concluded that:

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<sup>4</sup> The Progress in International Reading Study, an investigation into Grade 4 reading performance, was conducted in 40 countries in 2006.



- Teachers work an average of 41 hours per week, out of an expected minimum of 43
- 41 per cent of this time is spent on teaching, which translates to 3.4 hours a day
- 14 per cent of in-school time is devoted to planning and preparation
- 14 per cent is spent on assessment, evaluation, writing reports and record-keeping

In strong contrast to this picture of a very loosely framed time regime in most schools, the two studies on poor schools that perform well (Malcolm *et al.*, 2000; Christie *et al.*, 2007) found that, without exception, time is a highly valued commodity in successful institutions: not only is punctuality observed during the school day, but additional teaching time is created outside of normal hours. Ensuring the effective use of time in any institution is essentially a leadership responsibility, and it would appear from the available evidence that it is a responsibility which the majority of South African principals abdicate.

There is also a policy dimension to the problem of time management: the study by Chisholm and her colleagues indicates that much time is spent by teachers during school hours completing forms which appear to serve little purpose other than bureaucratic compliance, such as formalistic planning documents, and extensive assessment reports on the performance of individual learners, supported by boxes of evidence for the latter. This is a classic example of how some regulations are self-defeating: designed to improve curriculum coverage and assessment, the onerous paperwork serves to distract teachers from the core task of teaching, thus effectively undermining curriculum completion. Such counterproductive forms of regulation recall the observation by Hubbard, Mehan and Stein (2006) that one characteristic of a good leader is to protect her staff from bad policy.

The extent to which time is used for teaching and learning is the most valid and obvious indicator of the extent to which the school is dedicated to its central task of transmission/acquisition. The evidence provided above marks the majority of South African schools as maintaining a very weakly framed regulative order, which not only creates a poor learning environment, but, in doing so, is likely to socialise children into lackadaisical work habits and a passive attitude toward their own future.

## Curriculum leadership

Elmore (2003; 2008) uses the term ‘internal accountability systems’ to signal the processes through which the school organises effective curriculum delivery. These include: designing school improvement strategies, implementing incentive structures for teachers and support personnel, recruiting and evaluating teachers, brokering professional development consistent with the school’s improvement strategy, allocating school resources towards instruction, and buffering non-instructional issues from teachers (Elmore, 2000). Citing Elmore’s notion of internal accountability, Christie *et al.* (2007) note that the specific ways in which internal organisation of the curriculum and monitoring of progress is managed in successful schools differed from one to another: in some it was the task of the principal, for others it was Heads of Departments (HODs), and in a few cases, active teachers; however, in all successful schools in their sample were strong internal accountability systems in place: these schools knew what constituted the work necessary to achieve good results, and they had systems in place to do the work and monitor it.

The literature, both international and local, is short on detail concerning the activities and instruments which constitute these curriculum delivery systems, providing little practical guidance to school leaders. Locally, the PPP study found a statistically significant association between improved learning and two curriculum management factors: whether maths teachers had their own copy of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) document, and whether the implementation of curriculum plans of Grade 6 maths and language teachers was monitored by school managers, which is done in only 56 per cent of schools according to principals, with 41 per cent of teachers agreeing (Taylor *et al.*, forthcoming).

## Sequencing rules: pacing and coverage in the classroom

We now turn to a more detailed examination of one element of pedagogic practice in South African classrooms. Here we look at the second of Bernstein’s pedagogic rules, which concerns the *sequencing* of classroom activities in order to facilitate acquisition of the intended curriculum. Sequencing implies a certain pace, or rate of acquisition, and it is this factor which we discuss at this point. In Parts 2 and 3 we will look more closely at the *criterial* pedagogical rules.

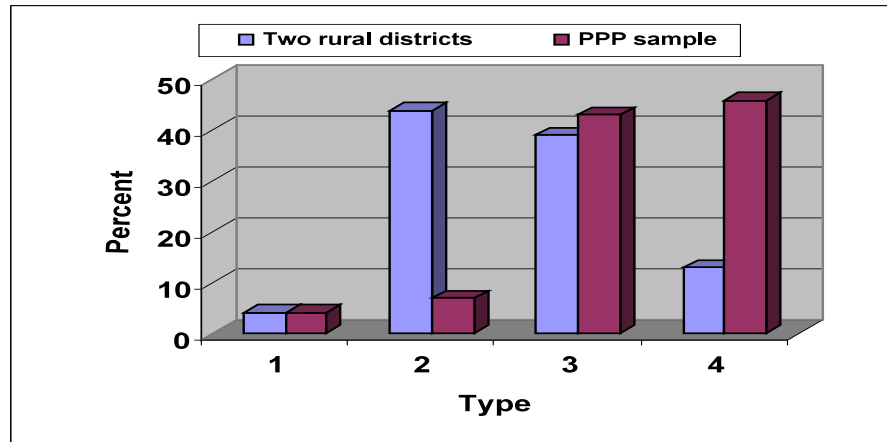
Explicit sequencing rules set out what competences children are expected to attain according to age: they construct the temporal project of the child, and may be inscribed in syllabuses, curricula, or rules of behavior (Bernstein, 1990). If the sequencing rules are implicit then the child initially is not aware of his/her temporal project, only the teacher is aware. South Africa attempted to introduce an implicit set of sequencing rules in 1996 with the introduction of Curriculum 2005. It was soon realized that such an implicit curriculum is inappropriate for the South African context, and it was replaced by the National Curriculum Statement in 2000. Apparently the DOE is of the view that the NCS is still considered too implicit, and hence the issuing of the Foundations for Learning Campaign, an attempt to specify in greater detail what teachers and learners are expected to do at successive grade levels of the primary school (Department of Education, 2008).

Reading is the most important skill a child learns in the early years. Once a child can read, independent solitary work is possible. S/he is introduced into non-oral forms of discourse, the rules of which are often at variance with those of oral forms; furthermore, school reading is often different from non-school reading (Bernstein, 1990). With increased reading proficiency the child becomes less dependent on the teacher and has access to alternative perspectives. Those unable to meet the sequencing rules become more dependent on the teacher and on oral forms of discourse.

By exposing the reader to descriptions of situations, ideas, and semantic and syntactic constructions outside of her experience, reading promotes the development of context-independent meanings, the understanding of principles and operations, and their application to new situations. Bernstein notes that local, context-dependent meanings generally come in the early stages of a pedagogic practice, and the understanding and application of principles come at a later stage, and the understanding of the principles of the principles even later. However, if children cannot meet the requirements of the sequencing rules and are caught up in the strategies of the repair system, which is more often the case with lower working class children than with more privileged learners, they are constrained by context-dependent meanings and a world of facticity. Such children are effectively excluded from the world of elaborated codes. Thus, the way the sequencing rules are applied distribute different forms of consciousness: while they promise what Michael Young (2007) has called 'powerful knowledge' to all, they often reinforce social inequality and disadvantage. Studies of sequencing and pacing in the majority of South African schools indicates that this is one of the key mechanisms responsible for poor academic performance and persistently high levels of inequality.

In Reeves' time-series study in 24 poor SES schools she found that 47 per cent of her sample experienced a pedagogical approach where the pace set was apparently very loosely bounded and appeared unconstrained by curriculum expectations. However, achievement gains across a single school year increased when teachers adjusted the pacing in their lessons in ways that were responsive to learners' levels of ability and progress. Reeves' data hints at the cumulative effects of curriculum coverage from one year to the next: coverage of grade 5 topics had a positive effect on pre-test scores of Grade 6 learners, indicating that, in relation to improving achievement outcomes of low SES learners, curricular pacing across time (inter-grade pacing over a number of school years) may be a more significant measure in relation to overall achievement status than gain across a single school year (Reeves, 2005; Reeves and Muller, 2005).

A striking feature of most South African classrooms is the snail's pace at which teachers progress through the curriculum, sometimes spending a whole lesson reading two or three sentences or talking about two or three maths problems. This slow pacing results in low levels of curriculum coverage over the year, discernable through an examination of children's workbooks, which commonly contain very low volumes of writing, often showing between ten and twenty A4 pages completed over a school year. Curriculum coverage in mathematics was assessed in the Khanyisa baseline (Taylor and Moyana, 2005) and the PPP (Taylor *et al.*, forthcoming) studies by analysing the work done in all the exercise books of the best learner in each class observed. Topics covered were checked against those specified in the National Curriculum Statement. Observations were done in October and extrapolated to estimate coverage for the year. This is a crude method of assessing coverage, which reveals neither the extent of coverage, nor the cognitive level at which the tasks identified in the work books are covered. The method of counting topics merely indicates whether these were addressed at all, at any level, for however brief a period during the year, and gives no indication as to the adequacy of coverage. They are thus a best case scenario. Comparison between the results found for the two studies (Figure 1) must be done with circumspection: the Khanyisa figures reflect the situation in Grade 3 maths classes in 24 schools in two rural districts in one of the country's poorest provinces, while the PPP results are for Grade 6 maths classes in a 90-school stratified random sample in the most highly developed province. Nevertheless, they indicate the kind of spread which occurs across the country on this indicator of teaching quality. They also reflect the bimodal distribution of maths scores in the South African school population identified by a number of authors (Gustafsson, 2005; Van der Berg and Louw, 2006b; Fleisch, 2008).

**Figure 1: Curriculum coverage, mathematics**

Key 4:  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more NCS topics completed over year  
 3: Between  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{3}{4}$  topics completed  
 2: Between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$   
 1: Less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  covered

Source: Taylor and Moyana, 2005; Taylor *et al.*, forthcoming

Classes in only 45 per cent of the PPP sample and 10 per cent of the Khanyisa sample were on track to complete the curriculum for the year, while 42 per cent of Khanyisa children and 7 per cent of PPP children were heading to complete less than half the number of topics specified by the curriculum.

## Homework: extending pedagogical time

Curricula cannot be acquired adequately using only school hours: Bernstein insists that school time must be supplemented by official pedagogic time at home, and the home must provide a pedagogic context and control of the pupil to remain in that context. The basis of homework is usually a textbook. This is an important area over which school principals have some influence. In the South African literature, two factors related to home educational practices are commonly associated with improved learning: reading and homework. In one of the early regression models run on the PPP data, the quantity of reading undertaken by children was very strongly associated with school performance, with children who read once a week having an advantage of about five percentage points in the literacy test over those who do no reading at home; when reading is done three times a week the advantage is increased to ten points, and those who read more than three times a week are likely to be about twelve points ahead (Taylor *et al.*, forthcoming). In the full regression models the effects of reading at home are more muted, but remain strongly significant.

On the question of homework, the PPP results indicate that children who do homework frequently have a performance advantage over those who do not. While this advantage is lower than that conferred by frequent reading, it is nevertheless significant. Yet, on average only 40% of South African Grade 6 children report having regular help with reading and maths homework (Strauss, 2005).

## Conclusion

South African children receive schooling of a significantly poorer quality than pupils in many of our much poorer neighbouring countries. This is true in all five poverty quintiles. The first problem with the majority of South African schools is a culture which tolerates a very loosely bounded approach to pedagogic time. This is evident at four levels:

- The school day is loosely framed, with teachers and learners in many schools coming and going as they please, and frequent stoppages for a host of reasons, such as preparing for the matric farewell, or training for athletics.
- The timetable is more of a guideline than a programme which requires strict adherence, and teachers spend considerably less teaching time class than specified in the timetable.
- Once in class, pacing is too slow to meet anywhere near all the requirements of the curriculum.
- Homework offers an important supplement to time spent at school, and requires systematic attention from school managers, teachers and parents, yet only two out of five Grade 6 children get regular school-focused pedagogical support at home.

As a result of these time management practices, children in most schools are provided very limited access to the elaborated code of analytical thought. Worse, school life socializes these children into placing a low value on time, an attitude which is likely to manifest in inefficient work habits, and low life expectations.

It would seem that something in the order of 80 per cent of the nation's schools fall into Hopkins, Harris and Jackson's (1997) Type I category of school growth states. In Elmore's (2003, 2008) terms, they do not have the internal accountability systems required to meet external accountability conditions. Internal accountability refers, in this sense, to the extent to which the institution is coherently focused on teaching and learning, maximises time for these activities, and organises its internal systems around improving instruction.

But building effective internal accountability systems is a difficult process and, according to Hopkins *et al.*, not easily achieved in failing schools without outside intervention and support. In many cases, the first thing to do is to replace the principal and to stabilise school organisation. There should be a clear and concerted focus on a specific, limited number of factors: tightening up attendance; the timetable and learning course must be organised; and specific and intensive teacher reskilling focused around how to run a classroom, plan seating, run a timetable, and use resources. Above all, though, as Hopkin and his colleagues stress, these schools should be given space, and external pressure withdrawn for a specified period, in order to allow the development plan to be put into effect because, in the end, if the school does not own the strategy it cannot be made to work.

Who would undertake the task of initial intervention in the tens of thousands of failing schools in South Africa? The obvious answer is provincial and district-level structures. However, most of these offices are themselves ineffective organisations, unwilling for political reasons, or unable for technical reasons, to intervene decisively in schools; the majority lack educational authority, based on expertise, and most are in the same dysfunctional state as the failing schools they purport to administer. According to Christie *et al.* (2007), the well-performing poor schools they visited are known to their districts, but do not necessarily draw support from districts; one of the principals remarked that District Officials who visited the school said they learnt from what they saw; in many of the schools, the lack of subject advisory support was mentioned as a problem. Principals and management staff expected expertise to be provided by the District Office, but often the training provided on the curriculum (especially NCS) was felt to be too little and of poor quality. The authors conclude, that:

[w]ithout a thorough and ongoing relationship with the District Office, which would include training, advice, and inspections, an important part of the systemic accountability and improvement system is missing.

(Christie *et al.*, 2007, p.85)



A priority for improving district impact, therefore, would be to train those officials responsible for school governance and management in organisational development, industrial relations and office administration, and to hold them accountable for the efficient management of their schools. In addition, the inspectorate envisaged by the Ministerial Commission on a National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (Government Gazette, 2009) may help in policing time management in schools.

However, the problem is too widespread and too deeply ingrained in the culture of schooling to be changed simply by improved training and tighter policing. The longer term project must be to move teachers toward a different habitus, where agency is intrinsic and the pursuit of knowledge the goal of professional life. We will return to this issue in subsequent chapters of this discussion.

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# Deconstructing language myths: which languages of learning and teaching in South Africa?

L Dalvit, S Murray and A Terzoli

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## Abstract

In this article we argue for the use of African languages as Languages of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) for native speakers of such language in South Africa. We believe that both public and academic debate is influenced by a set of 'language myths': 1) only one language should be used; 2) the earlier one starts using English as LoLT, the better; 3) using English as LoLT improves English proficiency. These myths be seen as a direct manifestation of Western hegemony, and English-functional arguments are often the terms of reference. We will try a different approach by highlighting the advantages of using an African language (i.e. isiXhosa) as LoLT and, whenever possible, we will try to put English on the 'defence stand'. The purpose of this paper is not to advocate the substitution of English with an African language. We believe that bilingual education is the appropriate choice for South Africa, but in order to achieve full equality between English and the African languages in education, arguments in support of the latter must be put forward proactively. With our paper, we hope to contribute to this new perspective.

## Introduction

In terms of language in education policy, the model used by speakers of powerful languages such as Russian, Chinese, French, Finnish, Afrikaans and English for that matter is mother tongue education coupled with the study of a second language (in most cases, English). In South Africa, the current policy for speakers of African languages has remained virtually unchanged since 1979. Most African students are expected to learn in their mother tongue up to grade four, and in either English or Afrikaans henceforth (Kamwangamalu, 2001). This approach can be classified as transitional bilingual education. It is not very different from one designed for an immigrant child in an English-speaking country such as the US. The linguistic situation of South Africa is, however, radically different from that of Western English-speaking countries.

For historical reasons, language in education policy and practice is a contentious issue (Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2000; Alexander 2001). The policy

developed under apartheid was an integral part of Bantu Education. Such policy was not informed by linguistic considerations, was not shaped by pedagogical considerations and, arguably, was not drafted for the empowerment of speakers of an African language. It is difficult to imagine how a model which was explicitly designed to enforce discrimination against speakers of an African language can now be used to promote equality and support economic and social development. Besides attempts to change the curriculum (met with mixed feeling by both teachers and students), not much has changed in the education system since the end of apartheid. Funding and infrastructure in most rural and township schools remains inadequate and most teachers were trained under Bantu Education.

The dominant role of English in the education of speakers of an African language is entrenched by a number of factors. English hegemony is supported by the demands of the global economy (see Wright, 2007). With reference to immigrant communities in Canada, Peirce (1995) argues that learning to function in a powerful language such as English represents an investment in what the author calls 'cultural capital'. Proficiency in such a language is a key to social integration and upward mobility. As noted by Pattanayak (1986), in developing countries the use of former colonial languages serves the interests of westernised elites than that of the majority of the population. To our knowledge, there is little empirical evidence that the past and current investment in English 'cultural capital' enables the majority of speakers of an African language to participate meaningfully in the global economy.

Language attitudes supporting the dominant role of English, both within the education system and in society as a whole, seem to indirectly contribute to the marginalisation of African languages. In a democratic country like South Africa, where language policy has to take all stakeholders into account, this has important implications. In this sense, English linguistic hegemony contributes to shaping important political decisions regarding the LoLT issue, which have real practical implications for speakers of an African language. The issue seems to have lost momentum over the last decade. We feel it should be brought back to the fore with renewed vigour.

In this paper, we start by deconstructing some of the language 'myths' which are often used in public and academic debate to support the current English-mainly policy. We then use isiXhosa, a previously marginalised indigenous African language widely spoken in the Eastern Cape provinces (Statistics South Africa, 2001), as an example to address various concerns associated with the use of African languages in education. In doing so, we loosely follow

Phillipson's (1992) taxonomy of intrinsic, extrinsic and functional arguments, bearing in mind their linguistic, educational and ideological implications.

## Deconstructing some language myths

Language in education issues have been the topic of extensive research on language attitudes, broader academic literature and public debate in the media (De Klerk and Bosch, 1993; Kamwangamalu, 2001; De Klerk, 2000a, 2000b; Wolff, 2002; Dalvit, 2004, Aziakpono, 2008). Three English-functional myths emerge, which support the exclusion of African languages from education: 1) only one language should be used; 2) the earlier one starts using English as LoLT, the better; 3) using English as LoLT improves English proficiency.

### Monolingual vs. bilingual education

As pointed out by Alexander (2001), the European romantic ideal of 'one nation, one language' still has a strong appeal in South Africa. The belief that, in order to be modern, peaceful and efficient, a country must have only one language is a simplification contradicted by evidence and common sense. In Europe itself, Switzerland, Belgium and Finland are successful examples of societal multilingualism. It is also worth noting that, while the study of English as a *lingua franca* for international and (in some cases) national communication is widespread, none of these countries use it as LoLT (McRae, 1997). Mqgashu (2004) highlights the different history and context of multilingual countries in Europe and Africa. This is an important point to bear in mind when drawing on European examples of language planning. In terms of the debate between advocates of multilingualism and bilingualism, however, such examples confirm that, under the appropriate circumstances, a multilingual approach can be successful.

An English-mainly or English-only educational policy seems unsuitable for South Africa. The reality of a multilingual African country is radically different from that of a predominantly monolingual country in the developed World. An exemplifying paradox is that an isiXhosa-speaking child in South Africa is supposed to go through the same model of transitional bilingual education as a Spanish-speaking child in California (see Baker, 2006), i.e. complete switch to English after the first phase.



Posing the question on LoLT in terms of a clear cut choice between English and isiXhosa implies the assumption that they cannot be used together and that ultimately only one language should be used. Research on the language attitudes of speakers of an African language from different educational backgrounds and at different levels in the education system (Smit, 1996; De Klerk, 2000; Bekker, 2002; Dalvit, 2004) shows that, whenever prompted with a clear-cut choice between English and an African language, most parents and students opt for the language they feel would empower them the most, i.e. English. Braam (2004), however, argues that, when students and their parents are well informed, they do not necessarily support an English-only policy. Asking 'to what extent should English and isiXhosa be used?' adds depth and complexity, and allows for a more comprehensive picture of the complex scenario students might have in mind. As noted by Bekker (2002), Dalvit (2004) and Aziakpoho (2008) enabling respondents to indicate the most in appropriate language for particular levels of study (primary, secondary, tertiary); subjects (sciences vs humanities) and domains (lessons, discussions, tutorials and practicals) highlights areas of support for the use of African languages in education.

A more extensive use of African languages as LoLT would reflect more accurately the multilingual reality of many speakers of an African language. According to the official policy, most African students who write Matriculation exams have been exposed to English as the only official LoLT and assessment for at least eight years (Holmarsdottir, 2005; Kamwangamalu, 2001). However, code-switching between English and the students' mother tongue is the norm rather than the exception in many rural and township schools (Heugh, 2000; Holmarsdottir, 2005; Kamwangamalu, 2001; Maake, 1994; Szanton, 2005; Simango, 2009). A teacher would normally interact with the students orally in a common African language, while referring to English books and using English subject-specific terminology.

Using isiXhosa as an additional LoLT could be seen as a formalisation of what is already the students' experience. Setati and Adler (2000, p.255) note how teachers are caught in the "dilemma of code-switching": using students' mother tongue to make communication possible while feeling the responsibility to teach in English. Teachers seemed to feel 'liberated' when the researchers endorsed the pedagogical value of the code-switching they commonly used in classroom practice (Setati and Adler, 2000).

African students are put in a somewhat paradoxical situation. In common practice, both English and their mother tongue are effectively used as



languages of learning and teaching for most of their study career. However, since grade four, English is the only official language of assessment (Holmarsdottir, 2005; Kamwangamalu, 2001). In the mind of many speakers of an African language, the code-switching which takes place in many schools for speakers of English as a second language is associated with the poor quality of education in such schools (Wolff, 2002). Such association is exemplified by the common reference to rural and township schools in terms of the African language spoken by the students (e.g. 'isiXhosa-medium schools'), although English is actually the official LoLT in most such schools. Association with poor quality is a deterrent from using such languages in education. When given a choice, it is not surprising that they would opt for the monolingual English education enjoyed by English speakers (see Kamwangamalu, 2001; De Klerk, 2000a, 2000b). The use of both English and an African language should be equally supported. Bilingual education *de facto* reflects the practice in many rural and township schools and the multilingual reality of many speakers of an African language.

### Early transition to English

In post-apartheid South Africa, there is a tendency among members of the emerging African middle class to enrol their children in schools where English is taught as a first language, and that were previously reserved for individuals classified as 'whites'. The assumption among advocates of an early switch to English seems to be that if an isiXhosa-speaking child uses only English in school like English-speaking children do, he or she will be as successful as them. According to various authors (De Klerk and Bosch, 1993; Kamwangamalu, 2001; De Klerk, 2000a, 2000b; Wolff, 2002; Dalvit, 2004; Aziakpono, 2008), African students and their parents support an early switch to English as the only LoLT. They believe this would give them better opportunities in life for further education and future employment.

This belief is probably supported by the commonsensical observation that African children who attend schools where English is the only LoLT since the beginning tend to have better life chances than their counterparts who attend rural and township schools where English is taught as a second language. The association between the use of English as LoLT and better life chances raises three types of objections. First of all, one could argue that better quality of education rather than the use of English as LoLT in schools for speakers of English as a first language determines better academic results and ultimately

better life chances. Secondly, a more thorough investigation is needed on the differences between African students who attend schools for speakers of English as a first, as opposed to a second language. If, as commonsensical observation would suggest, the former generally come from a more affluent background that would explain their better academic performance and life chances. Supporters of very different approaches to the LoLT issue (Borg and Borg, Buttigieg and Mayo, 2002; Boughey, 2007) agree that students from a privileged background are more likely to achieve academic success and high-status in society. A third objection to the association between early switch to English as LoLT and better performance among speakers of an African language is that this might hold only to a limited extent in the South African context. Research (Negash, 2002; Dalvit, in press) would suggest that speakers of an African language who attended schools for speakers of English as first language do not perform as well as native speakers of English, even in technical subjects such as Accounting or Computer Science. Among speakers of an African language, those who attended schools for speakers of English as a second language perform as well, if not better, than the others from the second year onwards.

The claim that early switch to English as LoLT does not entail better academic performance is supported by educational theory. Sweetnam-Evans (2001) advocates that maintenance or late transitional bilingual education is more likely to lead to academic success across the board than education in a second language forced on students by the circumstances. Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh (2002) support this point. These authors note that in the transition between the first phase of Bantu Education (when African languages were used for the first eight years of schooling) and the second phase (when the years of mother-tongue instruction were reduced to four), there was a drastic drop in the matriculation pass rates. Since matriculation exams were written in either English or Afrikaans throughout, this seems to support both the claim that prolonged instruction in one's mother tongue offers cognitive advantages and that bilingual education leads to better performance.

Although much of the literature on early switch to English is somewhat out of date, as noted in the introduction, not much has changed in the last few decades. Walters (1996) argues that pupils are not trained in English well enough to use it as LoLT before the shift takes place. MacDonald (1990) agrees that the shift happens too early. She notes the discrepancy between the vocabulary of English words pupils have learnt by the end of fourth grade (800) and the one required for fifth grade (5 000). Other authors (Szanton, 2005; Wolff, 2002; Holmarsdottir, 2005) argue that low standards and high

drop-out rates in many rural and township schools might be due, among other things, to the early transition to a LoLT many students are not familiar with.

The difficulties experienced by speakers of an African language can be explained in terms of the psycholinguistic theory concerning the relationship between first and second language in education elaborated by Cummins (1986). This distinguishes between ‘basic interpersonal communicative skills’ (BICS) and ‘cognitive/academic language proficiency’ (CALP). Cummins claims that the two languages of a bilingual can develop independently up to the BICS level, but at the CALP level they work inter-dependently. This means that, in a decontextualised and cognitively demanding situation, the level of CALP in the second language depends on its stage of development in the first language. A failure in the development of CALP in the first language inhibits the acquisition of academic language skills in the second language. This is known as the interdependence hypothesis.

Two studies from Tanzania yield contradicting results on the use of Kiswahili as additional LoLT. While Mqgashu (2004) found that the use of an African language as LoLT disadvantaged students, Brock-Utne (2007) found that it encouraged active participation. With reference to studies in the South African context, Luckett (1995, p.75) notes that

Many Black pupils could not explain in English what they already knew in their first languages; nor could they transfer into their first languages the new knowledge that they had learnt through English. In other words, they found that pupils had failed to achieve CALP in either language.

Later studies (Setati, Adler, Reed and Bapoo, 2002) seem to suggest that African students *do* use their mother tongue (together with English) for exploratory talk and mathematics conceptual discourse. The above paragraph could therefore be reinterpreted as indicating that the understanding students achieved through code-switching between English and their mother tongue could not be assessed using either of the two languages in isolation.

### Using English as LoLT improves English proficiency

A strong argument against the use of African languages in education is that it would prevent students from achieving proficiency in English. Once again, this might be based more on the association between code-switching and low levels of English proficiency in many rural and township schools, rather than on pedagogical considerations.

Baker (2006) discusses Cummins's theory, highlighting that instruction through the home language does not prevent the development of academic proficiency in a second language. On the contrary, according to the interdependence hypothesis, once academic proficiency is developed in one language, it can be transferred to another, given enough motivation and exposure to the target language. Sweetnam-Evans (2001) notes that students who are not taught entirely in English are likely to have higher levels of English proficiency than those who are taught only in English, provided that they have opportunities to practice it. Using English as the sole LoLT, on the other hand, does not necessarily improve one's proficiency in it.

The South African example clearly shows that a language policy favouring the use of English as LoLT does not guarantee higher levels of English proficiency. Since 1979, most African children have been officially taught only in English from fourth grade onwards. In spite of this, according to Webb (1996), less than 25 per cent of the South African black population has a reasonable competence in English. Gough (1996) quotes a number of other studies on English proficiency among black South Africans, with figures (depending obviously on the definition of *proficiency*) ranging from 61 per cent (SABC, 1993) to 32 per cent (Schuring, 1993).

