

## Is schooling good for the development of society?: the case of South Africa

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*This paper is concerned with three possible theoretical relationships, between education and social, economic and political development, that — (a) education improves society, (b) education reproduces society as it is and (c) education actually makes society worse. The paper then uses South Africa as a case study to critically analyse these different roles of education in relation to development theory. In particular, it examines three theoretical tensions in post-apartheid education policy and practice — those between human capital theory and social reproduction, between modernisation and bureaucratic disorganisation, and between democracy and peace and authoritarianism and violence. It concludes by attempting to explain these tensions and contradictions in term of factors specific to South Africa such as teacher professionalism and teacher identity and in relation to wider factors inherent in the historical origins of schooling as a form of organisation based on social control.*

**Keywords:** authoritarianism; bureaucracy; democracy; development; human capital; modernisation; peace; reproduction; schooling; violence

### Introduction

Within the field of comparative and international education, there is a sub-field that explores the relationships between education and development, that is, it is concerned, not unproblematically, with the poorer countries of the ‘south’ (Phillips & Schweisfurth 2007). However, development studies have a tendency to accentuate the positive in relation to education:

“Underpinning the existence of this sub-field is the assumption that there is a positive relationship between an educated population and national development in all its forms, and that education can be used as a ‘weapon’ against poverty and other forms of underdevelopment. Education is seen as contributing to the public good, and therefore as deserving of the allocation of public investment, and in need of public control” (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2007:60).

Though they go on to question the widespread assumption that education is automatically a weapon against poverty, there is much truth in this statement that there is an over-emphasis on the positive role of education in relation to development. However, there are in reality three main ways of looking at the relationship between education and development. The origins and nature of these discourses are discussed in more detail in the sources cited below. Here the main purpose is to outline the nature of each discourse before considering it in relation to the context of South Africa. First, is the dominant discourse in international debates on education and development — that education is of significant *benefit* both to the individual and society (Harber 2004; Harber 2010). This can be economic benefit in the form of human capital theory where education increases the employment skills, productivity and earning power of indi-

viduals and hence contributes to economic growth. Or, according to modernisation theory, education can be of social benefit in the form of the development of more 'modern' social attitudes towards, for example, science, gender equality and the desire to achieve (Harber 2010). Finally, education might contribute politically by developing the values and behaviours required for a suitable political culture that will help to sustain a democratic political system (Harber & Davies, 1997). It is these arguments that are used to justify the enormous effort to provide universal primary education for all as witnessed by the second of the United Nations' (UN) millennium development goals and the major international conferences at Jomtien in Thailand in 1990 and Dakar in Senegal in 2000.

The second, less heard, discourse, is that of education as *reproduction*. While seemingly opening up opportunity for all and contributing to the development of an economic and social system based on open competition, achievement and merit in fact the education system merely serves to reproduce things as they are. Children from poor backgrounds go to poor schools and then into poorly paid, low status jobs or unemployment. A small number of children from poor backgrounds succeed and this provides the appearance of a meritocratic system whereas in reality it merely serves to mask the role of education in perpetuating and reproducing inequality (Holsinger & Jacob 2008; Harber 2009). Elsewhere in Africa, for example, political elites utilise expensive private schools to help retain the privileged positions of their families, a tradition often inherited from colonial education systems (Boyle, 1999, Harber 2009).

The third discourse, not heard about much at all until relatively recently in comparative education and development studies, is that schooling not only reproduces society fundamentally as it is but also actively makes the lives of individuals worse and harms the wider society. This is because schools both reproduce and cause violence. Not only do they not necessarily protect learners from different forms of violence in the wider society but they actively *perpetrate* violence themselves (Harber 2004, 2009).

This paper uses post-apartheid South Africa as a case study of the different possible roles of education in relation to development and argues that, while schooling is often simply assumed to be of socio-economic and political benefit in all societies, it can equally well help to reproduce existing inequalities and contribute to violence in society.