Although these figures refer to research conducted over a decade ago, to our knowledge little has changed in the education system (see Heugh, 2000), nor is there a clear indication of an increase in English proficiency among speakers of an African language. There are a number of reasons for this. Most black children, especially in rural areas, have very little contact with English outside the school. Setati *et al.* (2002) speculate that this could explain why teachers in rural areas expressed particularly negative attitudes towards code-switching, since the classroom is the only domain where students are exposed to English and have a chance to practice it.

Another possible reason for low levels of English proficiency is that teachers themselves (most of whom have been trained under Bantu Education) are not necessarily proficient in the language (Webb, 1996). While code-switching in the classroom is often blamed for low levels of English proficiency, a pragmatic approach would acknowledge the fact that, under present circumstances, using English as the sole LoLT in rural and township schools is simply impracticable.

## Intrinsic arguments

According to Phillipson (1992), intrinsic arguments refer to ‘what a language *is*’, i.e. to its inherent properties as a language. From the linguistic point of view, African languages are equal to English and like any other language, can be used to express a variety of ideas. In this section we discuss the advantages of isiXhosa over English from the structural point of view as well as from the point of view of modernisation, which is a crucial issue with reference to the use of a language in education.

### Language structure

The spelling and grammar of African languages are much simpler than the English ones. In spite of the potential implications for the use of African languages as LoLT, the comparison between the spelling and grammar of English and African languages is hardly ever mentioned in the academic debate and in research on language attitudes.

Unlike African languages, English does not have a phonetic spelling. The discrepancy between the way English words are written and the way they are pronounced is problematic both for first and second language speakers (Spencer, 2002; Birch, 2007). On a more general note, it is ironic that English, which is considered the main language of scientific and technological innovation, relies on an archaic and opaque spelling (Carter, 2006). Indigenous South Africa languages have been standardised in relatively recent times (see Smit, 1996; Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2000) partly as a result of this, in African languages the way words are written corresponds quite accurately to the way they are pronounced. Arguably, this makes it easier to acquire basic literacy in any of them than in English.

The different structure of African languages compared to English might cause problems in scientific discourse. For example, the African languages make little use of logical connectives, which are a common feature of scientific writing. African languages do not use the English articles ‘the’ and ‘a’, hence ‘copper is *a* metal which conducts electricity’ and ‘copper is *the* metal which conducts electricity’ could cause confusion when written in an African language (Grayson, cited in Finlayson and Madiba, 2002, p.48).

One might respond to these criticisms by pointing out that English is also

ambiguous in some cases. As a counter-example, the sentence 'copper is the metal in the cable which conducts electricity' does not clearly indicate whether the conductor is copper, metal or cable. Its equivalent in isiXhosa is not ambiguous, since different nouns belong to different classes. For instance, in 'ikopolo sisinyithi esikumbhobho *sihambisa* umbane' the use of '*sihambisa*' instead of '*ohambisa*' indicates that the metal conducts electricity, and not the cable. This is an example of a distinction which is useful in making further inferences (e.g. a metal plate conducts electricity, but an empty plastic cable does not), and which is marked linguistically in an African language but not in English.

### Technical terminology

One of the critiques levelled to the use of African languages in education is their alleged lack of appropriate terminology. Wolff (2002) attributes the underdevelopment of African languages to the early switch to English as LoLT. In fact, a language can develop fully only through use, particularly as LoLT in advanced levels of education.

The possibility of using terminology from the apartheid era is somewhat controversial. On one hand, Heugh (2000) notes that the terminology developed during the first phase of Bantu Education (1953–1976), when African languages were used as media of instruction for the first eight years of school, is still there and is continually adapted in the code-switching that still takes place in rural and township schools today. She argues that such terminology could be revived and further developed for academic use. On the other hand, one must consider that under apartheid corpus planning for the African languages was often informed by the interests of the government rather than those of the relevant language communities. New terms were developed simply to support the façade of official status in the former homelands (Van Huyssteen, 2003). The result was general bad quality of the terminology developed, which might account for the difficulties in promoting the use of new terminology in the African languages.

In the New South Africa, the work of apartheid's Language Boards was taken over by a number of language planning bodies coordinated by the Pan South



African Language Board (PanSALB).<sup>1</sup> In recent years, various projects (e.g. PRAESA, Translate.org.za, Rhodes SANTED programme) have sprung up to spearhead the development and implementation of terminology in the African languages (see Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh, 2002; Van Huysteen, 2003; Sam, Dalvit and Machula, 2008). These combined efforts have led to the collection and/or development of a considerable amount of technical terminology in various areas, ranging from Health Sciences to Information Communication Technology (ICT).

According to Van Huyssteen (2003), the most common strategies of word creation in African languages are compounding, derivation and borrowing. IsiXhosa, like many other African languages, is a very descriptive and idiomatic language. This makes it easy to create new words by combining existing ones. This strategy for word creation is called compounding. New technical terms created in this way are arguably very suggestive to native speakers, as they link to the existing semantic clouds of related words. An example in English would be *washing powder*, which has got clear semantic links with *washing machine* and *washing line*, but also shares some characteristics with *cocoa powder* and *gun powder*. A rather famous example of an isiXhosa compound is *umabonakude* (literally ‘you can see things from far’) which means ‘television’.

The morphology of isiXhosa makes the creation of words by derivation easy. For example, the root ‘-ntu’ can be found with a combination of prefixes such as *abantu* (meaning ‘people’), *oluntu* (meaning ‘community’) and *ubuntu* (meaning ‘humanity’). The common root makes the semantic relationship between these words immediately clear. Halliday and Martin (1993) note how a similar characteristic in Chinese support scientific discourse, whenever scientific classification corresponds to commonsensical one. An example with English would be ‘berry’. For a native speaker of English, it is immediately clear that ‘blackberry’, ‘blueberry’, ‘strawberry’ etc. belong to the same class of things, i.e. berries. Halliday and Martin, however, warn that this type of inferences might be misleading when commonsensical taxonomies do not reflect the scientific ones, as is often the case in health sciences, for instance.

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The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) is a Subcommittee of the Senate concerned with the protection of linguistic diversity and language rights. It functions both as a watchdog on the implementation of language policy and as an advisory body for the government.

In terms of strategies to create new words, African languages are following the same path as other languages (see Pulcini, 1995 for an example with Italian). More and more English borrowings are used, especially in the scientific and technological field (Pluddeman, Mati, Mahlalela-Thusi, 2000; Setati *et al.*, 2002). This can allow for the lexicon to grow very fast, in the same way the English lexicon grew by borrowing existing scientific and technical terms from other languages. If one considers English borrowings as part of the lexicon instead of examples of code-switching, isiXhosa seems to be already suitable for scientific and technological discourse.

IsiXhosa seems to offer flexibility in integrating words from other languages (especially English and Afrikaans). Unlike English, where words of Greek and Latin origin are marked by their suffixes (e.g. -logy, -ism etc.) and follow their own morphological rules, in isiXhosa most borrowings are fitted into existing noun classes (mostly classes nine and ten), usually with some orthographic adaptation (e.g. *idesika* – ‘desk’, *iidesika* – ‘desks’). This seems to allow for a more harmonious integration of borrowings into the existing grammatical structures.

Many language developers as well as common speakers of African languages have negative attitudes towards code-switching (see Finlayson and Madiba, 2002). This phenomenon, called *language purism*, might be a legacy of apartheid’s ideology, in which languages were an integral part of separate and ‘pure’ cultural and social identities (see Webb and Kembo-Sure, 2000; Kamwangamalu, 2001). This might still be reflected in the curriculum and passed on to students in classroom teaching of the African languages today (Barkhuizen, 2001). Madiba (2001, p.74) stresses the communicative value of language and advocates a pragmatic approach, which “has the capacity to open up the African languages for new terms through borrowing and at the same time, to enable non-specialists to understand the relevant concepts as they are designated by indigenous terms of their languages”.

## Extrinsic arguments

Extrinsic arguments refer to ‘what a language *has*’, i.e. the resources associated with it. These can be either immaterial resources (e.g. teachers, knowledge) or material resources (e.g. books and teaching material). The issue of costs associated with developing and implementing such resources is crucial to the debate.



## Immaterial resources

From the point of view of immaterial (human) resources, the use of African languages in education offers a clear advantage compared to English: many teachers in South African schools are speakers of an African language. Conversely, Webb (1996) doubts that there are enough teachers who are sufficiently proficient in English to teach it as a second language let alone using it as LoLT. Whether this is the case or not, African languages are informally used as additional media of instruction in education (Heugh, 2000; Setati and Adler, 2002).

It would arguably be possible to formalise this situation and re-train teachers to use code-switching between English and the students' mother tongue as an effective educational tool. Formalising code-switching seems to be a more viable solution than attempting to get teachers and students who share the same first language to communicate in a second language they are not fully proficient in (see also Simango, 2009). This claim is supported by the fact that, in spite of the considerable pressures to use English as the sole LoLT, this is not actually happening in the classroom.

The use of English gives access to a large body of international knowledge. As noted by Alexander (1995), however, exposure to and uncritical assimilation of knowledge produced internationally might lead to cultural dependency as well as misconception of the peculiarity of the South African context. In the words of this author:

We have to be wary of any simple transplanting of the orthodox multicultural paradigm from European and North American theories of plural societies. In South Africa, the sim-plest adoption or implementation of such theories, under present conditions, tends to revive and to reinforce Apartheid structures and patterns (p.40).

Knowledge relevant to the African context must be made available in a language the majority of African people understand. Simango (2009) argues that there are enough African scholars to produce knowledge in African languages. Wa Thiong'o (2003) notes that the knowledge produced by such scholars, if written in English, is inaccessible to masses of Africans.

## Material resources

Retaining English as the main LoLT allows for the use of the existing material

resources in English and saves the costs of developing resources in African languages (Titlestad, 1996; see also Mqgqashu, 2004). A possible critique to this point of view is that creating new and culturally-appropriate material for speakers of an African language might be more efficient than clinging on to existing resources.

Existing resources seem to be ill-suited to the South African context. The English teaching materials currently used are not necessarily culturally appropriate, while subject experts with good English proficiency do not necessarily have the appropriate linguistic and cultural understanding for all learning contexts (Annamalai, Jernudd and Rubin, 1986; Alexander 2001). A similar critique could be levied to the suggestion by Mahlalela-Thusi and Heugh (2002) that teaching material and technical terminology could be revived from the first phase of Bantu Education. These teaching resources were shaped by apartheid ideology and would need to be extensively revisited.

Language issues are partly responsible for the current drop-out rate of above 70 per cent (and for the relative costs) in primary and secondary school in the townships and rural areas. A document by the CHE (2001) suggests that the language-medium issue is probably one of the factors determining the unacceptably low pass rate at tertiary level and argues that the present situation would be unsustainable if real cost effectiveness were taken into account. Research commissioned by the World Bank indicates that developing material and training teachers for multilingual education in South Africa would imply a very small increase on the education budget (Heugh, 2000).

While the current model appears to be dysfunctional, a more extensive use of African languages as LoLT could have beneficial effects on education and society at large. Such benefits are difficult to gauge at the present stage. As an example, Alexander (2001) suggests that investments in multilingual education would support the development of an African languages industry, with positive spin-offs for a previously disadvantaged segment of the population.

In a country characterised by unresolved tensions fuelled by unequal distribution of resources, dedicating resources to the promotion of African languages could allow a wider section of the population to become part of the productive cycle (Hinton, 2001). Wright (2007) notes that some scholars might support the development and use of African languages to defend 'project funding and personal career trajectories'. Likewise, one could argue that African academics who have mastered English proficiency might

advocate its use in order to entrench their position and distance themselves from the mass of speakers of an African language.

## Functional argument

Functional arguments refer to ‘what a language *does*’, i.e. its functions in a given society and the resources it gives access to. In this section we discuss the instrumental as well as the symbolic value of isiXhosa in South Africa.

### Instrumental value of language

In order to address practical issues connected with the use of 11 official languages, Alexander (2001) proposes to develop a Common Sotho and a Common Nguni. These could be easily spoken and understood by speakers of languages in the Sotho and Nguni families respectively. This would cut the number of official languages from 11 to 6, thus increasing efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The flip side of the coin is that it would flatten some of the linguistic diversity of the country and further marginalise smaller languages such as Xitsonga and Tshivenda.

A possible alternative would be to promote mutual learning and use of languages within the same family. For instance, isiXhosa is mutually intelligible with other Nguni languages (Alexander, 2001). It is therefore understood (or arguably easy to learn) for almost half of the South African population. In the educational context, this means that materials could be exchanged, thus cutting costs.

The issue of multilingual classes, though pertinent mainly to Gauteng, features prominently in the debate. A possible explanation is that, because of its presence in the media and since it is the economic engine of the country, Gauteng is often considered a reference point for the rest of South Africa. One might argue that, because of historical reasons, most classrooms in the rest of the country are linguistically homogeneous; students who do not speak the local African language are usually under considerable social pressure to learn it. A second, possibly more plausible explanation is that multilingual classrooms exemplify an ideological construction of the language issue which, for historical reasons, is still very strong.

## Symbolic value of language

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) observe that the use of language as a marker of social identity is far less common and weaker in Africa than it is, for instance, in Europe. In South Africa, however, the association between language and social identity is very strong as a consequence of past policies. Herbert (1992) argues that, during apartheid, language identification was encouraged and language borders were enforced in order to keep different communities separate and, possibly, divided.

The recognition of official status to African languages in the homelands and mother tongue education were part of a strategy to reinforce identification with one's language. Language was the main criteria according to which different groups of black people were divided and often put in competition with each other (for jobs in the mines, for instance). This favoured the apartheid policy of divide-and-rule. The process through which languages in South African have acquired strong political connotations and strong ideological and symbolic value as markers of social identity is discussed by Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000). This phenomenon can cause linguistic intolerance and may lead to future conflicts.

The politicised nature of South African languages makes it difficult to discuss issues such as mother-tongue education, which in the mind of most speakers of an African language is associated with the divisive policies of the past. Since most classes, especially at tertiary level, are multilingual, support for any African language as LoLT might be interpreted as giving speakers of that language an unfair advantage. Research on language attitudes at tertiary level (Dyers, 1998; Dalvit, 2004) suggests that this might be one of the main arguments against the use of African languages in the educational context, even in linguistically homogenous situations. This seems to suggest that such attitudes might be the result of an ideological construct as well as of practical considerations.

Ironically, attitudes among speakers of an African language entrench the dominant position of English, not so much as a neutral *lingua franca* but as equally unassailable by all speakers of an African language. This reinforces hierarchical language structures, with English (and to some extent Afrikaans) at the top and the African languages at the bottom.

In spite of the ideologically constructed view that the use of English promotes linguistic equality among African languages, they enjoy different status

according to the number and influence of their speakers. IsiXhosa comes second only to isiZulu in terms of number of speakers among the 11 official South African languages. IsiXhosa-speaking Transkei is considered the historical cradle of the African National Congress, and many prominent figures in the struggle (Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Govan Mbeki, Robert Sibukwe, and Oliver Thambo) were isiXhosa speakers. Thabo Mbeki was also a speaker of isiXhosa, and so were the majority of members of cabinet. This led to suspicions that isiXhosa speakers might be building a powerful lobby around ethnic affiliation, in what has been called a Xhosa *nostra* (*Daily Dispatch*, 18 May 2002). The issue gained prominence in the media during the race with current president Jacob Zuma, an isiZulu speaker. This supports the fear of rising interlinguistic tensions, envisaged by Herbert (1992) as a possible consequence of his politicisation of the South African languages.

## Conclusions

In response to our own question, English can and definitely should be used in the education of African students in South Africa. Its dominant role, however, is symptomatic of hegemonic structures which, we feel, need to be deconstructed. From the ideological point of view, it hampers the process of social transformation in the education system, by *de facto* entrenching an official language policy which was designed to disempower speakers of an African language.

From the practical point of view, the current English-mainly model adopted in most rural and township schools does not seem to produce educational excellence or English proficiency. African languages, though still in the process of being developed, are linguistically equal to English. They can rely on material resources which are culturally appropriate and on immaterial resources (i.e. teachers) which are already in place. Transformation of the educational system to make a more extensive use of African languages is relatively cost effective, if compared with the cost of the currently inefficient system. The fear that a more extensive use of African languages would fuel tensions seems to be motivated by ideological constructs inherited from apartheid rather than practical considerations.

In summary, we feel that the cause of bilingual education in South Africa needs to gain a new momentum. Both on the practical and on the ideological level, this would better reflect the reality of the new society promised after the

end of apartheid. Language in education remains a crucial issue to address in the transformation of the currently dysfunctional education system.

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# Epistemological access as an open question in education

Heila Lotz-Sisitka

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## Introduction

In his book *Learning to Teach in South Africa* Morrow (2007)<sup>1</sup> argues that teacher education's ultimate aim is *to enable epistemological access<sup>2</sup> to knowledge in the modern world*, and that there is a need to find new ways of thinking about teaching in South Africa if we are to meet the challenge of enabling all learners to gain such epistemological access. Morrow relates problems of epistemological access to the dominance of an empiricist epistemology in education, and he also comments on how this is obscured by the ideologies of Outcomes Based Education and learner-centred education (with attendant constructivist, relativist assumptions about knowledge). These problems, he argues, have come to shape curriculum thinking, and hence teaching practice, creating a muddled epistemological context in which teaching practices are taking place. He argues for a *realist focus* but he does not elaborate on what such a realist focus might mean for enabling epistemological access or for associated teaching practice or for teacher education. He does, however, propose that systematic learning is a necessary way forward.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper will also be published in an edited book which collects a series of papers that respond to Morrow's (2007) book '*Learning to teach in South Africa*' entitled 'Retrieving teaching in South Africa: a dialogue with Wally Morrow' (Shalem, Y. and Pendlebury, S. (Eds) (in press) UCT Press, Cape Town). The paper was first presented in a Kenton Education Conference Symposium, which led to the publication of this collection.

<sup>2</sup> I understand this to mean that teachers have a *teaching practice* responsibility that enables learners to gain access to *particular forms of knowledge* – in this case Morrow seems to think it is forms of knowledge that are valued in the modern world. In the formal school system, this has traditionally meant that teachers are expected to support learners to gain access to propositional or more abstract forms of knowledge, since they would not need to go to school to simply encounter more experiential knowledge of the variety that they encounter in the every day. This has led to distinctions between context dependent knowledge, and context independent knowledge (Gamble, 2006); and school knowledge and everyday knowledge (Daniels, 2001); and debates on differentiation and de-differentiation (Muller, 2006).

In this paper, I reflect on the epistemological muddle that Morrow points to, and I engage with his proposed solution i.e. a *realist focus*, and what it might mean for *teacher education*. I also propose that the epistemological muddle is not only a South African phenomenon, but that its roots may lie (partially) in the wider transition from high modernity (Morrow's 'modern world') to reflexive or late modernity as described by Ulrich Beck (1992, 1999) and other sociologists such as Giddens (1999) and Delanty (1999). In this transition, two major critiques of epistemology have emerged, the first being the rejection of empiricist epistemologies, and the second being a more recent rejection of relativist epistemologies (Delanty, 1999). Out of this is an emerging return to realism, but of a different kind to the empiricist realism that characterised the positivist era (Sayer, 2001). The paper argues that this changing epistemological context has implications for how teachers might engage with the practice of *enabling epistemological access* in schools, and it has consequences for teacher education practice too, which I also discuss.

## A methodological note

To shed light on the consequences of the epistemological muddle that Morrow alerts us to for learning, and to probe what this might mean for teacher education practice relating to enabling epistemological access, I centre the discussion on four case stories of teaching practices observed in our research programme.<sup>3</sup> These case stories were purposefully selected from a wider set of similar, yet slightly different practices reported on in a range of case studies undertaken mostly in Eastern Cape rural schools, as such they provide insight into the relationship between teaching practice and enabling epistemological access in this context.

They are not isolated cases, in the sense that numerous similar cases have been observed, but the caveats of generalisation from cases remain an impediment to making wider claims from these four cases. Bassey (1999) does argue, however, that it *is* possible to make tentative or 'fuzzy generalisations' from

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<sup>3</sup> The research programme focuses on the relationship between 'Environment and Sustainability Education and Educational Quality and Relevance'. This research programme was first established through a Rhodes University/NRF research programme into environmental education, curriculum and learning, and later extended to a SADC research programme into the relationship between Education for Sustainable Development and Educational Quality and Relevance. It consists of some 20 M.Ed half thesis case studies, and staff research projects. We are currently in a phase of synthesising the research, this paper being one contribution amongst others.

cases, particularly if similar patterns begin to emerge in a range of relatively similar cases. Sayer (2001) argues that all research takes place on a continuum between intensive and extensive research, with intensive research providing causal explanations of the production of certain objects or events, which might not necessarily be representative, while extensive research produces descriptive quasi-representative ‘generalisations’ that lack explanatory penetration. Even research that claims to be representative of a whole population suffers from difficulties of being generalisable to other populations at different times and places.

The cases presented here are more intensive in nature. A realist analysis of the cases allows the discourses of the stories to be related to their referents and contexts, since text-like representations are only ever partial representations of reality. In this regard Sayer (2001, p.20) states that “Much of what happens does not depend on or correspond to actors’ understandings; there are unintended consequences and unacknowledged conditions and things can happen to people regardless of their understandings.” A wider literature review on curriculum implementation issues facing the South African schooling system<sup>4</sup> reveals many of the issues raised in these stories, providing wider contextual evidence that the four cases presented might not be ‘isolated’, but that similar causal influences and conditions are shaping teaching practices relating to the enabling of epistemological access in South African schools. It is at the level of causal influences that it is possible to make the ‘fuzzy generalisations’ referred to by Bassey (1999).

As such, the cases provide further illustrations of much of what is being learned about the context of education in South Africa today, at least since the advent of outcomes-based education, strengthening the arguments that have been put forward by educators such as Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999) and Muller (2000, 2001, 2006) for ‘reclaiming knowledge’.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example: Taylor and Vinjevoold (1999); Jansen and Christie (1999); Harley and Wedekind (2004); Lotz-Sisitka and Raven (2001); Young and Gamble (2006); Morrow (2007).

## A realist interpretation of some teaching practices

### Case stories of teaching practice that (don't) enable epistemological access

The stories presented here are in many senses 'negative cases' in that they report on teaching practices that essentially fail to enable epistemological access.<sup>5</sup> They are drawn from teaching practices in a range of different Learning Areas, since our interest has been to examine environmental learning processes in a range of different Learning Areas in the National Curriculum Statement. The schools are all rural Eastern Cape public schools, by and large all are subject to the range of contextual, historical and socio-economic conditions affecting rural education as described by the Nelson Mandela Foundation in their 2005 study on 'Emerging Voices'. The full scope of these will not be reported here, but most are former homeland schools with inadequate resource provisioning, teachers who were educated and trained under Bantu Education, and communities that are affected by poverty and socio-economic stresses. The reason for choosing these negative cases was to sharpen our observations of what questions arise for teaching practice, and for teacher education. The cases were not chosen to vilify teachers, but rather to allow us to develop a critical and emergent response framework for teacher education. As such, these practices allowed for a deeper realist causal analysis, opening space for considering what constraints could be absented to inform new teacher education practices.

The first story, rooted in an earlier more personal research experience, started a deeper probing of teaching practices related to epistemological access in our research programme.

#### **Story 1: The mutualism/commensualism homework**

*About 5 years ago a 12-year-old child living on our farm made a simple request, one made by children everywhere 'Please help me with this homework'. Looking into the homework, I found that he had been asked to*

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<sup>5</sup> 'Negative cases' were selected in relation to the expectations of what it means to enable epistemological access in a modern world as defined by curriculum norms and expectations, and knowledge forms presented in the curriculum (i.e. the assumptions of modern education systems). Positive cases could also have been selected, but for this analysis I chose negative cases as they appear to be more **analytically productive** for understanding the issues facing teachers, and teacher education in South Africa. They were not chosen to vilify teachers, or to place the blame on teachers, as outlined in the realist reading of the cases.



*explain and then draw pictures of two science concepts 'commensualism and mutualism'. Having practiced as a primary school teacher myself, I immediately assessed that he was being asked to distinguish between and explain these concepts. I asked him: Did the teacher give you any materials, do you have a textbook, and do you know what the words mean? The answer to all of this was 'no'. We then started to resolve the problem – first by using the dictionary (which was not very helpful as it simply provided us with a more detailed explanation of the concepts in abstract terms). I then checked my understanding of the dictionary concepts by asking my husband (an ecologist) to help us explain the difference between the two concepts. We then took some books from our natural history bookshelf, and we looked for pictures in the books, and in some magazines which illustrated these two concepts. Mercifully we found a picture of a buffalo and some oxpeckers, and a mushroom/fungi growing on a tree trunk. We went into the field and looked at the cows, and noticed an egret sitting just near the cows in the field. We also found some lichen growing on a tree near the house. With these resources at hand – the dictionary, the pictures and the examples in the field, I was able to explain the difference between these two concepts and the child could draw his pictures and write his explanations. After about 90 minutes the homework was complete, and one could say that the child had gained 'epistemological access' to some modern scientific/ecological concepts. He got full marks for the homework, and the teacher complimented him for exemplary work. He reported that he was the only child able to complete the homework.*

*If this was just an isolated incident, it could be treated as an interesting curiosity. However, this pattern was repeated over a period of five years with Mathematics homework, Geography homework, Life Orientation homework, English homework, Technology homework and even Arts and Culture<sup>6</sup> homework, with different teachers each time. The result of this was that the child's experience of schooling was littered with 'foreign words' that apparently held little meaning; concepts that were not accessible to him through the cultural resources in his life world (except through the innovative strategy he used in asking for help with his homework through which he could access other cultural resources and a mediation process). Eventually this was*

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<sup>6</sup> I recall one instance where he was asked to compare the clothes, religious symbols, food and activities of Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Africans. He got as far as writing that Africans wear Jeans and T-Shirts before coming to ask for help with the homework. Completing this homework required a trip to the library and to some religious establishments in town, and due to the impossibility of the task, some simplistic renditions (i.e. stereotyping) of richly textured cultures and cultural practices, showing that it can also be the nature of the task that creates epistemological access problems.

*not enough, and last year he dropped out of school in grade 11, despite the fact that he was a motivated student, keen to learn, and intellectually capable.*

Much has been written about the distinction between school knowledge and everyday knowledge, the different structures of knowledge (vertical and horizontal) and how these ought to be developed and mediated through progressive sequencing of knowledge, systematic learning and concept clarification (Bernstein, 1990, 1999; Daniels, 2001; Muller, 2000; Gamble, 2006). Davydof (1995) argued that the process of meaning making should be one of ‘ascending from the abstract to the concrete’, which was “. . . extended by Hedegaard and Chaiklin (1990) into a conceptualisation of teaching and learning as a ‘double move’ between situated activity and subject matter concepts.” (Daniels, 2001, p.97). This case story therefore raises a question about the teaching practices necessary to allow this ‘double move’ to take place, in order to enable epistemological access at the interface of concept and context; or school knowledge and everyday knowledge?

### **Story 2: Under-teaching and vestiges of teacher memory**

*Story 2 involves a teacher who wrote the following Assessment Standards in her Lesson Plan for a Grade 7 lesson focussing on Learning Outcome 1 (Health Promotion) in the Life Orientation Learning Area which expected learners to ‘make informed decisions regarding personal, social and environmental health’:*

- *Critically analyse the **causes of common diseases** in relation to socio-economic and **environmental** factors [emphasis here indicates the connection points made by the teacher].*
- *Demonstrate informed, responsible decision making about health and safety.*
- *Examine health and safety issues related to violence and propose alternatives to violence as well as counter strategies.*

*In the lesson she did the following: she asked learners to answer some questions about what they know about common diseases, and she listed some causes of common diseases. She then listed food stuff on the board, and took the learners out to the school garden where they had to name different vegetable plants. She divided them into groups (boys and girls), gave the boys spades, forks and hand hoes, and the girls rakes and asked them to work in the*

*school garden to tend the vegetables. No assessment took place, and for the remainder of the lesson the teacher seemed to be unconcerned about the intended learning outcome and assessment standards that she had indicated in her lesson planning work. She indicated that she could not teach the learners anything about the indigenous plants in the school's indigenous garden because she did not know anything about them, thus missing the opportunities for decision making about health using plant resources for example.*

Selective appropriation and ideological transformation of curriculum policy statements (official pedagogic discourse) is one of the critical processes that Bernstein (1990) alerts researchers to in his descriptions of the recontextualisation process, and one could argue that recontextualisation is a normal meaning making process, and thus a normal teaching practice. In this case, however, the recontextualisation process involved a loose 'surface marking' of an allegiance to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards, and selectively appropriation of a few connecting points associated mostly with the teachers' prior knowledge and experience (vestiges of memory). Other examples of this practice can be found in the studies of Mvula Jamela (2007); Jenkins (2008); Lotz-Sisitka (2007). Our observations point to an 'under-teaching' in relation to expected curriculum standards, while appearing to be situated within the curriculum framework. We have also identified some cases where the vestiges of teacher memory (linked to the past curriculum or their own life world experience) *are* the curriculum, with no reference being made to any curriculum framework, structure, content or assessment or standards framework (see for example Jenkins, 2008). In this case, the teaching practices *are* providing epistemological access to some forms of knowledge, but it is of a lower than expected standard (if judged by the curricular and assessment norms), and remains largely dependent on the teachers' memory. Our conclusion from these observations is that such teaching practices are not providing adequate access to knowledge in the modern world (normatively framed by curricula), as expected by Morrow (2007). The question that arises here is what relationship (ought) to exist between normative standards for enabling epistemological access, teacher knowledge and experience, and teaching practice?

### **Story 3: Not teaching what is not possessed as own knowledge**

*The third story involves another teacher from another school who reflected that he could not teach children about marine resources along the coast (the school was just next to the coast and the biodiversity knowledge component in the Science curriculum requires teachers to teach about biological diversity).*

*He said this was because he did not come from the area and the children would know more than he did about the coastal marine resources. He also said he did not know about biodiversity as this was a new concept in the curriculum and he had not received training in this.*

Similar instances can be found in other studies in the research programme (e.g. Schudel, 2006; Mvula Jamela, 2007; Jenkins, 2008; Mbuyazwe, in press). The epistemological access question here relates to how it might be possible to broaden teaching practices beyond teaching what is possessed as own knowledge?

#### **Story 4: Mis-teaching and mis-assessing**

*The fourth story involves a range of mis-teachings and mis-assessments observed in a project to support the use of a set of outcomes-based curriculum materials (Schudel, 2006):*

- *In one lesson plan, a clearly inaccurate bar graph recorded eight of the learners as having used 1600 litres of water (200 litres per person) to brush their teeth in one day (even for a household, this would be unrealistic). The teacher gave the learner full marks for the graph. The problem was difficult to pinpoint but may have been a failure to convert from litres to millilitres. The teacher herself drew up a worksheet adding the results from the whole class and failed to convert to a common unit when adding the figures.*
- *In another example, the teacher did not challenge a graph drawn by learners with no units of measurement, which made the graph meaningless and impossible to interpret.*
- *In yet another example the teacher did not notice a multiplication error in a worksheet calculating the amount of water lost by leaking taps, which lead to a misleading answer.*
- *In another case the teacher prepared a resource labelled 'alien invasive plants' which consisted of a number of line drawings of different plants. Most of the plants were 'alien' vegetables but not invasive (no distinction between these two appears to have been made for the learners). The resource also included pictures of two unidentifiable trees.*

- *One teacher assessed evidence of learners sticking pictures of ‘alien invasive plants’ (the pictures were not all of alien invasive plants) as showing evidence of learners being able to ‘make informed decisions’ about which trees to plant. Here the teacher appears to be making the assumption that being able to identify plant pictures is sufficient for developing the skill of making informed decisions without actually assessing whether informed decisions had been made or not.*
- *In another case, learners answered questions for assessment about the differences between rural and urban life which clearly was not an assessment of learners’ ability to critically evaluate why these differences exist.*
- *Rubrics often tend to be used to assess worksheets, looking at the same knowledge that could be assessed through the worksheet itself. The assessment technology (i.e. design and use of rubrics) appears to be overwhelming the assessment purpose and process itself. (All examples here are drawn from Schudel, 2006)*

Similar instances can be found in the studies of Mvula Jamela (2007); Jenkins, (2008); Tundzi, (2009); Mbuyazwe, (in press); Mazingiza, (2009). The epistemological access question raised here relates to how quality of feedback and assessment provided by the teachers might enhance epistemological access and thus quality of learning, and how teachers might become more reflexive of their own knowledge practices?

## A realist reading of the stories

As indicated above, the four stories above have raised a number of questions related to epistemological access and teaching practice. They have shown that teaching practices can:

- Constrain epistemological access to knowledge represented in abstract form (e.g. concepts) if sophisticated approaches to mediating between the abstract and concrete, or situated activity and subject matter concepts are not practiced;
- Limit the scope and level of epistemological access in relation to curricular (normative) standards; if adequate attention is not given to normative expectations associated with knowledge structures, progression and standards;

- Limit the scope and depth of exposure to new knowledge, and the unknown (as defined by the teachers' knowledge of a topic); if teachers are not prepared to risk teaching that which is not fully known to them personally; and
- Affect the quality of the epistemological access process, if inadequate feedback is provided (i.e. learners are not challenged to reflect on the quality of their work), or if inaccuracies are glossed over or go unnoticed (if teachers are not able to reflexively review the quality of their own contributions).

To provide a realist reading of these teaching practices and constraints to epistemological access, I consider the stories from an open systems perspective (i.e. I do not assume a closed system in which a regular relation is expected between the cause event (the specific teaching practice) and its effects (i.e. loss of opportunity for epistemological access and learning). A realist reading considers the diverse range of circumstances that have, and may influence teaching practices oriented towards enabling epistemological access. As mentioned briefly above, all of the schools and teachers involved in the studies were primarily from the rural Eastern Cape with its particular history and resource-based difficulties, and socio-economic conditions. Most significantly however, teachers prior knowledge and experience of teaching, the absence of teaching and learning support materials, and teachers' abilities to navigate the new curriculum structure, assessment system and constructivist epistemology seemed to be significant causal mechanisms influencing the teaching practices, and thus the enabling/constraining of epistemological access. These have all emerged in other studies on teaching and learning in South African schools, as mentioned and referenced earlier in the paper. The quality of teacher's knowledge, the quality of teacher education, the educational policy framework, and the link between these would therefore seem to be key underlying causal mechanisms influencing teaching practices and epistemological access. The constructivist epistemological assumptions of the curriculum also appear to be influencing teaching practices that constrain epistemological access, although it is not clear whether this would also be the case with a curriculum with an empiricist epistemological underpinning as well. This could probably be established through analysis of teaching practices and epistemological access within an empiricist curriculum framework in similar schools. As mentioned by Morrow, the South African curriculum framework is muddled by an empiricist epistemology, and a constructivist



epistemology which are difficult to untangle because of complex histories. From the stories it might be surmised that the teachers concerned have not developed adequate abilities or do not have appropriate conditions available to enable epistemological access from within an empiricist epistemological framework *or* a constructivist epistemological framework. Continuities between earlier forms of Bantu Education and Outcomes-Based Education suggest that this might be the case (Chisholm, 2004; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

The normative framework of the curriculum, and its assumptions about ‘epistemological access to the modern world’ and associated power relations, life world experiences and cultures (i.e. a modernist epistemological frame for education) may also be a mechanism influencing the situations in the stories, as may the issue of language of instruction. A realist causal analysis indicates that it is probably not any one of these factors, but a variety of them, in various interactions with each other that influence the way teaching practices are constraining and enabling epistemological access in South African schools. Sayer (2001, p.23) states that “No mechanism or set of mechanisms, especially not those of the programme, is to be taken as a ‘black box’. Their identification is not a matter of finding more specific regularities . . . etc. . . . for to do so would not explain the mechanisms [and their relation to each other] but merely redefine the problem.” What the identification of causal mechanisms does allow for, however, is a purchase on the possible range of mechanisms that are influencing practices, and it is *these* (and their relations to each other) that need to be probed and investigated in more depth for what needs to be absented in order to allow for the emergence of new practice.

## Considering possible responses

One could respond to these causal mechanisms in various ways with teacher education and curriculum design practices, all of which appear to be necessary if we are to support teachers to fulfil the task that Morrow (2007) outlines for them *to enable epistemological access to the modern world*. Some solutions may look like this:

- *Absent the constraint of poor disciplinary knowledge and lack of structure and differentiation in the curriculum:* Teach teachers the discipline-based knowledge they are required to teach; Differentiate the curriculum more clearly so as to make it more explicit and less confusing

so that teachers have a better idea of what ought to be taught by when and how and at what level (Muller, 2006); and induct teachers into the vertical and horizontal knowledge structures defined by Bernstein (1990) get teachers to teach systematically and sequentially. As one of the reviewers of an earlier draft of this paper stated “. . . teachers first need to acquire the specialised knowledge they are supposed to teach. The other good things *follow from* it – increased reflexivity, the ability to make connections between contextual and decontextualised knowledge etc. – they are not an alternative route *to* it, as the constructivists all too often imply” (blind reviewer, 2008).

- *Absent the constraint of inappropriate level and scope of teaching:* Teach teachers that there is a need to teach at an appropriate level, and that teaching cannot simply be based on ‘own knowledge and experience’ or vestiges of own memory, but ought to be normatively aligned according to the curriculum framework and standards.
- *Absent the constraint of inadequate feedback and reflection:* Teach teachers how to assess learning and provide accurate feedback; and how to assess their own knowledge practices.
- *Absent the constraints of empiricist views of knowledge:* Teach teachers to access and adapt to a changing knowledge environment; teach teachers that you don’t need to know everything before you teach it, and that you can draw on the knowledge of others and information in materials in a teaching-learning situation, and that not everything is necessarily known before hand – through for example use of enquiry-based teaching methods.
- *Absent the constraints associated with lack of materials:* Improve teaching and learning support materials so that they do not compound the problems, and teach teachers how to use them systematically in schools.

Biersta (2006) would describe such a set of solutions as technological solutions, since they focus mainly on the effectiveness of knowledge transfer, and leave little room for more open-ended approaches to enabling epistemological access. He (2006, p.9) states that this approach to enabling epistemological access through ‘effective’ teaching practice represents a “modern understanding of education in which education is understood in terms of the ‘production’ of the rational autonomous person and in which the



educator is seen as the midwife whose task it is to release the rational potential of the human being”.

He, and other epistemologists, sociologists and pedagogues (Giddens, 1999; Archer, 2007; Beck, 1999; Engeström, 2005) argue that such an assumption in today’s knowledge environment (characterised by complexity, inequality of access, and risk) would be a *necessary* but *not sufficient* condition for gaining epistemological access to knowledge in **late modernity**. Late modernity, has been described by Giddens (1999), Beck (1992, 1999) and others as a ‘runaway world’, a ‘globalising world’, and a world characterised by ‘risk and uncertainty’. Many of the children in the schools involved in the case stories reported above are faced with risks and uncertainties linked to personal safety, economic security, health, food security and poverty in their immediate futures (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005); and wider issues such as loss of resources, economic insecurity and climate change risks in their longer term futures (UNEP, 2006; Africa Geographic, 2007; Vyas and Ponzi, 2007), and because of this, it may also be necessary to consider *absenting the limitations of knowledge assumptions designed for high modernity (which dominate formal education structures and histories) and societies characterised by low risk and certainty*.

Our research programme is pointing to the need to *not only* focus on acquisition of concepts and content, within the framework of existant modern vertical and horizontal knowledge structures in teaching practices (to ensure *effective* epistemological access), but *also* to allow children to experiment with open-ended, reflexive epistemological questions such as ‘what could be done now?, and ‘how can we respond to situation x, y and z with what we know?’, and ‘how does A relate to B and why might this be interesting or useful to us/ or our community’ etc. Perhaps there is something to be gained from thinking deeply about the comment made by Latour (1993) who argues that ‘we have never really been modern’, and no matter how hard we try to purify knowledge into abstract and structurally defined disciplines, there is always something left over – he calls these ‘hybrids’, and ‘networks’ and asks us to consider what lies between the vertical and horizontal differentiations of knowledge that dominate our epistemological access work in education. He wonders why the most complex problems facing humanity today, notably HIV/AIDS and climate change [and poverty] are *inter-disciplinary* or *trans-disciplinary* problems, requiring complex and unusual combinations of disciplinary and other forms of knowledge. Considering this dimension of epistemological access (i.e. within a more open-ended dynamic and complex framework), *in addition to* the more technical and systematic responses

outlined above, is, in my view, a necessary condition of enabling epistemological access for South African learners in an emerging democracy that is unfolding in a wider risk society.

I am also not sure that I completely agree with the blind reviewer cited above, that this is *necessarily* a linear process, even though I agree with the view that knowledge structures do exist outside of our constructions of them, and that existant knowledge pre-exists new knowledge. Archer (2007) argues, from a social realist vantage point, that we can really only make our way in the world reflexively, and for this we need to be able to flexibly engage with knowledge in varieties of applications and circumstances which implies a more open-ended, not quite as linear, approach to epistemological access. Simply focussing on acquisition of knowledge in a systematic order, as proposed by some realists would seem to only half-way address the realist focus that Morrow (2007) asked for in his book. Not engaging with contextual complexity while dealing with structured and systematic approaches to teaching and learning may result in structural redundancy, while only dealing with contextual complexity without structured and systematic knowledge building may result in chaos.

In this sense, I more or less<sup>7</sup> agree with Biersta (2006, p.148) who argues that “. . . the responsibility of the educator is [also] a responsibility for what is to come, without knowledge of what is to come”. In this argument, he, in my view proposes an argument for an epistemological foundation for education that is neither empiricist, nor relativist, but located in a form of realism that recognises that it is possible to access a systematically organised and presented body of knowledge that exists outside of our constructions of it (i.e. a realist ontology), but that knowledge is fallible and open to change, and that new contextually significant meaning making possibilities may emerge (i.e. epistemologically constructivist), making *in relation to*, and *emergent from* knowledge that exists in the world out there, and that precedes individual constructions.

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<sup>7</sup> Note my addition of [also].

## So what might this mean for teacher education practice?

As indicated in the introduction of this paper, Morrow proposed that the current epistemological muddle influencing teaching practice in South Africa can be addressed through a realist focus. I have tried to examine what this might mean in the context of teaching practices oriented to enabling epistemological access, using a selection of ‘negative cases’ and a realist causal analysis. From this I was able to identify a number of technical solutions that might improve the current situation in schools in South Africa. I have also, however, drawing on Biersta (2006), proposed that we need to move beyond technical solutions and *additionally* embrace an open-ended notion of epistemological access to enhance reflexivity, agency and responsiveness to risk and vulnerability given that such conditions characterise the contemporary context in which children are learning, and people everywhere are living. Projections on HIV/AIDS, climate change risks, loss of ecosystem services, poverty and food insecurity for example, indicate that southern Africa is one of the geographical regions most at risk from the compounded and interrelated impacts of these issues (UNEP, 2006; Africa Geographic, 2007). Educational proposals, if they are to be adequately grounded in realist assumptions should take account of social realist proposals for enhancing reflexivity and heightened forms of agency, and education has a critical role to play in preparing children to live in the world. If such a world presents such challenges, then our conceptions of epistemological access need to take the nature of these challenges into account.

In the past five years we have been experimenting with various teacher education inservice practices that are aimed at addressing some of the issues identified above. Since we are a small programme in a wider faculty, we have not been able to mainstream these across the faculty, or across the teacher education system in any meaningful way. They remain therefore experimental, but appear to have some potential for mainstreaming within an un-muddled epistemological environment, should this be achieved through policy and other measures. I briefly describe three such practices. A more detailed rendition of the practices and their efficacy and wider applicability would need to be the subject of further research. All of these practices are oriented towards addressing some aspect of the ‘absenting’ agenda outlined above.

***Practice 1: Absenting the constraint of lack of resource materials use through resource-based learning approaches***

In this experiment we have researched the use of fact sheets in relation to activity sheets in teacher practices. We found that the fact sheets were used by the teachers to ‘inform themselves’ so that they could use the activity sheets and assist the learners to complete the activities (Mbanjwa, 2001). We found these to be critical ‘knowledge resources’ for teachers, and found that because they were not too heavily packaged or too difficult to work with, they improved teachers knowledge of the subject they were teaching, and they were able to provide the learners with a more substantive content focus in the lesson. Our most recent experiments here are oriented towards examining teacher’s knowledge and how to use more complex materials as we found that teachers consistently choose easier materials (Lotz-Sisitka and Raven, 2001). We are doing this by supporting teachers to use a range of learning materials *in relation to* each other (e.g. fact sheets, museum resource persons and textbooks) (Nduna, 2003; Mbuyaswe, in press). We are learning that there is a need to support teachers to learn how to select materials appropriately, to read more, to use factual information in relation to activity based work, and to develop materials that allow children to read and write. We have also found that a good ‘mix’ of materials such as a fact sheet, an activity sheet, and enquiry activity and a reporting activity (four in a pack) appears to provide adequate support and guidance for a good quality lesson. Too many materials are ‘overpackaged’ or too full of activities and no content, and thus do not seem to be grounded in a consideration of enabling epistemological access in the classroom.

***Practice 2: Absenting the concept into context transfer problem, with context to concept knowledge experiments***

To address the constraints to epistemological access described in the first story (the ‘commensualism and mutualism’ homework) which pointed to conceptual transfer problems, we are seeking to open ‘access routes’ that enable learners to differentiate and make more explicit what is known in the everyday through establishing an *iterative relationship between* everyday knowledges and institutional/propositional forms of knowledge that circulate in schools and formal learning institutions. In the case of Story 1, this might mean taking learners to see the cows and eagrets, and the lichen in the tree and then introducing the concepts of commensualism and mutualism, and their value and validity for better understandings of the modern world in a wider time-space register than that offered by the local/everyday practice of simply ‘seeing’ the eagret and the cow together in the field. We have worked with a

number of such reconstructive research experiments involving the mobilisation of local and indigenous knowledge practices in curriculum contexts.<sup>8</sup> Examples include working with school environmental policies in relation to curriculum requirements (Mvula-Jamela, 2006); looking after wild leafy vegetables in Agricultural Sciences (Asafo-Adjei, 2004) to widen knowledge of agricultural science options use; making of *amaRhewu* in Consumer Studies, to discuss and orient learners to a wider range of healthy food and nutrition options available to them (Kota, 2006); and even brewing traditional beer in Natural Sciences to make knowledge of fermentation processes more explicit (Hanisi, 2006) etc. In essence we are experimenting with Hedegaard and Chaiklin's (1990) 'double move' between situated activity and subject matter concepts, but not in the way that Davydov proposed which was from 'ascending from abstract to concrete' only. We have also not considered these in a sequential process of knowledge acquisition as proposed by the knowledge structures argument of Bernstein (1990) as yet. So far, these studies are beginning to show that working the other way round to the way that Davydov proposed appears to be a) motivating learners and teachers to 'make connections'; b) enhancing epistemological access; and c) unexpectedly generating stronger learning relationships with parents and communities around the schools (O'Donoghue, Lotz-Sisitka, Asafo-Adjei, Hanisi and Kota, 2007).

***Practice 3: Absenting poor understanding of disciplinary structures through multi-disciplinary knowledge experiments***

The third reconstructive experiment involves teachers in investigating complex knowledge relations in relation to complex problems such as HIV/AIDS and Climate Change. In these knowledge experiments we consider the whole issue from a transdisciplinary perspective, and *at the same time*, we identify the specific disciplinary dimensions of knowledge related to the issues. For example in relation to health and environmental issues we consider the issue in relation to society as a whole, and we consider all kinds of reports, discourses and stories relevant to the issue. We then 'break it up' into disciplinary interpretations, and investigate what each discipline brings to the resolution of the problem, probing the epistemological structure of the discipline and its purpose and intent. In this way we are able to develop knowledge of disciplinary structures (in relation to each other), and also explore the 'hybrid' or 'network' spaces that exist between the disciplines and that make up the picture of the whole. In the context of climate change issues,

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<sup>8</sup> Many of these can be credited to the efforts of Rob O'Donoghue's research and supervision leadership.

for example, we examine what is known, and what is not known (i.e. knowledge and unawareness). In some senses and in the context of teacher education practice one can describe this as a 'knowledge exercise' aimed at sharpening the skills necessary for gaining and enabling epistemological access, and for developing confidence in working with knowledge.

We also consider the links between knowledge and practice and consider processes of decision making and agency in relation to available knowledge resources that are available from different disciplinary frameworks. What we are learning so far from this is that the process of investigating complex knowledge relationships in this way enables teachers to gain (critical) perspective on the disciplinary structure of the curriculum and the knowledge environment in which they find themselves (from 'outside' of the disciplinary framing of things), and to 'find flexible pathways' in and out of a structured, categorised, propositional knowledge environment. This should, we think, begin to address the problem in Story 3 where teachers don't want to teach anything unless they 'know' it beforehand. Through this process teachers are able to develop an understanding of the realist nature of knowledge, as well as its fallibility and open-ended possibilities.

## Conclusion

As can be seen from the descriptions of the experimental practices above, they are still in embryonic form, and many other such experimental practices are possible. We see these as reconstructive experiments in which we can re-imagine and create new practices in response to the causal factors influencing teaching practice *at the level of teacher education only*. In practicing these experiments, we are acutely aware of the fact that these issues cannot only be addressed by teacher education institutions alone, although they *do* have a critical role to play. A range of other structural and policy related interventions are necessary to adequately address the epistemological access problems in schools, for example efficient distribution of textbooks that are knowledge rich, and of a high quality, and a more differentiated curriculum policy that also allows some flexibility for open-ended epistemological access and the emergence of reflexivity in response to risk.

The paper has essentially argued that for teachers to become *good teachers* in the structured knowledge environment of a formalised, disciplinary curriculum context (influenced by a more complex and changing knowledge



environment), they themselves need to have a broader understanding of the contemporary knowledge environment. This will be necessary if they are to address the constraints reported in stories 1–4 above in non-mechanistic ways. In our view, this requires careful experimentation and ‘trying out’ (with teachers) how to best enable epistemological access in schools through teaching practices.

In closing this paper I propose that there is the potential to explore many more such open-ended practice-centred reconstructive experiments and that this might provide us with the creative space necessary to consider questions of enabling epistemological access more carefully, critically and creatively in future. Epistemological access, in the sense used by Biersta (2006) and in the sense used in relation to these practices, remains an open question in education. We have yet to learn more about, and address the complex array of problems associated with epistemological access identified in this paper (and reported by others over the past few years), if we are to adequately address the realist focus that Morrow proposed in his book.

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# School choice and intra-township migration: Black parents scrambling for quality education in South Africa

Vuyisile Msila

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## Abstract

School choice in South Africa brought much hope to parents who have always yearned for quality education. Apartheid laws prohibited black learners from attending the then exclusively white schools. However, post-apartheid education reforms in the late 1990s saw many empowered black parents 'exiting' the (historically black) township schools, opting for the better resourced, historically white, Indian and Coloured schools. This study shows that school choice does not only happen when black parents and learners move from historically black schools to historically white schools. Sometimes, they move within the township, searching for what they believe are quality schools. There are still many community members in the historically black areas who maintain that some township schools work hard despite the persisting challenges which include being under-resourced, demotivated staff and uncommitted, ineffective stakeholders.

This article also reports on the findings of a study conducted in eight township primary schools to investigate the choice strategies black parents utilise when they choose certain township schools over others.

## Introduction and problem postulation

Woolman and Fleisch (2006) contend that historical and political influences have resulted in unintended consequence of producing school choice in South Africa. Furthermore, they aver that school choice was not the state's adoption of a conscious and deliberate policy. Historically, schools before 1994 were divided according to racial lines hence the past education system was an effective tool in dividing the society (Kallaway, 1988). Schools entrenched inequality as learners were confined in segregated schools. Many poor and black parents as well as their children had no choice but to remain in historically black areas (townships), whilst white parents registered their children in private schools and better resourced public schools. It was also apartheid policy that Indian and Coloured learners had their own schools. With the advent of democracy, black parents and their children have tried to

address the issues of equality in education. This is akin to what happened in the United States of America (USA) where African-American learners have always found it necessary to deal with issues of both equality of opportunity and quality education in order to revitalize and probably save their communities (Morken and Formicola, 1999). These writers also explain how segregation excluded all African-Americans from good schools.

It was the introduction of framework legislation which included the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and South African Schools Act (SASA) that led to the creation of South Africa's 'unintended' experiment in school choice (Woolman and Fleisch, 2006). Furthermore, these acts led to the enabling quasi-markets for the consumers. Unlike in the USA and other first world countries, school choice in South Africa neither includes public and private vouchers for parents nor does it include the idea of charter schools. However, parents have learnt to vote with their feet by sending their children to schools that they think will best serve their interests. It is through the exercise of choice that some black parents for example, will move their children from historically black schools to other schools outside their areas of residence.

Van Heemst (2004, p.165) states that "education is the key for poor children. Many different voices have proclaimed choice as a vehicle for empowering poor children". Furthermore, Van Heemst (2004) cites *The Condition of Education 2000* document which proclaims that by choosing the school that their children attend, some parents may perceive that they can influence the quality of education their children receive. The poor parents might prefer school choice because there are possibilities that through it they can address past segregation and waning quality in historically black schools. The idea of black parents exercising choice in South Africa is not a novel one though. Historically, it can be traced right into the 1970s when protests in (especially) urban schools grew as black schools were transformed into sites of struggle. A number of parents moved their children to remote, usually (rural) areas, most of which were part of the homeland system; the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) states. These parents wanted their children to study in undisturbed environments of these TBVC states.

It was, however, after the demise of apartheid that black parents explored their choice options further by securing enrolment places for their children in suburban, former white schools. The historically white schools are sometimes referred to as ex-Model C schools. Ex-Model C schools are formerly white



schools that were funded partly by the government (80%) and partly by the parents (20%) (Dekker and Van Schalkwyk, 1996).

However, it should be noted black parents have not only ferried their children to the ex-Model C in search of better and quality education, they have also registered their children in former Coloured and Indian schools. There is another less explored but interesting aspect where parents and their children have looked at other better schools within the black townships hence the ‘intra-township migration’. Black families appear to prefer certain schools to others among the historically black schools (Msila, 2005). Although these families are dealing with a set of schools with similar histories and challenges, they tend to believe that some of these are more effective. This study wishes to investigate the question:

Why do some township parents prefer certain historically black schools to others within the township?

Sub-questions addressed include the following:

- Who are the township parents who exercise the intra-township choice option?
- Who benefits when school choice is exercised among township schools?

For the purposes of this article the word ‘black’ refers to *black Africans* and does not include Coloured or Indian South Africans.

## Brief theoretical framework: exit, loyalty and voice option

Msila (2005) contends that township black parents can exercise choice by selecting any of the three kinds of choices when it comes to school choice. These are the voice, loyalty and exit options. The voice option alludes to when parents decide to stay in their current schools whilst they try to change them from within. Loyalty refers to the option when parents do not have any recourse or alternatives and they end up letting their children remain in (township) schools even when they are not effective. The exit option refers to the option frequently exercised by a number of parents who have moved their children from schools in their domicile to find them schools usually situated in

the suburbs. Woolman and Fleisch (2006) aver that many South African learners do not have access to quasi-markets in schools. The absence of these is apartheid's creation that is deeply entrenched in inequalities in primary and secondary schooling (Woolman and Fleisch, 2006).

Based on A.O. Hirschman's theory, Msila (2005) argues that the customers (township parents in this case), shop around for better schools and when they are not happy with what they have in township schools, they take their business outside the township schools. Maile (2004) also contends that parents complain about the declining quality of education their children receive in rural or township schools. Maile also argues that learners from the township migrate to better schools to acquire skills that will make them earn more and be economically empowered in future.