### **Development goals for education in post-apartheid South Africa**

Schooling was a significant site in the struggle against apartheid and there is no doubt that post-apartheid governments since 1994 have attached considerable importance to educational reform. The first white paper on education and training set out the key goals of the new education system (Harber, 2001). First, there was considerable emphasis on education as human capital as a meritocratic attempt to move away from unequal social and economic reproduction of apartheid to more equal opportunities for all. An integrated approach to education and training was key to human resource development as the old academic/applied or 'head and hand' distinctions were seen as having helped to reproduce occupational and class distinctions. There was a need for a form of education that provided the skills and predispositions for continual learning, moving flexibly between occupations and taking responsibility for personal performance as a contribution towards developing a successful economy (Department of Education, 1995). This emphasis on the role of education in providing the skills necessary for economic competition in the global market place has continued (McGrath & Akoojee, 2007) and was reflected in the Revised National Curriculum (NCS) of 2001 where two key developmental outcomes for schooling that are relevant to the economic role of education, for example,

are to explore education and career opportunities, and develop entrepreneurial capacities (Department of Education, 2001).

Second, and in line with modernisation theory (Harber 2010), there is an emphasis in the original white paper on creating a 'modern' society through education through an efficient, professional and well managed education system (DoE, 2001:15/44/69/74). Some of the attributes of a modern person are spelt out in the revised national curriculum where the kind of learner envisaged will, for example, display a developed spirit of curiosity to enable creative and scientific discovery and display an awareness of health promotion; use effectively a variety of problem-solving techniques that reflect different ways of thinking and make informed decisions and accept accountability as responsible citizens in an increasingly complex and technological society (DoE, 2001:13).

Third and finally, post-apartheid education policy has had an overwhelming emphasis on the role of education in helping to create a more democratic and peaceful society:

The realization of democracy, liberty, equality, justice and peace are necessarily conditions for the full pursuit and enjoyment of lifelong learning. It should be a goal of education and training policy to enable a democratic, free, equal, just and peaceful society to take root and prosper in our land, on the basis that all South Africans without exception share the same inalienable rights, equal citizenship and common destiny, and that all forms of bias (especially racial, ethnic and gender) are dehumanising (Department of Education, 1995a:22).

That this new philosophy based on democracy and human rights would mean changing all aspects of the education system was also recognised. Based on the above quote, an effective school in South Africa is one that operates democratically in order to promote democracy in the wider society (Mncube, 2005).

The letter and spirit of these rights and freedoms should inform the intellectual culture in all schools and educational institutions, and professional services in departments of education. This has unavoidable implications for curricula, textbooks, other educational materials and media programmes, teaching methods, teacher education, professional supervision and management culture (Department of Education, 1995a:43).

Subsequently, education policy was changed to introduce a curriculum aimed at encouraging more active and participant classrooms and at creating more independent and critical thinkers and introducing new governance structures in which parents, teachers and learners are involved in more democratic forms of decision-making and school organisation (Harber, 2001; Carter, Harber & Serf 2003).

### **Human capital or reproduction?**

"For many, education cannot compensate for much deeper economic and social inequalities — it is not ladder out of poverty, it simply confirms one's status in life" (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:142).

Despite a relatively strong performance in terms of economic growth since 1994, South Africa still has one of the most unequal societies in the world with between 45% and 55% of the population categorised as poor and between 20% and 25% as in extreme poverty and there are spatial, racial and gender dimensions to this poverty (McGrath & Akooje, 2007:422-423). Has education helped to reduce this inequality or to perpetuate it? Soudien (2007) sets out some of the achievements of educational policy since the end of apartheid such as ending the old racialised education departments, attempting to bring disaffected parents back into the

system, redressing imbalances in teacher-pupil ratios inherited from apartheid, achieving figures approaching 100% in terms of enrolment for the compulsory phase of schooling and significantly increasing the national budget allocation to education. In terms of outcomes, pass rates for the Senior Certificate Examination rose from 47.4% in 1997 to 73.3% in 2003 and black student enrolment in higher education grew from 191,000 in 1993 to 449,000 in 2003.

However, such achievements mask serious continuing inequalities in education and inequalities which are perpetuated by education. At the same time that efforts have been made to redistribute resources from the rich to the poor there has also been an acceptance that some of the funding burden will have to be borne by users of education in the form of fees as part of the government's adoption of the more neo-liberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) in 1996 (Harber, 2001). The South African Schools Act 84, 1996, permitted the governing bodies of all state schools to levy fees after a majority vote at a meeting of parents and most now do so. This can be interpreted either as a pragmatic recognition that the state did not have sufficient resources to provide a sufficiently good quality education for all or as further evidence of acceptance of the global influence of the World Bank's agenda of shifting the balance of funding for education from the public to the private sphere. It was certainly the case that in a situation where resources were to be redistributed the government accepted the advice of international consultants that there was a danger of a flight of middle class parents from the state to the private sector if traditionally advantaged schools were not allowed to raise further resources. This would result in the state sector losing the financial, managerial and persuasive capacities of the better educated and financially advantaged segment of the population (DoE, 1996).

Whatever the explanation, the result has been to perpetuate or even exacerbate inequality rather than to reduce it. Schools serving well-off communities can charge high fees to maintain excellent facilities and employ more teachers while schools in poorer communities will not be able to do so. Admission on the grounds of race may now be illegal but high fees may well have the same net effect. It seems very likely that public schools will be increasingly divided between a minority of relatively affluent and well resourced schools and a majority of poorer schools much more dependent on state funding. In their detailed study of two provinces tellingly entitled *Elusive Equity*, Fiske and Ladd (2004:233-234) conclude that South Africa has made progress on equal *treatment* in terms of allocation of state resources but the country has been less successful in terms of equal educational *opportunity* because of the very unequal access to good quality schooling and not successful at all in terms of educational *adequacy* in that repetition and dropout rates among black students remain high and matriculation pass rates low with little evidence of improvement. This is a similar conclusion to that reached by Spreen and Vally (2006:354-357) who also point out that many children go to school hungry and that 27% of schools have no running water, 43% have no electricity, 80% have no library and 78% have no computers. A study of rural schools in South Africa graphically brings home the way poverty both prevents access to education and success within it (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Schooling not only plays a part in reproducing socio-economic inequality but also in reproducing racist attitudes. The South African Human Rights Commission Report of an audit of 90 desegregated schools across all nine provinces (Vally & Dalamba, 1999). The report showed that racism in schools was pervasive. They summarised the situation as follows,

In fact little progress has been made to ensure an end to racial discrimination and prejudice in schools. Our Commission has had to deal with a large number of complaints:

discrimination in disciplinary measures, racial violence and cultural prejudice. Schools continue to be characterised by racial separation and discrimination. Efforts at racial integration have not achieved the desired results because learners approach school with the prejudices imbued in their home environments and the schools have no mechanisms to challenge and stimulate the unlearning of ingrained prejudices, as well as transform the minds of learners. Educators exhibit little or no commitment to constructing a learning environment free from discrimination and prejudice. Too many prefer to deny the existence of racism or presume a superficial tolerance. Some prefer to have their schools as laboratories for cultural assimilation where black learners are by and large tolerated rather than affirmed as of right. Four years after the miracle of 1994, school playgrounds are battlegrounds between black and white school goers (Vally & Dalamba, 1999: Preface).

A recent study of a community near Cape Town sheds some interesting light on how education continues to reproduce racial separation and antagonism in South Africa. The researcher found that both 'coloured' and 'black' parents and children had negative stereotypes of each other but that school did little to combat this situation. The national language policy prescribing that children be taught in their mother tongue in the first three grades meant that almost no racial integration took place in those grades. This also affected mixing among teachers with at least one school having a separate common room for each ethnic/linguistic group. Most teachers expressed exasperation at having to commit to adopting an anti-racist pedagogy and effectively turned a blind eye to the racial antagonisms displayed by parents in and out of school. Indeed, most of the churches and cultural and sports groupings that used the schools' facilities also did so on the basis of race (Fataar, 2007). In her study of four schools that had been differently racially categorised under apartheid (Hunt, 2007) found that the schools had done little to embrace a new culture actively based on non-discrimination and equality but that students not from the dominant group had been expected to assimilate into existing practices and discourses.

### **Modernisation or disorganisation?**

If schools are to be the source of modern attitudes and behaviours then young people must experience them through the effective operation of organisations and the professional behaviour of staff. While there are many effective and well organised schools, this has been recognised as a problem in South Africa for some time. In 1997 the Deputy Minister of Education said,

In many of our education departmental offices, there is a chronic absenteeism of officials, appointments are not honoured, punctuality is not observed, phones ring without being answered, files and documents are lost, letters are not responded to, senior officials are inaccessible, there is confusion about roles and responsibilities and very little support, advice and assistance is given to schools ... Many of our parents fear their own children, never check the child's attendance at school, are not interested in the welfare of the school, never attend meetings, give no support to the teacher or principal ... Many of our teachers are not committed to quality teaching, their behaviour leaves much to be desired, are more interested in their own welfare, are not professional and dedicated, are never at school on time, pursue their studies at the expense of the children, do not prepare for lessons ... Many of our children are always absent from school, lack discipline and manners, regularly leave school early, are usually late for school, wear no uniform, have no respect for teachers, drink during school hours, are involved in drugs and gangs, gamble and smoke at school, come to school armed to instil fear in others ... Many of our principals have no administrative skills, they are the source of conflict between students

and teachers, sow divisions among their staff, undermine the development of their colleagues, fail to properly manage the resources of their school, do not involve parents in school matters (Mkhathswa, 1997:14-15).