## Significance of the study

It is a critical commonplace that numbers have continued to increase in ex-Model C schools and former Indian and Coloured schools as black learners leave township schools. As highlighted above, Msila (2005) writes about the prominence of the 'exit option' as parents opt for better schools outside their neighbourhoods. Research on school choice is fairly new in South Africa although focus has been on the exodus of black learners from township schools to other schools outside the boundaries of the townships. School choice exercised outside the township was potentially virtuous for integration purposes. Yet while a number of schools, especially ex-Model C schools, opened their doors, in some schools access for black learners was limited through admissions policies determined by governing bodies of the schools as well as increasing fees among other factors (Naidoo, 1996). However, it is also true that quality in a number of township schools has waned as a result of the constant exodus away from these historically black schools (Msila, 2005).

What this study investigated are the experiences in some of these historically black schools. The study sheds light as to what causes parents to engage in intra-township choice exercise. Township schools need to learn lessons from this, for these schools will hardly improve if they cannot understand what parents and communities perceive as good practices of performing schools. Various studies are also necessary to inform policy as to what the markets demand and expect from 'good schools'. Whilst school choice might be controversial, it might be a missing link between high performing and low performing schools.

## Literature review

Plank and Sykes (2003) state that school choice policies are sweeping the world. Furthermore, they point out that governments in various countries have decided that giving parents more choices among schools is an effective response to local educational problems. With the advent of democratic dispensation, in post-apartheid South Africa, there have been various educational options opened up for (especially), historically disadvantaged parents. As pointed out above, school choice has not spread without controversies; it is a new terrain, involving new ideas, new figures, new alignments and new educational solutions (Wolfe, 2003). Many middle class black parents, in search of better schools have used the opportunity of the scrapping of apartheid education as a way to exercise the exit option and register their children in distant, historically white schools.

Gorard, Taylor and Fitz (2003) concur with Van Heemst cited earlier, that among others, school choice extends privilege to all as it enables children from poor families to be able to join effective schools. However, there is a paradox to school choice in that for meaningful choices to be available to most parents, schools need to deny choice to few families (McGhan, 1998). McGhan explains this by stating that the desire to broaden access to schools enables schools to drop disruptive and uncooperative learners. Sometimes parents might also choose schools for wrong reasons (Goldhaber, 1997, p.144). Furthermore, Goldhaber states:

For school choice to lead to improvements, the competition between schools should be based on educational quality. However, past evidence provided by Charles Clotfelter and new evidence I will present below suggests that, independent of the quality of the school, the racial composition of a school may be an important factor in parental decisions.

However, Gorard *et al.* (2003) also contend that school choice has a potential of driving up educational standards and that effective schools become popular whilst ineffective schools wane.

Wolfe (2003) argues that some critics state that schools often fail to accomplish the objective of promoting equality, instead they tend to reinforce inequalities of capitalism. Yet choice parents can hardly be dissuaded because they maintain that they are choosing the best schools for their children thus ensuring a secure future for them. The deterioration of learning and teaching quality in township schools is the most cited reason for the exodus away from township schools (Msila, 2005).

Pampallis (2003) avers that the struggles waged by learners in historically black schools resulted in deterioration in the quality of black education as school boycotts, strikes and other forms of resistance took their toll on 'normal' schooling processes. Furthermore, Pampallis argues that these acts increased the quality gap between white and black schools. Currently, the historically black schools have various challenges that include the breakdown in the culture of learning and teaching. Within this waning culture of learning and teaching though, some schools have remained better than others. Arguably, the biggest challenge facing township schools currently is how quality can be brought back thus transforming them into effective sites of learning.

## The study

### Research methods and data collection

Convenience sampling was utilised for the purposes of this study. Convenience sampling is sometimes referred to as accidental or availability sampling and it involves choosing readily available people or objects for the study (Brink, 2000). Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) also point out that this kind of sampling comprises of a group of individuals who (conveniently) are available for a study. Eight intermediate schools were selected in the townships of Port Elizabeth. All these schools had Grade 7 as the highest grade and after Grade 7 learners go on to high schools. Grade 7 lists of learners who had applied for admission in various township high schools were asked for. The management of the eight schools had sent out forms to all Grade 7 parents to indicate where their children would be going to the following year. A reasonable number of parents responded by filling in the forms, indicating their schools of choice. The majority of these parents are poor, working class parents who had chosen township schools for their children. The researcher then selected and contacted ten parents in each of the eight schools. Whilst choice is frequently exercised by both learners and their parents, the study was more interested in investigating parental school choice decisions. In the various schools there were parents who did not respond as to where their children were going but these parents were not investigated; the study focused on choice strategies exercised by concerned parents. Of the eight schools under study, four are situated near informal settlement areas where unemployment is rife. The rest of the schools are situated inside the township away from the informal settlement.

The data collection procedure included structured and unstructured interviews with the participants. The principals had earlier, through the Schools' Governing Bodies (SGBs), asked for parents who would volunteer in the study. There was an overwhelming response to the call although only ten parents were selected in each of the eight schools. The interviews took place in the homes of these parents after an appointment was arranged with each of them. While the researcher also visited the schools of these parents and also briefly interviewed the eight principals (for triangulation purposes), the main focus was the attitudes of the parents. The participants' most distinguishable qualities were age, level of education as well as their employment details.

Age was spread as follows:

18 yrs to 30 yrs = 28 parents  
31 yrs to 50 yrs = 20 parents  
50 yrs to 87 yrs = 32 parents

The parents' level of education:

31 parents had less than Grade 8 education  
37 parents had some high school but less than Grade 12  
12 parents had Grade 12 and higher post-school diplomas and certificates

Of these 80 parents and guardians, 31 were males and 49 were female. 16 of these male participants were not employed and 22 women were also not employed.

## The findings

The notion of parents' choosing choice has assumed centre-stage and it cuts across families of different socio-economic status. All parents want better education for their children, albeit the idea of *better education* might be interpreted differently as one moves from one individual to the other. At a time when the public needs effective schools, school choice has a potential of enhancing that effectiveness in ailing township schools. It can be discerned in this study that school choice within the township empowers parents and that it is the last hope for education after other reforms have failed (Morken and Formicola, 1999). In fact, intra-township migration cannot be regarded a panacea but in the long run it can assist in entrenching the necessary

competition among township schools. With the migration happening from weak schools to good township schools, the onus will be on the weaker schools that are losing numbers to improve or close down. A majority of parents in the study were IsiXhosa first language speakers and all wanted schools that could teach their children to speak English well. Some of these parents also wanted schools that would teach their children good morals. There were also a number of them who explained quality education as that system that would enable their children to be able to acquire better paying jobs.

The poverty levels also make the parents conjure own definitions as what good schools should be. For the latter parents good schools literally attend to bread and butter issues.

As one parent, Nomsa puts it:

I chose the high school close by because it is a good school. My children will get soup and bread frequently. Moreover, the school fees are much less as compared to Mhlophe for example. Mnyama is cheap and the teachers are very compassionate. Moreover they do not call us more often for school meetings and such like.

Nomsa is supported by Lizi whose child is to enrol in the same school:

We are unemployed members of the community. Therefore, it is important that we get our children to good schools around the township. I think Mhlophe will be ideal for my child. They do not enforce school uniform and the principal is loved by the community. He organises a number of good things for us. Our children are always in good hands there because their English is not bad although it is a township school.

Lisa supports some of the sentiments above although her idea of quality education seems a bit different. She works two days a week at a cotton and garment firm. She said she would have loved to see her children go through city schools, the historically white schools, but she maintains that the money would be too much for her. The bus fare, the school fees, books and uniform would all be too much for her. She points out:

I would like to take my children to schools outside the township but where is the money? My child will go to Mhlophe or Bomvini. I do not think they are bad schools because at least there is still a bit of discipline shown by learners there. But everybody is sending their children to town. The city schools are better, don't you agree?

A number of the working class parents living in the informal settlements, where many are unemployed, would like to see their children in historically

white schools away from the townships. Their children would be able to speak better English and/or Afrikaans thus ‘preparing them for a future world of work’. However, as pointed out by some participants, the nearby schools are usually preferred for practical purposes suiting the parents’ pockets. Children can walk to schools; the schools also have teachers who “understand our culture” and who could accommodate their meagre budgets. Therefore, to many parents in this informal settlement the proximity of the school, less financial burden and reinforcement of family values are among the most important determinants of school choice.

There was also a rather small group of parents in the study that consisted of those parents who had graduated from high schools and some having achieved diplomas and post secondary certificates. The level of education, the exposure to some cultural capital and certain societal pressures appeared to influence this second group of parents. Some of them are not working and a few live in informal settlements too, yet they define quality in a certain elaborate way, slightly differently from parents whose education level is lower. A number of these parents also stated that despite the lack of resources, there were better schools in the township. A pattern of ‘good and effective’ schools appeared as parents in certain areas seemed to choose certain schools that ended up topping our list of ‘good township schools’. In the four historically black areas selected, the following seemed to be the top of the crop as good schools. (All these are not the real names of the schools):

In Kwazakhele – Lubhelu High School  
In New Brighton – Mthubi High School  
In Motherwell – Pinki High School  
In Zwile/KwaMagxaki/KwaDwesi – Mdaka High School

The parents who were choosing certain schools over others cited the following as reasons for their choices in this order:

- good matric (Grade 12) results
- good management
- discipline
- reputation and history
- teachers’ dedication

There were a number of parents who did not seem to mind about how near the school is to their homes. A number of them skipped schools that were in their



immediate neighbourhood to opt for schools that were at a distance because of all or some of the above characteristics. The matric results of the schools though appear to overshadow some of the other characteristics of good schools. While the parents who had some level of education appeared to have tangible and more pedagogic reasons than those who have not gone through formal education, there appeared similar concerns amongst all parents. Even parents who have not been to school much, appeared to know what they expect from effective schools. In the sample, quite a number of parents from one area were content to leave schools in their area and send their children to the relatively distant Mthubi High School in New Brighton, because Mthubi had a proud township history. Many of the important people in the community had studied there and this school is also one of the oldest schools. The parents who exercised choice within township schools showed that, despite their economic situation, some of them knew what they wanted for their children.

Welile lives in Kwazakhele, some 15 kilometres away from New Brighton but wants his child to study at Mthubi High School:

As you can see, there is a school not far from my house but I do not want it. The teachers are lazy and the matric results there are always dismal. Last year that school managed a less than thirty percent pass rate in matric. Mthubi is a bit far. On cold rainy days Sizwe might need to take a taxi, but that is a good school. Their matric results last year tell us something. Higher than sixty eight percent!

In Motherwell, Wanda also maintains that he would exercise his powers as a chooser in the township. Like Welile above, he seems to know what he is looking for. Wanda postulates:

I would have loved to take my children to city schools. But I am a breadwinner here and my wife is an invalid, I have three children in high school already. I cannot afford a former white school. But Pinki high school is a good school. One of my children is doing matric there this year. I am sure she will pass reasonably well. That school is very good. Just look at the fields, the teachers and, most importantly, the annual matric results.

Asked about the importance of Grade 12 results in choosing schools one parent, Lydia said;

Yah! All parents want to see their children pass Grade 12 well. The grade opens or closes gates of the future. If you do well in Grade 12 you can get a better job or maybe if you are lucky be admitted by a good university. I am sure all parents when they select schools for their children they look for schools that do well in Grade 12. I wanted to transport my child to Mthubi High School in New Brighton but there is a long waiting list there. However, Lubheli High School near my house is not so bad here in Kwazakhele. I am sure Wendy would enjoy that school too.

The reasons of some parents show that they have clearer goals as to what they want schools to do for their children than others. The reasons though might not always be pedagogic because some of the reasons cited as to why one school is preferred over another can be confusing. Among the non-pedagogical reasons cited are: ‘the teachers are friendly’, ‘the school is big’, and ‘the caretaker looks well after the gardens of the school’. There are also a number of ‘pointers’ that influence parents when making choices for their children. Teachers and learners leaving school early, smoking of learners while in school uniform, arriving at school late, and clumsy teachers are some of the negative pointers that repel some parents from certain schools.

Some parents perceive what they call the waning culture of learning and teaching in certain schools. They see some township schools as lacking a good climate and effective work ethic among teachers. Nimrod who wants his child to go to ‘any good school in the township’ states:

Many of us studied at a time of the struggle. Sometimes our schools were affected by the upheavals. But now we want effective schools where there is normality and the learners learn and teachers teach. Schools where management is weak and teachers are misusing funds our children will never learn. We need committed teachers. Our children will certainly follow teachers who are setting an example.

Sylvia who wants to send her child to Mthubi where she also studied concurs. She says that some teachers and parents ‘destroy our schools, for they are not committed’. Sylvia says that there needs to be commitment among all stakeholders if schools are to be successful. She continued:

We need the involvement of everybody here; the councillors, teachers, parents, community and religious leaders. We cannot run forever to city schools. Will our society perish? Yes, if we want it to. Honestly, I would have liked to move my child to a city school. But my husband does not work, we will not be able to transport the child. But the township school is not bad. It might not be our first choice but I know it is a better school here.

## Analysis of the results

The study reflected that although parents in township schools usually stay in these historically black schools, few do so of their own free will. A number of the parents in the study pointed out that many quality schools are outside the township, but they stay in the township schools for economic reasons. A number of them cited the challenge of bus fares or taxi fares, which would be expensive for them to afford having to bus the learners every day. There was also concern that many historically white schools charged fees that were not affordable for some parents. However, the study also displayed that, within the township, schools are not equal in the consumers’ eyes.

Notably, it is the black parents who have moved from historically black schools to former white schools. The latter appears to be the same in the USA where frustration exists among middle class professional blacks (Corwin and Schneider, 2005). Corwin and Schneider (2005, p.180) point out:

It is becoming increasingly obvious to them (middle class and professional blacks) that integration is a one-way street. If they have to move into a white community their children have to assimilate with white children. White adults and their children are not about to integrate into black communities. Even in few multiracial communities. . . the schools generally are pretty much devoid of white students, because they tend to be shipped off to private schools.

The scenario is similar in South Africa. Long after the demise of apartheid the historically black schools remain 100 per cent black (Msila, 2005). Therefore, when poor parents opt for choice in township schools, there are no prospects of integration as these schools are still black. Many of these schools are also stricken by poverty and have minimum resources. In discussing the findings two broad themes will be highlighted:

- ‘Good schools’, relevance and choice
- Changing schools through choice: the role of parents

### ‘Good schools’ relevance and choice

The transformation in the South African education system has enhanced the hopes of many parents including the poor. Many, confined in a life of poverty and squalor, see education as an opportunity to free their families as they invest in their children’s education. A majority of parents hunt for schools with high pass rates; they look at education and success in economic terms. Choice matters for poor parents because it gives them hope when they select their ideal schools. Parental choice in township schools is unique in that it is different from school choice exercised outside the township. Outside the township choice parents might choose ex-Model C schools because they yearn for racial integration. However, black schools have remained 100 per cent black long after the attainment of freedom. Racial integration in schools has been a one-way process, with learners from historically disadvantaged racial groups seeking admissions to former white schools or schools previously less oppressed (Naidoo, 1996).

Van Heemst (2004) argues that there are two arguments when it comes to the poor making wise choices. On the one hand some critics state that poor parents

lack the essential resources such as time, energy, knowledge and education to make a wise choice of schools. On the other hand though some research points out that poor parents select their schools based on significant academic criteria (Van Heemst, 2004). Yet judging by the study's results, one can assume that a majority of parents know or can perceive when a culture of teaching and learning (COLT) has waned in certain schools. The latter distinguishes effective schools from ineffective schools. There are a number of these ineffective schools that have been beset by managerial problems. Mathibe (2007) contends that one reason that has always been advanced for failing schools is that principals are not appropriately skilled and trained in school management and leadership. Thurlow (2003) points out that the view that the core purpose of education management is to facilitate effective learning through effective teaching is now emerging in South Africa. Furthermore, Thurlow posits that the process of management is concerned with the transformation of schools so that effective learning can take place. In many instances, the school leaders and managers operate in climates that are far from being conducive for learning. McLennan and Thurlow (2003) state that the recent changes to the system of school governance have resulted in the majority of principals being under-prepared for their new roles. These writers also add that the collapse of COLT in many schools has eroded the confidence in education managers. Yet, the government in post-apartheid South Africa wanted a representative school governance where principals were accountable to the community, hence the SASA of 1996 pressed for the inclusion of parents and community in school governance.

Kruger (2003) points out that the COLT refers to the attitude of all the role players towards teaching and learning and the presence of quality teaching and learning at a school. Furthermore, Kruger states that the following are common features of a poor COLT; weak/poor attendance, educators do not have desire to teach, tensions among the various elements of the school community, vandalism, drug abuse, high drop out rate, poor school results, weak leadership, management and administration, demotivation and low morale, disrupted authority and poor state of buildings, facilities and resources. Lethoko, Heystek and Maree (2001) highlighted a number of factors that impact negatively on the COLT in historically black African schools. Among these is a lack of professionalism between teachers and principals as well as poor management of the school by the principal. Many parents can see some of these shortcomings in ineffective schools and choose the exit option as they look for better performing schools with a better COLT.

Parents in the study also highlighted some of the above problems that exist in the various schools. Some cited that they are compelled to move their children around township schools because there is no hope in certain schools where they find teachers 'despondent and uncaring'. Others cite the ineffectiveness of management in the schools. The politics of choice though are complex, as some parents are compelled by their SES to remain in the township even when they do not want to and these are the 'reluctant choosers'. The reluctant choosers might choose what they perceive as best among the worst. However, parents who strive to involve themselves in their children's education exercise choice as they search for good schools. Their role is immense in this regard.

## Changing schools through choice: the role of parents

As pointed out in an earlier discussion, choice proponents contend that good schools are usually strengthened and weak ones run the risk of being closed down. Alluding to this Chubb and Moe (1990) posit that schools that fail to satisfy many will go out of business. Furthermore, they state that of the schools that survive, those that do a better job of satisfying the consumers will be more likely to prosper. A number of schools had been closed already in Port Elizabeth for a number of reasons, including dwindling numbers of learners. There is hope for township schools though, that they might change for the better when competition rises (Msila, 2005). Even when parents choose schools for unpedagogic, 'wrong reasons', conscientious educators of schools losing through choice will arguably try to improve. Intra-township choice parents, while they are exiting certain township schools, assist in the betterment of neighbourhood schools.

A majority of parents 'know' what they expect from their children's schools. Whilst many poor and working class parents might not know what really goes on in their children's classrooms, it is outside the classroom that many will perceive what teachers do. Schools are not expected to achieve only the academics. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is a curriculum based on the South African Constitution and this implies the need for schools to heed their political function. Wood (1998) points out that only after people understand what it means to be citizen, to participate democratically, can they begin to sort out the shape and scope of the curriculum. "Public schools must assist in the unending work preparing citizens for self-governance in an evolving social environment, Through public schools, learners can be taught the values and skills necessary to administer, protect and perpetuate a free

democratic society” (Giroux, 1995, p.6). Sometimes, besides wanting their children to pass grades, parents would want to ensure that their children have a role in upholding societal values.

Chubb and Moe (1990) contend that the parents’ and learners’ role in public schools is overstated; they are only a part of a larger constituency that includes politicians, administrators and other groups at all levels of government. Chubb and Moe also state that even in perfect democracies public schools are not meant to be for parents to control and are not supposed to provide them with the kind of education they might want. Furthermore, they also point out that parents have no right to win and sometimes might have to take what the society gives them. However, school choice parents will try to vote with their feet with the hope of getting better education for their children. As highlighted above, sometimes they will lose and not get their way hence conflict might arise. Poor parents do sometimes choose schools that they do not necessarily like because they have limited options. Many poor parents and their children are condemned to their local public schools. They have no options; they have no chance to ‘opt out’. Their hopes and dreams are diminished by sending their children to schools at a severe competitive disadvantage due to a lack of funding. Their children might not live better lives than they did.

Lacking feasible exit option, whether through residential mobility or escape into private sector, many parents and learners will ‘choose’ a public school despite dissatisfaction with its goals, methods, personnel and performance (Chubb and Moe, 1990). A majority of township parents in the study would have liked to go to other schools outside the township had it not been for financial constraints. Many suburban schools are kilometres away from the historically black areas. “Transportation costs may eliminate many options. The unequal distribution of income in society may bias certain markets in favour of the rich against the poor” (Chubb and Moe, 1990, p.34). The findings also demonstrated many poor parents would like their children to avoid the cycle of poverty through the exercising of choice. Van Heemst (2004) states that choice should open the finest schools to all children and ensure that poor children will no longer be condemned to failing schools in their districts. However, in South Africa, some poor parents find themselves having to choose ‘better schools’ out of a pool of failing schools in the township. If justice is to be upheld and equality maintained, township schools will need much revamp to improve the quality.



## Conclusion

This article has shown that within the townships, some parents do have glimpses of hope that certain schools have the capacity to empower their children. They have come to realise that certain township schools are more effective than others. The study though, also demonstrates that it is usually poor parents who are compelled by their socio-economic status to remain within the township. Yet, Van Heemst (2004) avers that school choice is the single most effective weapon at the disposal of today's policy makers to liberate the poor. It is a majority of poor black parents who end up choosing to remain in township schools and this need not be punitive because they do not have the financial means to go to other 'better schools'. Education should offer them hope, hence their empowerment is necessary so that they can collaborate with teachers as they steer these schools to effectiveness and success. Arguably, it is also true that choice if not properly managed, can lead to injustice and segregation. The poor would always remain in township schools even when they do not want to. Scott (2005) avers that without safeguards, the expansion of school choice coincides with the segregation of learners and schools by race, social class, gender, ability and language.

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# University on the market: commitments, discourse, values and discontent

Richard Sivil and Olga Yurkivska

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## Abstract

This article approaches the language of discourse that emerged from and around the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) February 2006 strike and that seems to operate within and through the phenomenology of discontent. This paper challenges the prevalent perception that this discontent is a direct result of purely local causes and instead sees the strike as a consequence of a complex dynamics between global, national and local factors. It is our contention that national realities created the demand for educational reform, while global trends provided the means to attain national objectives, and the local context determined the particular response. A full appreciation and assessment of the situation could only be achieved through an analysis of these factors. In doing so, we will argue that:

1. The language of discontent is a symptom of a much broader process, namely the global transformation of education under the slogan of democratization, through the adoption of the corporate model and culture;
2. The corporate model is antithetical to aspirations of democratization;
3. Corporate discourse transforms our understanding of education, its philosophy and values and has a considerable impact on the structure and function of the university;
4. The subversive nature of this discourse contributes to the experience of transformation as traumatic and that the impossibility of resolution reinforces discontent and contributes to further malfunctioning of the institution;
5. The strike was a natural expression of discontent due to the turbulent history of dissent within the constitutive elements of the newly formed UKZN.

The year 2006 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) was a year of collective unrest and intra-institutional conflict. It started with a seventeen day strike that paralysed the university in February and ended with the Magid

Tribunal.<sup>1</sup> Even a perfunctory analysis of the key events that deeply unsettled the life of the university community suggests that the latter was in the midst of an institutional crisis. The fact that this crisis followed in the footsteps of a 3-year long process of restructuring within the broader educational reform points to at least partial connection between the two and strongly indicates that the answers about its causes could and should be found in the merger of the previously independent institutions, University of Natal (UN) and University of Durban-Westville (UDW),<sup>2</sup> which played a substantial part in the process of educational reform and unsurprisingly was colloquially often cited as the major reason of all the institutional problems.

The chronicles of the crisis have been recorded in a number of different sources.<sup>3</sup> The major one, and also the one that could be seen as having empirical credibility, is the *Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee* (consisting of 14 members of top university staff) that looked at the causes of the industrial action of February 2006. The *Report* (based on 600 oral and written submissions that represented the views of all the strata of university employees) proposes the view that “the cause of the strike was due to a confluence of anger from the different constituencies of the university that was able to express itself through the industrial action at that moment” (*Report* 2006, p.5). As other plausible motives, such as salary increase, the disagreement with the agenda for transformation or autocratic style of governance, were not mentioned being at the root of the strike, the findings of the committee subscribed to the notion that “many if not most of the causes of the industrial action are to be found in the fallout from the merger process” (*Report* 2006, p.3). In other words, The *Report* adopted a strictly localized perspective on the explanation of the strike, accepting the merger as the focal point of educational reform that lead to the conflicts between the staff and administration.

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The Magid Tribunal, headed by Judge Alan Magid, was established to investigate the irregularities surrounding the Masters of Commerce degree awarded to Prof. Pillay (UKZN chief financial officer); and the subsequent charges of sexual harassment and victimization laid by Prof. Msweli-Mbanga (Dean of Management Studies Faculty), who was instrumental in awarding Pillay's degree, against Prof. Makgoba (UKZN Vice-Chancellor) and Dr Maphai (council chairperson).

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UN, originally named Natal University College, was founded in Pietermaritzburg, the province's capital, in 1910. By the end of World War I a second site had opened in the coastal town of Durban. UDW was established in the 1960s as the University College for Indians. It was renamed when it moved from its site on Salisbury Island to its current location in Westville, Durban.

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*Report of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee: Looking at the Causes of the Industrial Action* of February 2006 (23 October 2006), On-line UKZN Change Forum, broad coverage of events in the media.

While this account is by all means legitimate it is questionable whether it is fully adequate. There are several reservations with respect to identifying the merger as the sole cause of the crisis. Firstly, there are compelling indicators that the transformation-related problems in higher education are notably a national issue (Lombaard, 2006) as well as a subject of broader international concerns (Salter and Tapper, 2000; Altbach, 2000; Farnham, 1999; Giroux, 2003). Furthermore, it has been suggested that educational reforms are also “shaped by a complex interaction among local, national, and international factors” (Ginsburg, 1991, p.25). Given this, accounting for the changes in higher education outside the global context of higher education developments is inadequate. If similar patterns of transformation-related problems are traceable in multiple places and locations, then explaining the strike in the light of purely local causes will amount to a reductionism.<sup>4</sup>

The second reservation relates to the notion of anger being placed in the *Report* as the causal epicentre of the strike. This is problematic, for several reasons. Anger is a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence. It is often irrational in origin, manifesting in spontaneous and uncontrollable violent outbursts. To describe the industrial action as such reduces its relevance, significance and downplays the organized nature of the strike.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, explaining the February 2006 industrial action as a ‘confluence of anger’ may explain the emotional state of the staff at the time of the strike, but neglects to identify the root cause(s). Lastly, such a position overlooks the historical fact of the *strike* as a form of collective bargaining for the wage labourers and industrial workers in order to express their grievances to the management and

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There is ample evidence to the fact that South African higher educational reform is a part of the global process. Clear parallels exist in the process of transformation between UKZN and the broader educational context – in relation to both historical and conceptual frameworks. There is evidence of this in the transformation of the British (Miller and Ginsburg, 1991; Rutherford, 2005; Salter and Tapper, 2000), Australian (Robertson and Woock, 1991; Bostock, 1999; Sanderson and Watters, 2006), New Zealand (Barrington, 1991; Roberts, 1998), and North American higher education systems (Preamble, 2006). Although objectives of access, affordability, quality and accountability are globally shared goals of Higher Education transformation the analysis of South African tertiary education could especially benefit from an analogy or comparison with the British “Saxon” system because “the latter tradition is found to have been transplanted to South Africa” (Du Toit, 2000) with the factor of ‘state intervention’ and all its implications being one of the key similarities ( Salter and Tapper, 2000; Du Toit, 2000; Duncan, 2007).

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The notion of discontent (rather than of anger) better conceptualises the events leading up to the strike, and has an accepted standing in the current literature on management leadership and workplace relationships (Steinitz, 2006).

defend the interests of the employees against the interests of the employers. It is an alien form of conflict resolution and negotiation within the self-governing structures of the academia and should be seen as symptomatic of significant changes. Considering that historically academia was placed “above the vagaries of employer-employee relations” (FXI Submission to UKZN, 2009), the choice of strike as a form of protest signifies the move from universities having an Administration to having a Management, a mode which sets up the opposing idea of ‘the managed’ and invites an alternative and contrary interpretation of the social practice that typifies the university (Giddy, 2007).