Recent evidence from the sources cited at the end of this paragraph suggests that these problems persist. The South African Human Rights Commission report on the right to basic education in 2006 described a dysfunctional schooling system for the majority and a privileged, functional sector serving a minority. The report followed public hearings in October 2005 on a litany of problems that schools face including low teacher morale, lack of accountability and non-attendance of children. Teacher absenteeism and lack of enthusiasm also remain as problems (Hunt, 2007; Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Moreover, various forms of corruption are also not unknown in South African schools (Harber, 2001; Fataar 2007).

Christie (1998) analysed schools as '(dis)organisations' in the "poor and disrupted communities spawned by apartheid". She notes that the list of characteristics associated with such schools (absenteeism, low morale, violence etc.) is an inverse of the 'lists' of features so popular in effective schools research and uses social psychology and the idea of 'social defence' to analyse and explain the way dysfunctional schools operate. School organisations need to contain the anxieties associated with learning and teaching. Rituals, school rules, formalised social relations and adherence to the boundaries of time and space provide a form of containment for learners and teachers. However, when the organisation itself is collapsing — when authority structures have broken down and the boundaries of time and space no longer exist for staff and learners — then social defenses cannot contain the anxieties of the organisation's members. She argues that when the organisational context of schools breaks down teaching and learning, as basic group tasks in a school are subordinated to unconscious group activity whereby social relations and office politics get more attention than substantive work. Instead of being able to focus on teaching and learning schools have become caught up in forms of conflict, aggression and uncertainty that cannot be contained in a weak organisational structure. This, she argues, goes some way to explaining "the apathy, depression, impotence, anxiety about physical safety, lack of agency, disempowerment and projection of blame onto others" that she and other researchers found in the dysfunctional schools they visited.

However, while it remains true that the legacy of apartheid forms the specific local context for such schools, particularly in relation to the levels of crime and violence further discussed below, it also has to be borne in mind that South Africa is a 'developing country', for example, ranking 121st on the United Nations Human Development Index (UNDP, 2007/8). Some of the features of schools discussed above can be found in all countries, including 'developed' ones, but the pattern and scale of resource problems, absenteeism, corruption and lack of professionalism are recurrent issues in the education systems of many other developing countries. In this wider sense many South African schools are not that unusual in that their organisation and management reflects both the drive for the 'modern', bureaucratic form and the persistence of pre-modern, economic interests, culture and social organization (Harber & Davies, 1997).

### **Democracy and peace or authoritarianism and violence?**

Democracy and peace were at the forefront of the new, post-apartheid educational policies, given South Africa's authoritarian and violent past. Corporal punishment has now been officially banned in schools, democratic school governance structures including parent, staff, learners and non-teaching staff representation have been introduced in order to provide working experience of democracy and a new, Outcomes-Based curriculum is designed to

facilitate more active and participant forms of learning Harber 2001). For example, Mncube and Harber (2010) maintain that OBE emphasises the need to develop learners to think critically, to analyse and to solve problems arising in the classroom, school and society. One of the respondents in a study explained that unlike in the past when the learners had merely to listen to the educator, engage in rote learning and eventually write tests on the material with which they had been provided:

[t]he present system of education in South Africa requires learners to be active participants in a lesson so that they can raise their concerns, views or opinions coming up with new ideas. This is a demonstration that, in quality education, freedom of expression exists, which is another aspect of democracy. This is what leads to quality education (Mncube & Harber, 2010).

Studies of the functioning on the new school governing bodies (Mncube, 2005; Bush & Heystek, 2003; Brown & Duku, 2008; Ministerial Review Committee, 2004) found that members of governing bodies tended to be male, that principals still played a dominant role in meetings and decision-making and that teachers tended to participate in meetings more than other stakeholders. Parents, the numerically dominant group under the legislation, were hampered in many areas by a skills capacity deficit and communication and transportation problems. Learner participation was only moderate and concentrated on fundraising, learner discipline and sports activities. So, while the structural dimension of democratic governance had been established, power relations, i.e. the dominance of the principal, remained much the same. Moreover, because of existing inequalities in the wider society, by

... devolving functions to the governing body, the State may unintentionally be contributing to a perpetuation of inequalities in the school environment (Karlsson, 2002:333).

In addition, Brown and Duku (2008) contend that school governing bodies are fraught with social tension, rejection, domination, and psychological stress, which in turn, leads to the isolation of those parents who have low socio-economic status and who do not fall within middle-class category; as such their participation is compromised. Research also suggests that socio-economic status (SES) serves as a paralysis to how some parents participate in school governing bodies (Ministerial Review Committee, 2004).

A study of four school governing bodies in KwaZulu Natal (Mncube, 2005) found that, although they exist and operate broadly according to the intention of the South African Schools Act 84, 1996 which introduced them, however, there is a number of factors leading to lack of parents' participation, namely: unequal power relations, socio-economic status, lack of confidence and expertise caused by the absence or lack training, poor communication of information, the rural-urban divide, different cultural expectations of diverse communities, language barriers, poor organisation and the high turnover rate of governors.

A further study in Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal reinforced the dominant role of principals and teachers and found that "many stakeholders, particularly principals and educators, do not necessarily value participation in itself or for advancing democratic participation in school. In their practices, such participation is little more than information sharing or limited consultation ..." (Grant Lewis & Naidoo, 2006:422). Both these studies tend to reinforce the point about the danger of contributing to the social reproduction role referred to by Karlsson above.

In the classroom, matters have been slow to change in many schools. A report on research carried out by the Presidential Education Initiative published in 1999 indicated that OBE is succeeding in the ideological domain, with teachers embracing its main intentions. However, many teachers did not have the conceptual resources to give effect to it in the classrooms. Teachers, particularly in poorly resourced schools, were not in a position to translate the broad

outcomes of Curriculum 2005 into appropriate learning programmes nor to develop their own assessment strategies. Some researchers observed significant contradictions between teachers' verbal support of the learner-centred pedagogy of Curriculum 2005 and the actual practices of these same teachers. The following, more teacher-centred, practices were commonly observed,

- Teacher talk and low-level questions dominate lessons
- Lessons are generally characterised by a lack of structure and the absence of activities that promote higher order skills such as investigation, understanding relationships and curiosity
- Real world examples are often used but at a very superficial level
- Little group work or other interaction occurs between learners
- Learners do little reading or writing. Where this exists, it is often of a very rudimentary kind

A recent study of schooling in rural South Africa found that, while 90% of teachers claimed to be using a variety of active teaching methods the responses from learners and the observations of the researchers strongly suggested that the majority of teachers continued to use traditional, teacher-centred methods of monologue and rote learning. Classroom activity is dominated by three modes: reading, writing and correcting (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005).

Indicative of this continuing authoritarianism is the persistence of violence against learners in schools (Harber, 2004; 2009). There is a widespread violence in South African schools. According to statistics published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR, 2008), South African schools are the most dangerous in the world. This report followed recent media reports of shootings, stabbings, rapes, and robberies at South African schools. The survey conducted by SAIRR (2008) suggests that only 23% of South African pupils said they felt safe at school. Schools in South Africa have traditionally been authoritarian institutions stressing obedience, conformity and passivity. The most tangible manifestation of this authoritarianism was the widespread use of officially sanctioned violence against children in the form of corporal punishment (Holdstock, 1990). Corporal punishment is now illegal in South Africa, though it is still commonly used and still supported by many parents and students (Morrell, 1999) and, in KwaZulu Natal, by the then Minister of Education herself.

Hunt (2007), using observation and interviews, recently found that corporal punishment was still used in three out of four of her schools in the Cape Town area and that learners were subjected to incidents of verbal insult and humiliation. Corporal punishment also remains widespread in rural areas (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:17).

Sexual violence against girls also remains a particular problem in South African schools. Violence within schools and violence against girls is a serious problem. Going to and from schools, girls are at risk of harassment, beating and rape. Inside schools, relationships between male teachers and female learners can find expression in everything from the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon to girls being demeaned and treated as less than equal in the classroom ... Pinning responsibility on teachers for action that may be seen as normal by both themselves and children, simply by virtue of habit and continual abuse, is a hard task (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005:61).