The third serious reservation pertains to the method of analysis used in the *Report*. The Committee adopted a sociological approach, which utilised interviews as the means of obtaining information. Conclusions about the causes of the strike were reached by collating the data under topics and made on the basis of the most often cited responses. As a result of the chosen methodology, the Committee in effect did not identify the actual causes of the strike but instead ascertained what the university community *thought* were the causes, openly expressing it in the language of discontent. Taking into account that there is a significant difference between analyzing experience and the phenomenology of experience, and that an optimal research model should guard against the potential biases of both (Bound, 1991; Manjer, Merlo and Berglund, 2004), it is necessary to consider the phenomenology of discontent within the broader discourse of transformation and relate the discontent to the actual structural and axiological changes in contemporary tertiary education.

We suggest examining the discourse of transformation on three levels:

- a) rhetoric of reform in tertiary education
- b) actual vocabulary of change, and
- c) language of discontent that became a vivid mark within the individual phenomenology of transformation. Our intuition is that the incompatibility of ‘a’ and ‘b’ is the reason for ‘c’.

## Rationale for reform: South African context

Pre-1990 the South African higher education sector was characterised by considerable inequities in the distribution of resources, with huge disparities between racially demarcated institutions. Segregated by race, ethnicity, class, gender and geography, and divorced from the needs of society, the higher education sector was deemed to be ineffective and inefficient.

Since 1994 the focus of the new government of national unity was to establish a comprehensive agenda of higher education transformation aiming to create a national, integrated and coordinated, yet differentiated higher education system that transcends the apartheid legacy. The fundamental principles guiding the transformation, as espoused in the Education White Paper 3 and the Higher Education Act 1997 include equity and redress, democratization, development, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and public accountability.

The merger of UN and UDW was a part of the national process whereby thirty-six public sector institutes of higher learning were consolidated into twenty-one. The transformation of the higher education sector was aimed at building top-quality institutions with diversity of disciplines, and sufficient capacity to enrol a large student body; eliminating inefficient administration, fragmentation, over-specialisation, and duplication; increasing efficiency and accountability; and implementing different funding strategies in order to bring about a reduction in state funding. Qualifications and programs were reformulated to promote greater mobility and transferability, and curriculum was redesigned to meet societal needs and interests (Education White Paper 3).

The notion of transformation was embraced in the spirit of redress and democratization. A significant change in meaning becomes apparent in the South African National Plan of Education, which “is based on the acceptance that the pressures of globalization require a change in the nature of academic institutions in the drive for global competitiveness” (Duncan, 2007, p.7), i.e. the corporatisation and commercialization of the academia under *state sanctioned managerialism*. Duncan, clarifying the origins of the expression, points out that the Ministry’s close intervention into the restructuring of higher education paved the way for a variation on the international corporatised model, labelled as *transformative managerialism*. Duncan adds that driven from the top by strengthened university managers this “brand of ‘transformation’ involves addressing the legacy of apartheid by creating equity



of access to higher education, while responding to the pressures of globalization to create a high skill/high wage, globally competitive service economy” (*Ibid.*, p.7).

From this, educational reform in South Africa has two divergent commitments and ‘*transformation*’ acquires a multi-focal connotation with historical redress of past inequalities constituting a ‘national’ element in a much larger ‘global’ picture. The ‘national’ commitment of reform can be seen to be part of the struggle for social justice against the legacy of apartheid. However, while the situation of transformation in South Africa has unique features of redress the commitment to state sanctioned managerialism indicates that it is not isolated but accords with broader reforms in the international education arena. This is evidenced by the appearance of the concepts of quality and effectiveness, efficiency and public accountability as part of the new discourse on education and is indicative of the entrenchment of the corporate culture and economic ideology within the education sector, which is now “shaped by the global neo-liberal restructuring of capitalism refracted through the international state system” (Pendlebury, J. and Van der Walt, 2006, p.79). The peculiarity of this situation not only points to the multifaceted teleology of educational reform but also complicates the analysis because of the power of rhetoric to bring under the limelight some aspects of transformation and conceal others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> There is a discernible tendency to stress ‘transformation’ as ‘Africanization’ and then condemn all dissenting and critical voices as racist. In a recent public exchange on the nature of ‘transformation’ at UKZN Percy Nkonyama, an MA student at UKZN and a former member of the SRC, challenged those who argue that the transformation agenda of the university reflects “what was envisaged during the liberation struggle. . .[as] the gains won in the past are increasingly being eroded with neo-liberalism induced restructuring vehemently implemented alongside this so called ‘transformation’” (Nkonyama, 2008). The problem, according to him, is a consequence of the narrow and elitist understanding of the concept that dichotomises between ‘progressive’ Africans advancing a ‘transformation’ agenda and ‘white reactionaries’ nostalgic for the old order and measures the progress through the number of blacks in senior management positions while disregarding the interests of the previously disadvantaged. The accent on de-racialization obscures other issues and concerns, making them appear irrelevant. This creates an opening for the subversive power of neo-liberalism to take over the worthy projects and use them for its own purposes, so what in reality is achieved is the “Africanization of neo-liberalism in higher education” (Naidoo, 2006).

## Rhetoric of reform

The above overview of educational reform reveals the complexity of its nature. On the one hand, *transformation as social redress* in higher education has primarily been driven by the rhetoric of democratization. On the other hand, in order to address the *telos* of globalization South African higher education has borrowed the conceptual framework of global corporate culture that has effectively changed the structures and functions of the university simultaneously bringing it up to the common international standards and decreasing the disparity between the educational system and its social environment, especially the global economy (Pendlebury *et al.*, 2006, p.79). The fact that global capitalism appears to be compatible with economic and political democracy and supportive of democratic ideals of individual autonomy, negotiation, tolerance, compromise, political equality and possibility of social mobility, provided the rationale for adopting the corporate model as a means to attain democratization in education.<sup>7</sup> This entails the application of economic ideology to the education sector in which the maximization of output is sought with reduced input (Robertson and Woock, 1991; Duncan, 2007), the goals being financial accountability and quality assurance. In order to understand the conflicts that have arisen in the higher education sector (both nationally and globally) it is necessary to unpack the respective discourses and examine the ways in which they support and conflict with one another.

The notion of democratization in education is commonly used as an umbrella concept to cover a multiplicity of often diverging processes and aims that for purposes of our argument will be limited to a distinction between democracy as political, social and pedagogical ideals.

The political ideal requires the promotion of democratic values through education and the implementation of democratic values within institutional

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<sup>7</sup> Such compatibility between neo-liberal means and democratic goals in general has been contested by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise Of Disaster Capitalism*. Klein follows the changes in the ANC commitments, from the democratic transformation of the country to adopting a program of “re-distribution through growth”. Klein argues that, due to the self-enforcing nature of capitalism, the ANC government has been forced to accept capitalism through what she calls “neo-liberal shock therapy programs.” In the process the nature of democracy has been altered. According to Klein, South Africa is a living testament to what happens when economic reform is severed from political transformation (2008, pp.194–217).

governance. Seen as an institution of education for democracy that derives from and is driven by democratic values, a truly democratic university is constituted by a critical assessment (and renovation) of society and its values. Problematically, the political notion of democracy has a plurality of meanings, each of them falling within different discourse domains, and hence the application of each has a significantly different impact on the nature of higher education.<sup>8</sup>

As a social ideal within the South African context the idea of democracy has been applied to problems of equity and redress, in order to rectify previous inequalities. At the level of higher education it is translated into equality of access, equality of educational results and equality of educational effects (Cloete, Pillay, Badat and Moja, 2002).

As a pedagogical ideal it could be firstly seen as an imperative to develop critical, liberal, humanistic education for the creation of active participative citizenship. Secondly, it is concerned with the process of democratizing learning itself. This translates into the notion of student-centred learning. The realization of these ideals through practical activities would constitute an authentic democratic education while academic freedom could be understood as a necessary condition for authentic democratization of education. The major question that arises is whether the commitment to globalization is compatible with and conducive to the commitment to democratization. A preliminary argument can be made that if academic freedom is a necessary condition for the realization of an authentic democratization of education, and there are serious concerns raised about the state of academic freedom (via the Change Forum), then it is questionable whether the ideals of democratization are being achieved in South African higher education. However, we wish to claim more. It is our contention that the drive of global capitalism is not only incompatible with the ideals of educational democracy but that it is also damaging to the nature of the university and its core values. An examination of corporate discourse, combined with an understanding of the effect this language has on our conception of education in general and the university in particular will enable us to answer this question.

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<sup>8</sup> Baatjies makes a distinction between an inclusive democracy and an economistic democracy. Within the former, education is perceived as a public good and a public space. Within economistic democracy the emphasis of education is placed on access to the global Market which “redefines citizenship as consumership and where the rights of the consumer replace the rights of the citizen” (Baatjies, 2005, p.3). These discourses are at variance with one another in every way to the point of conflict.

## Corporate discourse

The official rhetoric of educational reform in South Africa is replete with corporate jargon, evidenced by terms such as: quality assurance, performativity, productivity, accountability, efficiency, audit, outcomes, etc. It is futile to assume that the import of corporate discourse would leave the nature of higher education intact without introducing a powerful speech-act dimension into its geography. This has a number of effects – firstly, language conditions reality rather than simply reflecting it (Rorty, 1991; Clark, 2004). Secondly, all language is ‘performative’ (Austin, 1962), it may describe the world and state facts but it also functions to bring about certain effects on the speaker and the listener, i.e. to say something is to perform a certain action. In other words, reality is not reflected by language but is ‘produced’ by it. Thirdly, the change of language leads to a change of meaning, which alters the identity of the actors and in turn transforms the structural networks and institutions (Svedberg, 2004).

The familiar tropes such as ‘knowledge production’, ‘entrepreneurial university’, ‘outcomes based education’, ‘life-long learning’, and ‘marketable degree’, when used in close proximity with or correspondence to the terms that constitute a well established vocabulary of education radically alter the meaning and restructure the whole perception of the university and signify a considerable change in the identity of an academic and student body.<sup>9</sup>

If we understand education as one of the principal means for individuals to achieve independence and personal growth (Dawkins, 1988) and when these are identified solely through economic advancement and economic productivity then the purposes of education are reduced to fostering “well-developed conceptual, analytical and communication skills. . . essential to the building of a flexible, versatile workforce able to cope with rapidly changing technology” (Robertson and Woock, 1991, p.107) which turns students into resources and “makes educational-philosophical and social-political definitions of students obsolete” (Huppauf, 1989, p.110). While students are rendered as active consumers they are transformed into passive learners, and that in turn fundamentally transforms and marginalises pedagogic values and relations.

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Hayden White (1973) suggested to extend the use of tropes to the general style of discourse and defended the idea that histories are determined by tropes. The same approach can be fruitfully applied to the history of university: Newton’s notion of a university as a place of teaching universal knowledge, Oakshot’s notion of the university as community, Bell Hooks’ idea of the university as a democratic space, each point to a particular concept of the university inclusive of its values, organization, identities and academic – student relations.

The language of the market also considerably changes the identity, status and self-perception of the academic (Giroux, 2006). Academics are increasingly encouraged to act as entrepreneurs but in reality they are becoming more and more proletarianised and their value is increasingly judged by their ability to produce grant money rather than their ability to offer quality education to students.

On the surface the commitment to democratisation appears to be the priority. However, it is our contention that the commitment to globalization adopts the language of democratisation and uses it as a means to its own ends. This has a direct effect on the structure of higher education, as “the politic of governance of higher education. . . [is] now imbedded in a discourse which assumes the external regulation of academic activity to be the natural and acceptable state of affairs” (Salter and Tapper, 2000, p.82). The very nature of the university has been fundamentally transformed through the ‘university on the market’ trope. And this change transforms everything that ‘the university is and stands for’ (Higgins, 2007).

In order to appreciate the extent of change and answer the question whether the corporate university is compatible with the commitment to democratization it is imperative to look at the value systems that underlie the idea of the university.

## Value systems

If we understand education as a social process, and as such subject to society-education dialectics, it will become clear that a university’s ethos is not static but a dynamic one. The very concept of a university as an institution of higher education that we perceive now as ‘traditional’ is a product of a long history of development.

In order to discern the so-called values of the university we have to go back to its origins and goals. As Jacques Derrida has put it, “to ask whether the university has a reason for being is to wonder why there is a university, but the question ‘why’ verges on ‘with a view to what?’” (1992, p.3) Derrida’s comment brings into focus a strong teleological correlation between the major constitutive elements behind the ‘idea’ of the university: goals and objectives determine its function while the latter shapes the values and underlying organizational principles. It is this question of key goals, function, values and principles in conjunction that illuminates what makes the university what it is in a particular society and at a given time in history.

The roots of the contemporary university ethos are liberal, in the sense “that it liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom, producing people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world. . . aims at the cultivation of the whole human being for the functions of citizenship and life generally” (Nussbaum 1997, p.8–9). This determines three core values of liberal education – critical self-examination, the ideal of the world-citizen, and the development of the narrative imagination. From this perspective universities are not only places where scholarship is cultivated, where evidence and argument are practiced, places of sustained inquiry and higher-level analysis, of freedom to create and invent, but also where purposes of civic agency, citizenship and democratic participation are pursued. In pursuit of its goals, the liberal university is ‘a historically autonomous sector’ which is constituted by a community of scholars, which democratically organizes its own affairs, unrestricted by, and unaccountable to, any outside body “since any restriction on academic freedom was deemed to undermine its cultural identity and diminish its central social value as a source of independent authoritative judgment” (Tapper and Salter, 2000, p.68). Primary values are openness to peer criticism, cultivation of academic virtues of honesty, courage and self-criticism, collegial governance, institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Neo-liberalism, which intertwines economic ideology into higher education, has transformed universities into institutions tasked with maintaining and upgrading the supply of human resources for the betterment of industry. This is achieved through human resource development, training in high level skills and the production of knowledge. This ensures that corporate institutions of learning are fundamentally different from liberal institutions in every conceivable way.

Neo-liberal institutions primarily service the market place by creating a qualified labour force through the production of technical knowledge for mass consumption. This demands that institutions are responsive to the needs of the marketplace, which results in a distinct shift in focus away from the cultivation of critically engaged, socially aware individuals, toward the vocational training of professionals. Institutions of higher education have become the “producers of intellectual commodities” (Pendelbury *et al.*, 2006, p.82), with the campus operating as both the site for the production of its commodity as well as its point of sale.



The shift to neo-liberalism has a significant effect on pedagogy. According to Florence Myrick (2004), a subliminal infiltration of corporate thinking into the university has deeply affected its micro cosmic world. It has insinuated itself upon what academics research and teach and has a pedagogical impact not only of what lecturers and students think but how they think. In other words it has contributed to a significant pedagogical transformation where the values of the corporate world become dominant.

It is evident that liberal and neo-liberal values are at odds with one another. However, we also realise that we cannot see the difference in values as a bipolar opposition that imposes an ‘either or choice’ onto the institution.<sup>10</sup> Education is a social institution, and inevitably reflects and supports the values of society. Every educational system aims at the production of citizens that will necessarily fit in and support the system. Hence in a consumer oriented society universities are supposed to produce consumers.<sup>11</sup> The question is whether the consumer-oriented university model is reconcilable with the tasks of democratization and social justice in South Africa, considering that in 2005 48 per cent of households lived below R322 (per person per month) poverty line (Appel, 2008), which effectively placed almost half of the population on the margins of South African post-apartheid consumerist economy and outside of the market-driven world of higher education.

The above analysis highlights three significant points. Firstly, implementation of corporate culture fails to achieve democratic values within the institution. Corporatisation of higher education fails to create the “appropriate mechanisms that provide the pedagogical conditions for critical and engaged citizenship” (Giroux, 2006a, p.63). In addition, there is ample evidence pointing to the fact that the corporatisation of higher education constitutes “an

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<sup>10</sup> Liberal and neo-liberal values are represented in the vision and mission statement of UKZN, as well as the Education White Paper III, forcing these contrary values to co-exist in a state of dynamic tension.

<sup>11</sup> In “The Last Professors; the Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities”, Frank Donoghue argues that the transformation from a traditional liberal university to a ‘for profit’ university has a long history, dating back to at least 1891, and challenges the often reiterated idea that higher education is facing a ‘crisis’. According to him the new vision is the logical end to a process of innovation based on the ideas of the market place, and suggests that such a change is a necessary, unavoidable and irreversible development to bridge the gap between the deficiencies of the educational system and the needs of the market place (2008).



assault on academic freedom, teacher authority, and critical pedagogy” (Giroux, 2006b, p.30).<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, failure to recognise the actual educational needs of our students, and provide for them means that “although the gloss on the expansion of higher education emphasises equal opportunities and democratization, the increasing importance attached by employers to the direct value of middle class forms of cultural capital, cloaked in the jargon of personal and transferable skills, will ensure that some graduates are more equal than others” (Brown and Scase, 1994, p.30). A study performed by Cloete *et al.* (2002) gives persuasive evidence against the success of ‘transformation’ to address equity and redress.<sup>13</sup> Local evidence is reinforced by a survey of the worldwide educational reform and its rhetoric, which contends that the goals of improving education’s effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance may be contradictory or incompatible and attempts to rearticulate it through the means of corporate discourse may in fact increase or at least reinforce inequalities in education and society (Ginsburg, 1991).

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<sup>12</sup> Enslin, Pendlebury and Tjiattas point out that although some may argue that bureaucratic control as a part of growing managerialism is necessary for the achievement of social justice in South Africa, the experiences of reform in the United Kingdom and Australia, “suggest that attempts to over-regulate or over-monitor academic work by subjecting it to administrative directives leads to detrimental and counter-productive results,” undermining the very practices that constitute academic work (2003, p.75).

<sup>13</sup> The total enrolment of black students in universities increased from 32 per cent in 1990 to 60 per cent in 2000, and technikons from 32 per cent to 72 per cent over the same period (Cloete, 2002, p.415). The proportion of women enrolling in tertiary institutions increased from 42 per cent in 1990 to 53 per cent in 2000 (p.417). While student composition changed, overall participation did not, and overall retention rates decreased for universities from 17 per cent in 1993 to 16 per cent in 2000 (p.418).

While transformation of the curriculum was intended to increase student portability, evidence indicates that there are greater restrictions placed on students who wish to change their degree programmes (Cloete, 2002, p.288)

While the overall proportion of black staff has increased at universities from 13 per cent in 1993 to 20 per cent in 1998, and at technikons from 12 per cent to 29 per cent over the same period, historically white universities (HWU) are still predominantly white.

Transformation did not benefit historically deprived institutions. An increase in student mobility resulted in student numbers falling at historically black universities (HBU) by 35 600 between 1995 and 2000 and increased at HWU by 54 200 over the same period. This had financial implications which translated into a subsidy decrease of R102 million for HBUs for the 1999–2001 budget cycle, and a subsidy increase of over R230 million for HWU (Cloete, 2002, p.420).

Thirdly, if we conceive of democratized learning as an instrument of freedom and empowerment, with knowledge as an endless process rather than a product, then the massification of education and the commodification of knowledge fail to achieve this as it results in the transformation of universities from places of learning and development into the training grounds of skills. In addition, it is our contention that corporate discourse is at odds with the discourse of democratization. Corporations serve their own interests, as a matter of orientation and legal requirement (Bakan, 2004), and the language that they talk “is not the language of the soul or the language of humanity. . . it is a language of indifference; it’s a language of separation, of secrecy, of hierarchy” (p.56). Democracy, on the other hand, serves public interests and aspires for equality, fairness, harmony, freedom. The language of democracy is inherently passive to allow for listening, is tolerant and encourages unity through harmony.

The commitment to globalization fails to meet the commitment to democratization. Implementation of the corporate culture has radically transformed the structure, function and values of the university. Corporate values are incompatible with traditional (liberal) objectives and values of higher education, with the former driven by managerialism and striving for economic growth, while the latter seeks to empower the student as a necessary requirement for effective democracy.

The net result of the contestation and re-evaluation that characterises the contemporary higher education sector has given rise to a considerable divergence of opinions on the nature of change. On one hand there is a sense of optimism about the future of higher education (Owen-Smith, 2006; Clark, 1998; Scott, 2004), while on the other hand there are deep concerns that are having a negative impact on the sense of well-being and satisfaction of university staff.

## Phenomenology of discontent

Contemporary academic literature presents a host of voices lamenting the loss/corruption/compromise/distortion/decline/erosion/deconstruction of the university. Some authors go even further in professing ‘the strange death of the university’ (Brecher and Halliday, 1996), its ‘dismantling’ or its ‘imminent demise’ (Nussbaum, 2006). These sentiments rise up in a global educational environment that is “shifting from an elite, introspective, stable system. . . to a

mass, open, unstable one” (Farnham, 1999, p.4). Not only is the context of higher education changing, but so is its very nature. The traditional participatory structure of governance, which provides academics with a sense of institutional ownership, has become managerialised. This challenges the traditional hegemony of academics, their level of professionalism as well as their intellectual autonomy (Farnham, 1999).

Such radical transformations have necessarily brought about a change in employee attitudes, which include feelings of pessimism, a sense of loss of social exclusiveness of the profession, defensiveness in light of an impending crisis, and a sense of the fragmentation of the profession (Altbach, 2000). Restricted outlet to air these concerns and no recourse to address them, lies at the heart of staff discontent (Beale, 2004).

The findings of the Senate Ad Hoc committee reflect similar, highly negative and largely unsettled sentiments of the UKZN staff expressed in the language of discontent.

For purposes of analysis the perceptions and experiences that were reported by the staff could be loosely grouped into the following clusters of related experiences that can be identifiable as particular areas of discontent.

## Governance

Multiple concerns were expressed around “poor leadership and governance” that are summed up as the “experience of a complex top-down bureaucratic structure” (*Report*, 2006, p.11). A lack of consultation and transparency is “interpreted as autocracy and authoritarianism. . . and indicates the lack of respect for the opinions, abilities and potential contribution of professional people” (*Ibid*, p.12). There is also the perception that the central self-governing body of the university – the Senate has been largely silent and inoperative during the whole course of the industrial action (*Ibid.*), adding to the perception that the academic voice has been marginalised (*Ibid.*). It is important to note that many staff members who reported the perceptions of a lack of democracy and of ‘autocratic governance’ related such perceptions to ‘corporatisation’ (*Ibid.*).

## Human relations

Staff report that “relationships of trust and social networks broke down in the face of new structures and new practices and protocols” (*Ibid.* p.3), and have been replaced with ‘rudeness’ and an ‘adversarial stance’ (*Ibid.* p.4). Human relations are perceived “as strained and often unhappy, expressed variously as *fear, a lack of a sense of safety, and suspicion*” (*Ibid.* p.13). Experience cited includes “grievances going unheard; verbal and physical harassment; humiliation and intimidation; no encouragement of free critical thinking; denigration and silencing; labelling and blaming” (*Ibid.* p.13). The above perceptions of the staff seem to be symptomatic of what Jane Duncan refers to as “the rise of the disciplinary university” that indicates a systemic shift in the academic freedom climate via usurpation of democratic means of academic self-government by corporate bureaucratic control and state steering of academia (2007, pp.1–4).

On the surface this signals a conflict between the authoritarian leadership of the management and the academic staff. As a result the recommendations of the *Report* recommend improving the style of the management.

Although this recommendation could lead to the creation of better cohesion within the university structure it will not address other sources of discontent, especially those that arise as a result of the conflict between the simultaneous institutional commitments to academic freedom and corporate rationalization. This conflict arises when an institution becomes dominated by mercantilism, at which point it becomes “a ‘psychopathic’ entity focused on fiscal outcomes to the exclusion of the humanity of the organization” (Bakan, 2004, pp.69–71; Sanderson, *et al.*, 2006, p.6).

## Work conditions

The hegemonic process of commercialization signifies the threat of education being reduced to a commodity in which teaching itself becomes an incidental activity (Myrick, 2004). Such is the reality of corporate university culture where academics face the demands of greater work discipline, closer managerial supervision, reduced autonomy, job insecurity, the pressures to reduce the costs and increase the profits, which invariably leads to the ‘deprofessionalisation’ of the professoriate (Noble, 2002). All of the above finds expression in the *Report* through the overwhelming sense of staff being

under-valued, disposable, treated without respect, experiencing a general depreciation of self-worth and esteem (*Ibid*, p.6), with an apparent perception of disparities in remuneration between the staff and the executive (*Ibid*, p.8).

### Job dissatisfaction

According to the findings of the *Report* UKZN academics (including those in senior positions) experience job dissatisfaction of four broad types: a sense of powerlessness, a sense of meaninglessness, a sense of isolation, and a sense of self-estrangement, i.e. their own work does not make sense in the context of the institution (*Ibid*, p.14), or put differently, the function and purpose of the academic profession is perceived to clash with those of the institution. Considering that pedagogy is an inherently moral and value-laden activity, the value systems that are core to the personal sense of academic identity become of paramount significance. External changes in the pedagogical process and the implicit values are bound to have a direct impact on the values and self-apprehension of the academic.

### Ethical dilemmas

Dissatisfaction is expressed around issues of race and gender discrimination in a surprisingly broad number of manifestations and applications ranging from accusations of racism, to perceived nepotism, to a radical claim that the “university does not seem to be addressing equity” (*Ibid*. p.13). Moreover, many respondents expressed an open doubt in the Council’s choice of imperative to ‘balance the books,’ (the metaphor clearly referring to the ‘business-model’ of a university that prioritises the bottom-line return on investment) while overlooking the core function of an university – effective delivery of the academic programme and addressing the needs of social justice.

The findings of the *Report* are compatible with our earlier stance that ‘transformation’ as corporatisation is not conducive to ‘transformation’ as redress and that the goals of ‘transformative managerialism’ are antithetical to the goals of social justice and democratization. The dissonance between the two commitments places South African academics between the horns of a moral dilemma whether to make money for the institution or invest in the primary goods of the profession as dictated by post-apartheid social reality.

The fact that the two sets of goods (namely the goals of profitability, efficiency, and performativity which are measured mostly by the numbers of postgraduate students and publications, and the goals of equity and redress that require the involvement with large classes and time-consuming remedial teaching) are incongruent contributes to the experiences of disharmony and discontent, and is damaging to the staff morale.

### Psychological strain

Respondents consistently report a decline in their emotional states. The experiences fluctuate from 'low morale' and 'demoralisation' to 'weariness', 'apathy', and depression. One of the respondents comments that "this is a depressing time for those who still value their role as academics" (*Ibid.* p.12), which in our view is of double significance. It most appropriately sums up the situation and confirms the broadly accepted assumption that managerialism not only corrupts the profession and alters the practice that is a university but also exhausts and demoralises its practitioners (Enslin *et al.*, 2003; Giddy, 2007).

### Local dissent

The above explains the discontent felt by academics in general, but fails to account for the phenomenon of the UKZN strike. While we have sought to provide a broader theoretical/global understanding for the conflicts experienced at UKZN, we have also taken cognizance of the fact that "globalization cannot simply be reduced to transnational homogenization because a nation's specific historical, political and economic characteristic do influence the ways in which globalization has unfolded and continues to unfold in each country" (Ntshoe, 2004, p.138–139). Even this is insufficient to account for the UKZN strike. We will argue that the heart of the strike lies within the particular historical elements that constitute UKZN.

UN, one constitutive element of UKZN, was known for its staff and student anti-apartheid activism, and includes well known activists such as Steve Biko, Fatima Meer, Mamphela Ramphele and Alan Paton in its alumni.

UDW, the other constitutive element, was an institution steeped in a tradition

of struggle, strike action and social activism.<sup>14</sup> Student enrolment in the 1960s was low due to the Congress Alliances policy of shunning structures of apartheid. This policy was reformulated in the 1980s into a strategy of ‘education under protest’. The end of apartheid did not bring any peace to the university as staff and student opposition was levelled against university management in 1995 over the retrenching of support staff in the name of greater efficiency (Khan, 2006). In 1996 a vote of no confidence in MANCO (UDW management committee) was passed by the student body in response to the negligence of management toward its workers, an increase in student fees, and over the adoption of neo-liberal policies. This strike saw the physical removal of MANCO from campus. In response to further 1998 fee increases students occupied the administration building, and were arrested. On being released they embarked on a hunger strike that forced university management to meet their demands. Issues surrounding student fees remained an ongoing issue that erupted in 2000. Regrettably, this strike action resulted in the death of a student – killed by the riot police. This effectively smothered the student political terrain, creating a political vacuum that was filled by a group of academics who, in 2001, organized an off campus march, including over 700 staff and students, in protest of broader social and economic issues. That same year staff and students combined in protest against the governance style and decisions of the university vice-chancellor.

This culture of dissent was an ethos UDW students were encouraged to partake in, and was supported and practiced by staff. As much as student and staff dissent hampered the administration, at times forcing it to capitulate on decisions and policies, and at other times impaired its functioning, it was tolerated – with very few casualties.<sup>15</sup> This toleration reflects the institutions commitment to democratic principles and processes.

The formation of UKZN, through the merging of UN and UDW, saw the combining of both staff and at least some students. With this blending of personnel came a blending of institutional cultures. The culture of dissent that characterized UDW was imported into UKZN. It is our contention that this culture of dissent, at least in part, fueled the UKZN strike – a process driven mostly by former UDW staff members.

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<sup>14</sup> The reason why discussion is predominantly focused on UDW as it was the institution of employ for both authors from at least the mid-90s through to 2004. We have therefore had first hand experience of the culture of dissent that characterized the institution.

<sup>15</sup> Strike activity at UDW saw the banning of a member of staff – Ashwin Desai – from the UDW campus in the 1990s for his involvement in union campaigns and strike organization, and the death of Michael Makhabane.



## Conclusion

This paper challenged the localized findings of the Senate Ad Hoc Committee for the cause behind the 2006 UKZN strike. There is no doubt that the merger lay behind the strike, but we were not satisfied that this fully explained the causal elements contributing to the strike. Seeking a broader account we identified national objectives which created the demand for educational reform, and the global trends which were adopted as a means to attain them. Divergent commitments, contrary discourses and opposing values in higher education converged in a terrain of conflict, which contributed to the sense of discontent amongst academics.

We recognised that the experience of discontent of the UKZN staff is largely analogous to the experiences of academics all over the world. An accurate account of this is achieved when analysed through the prism of the global transformation of higher education. However, there is a discernible range of perceptions that are specific to the South African context and are the source of an additional anguish and stress for local academics. We returned to explore the particular context of UKZN, and identified the institutional culture of dissent as the primary driving force behind the strike.

Having identified the underlying values and principles in conflict we recognize a) that the impossibility of resolution between competing commitments reinforces discontent and contributes to further malfunctioning of the institution; b) that if committed to democracy and democratization we as academics have a moral obligation to critically engage in the ongoing transformation of higher education with a clear understanding that above all a university has a commitment to the development of people, not profits, and c) the latter places academics in the middle of the ethical caught between the opposing forces of our intellectual and pedagogical commitments, and our institutional demands and requirements.

The end of the strike should in no way signal that the issues at UKZN, and in South Africa, are resolved. “Higher education transformation in South Africa is best characterized as highly complex, consisting of a set of still unfolding discourses of policy formulation, adoption, and implementation that are replete with paradoxes and tensions, contestations, and political and social dilemmas”.<sup>16</sup>

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[http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000081/SA\\_HE\\_10years\\_Nov2004\\_Chapter13.pdf](http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000081/SA_HE_10years_Nov2004_Chapter13.pdf), p.6

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“REds empowered me. I am resilient. Maybe I will bend, but I will not break.”

## The piloting of resilient educators (REds): an intervention programme to encourage resilience among educators affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic

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Steffie Esterhuizen

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### Abstract

The challenges of the HIV pandemic are multiple and frequently inimical to educators who are affected when their loved ones, colleagues and learners become ill or when learners are orphaned. Consequently there have been numerous appeals for intervention efforts aimed at enabling affected educators to cope. One response to this appeal was the compilation of the Resilient Educators (REds) intervention programme. The following article documents the initial piloting of REds with volunteer educators (n=15) living in the Vaal Triangle area. The aim of this piloting was to test and refine REds using pre-experimental, participatory research within an intervention research paradigm. Data were collected prior to, during and following REds by means of triangulated mixed methods, including survey research, detailed observations, facilitator and participant reflections, open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and projective media (fifteen incomplete sentences). The pilot results are encouraging because they suggest that it is possible to enable affected educators to cope more resiliently with the challenges of the pandemic. The pilot results also suggest that programme content and process are essentially effective, but altered logistical arrangements, increased use of participatory methods and heightened sensitivity to cultural preference will need to receive attention in future REds interventions.

### Introduction

Many educators who are affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, report that they are negatively impacted. Coombe (2003) argues that all educators are affected by the pandemic. Bhana, Morrell, Epstein and Moletsane (2006) argue that Life Orientation educators (especially those teaching in economically challenged communities) are even more affected as the burden of supporting learners and colleagues through loss and grief related to the pandemic

inevitably falls on Life Orientation educators. Bennell (2005) and Shisana, Peltzer, Zungu-Dirwayi and Louw (2005) do not agree that all educators are affected, but there is nevertheless an urgent call within South Africa to buffer teachers against the negative personal and professional impacts of the pandemic (Cf. Table 1) (Bennell, 2005; Coombe, 2003; Hall, Altman, Nkomo, Peltzer and Zuma, 2005; Kinghorn and Kelly, 2005; Shisana *et al.*, 2005; Simbayi, Skinner, Letlape and Zuma, 2005; Theron, 2007). This call is echoed in the findings of an international study concerning the readiness of the education sector (including the South African education sector) to cope with the impacts of the pandemic – the findings suggest that although HIV/AIDS management structures are generally in place, there is (amongst others) continued need for increased support for educators confronted by the pandemic (UNAIDS Inter Agency Task Team on Education, 2006).

**Table 1: Personal and professional impacts of HIV pandemic on educators**

Negative personal impacts linked to pandemic's challenges	Negative professional impacts linked to pandemic's challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Grief</li> <li>2. Mood disturbances</li> <li>3. Emotional lability</li> <li>4. Elevated stress</li> <li>5. Fear</li> <li>6. Poor health (e.g. disturbed sleep; poor appetite)</li> <li>7. Attenuated socialization</li> <li>8. Spiritual doubt</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Professional stress, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• escalating workloads/larger classes when colleagues are absent for pandemic-related reasons</li> <li>• teaching/caring for vulnerable learners</li> <li>• interacting with HIV + colleagues/learners</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Decreased morale</li> <li>3. Multiple roles, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educator</li> <li>• counsellor</li> <li>• confidante</li> <li>• caregiver</li> <li>• social worker</li> <li>• preventative agent</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

What is reflected in Table 1 above can be described as a dynamic set of environmental hazards (Leadbeater, Marshall and Banister, 2007), typically associated with the HIV crisis, that are likely to predispose HIV-impacted educators to unhealthy functioning. These personal and professional risks associated with being an educator in the age of HIV and AIDS will vary in intensity and frequency from context to context and are more likely to inflame

educator vulnerability when they are multiple and when educators have little accessible, mitigating support (Schoon, 2006; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007).

One potential way to support educators confronted by the risks of the HIV pandemic is by engaging in some form of intervention. Intervention is understood to mean any course of action that buffers and/or modifies processes and circumstances that are potentially threatening for individuals and communities (Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana, 2006; Lazarus, 2007). In the context of HIV/AIDS, the greater emphasis has been on preventive interventions, also with regard to educators, both in Africa (Norr, Norr, Kaponda, Kachingwe and Mbweza, 2007) and South Africa (McElligott, 2005). There are limited documented accounts of supportive interventions (interventions that seek to empower within an existing risk-laden context rather than to prevent risk) with South African educators who are affected by the pandemic. One such account relates to a collaborative research project conducted in Vulindlela, a rural area of KwaZulu-Natal, with teachers and community health care workers (Mitchell, De Lange, Moletsane, Stuart and Buthelezi, 2005). As a consequence of this project, local multi-disciplinary interaction was encouraged, community projects were planned, HIV-related stigma was explored and community education promoted, all of which contributed to teacher support. Another example is the participatory reflection and action research project conducted with primary school educators in an informal-settlement in the Eastern Cape (Ebersöhn, Eloff and Ferreira, 2007; Ferreira 2007). One outcome of this research was the facilitation of asset-based coping among teachers who participated. Participants were also empowered in the form of education with regard to basic HIV knowledge and training in additional coping skills. In both of the aforementioned, participant empowerment was partly attributed to the participatory methods that the researchers favoured (Ebersöhn *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2005).

To the best of our knowledge, there are no other examples of supportive interventions with South African teachers *affected* by the pandemic. This article reports on another recent attempt to do so in the form of a group intervention programme, Resilient Educators (REds), designed to support South African educators affected by the pandemic by encouraging resilience as a coping skill.

The purpose of this article is to comment on the efficacy of REds to empower affected educators as demonstrated in its pilot implementation and reflect on what fine-tuning (as recommended by participants and inferred from the

analysis of data) is needed to improve REs. The implementation of REs is framed by an intervention research approach which suggests that there is a period during which the programme is trialed and tweaked (De Vos, 2006), akin to that of formative evaluation (Babbie and Mouton, 2007). As such, the article reports work in progress. The initial findings suggest that educators who participated in the pilot intervention evidenced some positive change and could be assisted towards resilient functioning.

The results of the pilot intervention may be useful to service providers working with educators who are affected by the pandemic in that the nascent results suggest that educators can be enabled despite the adversities incumbent to teaching in the face of the pandemic this knowledge may in turn encourage service providers and educators that positive change among educators affected by the HIV pandemic is possible. These emerging positive results may further encourage service providers to implement REs with other groups of teachers. Finally, the understanding of how teachers changed following participation in REs might be used in professional development activities with both pre- and in-service teachers directed at fostering resilience and so reducing the risk of staff attrition (Edward, 2005).

## Resilient functioning

In essence, resilience refers to the process of functioning relatively well despite adverse circumstances (Almedom, 2005; Edward, 2005; Haeffel and Grigorenko, 2007; Masten and Reed, 2005; Rutter, 2000; Ungar, 2005). Typically, such adverse circumstances are beyond an individual's control (e.g. war, pandemic, entrenched poverty; continued crises) (Edward, 2005; Wong, Reker and Peacock, 2006). When the individual copes well (proactively or creatively) with such adversity, resilience is evidenced (Edward, 2005; McCreary, Cunningham, Ingram and Fife, 2006; Wong, Wong and Scott, 2006).

A study that sought to explore resilience among mental health practitioners involved in perpetual crisis counselling, suggested that resilient practitioners had adequate expertise, creativity and experience to cope with work demands; had faith and hope; had insight into their role and engaged in self-care, that included healthy habits and social networking (Edward, 2005). Resilience among these health practitioners, and others, might then be described as the ability to cope with stress, to network, to hope, to solve problems, to accept

the status quo, to persist and so forth (Hjemdal, Friborg, Stiles, Rosenvinge and Martinussen, 2006; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Masten and Reed, 2005). Rather than enumerate a list of descriptors, resilience might be summarized as a coping strategy that has the potential to encourage people to develop confidence in dealing with challenges and to reframe a negative status quo as a more positive, manageable one (Almedom, 2005; Edward, 2005; Rutter, 1985).

The antecedents of resilience are attributed to the dynamic interplay of inter- and intra-personal protective resources and processes that empower individuals and communities to live adaptively notwithstanding adversity (Cameron, Ungar, and Liebenberg, 2007; Carrey and Ungar, 2007a; Carrey and Ungar, 2007b; Hjemdal, 2007; Kirby and Fraser, 1997; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Powers, 2002; Phan, 2006; Schoon, 2006). Intra-personal protective resources might include attributes such as a sense of humour, internal locus of control, social competence, intelligence and so forth, whilst interpersonal resources relate to supportive family, social and cultural structures, such as mental health care; supportive interventions; mentors and so on (Hjemdal *et al.*, 2006; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Masten and Reed, 2005). Typically, resilient individuals negotiate or have access to buffering resources and capitalize on these resources. In other words, resilience is not exclusive to either the individual or the environment, but is an interactive process of protective give-and-take. In this way individual and collective strengths protect individuals interchangeably.

Theron (2007) noted such reciprocity among some South African educators who continued to function resiliently regardless of the pandemic negative impacts. These educators described both interpersonal (e.g. availability of counselling, collegial support) and intrapersonal (e.g. assertiveness skills, religious beliefs) protective resources that contributed to their wellness. Their ability to function resiliently did not mean that these educators were not challenged, disturbed or disheartened at times, but rather that they used inter- and intrapersonal resources to function adaptively most of the time.

Interventions can encourage resilience, either by reducing exposure to adverse circumstances, or by increasing the number of/access to protective resources that encourage competence, or by encouraging or influencing processes that facilitate resilience. Comprehensive interventions include all three these strategies (Masten and Reed, 2005) and encourage a sense of personal control over life trajectories and some sense of influence over the forces that impact



on daily life (Lazarus, 2007). This sense of control or influence is allied to a sense of empowerment (Donald *et al.*, 2006), a phenomenon believed to be integral to resilience and one encouraged by effective resilience-focused intervention programmes (Yates, Egeland and Sroufe, 2003).

## An overview of REds

REds aimed to encourage resilience as a coping skill among affected educators by amplifying protective resources and processes. Because of its alignment with the tenets of positive psychology, REds was based on the assumption that educators who are affected by the pandemic have individual and collective strengths (Ryff and Singer, 2005; Seligman, 2005) which might be amplified to encourage resilience.

To encourage resilient coping, REds aimed to buffer the personal and professional impacts of the pandemic as outlined by current research (Bhana *et al.* 2006; Coombe, 2003; Hall *et al.*, 2005; Kinghorn and Kelly, 2005; Theron, 2005; Theron, 2007) by using group-process and programme content that encouraged the awareness and development of personal and collective protective resources and skills and concomitant participant resilience.

The pilot version of REds consisted of eight interactive, practical modules. The modules focused on the facts of the pandemic; how teachers can give and gain support; how teachers can remain psychosocially well and cope with stigma; how teachers can cope with stress and fatigue; teacher rights with regard to the pandemic; how teachers can prevent HIV at school; guidelines for teachers and pupils on nursing ill loved ones and how teachers can function resiliently in the face of the pandemic. These modules were compiled by means of multi-disciplinary collaboration in line with reported educator support needs (Coombe, 2003; Simbayi *et al.*, 2005; Theron, 2005). As noted previously, the collective aim of these modules was to build “buffering strengths” (Seligman, 2005, p.6) by making teachers aware of available protective resources and encouraging skills, knowledge, and processes that might support resilient functioning.

As an intervention programme REds depended on small group process. The therapeutic worth of group interaction, especially groups limited to a maximum of fifteen members (Corey and Corey, 2002) is well documented (Ross and Deverell, 2004; Smit, 2004). In practice, each of the eight REds

modules was presented to a group of volunteer participants that met weekly. A ninth meeting was included as a finale. Each session lasted between 150 and 180 minutes and depended, in part, on group activities and group process. The venue (local school classroom) was chosen by the participants as this was convenient for them.

REds included participatory methods. Each session invited participant interaction and input and depended in part on participant activity for success. Participant activities included amongst others reflection, listing of community resources, art therapy, music therapy, gestalt work, role-play, debate and discussion. Within this participatory framework, participants and researchers shared knowledge and experiences, and changes were envisaged 'with' participants, rather than 'to' participants (Mullen and Kealy, 2005).

## Methodology

REds is based on intervention research. Intervention research focuses on ascertaining whether an intervention has merit for participants and/or their communities and typically has six phases (De Vos, 2006):

1. Problem analysis and project planning (completed 2003–2004)
2. Information gathering and synthesis (completed 2004–2005)
3. Design (completed 2005)
4. Early development and pilot testing (completed 2006)
5. Evaluation and advanced development (ongoing: 2007–2009)
6. Dissemination

This article focuses on the pilot-testing of Phase Four. This phase is allied to formative evaluation which is done with the express purpose of gaining feedback that might improve the intervention programme (Babbie and Mouton, 2007). To gain this feedback, we followed a pre-experimental pretest-posttest design, with no control group (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Mixed methods were used to gather data: quantitative and qualitative data were gathered concurrently in the pre- and post-tests to comment on participant empowerment (Babbie and Mouton, 2007; Ivankova, Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In order to ascertain how REds might be further developed, written participant and facilitator reflections (Ivankova *et al.*, 2007) were gathered at the close of each REds session.

The hypothesis underlying the methodology used in Phase Four was that if REds was efficacious as an intervention, educators would be empowered towards resilient functioning that might be reflected in post-test data that suggested a sense of participant mastery over the pandemic impacts (Lazarus, 2007). Specifically we hypothesized that participant job satisfaction would improve, participant stress would decline, and participants would develop confidence to deal with the pandemic challenges (Almedom, 2005; Edward, 2005; Rutter, 1985).

### Sample and recruitment

Two fieldworkers approached schools within the Vaal Triangle that were geographically accessible to them and where they knew gatekeepers that could facilitate their entrance into these school communities. Once introduced by the gatekeepers, the fieldworkers promoted participation in the piloting of REds by talking to school principals and to school staff during staff meetings. Educators who considered themselves affected by the pandemic were invited to participate. Affected educators encompassed educators who had HIV-positive loved ones, colleagues or learners; or educators with loved ones, colleagues or learners who had died from HIV/AIDS-related illnesses; or educators who were teaching learners who were orphaned or vulnerable as a consequence of the pandemic.

For the initial piloting, fifteen educators volunteered to participate. All fifteen were black primary school teachers teaching at township schools. Twelve were female and three were male. Their ages ranged from 32 to 54. The participants did not speak English as first language and so a translator was present to facilitate communication.

### Consent procedures

Informed participant consent as well as the permission of the provincial and local educational authorities was obtained prior to commencement. Ethical clearance from the university funding this research was also obtained. We observed basic ethical principles (e.g. voluntary participation, confidentiality, respect for participant rights to withdraw at any stage or choose not to disclose or discuss anything that they would prefer not to) (Roos, Visser, Pistorius and Nefale, 2007; Strydom, 2005; Wassenaar, 2008). Participants provided

permission for data generated in this study to be documented. We referred participants to local counselors if the need arose and debriefed them at the close of the intervention. We also followed up on participants three months after completion of piloting.

## Data collection

Four sets of data were collected. The first set was collected prior to the piloting of REds and included both quantitative and qualitative data that reflected educator well-being. The second set was collected at the end of each REds session in the form of written participant, facilitator and observer reflections on the efficacy of each session. The third set replicated the first and was collected on completion of the piloting of REds. The fourth was collected three months after completion of the piloting and included qualitative data on participant perception of REds and the pandemic.

The quantitative instrument used was the Professional Quality of Life scale (ProQol). The ProQol has been used internationally to determine job satisfaction, burnout and fatigue among school personnel (Stamm, 2005). Qualitative instruments were used to triangulate the data obtained by means of the quantitative instrument and gather rich information on how participants perceived the pandemic and its challenges for them as educators, how well they thought they were coping with these challenges and what, if anything, empowered coping. Qualitative data included detailed observations by an observer, facilitator reflections, open-ended questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (either in English or in mother tongue; mother tongue responses were translated by the participant observer) and projective media (fifteen incomplete sentences).

REds was implemented by two post-graduate students (one black, one white; both female) over nine consecutive weeks. One student facilitated and one fulfilled the functions of an observer. The duration of each session was two and a half hours on average. In the written reflections, participants were asked to reflect on what in the session had been beneficial, not beneficial and what they would like added to each REds session. The facilitator and observer also completed reflections.

## Analysis

The ProQol protocols were scored by an independent statistician according to the guidelines in the ProQol manual (Stamm, 2005). The scores were statistically computed to provide pre- and post-test averages for the three scales of the ProQoL, namely compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue. These averages were interpreted according to scale averages (Stamm, 2005).

The qualitative data which included transcribed interview responses, open-ended questionnaire responses, written projections (derived from the incomplete sentences test) and observations were thematically coded (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). The codes were influenced by current literature on negative educator experiences of the pandemic (Bhana *et al.*, 2006; Coombe, 2000; Coombe, 2003; Ebersöhn, 2008; Fredriksson and Kanabus, 2002; Hall *et al.*, 2005; Hjemdal *et al.*, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Kinghorn and Kelly, 2005; Shisana *et al.*, 2005; Theron, 2005; United Nations, 2003; World Bank, 2002) and by prevailing literature documenting coping and resilience (Almedom, 2005; Carrey and Ungar, 2007b; Edward, 2005; Schoon, 2006, Solomon and Laufer, 2005, Strümpfer, 2006, Taylor, Dickerson and Klein, 2005, Theron, 2007). They were also influenced by our professional experiences of service delivery to education stakeholders affected by the pandemic.

We contrasted the broad thematic categories from the pre- and post-tests and then drew inferences regarding emerging educator resilience and the efficacy of REds. Our inferences were moderated by a diligent search for contrasting emerging themes (Gilgun, 2005). We also compared quantitative data results with those of the qualitative data and discussed these with other, experienced researchers. In this way we attempted to ensure trustworthiness.

Participant reflections were analyzed for comments relating to necessary improvements to the content and/or process of REds. We used their comments, as well as those provided by an independent reviewer of the programme content and those of the facilitator and observer, to tweak REds content and process.

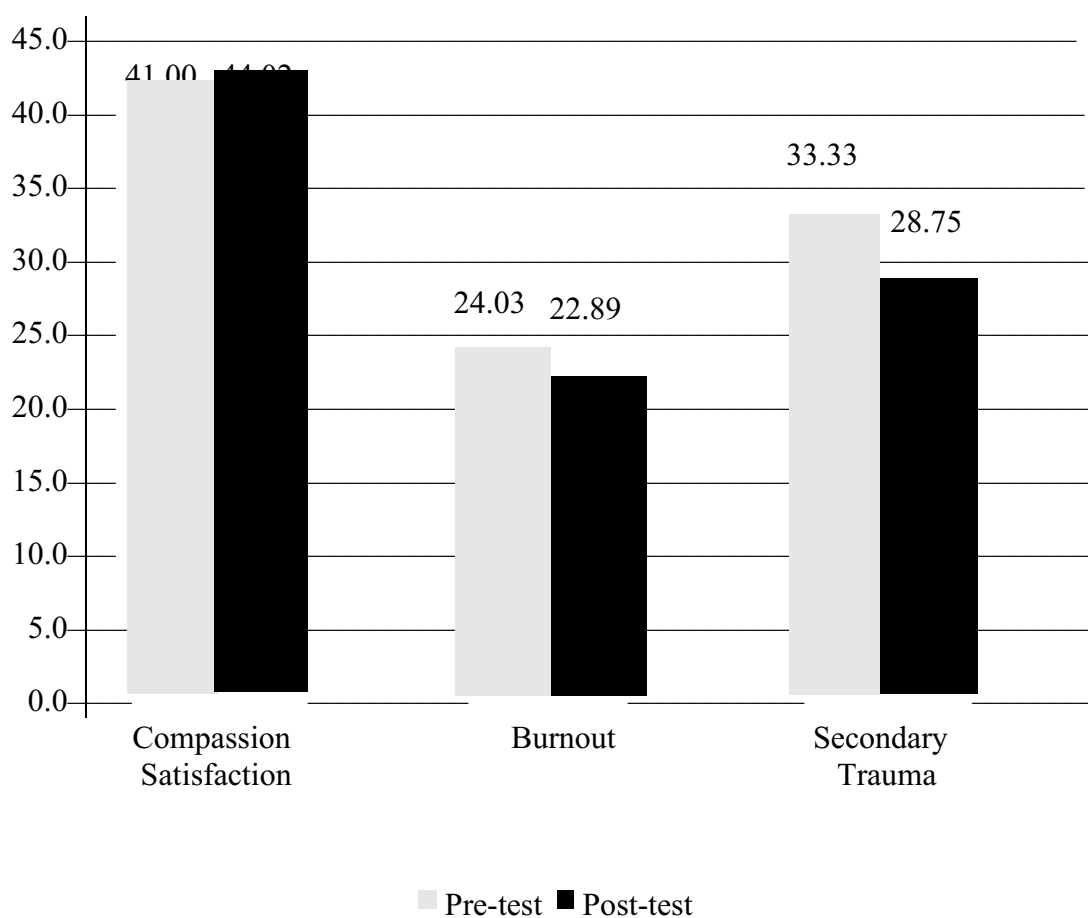
## Results

The results from the initial piloting of REds suggested that REds facilitated a degree of educator resilience. To facilitate an overview of the results, the quantitative and qualitative results and reflections on REds will be discussed independently.

### Quantitative results

The pre- and post test ProQol results are provided as a group average in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Pre- and post-test ProQol scores**



The average ProQol range for compassion satisfaction (the fulfilment that participants derive from a profession which involves compassionate work) is 32–41. In the pre-test, participants recorded an average satisfaction score of 41. The post-test average fell into the above average range (44.02), suggesting increased (albeit non-significantly) professional fulfilment among participants following participation in REds.

The average ProQol range for burnout ranges from 19–28. In the pre-test, participants recorded an average burnout score of 24.3. The post-test average was marginally lower (22.89), suggesting decreased (albeit non-significantly) levels of burnout. These levels are in line with current literature that suggests that South African educators are generally a stressed corps (Hay, Smit and Paulsen, 2001; Jackson and Rothmann, 2006; Lessing and De Witt, 2007; Schulze and Steyn, 2007; Xaba, 2003).

The average ProQol range for compassion fatigue (or secondary trauma resulting from compassionate work) ranges from 8–17. In the pre-test, participants recorded an average score of 33.33 – this signaled above average compassion fatigue among participants. The post-test average was lower (27.85), suggesting decreased compassion fatigue. Despite this decrease, participants continued to score in the above average range of compassion fatigue. To the best of our knowledge there are no current studies which document South African educator compassion fatigue and so it is difficult to comment on whether the high compassion fatigue of participants in our study is endemic to them or typical of South African educators or even typical of South African educators confronted by the challenges of the pandemic. Qualitative accounts of pandemic-related experiences of Life Orientation educators in KwaZulu-Natal (Bhana *et al.*, 2006) and educators in Gauteng and the Free State (Theron, 2007) do suggest that some educators are fatigued by pandemic-related caregiving tasks as does a comprehensive review of schools as sites of care and support (Hoadley, 2007).

Participation in REds did not impact significantly on participant compassion satisfaction, burnout or compassion fatigue – this may be related to the small number of participants which confounds statistical computations. Nevertheless, the decreases in burnout and compassion fatigue scores and the increase in compassion satisfaction suggest that participants experienced some relief following participation in REds.



## Qualitative results

The qualitative results emerging from the pre-tests will be presented first, followed by the results emerging from the post-tests. In summary, the pre-test results suggested limited resilience, whereas the post-tests results generally suggested nascent resilience, with themes related to altered perception and acceptance of the HIV-crisis, professional empowerment, and burgeoning community mindedness. There were, however, also some post-test results that suggested ambivalence towards the HIV-crisis. This section on qualitative results is concluded with findings from the reflection worksheets.

### Pre-test results

Prior to their participation in REds, the participants came across as vulnerable to the challenges of the pandemic. There were limited themes of resilience. Participants regarded the pandemic as a '*death sentence*', more specifically one which they were powerless to alter. Many of them commented on inadequate knowledge with regard to transmission and prevention: ". . . *we had very little knowledge about HIV and AIDS. Even up to now people still lack information . . .*" All participants related negative emotion that threatened to overwhelm them: "*When I think of the future I feel like crying because of HIV and AIDS*". They all referred to the pandemic's negative impacts, including altered social lives, poor sleeping and eating patterns and declining spiritual faith. One participant commented "*I sleep badly, because even if I am not positive I think of those who suffer from that and die.*" Participants generally experienced the pandemic as insidious because they witnessed its impact on their learners: "*If I see a learner suffering I just can't hold my tears*" and "*As an educator, you feel the learners pain and frustration.*" They reflected that it was not enough to take care of learners' academic growth, but that their learners needed them to provide psychological and sometimes physical care and that this left them feeling sad and drained.