The government appointed Gender Equity Task Team reporting in 1997 stated that the South African education system was "riddled with gender inequities" and that these included extremely worrying elements of sexual harassment and violence (Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997).

This affects primary schools as well as secondary schools. Bhana (2006) argues that a situation where fear and corporal punishment often characterise the classroom creates condi-

tions where violence flourishes so that physical violence is a striking characteristic of young boys' interaction with girls. They use their greater body size and strength to bully, control and get rewards by stealing things — and feel they are entitled to do so. Also evident in the power over girls is verbal and physical harassment relating to sexuality (Bhana, 2006).

In 2001 Human Rights Watch produced a detailed report entitled '*Scared at School: Sexual Violence against Girls in South African Schools*'. This is based on research in KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape. The report states,

Based on our interviews with educators, social workers, children and parents, the problems of teachers engaging in serious sexual misconduct with underage female students is widespread. As the testimony offered below demonstrates, teachers have raped, sexually assaulted and otherwise sexually abused girls. Sometimes reinforcing sexual demands with threats of physical violence or corporal punishment, teachers have sexually propositioned girls and verbally degraded them using highly sexualised language. At times, sexual relations between teachers and students did not involve an overt use of force or threats of force; rather teachers would abuse their authority by offering better grades or money to pressure girls for sexual favours or "dating relationships" (Human Rights Watch, 2001:37).

Perhaps the most startling figure was provided a Medical Research Council survey carried out in 1998 that found that among those rape victims who specified their relationship to the perpetrator, 37.7% said their schoolteacher or principal had raped them (Human Rights Watch, 2001:42). Section V of the report details many actual cases of sexual abuse carried out by teachers in schools. Section VII of the report describes how when girls reported sexual violence and harassment they encountered a pattern whereby schools failed to respond with any degree of seriousness.

Evidence from the Midlands area of KwaZulu Natal found a culture of silence surrounding gender violence in schools, despite this becoming a norm in 'black' urban and rural schools. Most teachers who violate girl children get away with it because victims do not report it as they are afraid of being blamed or victimised by parents and other teachers which, as the authors state, highlights an unhealthy over-respect for the teachers, and this perpetuates the myth that the person who was raped must have asked for it. In addition, parents do not report sexual harassment because they fear that the girl will be asked to leave school. Parents may even feel that monetary payment from the perpetrator is far more useful than lengthy trials and enquiries. In some cases the payment can be as little as R20 (less than £2.00) and parents are prepared to accept this (Mshengu & Midlands Women's Group, 2003).

### **Explaining post-apartheid contradictions in relation to education and development**

So, schools in post-apartheid South Africa, as elsewhere, have two faces. On the one hand they are capable of helping individuals gain knowledge and develop skills and values which can be of great benefit to both the individual and the wider society. On the other hand they reproduce existing inequalities, do not necessarily present a coherent and effective model of 'modern' professional and moral behaviour, reinforce authoritarian attitudes and, worse of all, actively perpetrate violence. Why have schools in South Africa been slow and reluctant to change in a democratic direction despite the new political and policy dispensation? There are certainly local, contextual explanations. Jansen (2001), for example, accuses the South African government of 'political symbolism' in terms of its educational reform. He argues that in the light of the known resources, personnel and training constraints there was never any real expectations

that the ambitious reforms would seriously alter education in South Africa for everybody but it was important to be seen to be doing something.

Another major obstacle is the existing nature of teacher identity. For example, a commitment to teaching as a profession may not form a strong part of all teachers' personal identity. The National Teacher Education Audit (Hoffmeyer & Hall, 1996) stressed that many students in teacher education colleges did not have a genuine desire to teach and similarly in a study of teacher voice which included interviews from a sample of sixty eight South African teachers, more than half attributed purely instrumental reasons related to salary, status, the desire to urbanise and the attainment of qualifications to their choice of teaching as a career. For these teachers "the teacher was a person whom socio-economic circumstances had conspired to choose" (Jessop & Penny, 1998:396).