There were strong overtones of despair, uncertainty and helplessness in most participant responses. Their negative experiences contributed to many participants being fearful: "*When I think of the future, I fear.*" In addition to fear, participants referred at length to grief and loss and also to feelings of disempowerment when they were helpless to save ill loved ones or aid learners. One participant explained "*You meet infected learners daily, and you are willing to help, but you don't know how.*" Participants noted that they did not have the skills to cope with the pandemic's challenges and that nothing

they did seemed to make enough of a difference. As one participant said: *"You want to give help to learners, colleagues and it won't be sufficient."* This contributed to some participants feeling overwhelmed and powerless with many wishing they could avoid the pandemic and its challenges: *"When things go wrong I feel like hiding myself."*

Facilitator and observer reflections noted that the participants were initially grave and generally uncertain. They seemed overwhelmed by the pandemic's challenges. It appeared that most of the participants welcomed the opportunity to be able to open up about their experiences. In general the pre-test data symbolised negative educator perception and lived experiences of powerlessness and hopelessness that connoted vulnerability rather than resilience.

None of the pre-test data were surprising. What the participants in this sample related matched the typical profile of the affected educator with limited resilience as documented to date (Bhana *et al.*, 2006; Coombe, 2003; Simbayi *et al.*, 2005; Theron, 2005; Theron, 2007).

### Post-test results

Compared to the pre-test data, very different themes emerged in the post-test data. In general the participants projected and reported resilience, although some participants still noted that the pandemic and its challenges continued to be taxing. One participant summarised her post-REds attitude rather aptly: *"REds empowered me. I am resilient. Maybe I will bend, but I will not break."* When the post-test data were analyzed thematically in terms of what might have informed educator resilience, or their 'bending but not breaking', the following themes emerged:

- ***Altered perception***

In most instances, participants voiced an altered perception of HIV and AIDS that suggested a reviewed understanding of HIV/AIDS as a disease, rather than a death sentence, scourge or punishment: *"It has impacted me so much because I was able to consult my younger sister who is infected. I empowered her by giving her skills to acknowledge herself as a person who has a normal sickness like everybody who is ill. . . . Before I undergo REds programme I did not understand HIV and AIDS. I took it as a death sentence but now I do understand that HIV is a*

*sickness like any other disease; the difference is that HIV has no cure.*" Implicit in this extract is the sense that understanding HIV as an illness encouraged advocacy and agency. A number of participants echoed notions of advocacy and agency, and added that their altered perception had facilitated more comfortable interaction with colleagues, learners, loved ones and acquaintances who might be HIV-positive and less prejudiced behaviour. In this regard a participant explained: *"It has taught me that people with HIV/AIDS are people like myself. They should be treated like all other people. . . I have also learned that people with HIV/AIDS need to be loved and supported."* Positive perception is typically associated with coping and resilience (Boss, 2006; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Potgieter and Heyns, 2006).

- ***Acceptance of an HIV-altered reality***

Many participants voiced acceptance of an HIV-altered ecology: *"REds has made me realise that AIDS is there and it is real. It has thus given me the strength and opportunity to take care and to make sure that other citizens be aware of the pandemic."* This acceptance was allied to a willingness to respond preventatively to the HIV-crisis, again implying agency. For some participants participation in REds encouraged acceptance of a professional reality altered by HIV/AIDS: *"REds lead me to accept the situation in my class and school"*. Acceptance of this led to an altered perception of what it meant to be a teacher in the pandemic and a sense of being able to make a positive difference: *"As educators we are faced with learners who come from different backgrounds. Some infected or affected. So I have learned as an educator to accommodate them, know more about my learners so that they can feel free to discuss with me and I should offer help"*. Acceptance of the status quo is thought to encourage resilience, especially when there is little possibility of affecting change. In such instances, acceptance is related to an internal locus of control, or a sense of one's power to make a difference despite the presence of ecological hazards (Donald *et al.*, 2006; Edward, 2005; Hjemdal *et al.*, 2006; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Masten and Reed, 2005). Given that the HIV-crisis is a social phenomenon over which educators typically have cursory (if any) control (Smit and Fritz, 2008), participant acceptance of the status quo and willingness to work meaningfully within this context is especially enabling.

- ***Professional empowerment***

Professional empowerment related to participants illustrating a sense of competence to cope with the taxing demands that the HIV-crisis makes of many educators, including being able to teach HIV-prevention, counsel, advise, and practically support learners (e.g. with grants, uniforms, food packages). Most participants referred to being able to assist and support vulnerable learners and orphans via the acquisition or extension of knowledge and skills: *"It [participation in REds] has empowered me with the knowledge and skills to help the learners understand how to deal with other learners who are HIV positive. And even I myself have learned how to deal with the learners who are infected and affected."*

Increased knowledge (such as knowledge of referral networks, available grants, HIV transmission, rudimentary nursing of HIV positive individuals) and augmented skills (such as time management, bereavement skills, counselling skills) encouraged educators to feel empowered and competent: *"It gives me skills on how to go about with the learners who are affected; how to handle them emotionally and psychologically. I know how to manage time in terms of teaching because initially I used to just listen to problems, not knowing what to do with the problems encountered by learners but through REds I am able to solve them and know whom to contact, whom to refer a serious problem. It means a lot to me because I know whom to contact. I do understand how to counsel learners who are affected. REds empowered me as a person with skills."*

For some participants the REds experience was associated with a sense of being able to cope with the multifaceted roles that confront educators in the age of HIV and AIDS, including amongst others preventative agent, caregiver and social worker (Cf. Table 1): *"In my professional capacity REds has changed me in such a way that learners and educators who are infected turned to accept their status and also have learned to live with it through my help; in short, REds has also changed my role as a teacher i.e. I've turned to be a social worker in a way."*

Whilst this change was generally interpreted in a positive way by participants, it included the potential to strain participants in ways similar to those noted by Bhana *et al.* (2006) and Hoadley (2007): *"I have been very concerned now of late about the lives those learners live in their different homes. Are they eating healthy foods . . . I also wanted to know whether they receive their grants . . . and if not I am always*

*willing to help those children. I also brought my children's clothes and give them to those children who need them."*

The above excerpts suggest that educator competence and resilience to professional challenges are intertwined, as suggested by Schulze and Steyn (2007). However, participants were candid that the keys to their empowerment lay in more than acquired knowledge and skills – empowerment was also partly in kinship with others, and in awareness of and access to supportive resources. In this regard, most participants noted that being with others and talking to others encouraged coping: *"REds made me realise that I cannot face AIDS alone. There are people who can help me."* Many participants felt better capable of coping with professional tasks because of heightened awareness of supportive resources within their communities and the sense of kinship that this provided. Their navigation towards and negotiation for resources that might aid them to cope with the challenges of the HIV-crisis is directly in line with more recent resilience theory that posits that people are inclined towards resilience when they are aware of and take advantage of accessible, protective assets (Ebersöhn, 2008; Ungar, 2008).

In summary, the above echoes themes that typified resilient mental health practitioners (Edward, 2005) and more resilient educators affected by the pandemic (Theron, 2007), specifically those of adequate expertise, skill and experience to tackle work demands; insight into professional roles, freedom to talk openly about confrontational issues and social networking.

- ***Community mindedness***

The post-test data suggest that participants were community-minded and confident about their ability to support their communities following participation in REds. Whereas they were aware of learners, colleagues and loved ones who were affected and infected prior to REds, they were mindful that communities needed empowerment in terms of knowledge and skills following REds. One participant noted: *"It made me realise how really my community needs me."* Another said: *"REds has made me aware that . . . you have to play an important role in educating my children, neighbours, family members about the necessary skills on how to cope and treat both an infected and affected member in a family situation, community, church . . ."* Positive social orientation has long been associated with resilience (Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge and Hjemdal, 2005; Werner, 2001), especially when such orientation includes empathy and a willingness to care.

Community-mindedness was expressed in tandem with a belief that participants could make a difference in their communities. For example, one participant noted: *"I have also learned how to help the people in the community that are infected and affected"* while another explained: *"REds has in fact changed my life as an educator able to reach children and help them. I am able to counsel them, especially those who are affected by HIV. And families are coming to me for more advices – in the community I am serving, I cope with [a] very difficult situation."* It would seem therefore that participants considered reaching out to their communities because they felt they had the know-how. As noted above, a sense of personal control, agency and efficacy are associated with resilience (Donald *et al.*, 2006; Edward, 2005; Hjemdal *et al.*, 2006; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Masten and Reed, 2005).

Many participants were mindful of the community of teachers, both in their districts and in South Africa and reported that such an awareness had encouraged them to share what they had learned with them: *"As teachers we should have knowledge about this pandemic – that is why after REds we found that it was necessary to impact the knowledge we had gathered from REds to other educators."* Other participants were aware that in the war on HIV/AIDS, educators need to stand together to be triumphant: *"I have decided to reach out to the community and help them to accept people who are HIV positive and not to neglect them. Let us not fight HIV and AIDS as individuals but join forces together – we will win."* Such community-mindedness echoes themes that typified resilient mental health practitioners and more resilient educators affected by the pandemic, especially in terms of finding meaningfulness in professional roles including making a difference to others (Edward, 2005; Theron, 2007).

- ***Ambivalent responses***

Despite the generally positive responses, there were still post-test responses that connoted vulnerability. For example, one participant commented that the spiritual impact of the pandemic was *"I have hatred to man"*. Another noted: *"Emotionally I feel sad and unhappy; I feel it is not happening. It is a dream."* Another said *"When I think of the future I become sad because of horrible things happening."* The responses suggestive of continued vulnerability were made by the same three participants and were interspersed with coping responses. For example, one of these three made the following positive comment later on: *"REds gave me hope for the future, no matter my circumstances"* and another



*"I can manage my stress . . . REds helped me a lot to cope."* More recently researchers have begun to suggest that resilience is not an either-or construct, but might more accurately be interpreted as a continuum (Speakman, 2005; Ungar, 2008). In other words, most people are motivated towards resilience; some may just be at the lower end of the continuum, and this position may never be regarded as fixed (Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007).

## Reflections on REds

The reflections of the participants were predominantly laudatory. In general participants advocated that REds should be more widely implemented in order that multiple educators and communities might be empowered. They were vociferously in favour of REds being translated into indigenous languages. Some participants felt that REds content should be integrated into the curriculum of educators-in-training and of learners.

Participants suggested only two changes to the REds programme. Both related to cultural issues. They recommended that alternative taped relaxation exercises be found that made no use of a white, male voice and that the classical music used in relaxation exercises be replaced with African or gospel music.

The reflections of the facilitator and observer urged more changes than the participants did. They recommended that the pre- and post-test media (e.g. questionnaires; incomplete sentences) be shortened and specifically that the wording and format of the ProQoL be simplified; that session times be lengthened and that resilient, HIV-positive community members be invited to participate as voices of realism and encouragement for participating educators. They also suggested that REds might be logistically simpler if it were implemented in its entirety over a weekend, rather than for nine consecutive weeks. In the course of piloting REds, implementation dates had to be frequently altered to facilitate apparently last minute Education Department or school initiated activities.

## Discussion

This discussion is prefaced by acknowledgement of the limitations of a pilot



study, especially one with a limited number of participants, and of the limitations of a pre-experimental design (Babbie and Mouton, 2007; Leedy and Ormrod, 2005). Furthermore the sample was fairly homogeneous (all participants were black primary school educators). Even though participants made causal inferences between their enhanced coping and REs, this cannot be exclusively proven, given this limited design and sample. Nevertheless, within the ambit of intervention research, the results (primarily the qualitative results) of this pilot suggest that participants reported greater confidence in their ability to cope with pandemic challenges, even though the degree of confidence differed from participant to participant.

A comparison between the pre- and post-test data suggests some enablement of participants and the emergence of resilient functioning: the participants projected that they were generally coping more positively with the difficulties of an HIV-altered reality. Emerging resilience could be seen in participant acceptance of a pandemic-altered teaching reality, an internal locus of control, emerging themes of professional enablement, awareness of and navigation towards available protective resources, a sense of self-efficacy and an other-mindedness. In a very real sense, the participants seemed to have developed confidence in dealing with the pandemic challenges and seemed to have reframed the HIV-riddled status quo as both manageable and an opportunity to reach out to others (Almedom, 2005; Edward, 2005; Rutter, 1985). In essence, the findings reflect more recent understandings of resilience as a process of dynamic interaction between a person placed at risk and the protective resources within her ecology (Leadbeater *et al.* 2007; Ungar, 2008). It would seem that as with other effective resilience-focused intervention programmes, REs succeeded in diminishing the impacts of a stressful situation (in this instance, the HIV crisis) and provided opportunity for positive education (e.g. accessible resources, HIV-prevention) and personal growth (e.g. skill development, group experience) (Masten and Reed, 2005; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007).

When the quantitative and qualitative post-test data are compared, the results corroborate one another. The above average work satisfaction scores and participant comments affirming commitment to learners and communities suggests that most participants were passionate about their profession, even though they functioned in a pandemic-altered context. The high compassion fatigue scores suggest that participants were very aware of the negative impacts of the pandemic on learners, loved ones and communities and that this strained these educators. Their awareness and caring involvement were born out by comments relating to their involvement with orphans, friends and

family. Their qualitative responses suggested that they felt more capable of being competently involved following participation in REds and increased knowledge of referral networks and augmented skills. The slight decrease in the post-test compassion fatigue scores may have been because of this growing confidence. Nevertheless, these scores and the few ambivalent qualitative responses suggest that participants continued to be challenged by the pandemic, both on a personal and professional level. One implication of this is that REds should be implemented more continuously than a one-off intervention and might enable participants more effectively if follow-up or recurrent interventions (e.g. bi-monthly) occurred. A second possible implication is that some participants might need more rigorous intervention than others and that such individual needs be accommodated, possibly by encouraging participants to initiate therapeutic relationships with local service providers. An alternative interpretation might relate to putting aside typically Western dichotomous thinking which suggests that people are empowered, or not. In this regard, the notion of a continuum of resilience (Speakman, 2005) is possibly more veridical. If participant responses were to be viewed from a more dualistic perspective (Wong *et al.*, 2006b), then it becomes possible that participants who completed REds might be empowered *and* challenged; that enablement and (continued) distress might very well co-exist. Perhaps as researchers we need to accept this duality of human experience, but simultaneously strive towards enabling participants to develop and make the most of protective resources so that there is greater balance and/or progression towards mastery of challenging circumstances (Wong *et al.*, 2006a).

When participant reflections and projections are considered, their emerging resilience is associated with enhanced personal resources (e.g. increased knowledge, additional skills, personal change) and collective resources (e.g. awareness of community-based protective resources) and protective processes (accessing referral networks, speaking to others). The aforementioned are inherent to proactive coping (Wong *et al.*, 2006a; Wong *et al.*, 2006b) and comprehensive interventions aimed at encouraging resilience (Masten and Reed, 2005). Confidence in one's ability to cope with challenging circumstances heightens enablement and is embedded in knowledge, skills, resources and social networks (Edward, 2005; Heppner and Lee, 2005; Maddux, 2005; Masten and Reed, 2005). This suggests that future versions of REds should continue to encourage the awareness and development of inter- and intra-personal protective resources and processes. The latter might be emphasized by encouraging mapping activities of community resources (Ebersöhn *et al.*, 2007).

As noted earlier, enablement and resilience are linked to the willingness to make the most of prevailing knowledge, skills, resources and social networks or to negotiate access to these (Carrey and Ungar, 2007a; Heppner and Lee, 2005; Hjemdal, 2007; Leadbeater *et al.*, 2007; Schoon, 2006). This suggests that the empowerment of the participants in this pilot phase might have been partly due to their willingness to make the most of inter- and intra-personal resources that emerged in the course of their participation in REds.

In reflecting on further possible reasons why participants projected resilience, we conjecture that participant growth in resilience was likely due to the process of REds and not merely the content of REds. The process of REds included group-belonging, volunteer participation and participatory methods. All of these have been reported to facilitate enablement (Ebersöhn *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell *et al.*, 2005; Ross and Deverell, 2004, Smit, 2004; Theron, 2008).

The qualitative data generated by participants provided clearer signs of emerging resilience than the quantitative data. It is possible that the wording and format of the ProQoL (as reported by the facilitator and participant observer) might have confused the participants who were not English mother-tongue speakers. The opportunity to use mother tongue during the generation of qualitative data might have made it easier for participants to express empowerment and continued challenges more clearly.

In summary, the findings of this study reinforce contemporary resilience theory and contribute an understanding of how this theory can be put into enabling practice with educators impacted by HIV and AIDS. At the very least, educators who are placed at risk by the HIV-crisis require support that encourages altered perception and acceptance of the status quo, raises awareness of ecological resources that can be used to buffer the challenges of the HIV-crisis, forges community-mindedness and provides a sense of belonging to a group of like-minded educators.

## The way forward

Participant recommendations regarding modification of REds were limited. We are aware that research participants often provide socially desirable responses (Mouton, 2008), but it is also possible that recommendations were limited because REds was specifically designed for educators in accordance with their reported support needs in the face of the pandemic (Coombe, 2003;

Theron, 2005). When interventions are designed for a specific population, the chances of participant empowerment are heightened (Mash and Wolf, 2005). The two recommendations that were made pertained to cultural sensitivity and cultural preferences and serve as a reminder that South African research needs to be meticulously sensitive to the realities of our multicultural society. Future REds facilitators should preferably be coached towards greater cultural sensitivity, especially given South Africa's cultural complexity.

The comments of both the facilitator and participant observer suggest that future rounds of implementation aimed at advancing REds development and concomitantly empowering participants and their communities should include altered logistical arrangements (possibly weekend-long implementation, depending on participant preference; shortened pre- and post-testing; simplifying ProQoL wording and format) and longer sessions. Participation by local, resilient and HIV-positive adults could potentially inspire participants and simultaneously further encourage community-participant interaction. In order to facilitate cultural compatibility, future facilitators should choose music and relaxation exercises that suit the culture of their participants. One possible way to address these suggestions is to adapt future REds to be even more participatory and include participants in decisions regarding the content and process of REds, prior to implementation. In this sense REds might facilitate immediate and practical experiences of empowerment.

## Conclusion

REds is research in progress. The results from its first piloting suggest promising themes of participant resilience, and suggestions for logistical improvements. They also caution the need for heightened cultural sensitivity in terms of programme content. These results will inform future versions of REds, but may also serve to guide and remind other researchers and service providers working with educators affected by HIV and AIDS: of the importance of flexible logistical arrangements, increased use of participatory methods and heightened sensitivity to cultural preference.

As the results of ongoing rounds of implementations are gathered, an understanding of how to optimally modify the contents and process of REds and empower educators affected by the pandemic towards resilience will crystallize. This is essential as the ultimate goal of REds research is the enablement of educators to cope, resiliently, with the ongoing challenges of the HIV/AIDS.

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# Theorising researcher self-effacement and youth deep-insiders in HIV/AIDS research: an awkward binary

Ronicka Mudaly

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## Abstract

The increasing prevalence of infection with HIV among young South Africans necessitates an exploration into their construction of sexuality. This article focuses on how principles of feminist theory can be used to enable young people to serve as researchers in the context of HIV/AIDS. Young researchers were enabled to use interviews and photographs to conduct research within their youth communities and in this way, they served as deep-insider researchers. An exploration into the processes of enabling young people to conduct research, while linking the production of meaning to the possibility of human agency and transformative social action, formed an evolving methodology in this work. Methodological insights into the training and enabling of young researchers and the resultant self-effacement<sup>1</sup> of the lead researcher are described. Insights and principles which emerged when working with young researchers are discussed.

A study<sup>2</sup> of young South Africans was undertaken by the University of Witwatersrand Reproductive Health Unit to explore the spread of HIV/AIDS among them. Nearly one in every four South African women between 20 and 24 years old is testing positive for HIV, according to this study (Reproductive Health Unit, 2004). In the same study, it was found that one in 14 men in the same age category tested positive for HIV. A distinct gender disparity in infection and mortality statistics is evident. According to Klepp, Flisher and Kaaya (2008), the spread of HIV/AIDS has raised concerns in all African countries, especially those which lie south of the Sahara desert. This view is also endorsed by Mitchell (2000) who states:

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<sup>1</sup> **self-effacement** – withdrawing into the background; making yourself inconspicuous  
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/self-effacement>

<sup>2</sup> A survey was conducted by the University of Witwatersrand's Reproductive Health Unit in partnership with the Medical Council of South Africa in 2004 to explore the trends of HIV/AIDS in the South African context. A sample of 11 904 South African young people completed questionnaires and donated oral fluid for an HIV test.



For no generation of young people more than this current one has the fact of sexuality – particularly the risk factors as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic – been under scrutiny. . . Young people between 10 and 24 years of age account for more than half of new infections after infancy worldwide. The largest percentages of these new infections are in the SADC<sup>3</sup> region. . . young women between the ages of 15–19 are the hardest hit. . . There has never been a more serious challenge to. . . our understanding of sexuality and sexual practices, the role of the youth in social change.

## Bringing youth to the research

Mudaly and Sookrajh (2008) cite Sloane and Zimmer (1993) and Milburn (1995) who assert that research about HIV/AIDS among young people needs to be age-appropriate and sensitive to the youth culture. This can be achieved if the researchers themselves are young people who are in synch with the youth culture.

According to Goodyear and Checkoway (2003), young people whose self knowledge makes research more age-appropriate should work with adults as equal partners in research projects. They assert that although young people assist in information gathering, youth participation in research remains a relatively undeveloped field of practice. AVERT.org<sup>4</sup> (2005) support the view that youth involvement in HIV/AIDS has, for too long, been confined to education about HIV transmission, answering questions and handing out condoms. This study aims to transcend these barriers by contributing towards this field of practice through creating a space in which young people can develop as researchers in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Mudaly and Sookrajh (2008) propose the following reasons for engaging young people in the process of research:

1. To encourage active involvement of young people in decisions that impact on **their** lives.
2. To build capacity in young people to serve as researchers generally and in the field of HIV/AIDS specifically.

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<sup>3</sup> Southern African Developing Countries.

<sup>4</sup> AVERT is an international AIDS charity. AVERT.org publishes information on HIV and AIDS.

3. To provide young people with the space to articulate ways in which the HIV/AIDS pandemic can be stemmed among youth, that is, to provide space for grassroots activism in HIV/AIDS prevention education.

In this article, the following research question will be explored: *How can young people be enabled to serve as researchers in the context of HIV/AIDS?* The article draws on data from an unpublished thesis entitled “Empowering secondary school learners to explore risk perceptions and the role of gender among young people in the context of HIV/AIDS” (Mudaly, 2006), and sheds light on how I, as the lead researcher, become effaced from the project as the young researchers’ involvement increases. The young people who were engaged in this study served as co-researchers, and may also be referred to as deep-insider researchers.

## Deep-insider

Brian Edwards’s (1999), *Inside the whale: deep insider research*, where he explores the notion of a deep-insider as an approach to understanding the role of the youth researchers, influenced this study.

Youth researchers can be described as deep-insiders because they have been part of the community for over ten years and will not be guilty of the *get in–get the data–get out* approach to research. In contrast they got deeper into the issues that affect the youth on a day to day basis. Three further observations, borrowing from Edwards (1999), are presented in respect of the researchers researching a group they are a part of for some time.

Firstly, all co-researchers have been in a position for some time whereby emergent theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1991), perhaps less academically informed previously, has been a daily part of the member’s working life. The community has been for some time under unwitting scrutiny and review on an ongoing basis.

Secondly, all co-researchers were exposed to a process of self-interpretation initiated with the change in role in relation to others. As Walker, cited in Edwards (1999) warns, the ‘. . .insider has to establish an authority not ascribed to the role(s) he (sic) normally occupies’. While authority may be appropriate, rapport and trust seemed to be critical.

Thirdly, the co-researchers were aware of the organizational history and personal relationships which were interwoven with that history. Much of this may be undiscoverable to outsiders. The co-researchers possessed reasonable beliefs about the landscape, the territory, the unspoken agendas of political and cultural groups within the community as well as beliefs about the history, the corpses, the heroes, the skeletons, the failures/successes of this community.

As deep insider-researchers they have watched and participated in the community life where groups and individuals “. . .continually construct, manipulate and even recast the social worlds” (Muir and Ruggiero, 1991, p.viii). The richness and texture of that awareness is well expressed by Ginsberg when he speaks of the “‘evidential paradigm’ (which) suggests that unknown objects can be identified through single, seemingly insignificant signs, rather than through the application of laws derived from repeatable and quantifiable observations” (Luria, 1986. p.89). Much of the data collection of the co-researchers happened during informal observations at the different events in the community, which included sporting and cultural programmes.

Edwards (1999) warns us that the strength of insider-research is also potentially its greatest weakness. The material is so commonplace, so normal, so everyday for the insider-researcher that the nuances, subtleties and indeed the ‘bleedin’ obvious’ can escape observation!

## Methodology

The study was conducted at a secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. A majority of the learners who attended the school were young Africans who were second language English speakers and who came from the lower socio-economic strata of society. Many of these learners were low achievers academically, with poor language, literacy and numeracy skills; this resulted in a low sense of self. In this work, the tenets of participatory action research, which intersect with feminist theory, and which work for social justice, were applied to the design of the research. The disparity in power and status between adult researchers and young research participants was addressed by engaging young researchers to conduct a large part of the research.

## The research participants

The participants are grouped into four categories. Firstly, there were the *co-researchers*, who were 10 Grade 10 volunteers, at the heart of the project. They were trained to conduct interviews with interviewees, whom they selected. They took photographs to reflect their perceptions about sexuality. This group also analyzed this visual data at the beginning and at the end of their involvement in the project, that is, twice within a period of nine months. The second group was the *interviewees*. They comprised ten candidates who were selected by the co-researchers. The co-researchers selected participants whom they believed might be sexually active, and with whom they had been previously associated. There was a great degree of trust between the interviewers and the interviewees. This was critical in order to obtain candid responses and explicit data about the sensitive, private views on sexuality. The third group of participants comprised 124 Grade 10 *learners* who responded to the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered by the co-researchers in the classroom. Lastly, the fourth category of research participants comprised a sample of 30 learners who assisted in the *pilot* study of the questionnaire. Ethical requirements were met by obtaining written consent from parents of all the participants, assent from participants themselves, and consent from the Principal of the school. The research instruments were modified to meet the requirements of the Ethical Clearance Committee of the higher education institution which had recommended that the study be undertaken.

## The research instruments

Four main research instruments were used, namely, photographs, questionnaires, interview schedules and reflective journals (which were maintained by the co-researchers). In this article, the use of interviews and to a lesser extent, the use of photovoice,<sup>5</sup> as ways of generating data, are described. Photographs were taken by co-researchers who were trained in the use of visual technological devices. Semi-structured interview schedules were designed by the co-researchers and me. Reflective journals were maintained by the co-researchers throughout the research process. The collection of data

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<sup>5</sup> Photovoice is borrowed from Mitchell, DeLange, Moletsane, Stuart and Buthelezi (2005a, p.258) is a method where photographs are taken and then analyzed.

from reflective journals can be viewed as being a qualitative, introspective technique, which, according to Denzin (1989) in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), is one of the principles of feminist research.

## Feminist research methodology and findings

This study was informed by feminist research methodology, as well as participatory action research. Through an analysis of feminist research methodology, it was found that its value lay in the theoretical understandings of tensions which arose from different life histories, from privilege, power and oppression as they are lived out by educators and learners in the classroom. Feminist policies validate, recognize and attempt to understand power relations, then work towards changing power relations (Weiler, 1995; Usher, 1996; Middleton, 1993; Holland and Ramazanoglu, 1995). The barriers between the researchers and the researched were dissolved to some extent by involving learners in this study.

In this work, a tension exists between the methodological angst and the reporting of findings. The outcomes of the training of the co-researchers (methodology) are collapsed into discussion on findings, because it reflects the processes which impacted on their enablement. The evolving methodology generates findings on empowering young people in the field of research. In this article, an attempt is made to show how interviews and photovoice, together with recordings in reflective journals, enabled young people in the field of research. The following description is an example of part of one of the training schedules which was used to prepare the co-researchers to interview candidates.

## Interviews

### (a) General rules about interviews

#### 1. *Informed consent*

Importance of informed consent especially when dealing with issues which are of a sensitive nature.

Includes written consent or assent from:

- Participants
- Parents of participants
- Principal of school

Observe protocol (Kemmis *et al.*, 1991 in Cohen, *et al.*, 2000, p.68)

2. *Pleasant demeanour*

Always be polite (Merriam, 1998). Greet participant. Thank interviewee for his/her valuable contribution.

Be friendly.

3. *Attire*

Dress casually to create an environment in which interviewee would feel comfortable.

4. *Dealing with responses which are not readily forthcoming*

Co-researchers were trained not to impose their will by insisting on responses if interviewees were not forthcoming on an issue. The following suggestions were to be considered in this instance:

- Allow silence to prevail if interviewee is unwilling to respond to a question which, you believe, is fully understood by respondent.
- Continue with next question if you believe the respondent will be harmed by pursuing current question.
- Be aware that interviews can create anxiety and trigger grief in the respondents even when a researcher's intentions are to bring benefit to the lives of young people. Apply the motto: 'Do no harm'.

5. *Selection of a candidate to serve as an interviewee*

Select a person who is representative of most of the learners in the sample. The candidate, together with her/his parent/guardian, must have signed letters of assent and consent.

6. *Venue*

- Should be a place where interviewer and interviewee feel comfortable.

- Should be a private space where personal issues can be discussed without threat of being overheard.
- There should be a minimum amount of noise

7. *Reactions of interviewer*

- Interviewer should keep reactions to him/herself (Cohen *et al.*, 2000: pp.122–125).
- Unresponsive body language must be maintained, while conveying a genuine interest in what respondent is saying.
- Do not distract the respondent by your reactions to what is being said. Give the respondent the right to be treated as an autonomous agent with considered opinions and choices (Schenk and Williamson, 2005).

**(b) Lifelong learners**

Emphasize that all participants, including co-researchers and the lead researcher, are constantly learning. Co-researchers should not, on account of their greater knowledge about this research, believe that they are superior to interviewees.

Once the interviews were completed, the co-researchers and I reflected on them to determine the nature of the challenges and rewards in the field when enabling young people to develop skills to conduct research.

## Reflections on interviews

Two of the initial interviews were unclear due to background noise. I explained that the dictaphone recorded most sounds and that the co-researchers had to be mindful of other noises in the room/area. Some of the interviewees chose public places as interview sites for reasons of safety. They indicated that they would rather use a strategically located bench outside the library, an area which had security guards at its entrance, instead of deserted community grounds or isolated buildings. Kirby (2004) has emphasized the need for ensuring young peoples' safety, health and well-being in the field. At the training sessions, it was emphasized that the selection of data gathering venues should be based on safe choices.



A co-researcher made the following journal entry: *'A good place would be a public place where it is quiet enough to ask questions. The respondent will have to feel safe and we must make him comfortable.'*

In constructing the context and places for the interviews, safety was a priority. It is possible that the co-researchers also took their personal safety into account when they chose the venues for the interviews.

Most of the interviews, however, were conducted in outbuildings and garages which were separate from but on the premises of the main homes of interviewees. The elicitation of highly private and sensitive information, with apparent ease on the part of the interviewees could be attributed to interview sites which both, the interviewer and interviewee, felt were safe, secure and private venues.

One co-researcher did not use the dictaphone correctly and her interview was not audio-taped. She expressed great disappointment at this loss of data. The group discussed the importance of using technological devices carefully. They saw, first hand, the difficulties which were faced when a researcher was not adept at tasks like tape recording an interview. They encouraged one another by demonstrating the technique required to use the dictaphone among themselves. The sharing of a difficult experience was therapeutic for the co-researcher who had lost the data. The support given by the group developed team spirit among its members in ways that we (co-researchers and lead researcher) had not imagined possible.

There were many positive responses about the interview experiences from the co-researchers. An example of such a response can be seen in the following journal entry:

I think the interview was well done. I asked a lot of questions that were not on my sheet. I dug deeper into the situation and got more information. I learned a lot when I did the interview. I also understand more about their (adolescents') lives. I really think the interview was successful.

This co-researcher had developed her technique of asking follow-on questions in a semi-structured interview. She showed a degree of confidence and an ability to probe which are hallmarks of an adept interviewer.

Another co-researcher expressed great happiness because she felt she had executed her task well. In her journal, she wrote: *'I was excited that I had*

*done a job of this calibre*'. She viewed this experience as a confidence booster. This is in keeping with the feminist qualitative methodology which was integral to the design of this study, and which facilitated work where the participants became empowered to do research.

Strict adherence to ethical requirements was central to this part of the training. The reduction in power differentials between the researcher and the researched by engaging co-researchers to solicit data did not decrease the need for strict adherence to ethical principles throughout the study. A co-researcher wrote that if she were faced with a difficult situation where the respondent was uncomfortable to answer a question, she would do the following: '*. . . maintain eye contact, allow (respondent) to speak, but we can change the question very quickly so we don't hurt the respondent.*'

The ethical requirement of ensuring that no harm would come to the respondent was seen as important to this co-researcher.

As the process of conducting interviews and reflecting on them continued, the co-researchers' confidence increased. This was evident from the following journal entries recorded by the co-researchers:

Undated

I'm really proud of doing this assignment and I've really learned a lot. And I wish next year we could explore a whole new field like prostitution and what problems teenagers face in today's society. After listening to the interviews, I've realized that it is safe to stick to one partner and although a person has a boyfriend/girlfriend, they should think about their future and have sex after marriage. I also have a boyfriend. I choose to reach my goals (reach for the stars) and he should respect and understand (this). I also don't believe in sex before marriage. I want to have fun but fun doesn't include sex.

The co-researcher felt empowered enough to dictate the future agenda for research, as well as to express a greater awareness of relationship issues, not only as they apply to other young people, but also as they apply in her personal life.

15/09/2005

I am glad in some cases the girls are beginning to see the light and are beginning to realize that boys are not everything. I truly believe that we choose our own paths and we need to know what can affect our lives in a major way. AIDS is one of them. Therefore I choose to wait until I find that special someone who is meant for me, to engage in sexual intercourse, because life is too short to blow your virginity over a one night stand and be left with raising a baby when I, myself, am still my parents' baby. I want to have a long life away from harm and AIDS. All good things come to those who wait. We should just sit back, relax and re-evaluate our lifestyles. This is my life's saying: "Listen to your heart and pursue your dreams. What your mind can conceive, you can achieve."

The co-researcher cites the gradual transformation in the world view of girls that 'boys are not everything'. Her work has spurred her into setting certain moral standards for herself as is evident by the statement: 'I choose to wait until I find that special someone who is meant for me, to engage in sexual intercourse . . .'. She reflects a heightened sense of maturity and growth which signals her coming of age into young adulthood when she writes about 're-evaluating our lifestyles'.

## Photovoice

Photovoice was used to provide a platform for the co-researchers to express their ideas about sexuality. The co-researchers analysed the photographs a week after they were taken (this is referred to as the first analysis), and again, after a period of nine months (this is referred to as the final analysis). During this interval, they generated data by using interviews and questionnaires. The use of photovoice showed a transformation in the co-researchers, which they attributed to personal incidents and experiences in their lives. They indicated that the research process had opened their eyes to new ways of seeing the same picture. A maturity in the co-researchers' views on traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity, as well as risky sexual behaviour, is evident in the analyses on condoms, by two female co-researchers who are called Suri and Nadi.

**Picture 1 by co-researcher Suri**

***How cool are condoms?***

**Suri**

First analysis	Final analysis
Found in a guy's room. Some guys carry them. Some girls carry them. Some guys don't want to use them and some do for protection against HIV/AIDS and the spread (of the disease). Used and thrown (discarded) anywhere. Used once with one partner.	When guys carry condoms they feel grown up. Their friends think they are very cool because they are having sex. When girls carry condoms they are seen as sluts. Like they are dying for sex. Guys and girls should think of the most important thing: PREVENT AIDS. It does not matter who carries a condom. Just use it.

The realization that the use of a condom is more important than who carries it, is evident in Suri's final analysis of Picture 1. A boy who is sexually active earns a positive masculine identity from his peers, according to the final interpretation. Girls who carry condoms are labelled as 'sluts' and acquire a 'poor' sexual reputation. Suri is aware of how traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity impact on sexual behaviour of youth. This awareness could

have resulted from the interview data, where condom carrying boys were perceived to 'be prepared for sex', while condom carrying girls were viewed as 'desperate for sex'.

**Picture 2 by co-researcher Nadi**



*Do the maths - does it add up?*

**Nadi**

First analysis	Final analysis
DO THE MATHS would target scholars. It is an interesting combination of education with schoolwork and AIDS. It gives relevant education in a way that is fun, considering it is in a mathematics classroom. It is not complicated and it is not monotonous because it is different from what we regularly see. It tells us the exact causes of AIDS and the correct combination (of behaviours) leading to STDs.	This is a wonderful picture. But I don't think the teens get it. I mean, even though it gives the combination of things which leads to AIDS, who listens? Teens still want to have a good time. They like to take the risk of having sex without a condom. They also feel the feeling is better without a condom. They want to feel close to their partners. They feel nothing is closer than sex without a condom.

In Nadi's first analysis, she describes the poster. In her final analysis, she raises deeper questions about the usefulness of such a poster. Her statement "I mean, even though it gives the combination of things which leads to AIDS, who listens?" signals safe sex information fatigue among young people. Nadi doubts the effectiveness of the information communicated by the poster on young people. She highlights the inability of young people to transform knowledge about HIV/AIDS into safe sex behaviour. This co-researcher comes to the realization that the importance of sexual pleasure, as well as the pleasure that one obtains from taking risks, supersedes the importance of safe-sex behaviour which says 'yes' to life.

There was a definitive sense of activist purpose in the co-researchers in the context of HIV/AIDS, as is evident by Suri's statements: "Guys and girls should think of the most important thing: PREVENT AIDS. It does not matter who carries a condom. Just use it." The co-researchers showed a heightened awareness of the social construction of sexuality along axes of differentiation, especially the ways in which the process of gendering and its outcomes are legitimated by prevailing social norms. The increasing involvement of the co-researchers in the project led to a growth of their confidence and their ability to conduct research. This resulted in a decreasing role of the lead researcher in the actual research activities and in the gradual effacement of the lead researcher from the project.

## An insight into self-effacement of the lead researcher

In her poem, *Morning Song*, Sylvia Plath (1981) writes about her daughter a year after the child was born. The following excerpt from the poem explains the concept of *effacement*.

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

This stanza of the poem involves a wryly ironic sense of the mother's role: she produces the baby just as the cloud, affected by the wind produces the rain. However, in the process of production the mother herself is diminished, it's the child that becomes important just as the cloud is actually dissolved by the rain issuing from it. The opening line *I'm no more your mother* is not meant to

be taken too literally. There is, after all, no rain without the agency of the cloud, just as there is no baby without the mother.

*Effacement* implies a withdrawal, to become unassertive. In the context of this study, I experienced a sense of *effacement* by the co-researchers as they engaged themselves in the frenetic collection and generation of data.

I clearly felt the angst of displacement, at times completely, at other times partially, in ways that found me moving out of the position of the commanding, controlling lead researcher. Lather (2004) talks about moving towards practices that produce different knowledge and produce different knowledge differently. In this study, the different way of producing knowledge was achieved by engaging co-researchers to solicit, generate and interpret data. This resulted in the production of different types of knowledge, for example, the type of language among youth which included concepts of ‘playa’,<sup>6</sup> ‘pleasure principle’<sup>7</sup> and ‘bedroom disease’.<sup>8</sup> The type of knowledge which was produced in young peoples’ efforts to change gendered patterns of behaviour as a way of reclaiming power in sexual relationships emerged.

What was clearly experienced was a ‘forced’ *effacement* at certain points of the study. This was especially felt during the photovoice sessions during which the co-researchers took complete control and effaced me completely from the study. Table 1 illustrates ways in which this *effacement* became operationalized in the study.

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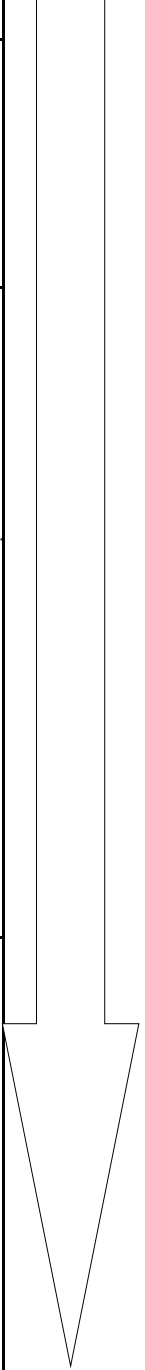
<sup>6</sup> Playa- having more than 1 sexual partner at a given time

<sup>7</sup> Refers to principle which young people adhere to when they risk their lives to experience the pleasure of sexual intercourse.

<sup>8</sup> Belief held by some young people that HIV can only be contracted by engaging in sexual intercourse in the bedroom, that is, location was believed to be a factor related to HIV transmission.



**Table 1: Charting the *effacement***

<b>Effacement moments of the lead researcher</b>	<b>Lead researcher</b>	<b>Co-researchers</b>	
Total control: no effacement at the beginning	<b>Preparation</b> Training sessions →	Photographs Interviews Questionnaires Journal entries	
Effacement begins	<b>Planning stage</b> Questionnaire design →  Interview schedule →	Input in terms of pilot study  Input in terms of certain questions	
Effacement strengthened	<b>Data Collection</b>	Interview process Selection of interviewees Selection of interview site Determining times at which interviews will be conducted Use of probes to guide course of interviews	
Effacement complete		<b>Photovoice</b> Choice of data for photographs Taking photographs Techniques of using cameras Choice of sites Interpretation of photographs Deeper insights into interpretations of pictures	

My *effacement* occurred on two levels: firstly, from the research project itself and secondly, from the co-researchers. Table 1 details the ways in which I was gradually effaced from the research project after the co-researchers assisted in the final compilation of questions which were admitted into the questionnaires and the interview schedules. This occurred during the planning stage.

*Effacement* from the project increased when the co-researchers entered the field to collect and generate data. I did not make any input into the selection of interview candidates, the selection of sites where interviews took place and where photographs were taken. The co-researchers analyzed their photographs independently, without any influence from me.

The reporting on the findings of this study was guided by the co-researchers voices and feelings which were embedded in their journal entries. I refrained from analyzing the co-researchers photographs to allow for their voices to be heard fully, without being filtered through my interpretations. This resulted in a degree of *effacement* during the report writing process.

## Working with young researchers: emerging insights

Both participatory action research as well as qualitative feminist research methodology, which informed this study, have the primary goal of transforming people who are involved in the research, into researchers (Haworth and Haddock, 1999). The importance of co-learning, which is a primary aspect of participatory action research, was achieved by training co-researchers and engaging in reflective sessions on the research process. This type of collaboration allowed for the generation of several insights out of the joint space which was shared by the co-researchers and the lead researcher.

Firstly, young people have different levels of cognition compared to that of adult researchers. Miers and Murphy (2004), in their article entitled ‘Giving Kids a Voice: Methodological and Practical Considerations in Conducting Research with Children and Young People’ refer to Piaget theory of cognitive development to remind researchers to be aware of the developmental capabilities of young people who are involved as research participants. They assert that young people’s levels of reasoning and ability to use language and think logically is different compared to that of adults. In this study, the co-researchers inability to use technology (the dictaphone) effectively was probably due to their lack of patience and their inattention to detail. Further self-reflection on the training of young people has led me to conclude that I

might have rushed training process. Atweh and Burton (1995), Kirby (2004) and Alder and Sandor (1990) emphasize that researchers should not underestimate the time which is required to train young people as co-researchers. Research skills need to be developed by creating the opportunity for more practice sessions for young people (for example, the practical issues around data collection which include the selection of sites for capture of data and the use of technological devices like cameras and dictaphones). Role playing as a preparation for conducting interviews is vital in developing interview skills. The research roles must be appropriate to young people's level of development and expertise.

Secondly, young people experience extremes in terms of their emotions. They have higher highs (great excitement, high levels of confidence when things go right) and lower lows (bitter disappointment, feelings of being disempowered) when things go wrong in the field. In this study, the co-researchers and I were not prepared for the content of some of the interviews. There were interviewees who viewed unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners as 'cool' and modern; these views, apparently, were not shared by the co-researchers. Another interviewee prided herself by asserting that she was 'the bitch of the millennium'. Two interviewees appeared to think that the co-researchers were 'out of synch' with contemporary youth culture; this made some co-researchers experience a sense of sadness and powerlessness. The lead researcher cannot expect young people to regard their 'low moments' in the field as a part of a learning curve during the process of research because, unlike adult researchers, young people may lack the experience to deal with difficulties in this way. The lead researcher needs to provide a highly supportive environment in order to nurture developing young researchers. This can be done by reminding co-researchers to apply Durkheim's first principle, cited in Tonkiss (1998, p.234), which is to "abandon all preconceptions". The importance of detaching oneself from the data is vital during training young people as researchers. Young researchers need to be constantly reminded to expect the unexpected.

The co-researchers reported many 'high moments' in the field. In relation to the photoshoot activity, the following journal entries signal empowerment and excitement experienced by the co-researchers: 'I did not only take the shots, I also called the shots'; 'I was excited taking photos. The photos were perfect'; 'I really enjoyed taking the photographs out. I had a lot of fun and the pictures came out great.' A boost in a co-researcher's confidence to gather data is

evident in the following entry: ‘It was the first time I used a camera. After being told how to use it, I felt ready to take my first photo.’

The third insight is that when young people examine data gathered by each other, it is necessary for feedback to be sensitive to their feelings. The lead researcher needs to emphasize the importance of constructive criticism of young people’s research efforts by their fellow researchers. A sense of intragenerational and intergenerational respect should pervade all feedback sessions. Praise for each other’s efforts needs to be encouraged to boost young researchers confidence. London, Zimmerman and Erbstein (2003) allude to the need for respect, communication and collaboration in a research culture which celebrates contribution by youth.

The co-researchers general transformation and enablement in the field of research are marked by the following features:

- Dialogical engagement about issues that concern them directly through their involvement in designing instruments, data collection and data generation, and data analysis.
- Fostering youth social identity in providing individuals (other young people who responded to their research probes) with the spaces to present themselves in *their* voice.
- Promotion of learning and change by, firstly, actively participating in a research project and secondly, by taking action on issues that directly affect *them*.

## Young researchers: significant research principles

*Epistemologically*, youth-based research acknowledges the value of multiple ways of knowing and more significantly, it recognizes the value of knowledge contributed by members of the youth community. Through praxis, critical consciousness develops, leading to further action through which people cease to see their situation as a “dense, enveloping reality or a blind alley” and instead as “an historical reality susceptible of transformation” (Freire, 1972, p.58).

In *ontological* terms, youth-based research adopts a postmodernist perspective in relation to the exploration of knowledge. Thus, knowledge is as much about politics as it is about understanding. Therefore, understanding research focuses not only on method but also upon the ways in which knowledge is contrived and the benefits that amass to people who control the creation and production of knowledge. Indeed, the inquirer and the participant are perceived as being connected in such a way that the findings are inseparable from their relationship (Lincoln and Guba, 1989).

In youth-based research, the *knower* participates in the *known* and that evidence is generated in at least four interdependent ways – experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical (Heron and Reason, 1997). A subjective-objective ontology means that there is “underneath our literate abstraction, a deeply participatory relation to things and to the earth, a felt reciprocity” (Abram, 1996, p.124 cited in Heron and Reason, 1997). As Heron and Reason (1997, p.279) further explain, this encounter is transactional and interactive. “To touch, see, or hear something or someone does not tell us either about our self all on its own or about a being out there all on its own. It tells us about a being in a state of interrelation and co-presence with us. Our subjectivity feels the participation of what is there and is illuminated by it.”

## Conclusion

This study has revealed how young people can be engaged to solicit the type of data from their peers which unleashes details of sexuality in a way that disrupts ‘static truths’. This could be attributed to the minimizing of hierarchy which is entrenched in research in general. In addition to enabling young people to engage in work for young people, this type of research creates a space for co-operative learning.

Young researchers can enable one to examine the notion of power, which organizes the categories of sex to make its gender inscriptions appear to have a natural origin, from new perspectives. It allows for analyses of data that begins by not taking categories for granted but by questioning their autonomy and naturalness (St Pierre, 2001). Future research projects, where youth researchers play a role, can make possible the examination of various versions of power, politics and identity, and create a space for different formulations around these areas.

It is cautiously suggested that adults who investigate and theorize about risky behaviour among young people are 'theory hunters'. The 'what we (adults) can do for them (young people)' in the form of benevolent intervention reproduces power differentials.

This study has revealed how the lead researcher becomes effaced from the research project as well as from the young researchers. This is a natural consequence of applying feminist methodologies (Olesen, 1994; Luke, 1992; Lather, 1991), which call for research participants to become researchers themselves. It involves a process during which the lead researcher becomes lost over uneven social spaces, and experiences, what Lather (2004) refers to as 'a slippage of the self', while entering zones of unequal access to the hegemonic language of the youth. This 'getting off track' of the lead researcher involves exposing oneself and one's work to the risk of doing things differently, in order to obtain knowledge from and as a community of young people.

The use of feminist research methodologies, which intersect with tenets of participatory action research (reflexive critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource, risk and plural structure), can empower young people to generate data and formulate intervention programs. These programs can take into account contextual factors which impact on sexual decision-making of young people, in order to become effective in the struggle against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

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# Journal of Education

Periodical of the Kenton Education Association

School of Education and Development

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University of KwaZulu-Natal

The *Journal of Education* is an interdisciplinary publication of original research and writing on education. The Journal aims to provide a forum for the scholarly understanding of the field of education. A general focus of the journal is on curriculum. Curriculum is understood in a wide and interdisciplinary sense, encompassing curriculum theory, history, policy and development at all levels of the education system (e.g. schooling, adult education and training, higher education). Contributions that span the divide between theory and practice are particularly welcome. Although principally concerned with the social sciences, the journal encourages contributions from a wider field.

While it is intended that the journal will remain academic in nature, the readers are considered to be educational generalists and articles which are of interest to such readers will receive preference. Potential contributors are asked to ensure that submissions conform to the guidelines outlined at the back of the journal.

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*Journal of Education* will appear at least twice per year.

## Submissions

Unsolicited papers are welcome for consideration and should be addressed to the Editor of the *Journal of Education*. Submitting authors should note that a per page fee of R100 will be levied on published submissions. Institutional Research Offices of higher education institutions usually pay this type of fee. Authors whose affiliated organisation may not have instituted this practice are asked to contact the Editor, as the levy is a means of sustaining the journal, and is not intended as a deterrent to aspiring authors!

Articles and review essays are reviewed by anonymous external referees. Appropriate papers will be refereed for significance and soundness. Papers are accepted on the understanding that they have not been published or accepted for publication elsewhere.

Articles and essay reviews (maximum 6 000 words); debate, discussion and research notes (2 500 words); book reviews (2 000 words); and book notes (200 words) will be considered.

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The electronic version of the article should not be formatted, and should preferably not use a variety of fonts and font sizes or use paragraph styles. Where necessary, however authors may wish to indicate levels of subheadings (i.e. first level, second level). Footnotes should be kept to a minimum, and authors are asked to keep tables and diagrams to the most feasible level of size and simplicity. Tables and diagrams should also be sent in separate files.

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## Referencing style

*Journal of Education* style of referencing is a requirement. References in the text should appear as follows:

No country in the world can afford the schooling its people want (Reimer, 1971) and it has been argued that “of all ‘false utilities’, school is the most insidious” (Illich, 1971, p.60).

The references should be listed in full at the end of the paper in an acceptable standard format, preferably the following:

### Books

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. *Title: additional title information*. Edition (if other than the first). Place of publication: Publisher.

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Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of chapter or article. In Surname(s), Initial(s) of editor(s) or compiler(s). (Eds). or (Comps). *Title of book*. Edition (if other than first). Place of publication: Publisher. Inclusive page numbers of the chapter.

### Journal articles

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of article. *Name of journal* volume number (part number (if there is not continuous pagination)): inclusive page numbers.

#### Articles and reports in magazines and newspapers

Surname(s), Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of article. *Name of magazine or newspaper* day and month: inclusive (and additional) page numbers.

#### Book reviews

Surname of reviewer, Initial(s). Year of publication. Title of review (if there is one). [Review of] *Title of book reviewed* by Name of author in its most familiar form. *Name of periodical* volume number (part number) or date (if applicable): inclusive page numbers.

#### Theses and dissertations

Surname, Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Description of work. Location of university: name of university.

#### Seminar papers

Surname, Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Unpublished seminar paper. Location of university: name of university, name of department, programme or unit.

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Surname(s), Initial(s). Year. Title: additional title information. Description of occasion (including the nature and subject of the conference or meeting, name of the society or group, the place at which it was held and the date(s) on which it was held).

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## Frequently asked questions

*Is the Journal of Education SAPSE accredited?*

Yes

*How many issues per year?*

In terms of a recent policy decision, we aim to produce at least two ‘normal’ editions of the journal each year in addition to at least two special issues (one of which will be the Kenton Special Edition).

*Most journals now have a per page fee which contributors are required to meet should their articles be accepted. Does the Journal of Education levy such charges?*

Yes. This step was necessary to cover the costs of the increased number of issues each year. A levy of R75 per page will be applied to successful articles submitted to our office. The central research offices in most institutions of higher education routinely arrange for such payments to be made. We encourage individual authors who do not have such cover to contact us.

*Are articles peer reviewed?*

Yes. Our goal is for articles to be refereed by three experts in the field.

*What is the waiting period after submission?*

Referees provide their crucially important service for no reward, and are sometimes unable to oblige on time but we endeavour to respond within three months.

*Can I send my submission by e-mail?*

Only if you live in a place where submission of three hard copies is inordinately difficult or expensive, please. The norm is three hard copies sent to our office. The electronic version of the article may be sent as an email attachment, or on a disk included with the hard copies.

*To what extent should an article being submitted be presented in ‘the style’ of the journal?*

Citation and referencing should be in the style of the journal (see the previous section ‘Notes for Contributors’). Authors are not expected to reproduce the particular fonts and font sizes used in the journal, but the levels of headings and subheading should be clear on the hard copies submitted. With regard to the electronic version of the article, we prefer as little formatting as possible.

*Does the journal have a policy to encourage and support budding novice researchers?*

Unfortunately not – this is simply beyond our capacity. While we welcome extended comment that referees may be able to offer, we cannot impose on their good services beyond the expectation of an overall judgement on the article, together with brief justification of that judgement.

*What is the rate of acceptance/ rejection?*

The following statistics for 2006 and 2007 provide an indication of the pattern of acceptance/ non acceptance:

Year	Accepted with no or minor revisions	Accepted after revisions	Not accepted
2006	2	7	34
2007	3	20	28

Even an increase in the number of issues each year will not keep pace with the ever-increasing number of submissions. We can do little to mitigate the competition engendered by state funding policy and the kinds of incentive schemes that have become a feature of the higher education landscape.

*Is there an appeal mechanism should my article not be accepted?*

Beyond summarizing reasons for rejection – where applicable – we regret that we are unable to enter into detailed discussion on decisions reached by the Editorial Committee on the basis of referee reports.

*The journal describes itself as providing “a forum for scholarly understanding of the field of education”. What does this really mean?*

We understand this as implying that articles should represent a rigorous enquiry (conducted through argumentation or empirically) into the understanding of educational issues. Such inquiry originates in a problem rather than a solution, and it is rare for such enquiry to have no reference to, or engagement with, a broader literature and theory. Advocacy in the form of prescriptions or ‘how to do it’ recipe knowledge for practitioners seldom finds favour with referees. The question of audience is key. The assumed audience is the collective body of researchers rather than those more narrowly concerned with the effective implementation of specific policies.

Recent non-acceptances include a high proportion of undeveloped research reports, summaries of dissertations, and even sound but small-scale case studies that are purely context specific and unconnected with broader issues, literature or theory. Similarly, even a successful conference paper is usually in need of further development before it merits publication.