The same study also found that there was considerable nostalgia for an imagined golden age in which children respected elders and certainty prevailed. For some South African teachers, nostalgia for the old order was coupled with suspicion of the new and radical democratic values accompanying the end of apartheid. This has also been the finding of a recent study of four schools in the Cape Town area (Hunt, 2007). There were difficulties for some teachers in reconciling the contradictions of the collapse of apartheid (a good thing) with the breakdown of traditional values (a bad thing). This desire for certainty and fixed rules sits awkwardly with one of the key desired outcomes of the new curriculum — the development of creative and critical thinking.

However, while there are contextual factors specific to South Africa shaping teacher resistance to democratic reform, there are also wider and deeper historical and structural forces that shape the nature of schooling which make *fundamental* change very difficult in South Africa and elsewhere (Harber, 2004; 2009).

Essentially, the dominant or hegemonic model of schooling globally, with some exceptions, is authoritarian rather than democratic. Education for and in democracy, human rights and critical awareness is not a primary characteristic of the majority of schooling. While the degree of harshness and despotism within authoritarian schools varies from context to context and from institution to institution, in the majority of schools power over what is taught and learned, how it is taught and learned, where it is taught and learned, when it is taught and learned and what the general learning environment is like is not in the hands of learners. It is predominantly government officials, headteachers and teachers who decide, not learners. Most schools are essentially authoritarian institutions, however benevolent or benign that authoritarianism is and whatever beneficial aspects of learning are imparted. In this authoritarian situation of relative powerlessness and neglect of their human rights learners can be mistreated violently or be influenced by potentially violent beliefs because the dominant norms and behaviours of the wider society are shared, not challenged, by many adults in the formal education system.

Why are the key international formal institutions of learning socially constructed in this way? Throughout the history of schooling there has always been a conflict between education for control in order to produce citizens and workers who were conformist, passive and politically docile on the one hand and those who wanted to educate for critical consciousness, individual liberation and participatory democracy on the other. It is our contention that the former has dominated the real world of schooling, as opposed to educational debates and theory, because this was the main reason that formal, mass schooling systems were established in the first place (Green, 1990) and then expanded numerically and geographically. Some educational writers, practitioners and policy-makers have championed the latter approach to

schooling and education in general but the global persistence of the dominant authoritarian model suggests that the original purpose of control and compliance is deeply embedded in schooling and is highly resistant to change as a result.

This authoritarian model of schooling with its origins in state formation, modernisation and social and political control gradually extended globally from European societies and Japan through colonisation where the key purpose of schooling was to help to control indigenous populations for the benefit of the colonial power. When formal education was eventually provided missionary schools and those of the colonial state were used to control local populations by teaching the superiority of the culture of the colonising power and by supplying the subordinate personnel necessary for the effective functioning of the colonial administration (Altbach & Kelly, 1978; London, 2000; Alexander, 2000:92). Even if it was not always entirely successful in this, and indeed in the end helped to sow the seeds of its own destruction, the organisational style of schooling bequeathed by both the needs of industrialised mass production and then colonialism remains as a firm legacy in many post-colonial societies. Moreover, this, authoritarian, style, even if not spread directly through colonisation, was adopted and imitated by other nation states as the only 'modern' mass model of education.

The impact of colonialism on the contemporary education systems of Africa, Asia and the Caribbean is undeniable and is authoritarian in nature. Subsequently, many post-colonial governments did not hesitate to use schooling for political control purposes of their own. However, while in post-colonial societies the school may have taken on a 'modern', authoritarian form in the shape of its ostensibly bureaucratic organisation, in reality the economic and cultural contexts in which schools function in developing societies has often meant that schools often actually operate quite differently. Elsewhere (Harber & Davies, 1997) we have described and analysed these as 'bureaucratic facades' of incoherent and messy authoritarianism and being neither completely modern nor traditional. This has meant that, as in South Africa, their role as a model inculcating modern attitudes and behaviour has been limited.

## Conclusion

So schooling in South Africa, as elsewhere, is contradictory. On the one hand schooling has the potential to contribute positively to economic, social and political development. On the other hand it can reproduce social inequality and negative attitudes, fail to provide an efficient model of modern organisation and actively perpetrate authoritarianism and violence. Indeed, reproduction, authoritarianism and the potential for violence is built into the historical origins of the system. The main lesson is that it cannot be taken for granted that schooling is automatically a good thing. It is as important to be as concerned about what happens to children in school as getting them in to school in the first place. The struggle to ensure that schools provide genuine opportunities and a safe, peaceful and democratic environment for learners continues.

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