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ABSTRACT
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ascertain the degree of penetration of democratization reforms and to
document developments in these schools as they experience the latest phase of
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tables and 22 references.) (BT)

Transformational Issues and Challenges in South African Educational Reform: A Case Study of Two Schools in QwaQwa

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TRANSFORMATIONAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATIONAL REFORM: A CASE STUDY OF TWO SCHOOLS IN QWAQWA[*]

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Abstract

Policies for creating a nonracial, democratic education system in South Africa are spawning implementation issues that reflect change and resistance to change in schools. This is a report on a multiple year ethnographic study in two contrasting schools in a remote area of South Africa, Qwa Qwa, in which we observed and interviewed faculty, administrators, and students to ascertain the degree of penetration of democratization reforms and to document developments in these schools as they experience the latest phase of reform implementation. The three researchers bring different perspectives to the study, as an insider, a partial insider-outsider, and an outsider. Although both schools now have non-white enrollments, the one is a former township school for Africans with an African staff, while the other is a former white school that has retained its predominantly white Afrikaner staff and ethos. The two schools exhibit contrasting features of change, no change, and resistance to change in ways that reinforce findings in the first years of the study. The transnational flow of educational ideas such as democratization is evident in South African transformation policies that are differentially impacting these schools. The research reveals the manner in which transformation policies are themselves transformed, mediated, or resisted at the micro level in the school and classroom depending on internal contextual factors and administration ideology. Internal realities of reform in process are exposed. **Key Words: Educational Reform, Transformational Issues, Implementation Issues, Race, South Africa**

Introduction

Transformation of education in South Africa was and remains a massive undertaking. As the apartheid-era segregated and highly inequitable, fragmented educational structures were dismantled and incorporated into a single, nonracial, democratic, and relatively decentralized system, other reforms sought to enact qualitative transformation in the form of a new outcomes based education system tied to a National Qualifications Framework and

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1

delivered via a controversial new curriculum. Teachers and schools were significantly impacted by these reforms and a host of implementation issues emerged, revealing the challenges of such massive educational reform. Disadvantaged communities in urban and rural areas faced a variety of challenges before the benefits of democratized education could be realized, as a result of persistent disadvantage and inequitable development even as transformation ensued. In this paper, we report on our research in one of South Africa's most remote and disadvantaged areas, the former homeland of QwaQwa, which is now part of the Orange Free State.

The apartheid era of racially segregated education officially ended in 1994 with the installation of a multiracial democratic government, and the adoption of a new Constitution in 1996. Official mechanisms for educational transformation were first framed in a 1987 white paper and in the 1991 Educational Renewal Strategy (DNE, 1991). A series of "open" (nonracial) private schools in the late 1970s to early 1990s served as nonracial prototypes that became models for the post-apartheid era of educational transformation under the new political dispensation. These open schools were predominantly in urban areas of the country. Researchers documented these early transformative endeavors (for instance Brook, 1991, 1996, 1997; Brook Napier, in press; Brook Napier, Lebeta, & Zungu, 2000; Christie, 1990; Freer, 1991; McGurk, 1990; and Samoff, 1998). The blueprint for a single, nonracial education system was developed with significant infusions of influence from the United States (in the form of outcomes based, performance based curriculum and evaluation systems), also from Britain, Canada, and New Zealand (in the development of a National Qualifications Framework or NQF) (ANC,1994). Large numbers of foreign experts and consultants, as well as much donor aid, also played significant roles. As sets of imported ideas were translated into official reform policy and mandates in South Africa, well-resourced urban and suburban (former white) schools were

in a better position to adapt to the changes compared with remote area and disadvantaged schools.

The overall plan for educational transformation was first focused on quantitative or structural reforms to dismantle the segregated systems which had existed for whites, Africans, Coloureds, and Asians respectively; then qualitative or curricular reforms were initiated in the creation of the NQF and of Curriculum 2005, a new approach based on principles of "outcomes based education" commonly referred to as OBE, imported from abroad. The National Educational Policy Act of 1996 put in place major provisions for democratized education based on constitutional principles, while the South African Schools Act of 1996 articulated provisions for devolution of (some) authority to schools, governing bodies, and communities as well as for teachers' roles and responsibilities. In essence, the South African reforms were designed to overturn a previously completely centralized, externally evaluated complex of segregated systems (with a Eurocentric, dominant culture curriculum) into a non-racial system that was still centralized at the national and provincial levels, but that gave teachers and schools new autonomy to implement the reforms at the local level. For an overview of the policy context and the magnitude of the challenges facing South Africa in education, see Brook (1996, 1997).

In the transitional years of 1994-1999, those interested in South African educational transformation focused on debate about policy formation, since this was the dominant thrust of the early post-apartheid legislative action. Thereafter, in the period 1999 to the present, the debate also focused on policy implementation critique. Much debate focused on the issues surrounding the development and implementation of the controversial Curriculum 2005 outcomes based reform program, including the degree to which teachers in schools were receiving adequate training and support to implement the outcomes based curriculum. The adoption of OBE in South African form was an amalgam of borrowings from various Western

countries, ostensibly an efficient and desirable move but in reality one that gave little heed to contextual factors in the South African system and in schools, particularly how teachers had been trained under the previous system. As pointed out by Herbert (2001), when OBE seemed to work in South African education, it was largely at the official level (national or provincial) in the form of mandates, some materials development, and theoretical construction. Underlying Curriculum 2005 were the notions of grassroots involvement and active participation by teachers. However, the reform came under serious fire for its conceptually weak design, too-rapid implementation timeline, lack of adequate training and support of teachers, overly complicated system of learning outcomes and other features, haphazard implementation, and lack of consideration of internal or local needs. The original Curriculum 2003 was renamed Curriculum 2005, then almost scrapped before being renamed again in 2000 as Curriculum "21" as its developers and official implementors responded to the attacks (for examples of these critiques, see Chisholm, 2000; Cross, et al, 1998; Jansen & Christie, 1999; and Potenza, 2000; and Review of Curriculum 2005, 2000). As teachers and the educational community protested, joining the scholarly community in criticisms of Curriculum 2005, there were increasing calls for more research documenting implementation processes and realities in a variety of settings, to uncover the facilitating and inhibiting factors at the micro level as the so-called "new paradigm" of teaching was adopted (see for instance Brook, 1996, 1997; Brook-Napier, Lebeta & Zungu, 2000; Cross, 2001; Cross et al, 1998; Herbert, 2001; Howard & Herman, 1998; Jansen & Christie, 1999; and Motala, 2001)

One of the major questions that the new government faces is how schools and teachers are actually coping with the changes required. In particular, how are schools and teachers in remote areas of South African coping with these required changes? Under apartied, remote area homelands were the least funded and most disadvantaged in all sectors including education. In

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this study we sought to examine the degree to which African students enrolled in remote rural area schools are benefiting from the reforms; what needs are emerging for teachers and administrators in remote rural areas facing new curriculum mandates and structural changes; and the extent of emergence of a truly equitable, nonracial, democratic education. We were particularly interested in the nature of contextual factors that influenced the transformation processes in schools in areas such as Qwa Qwa.

Setting for the Study

QwaQwa is a former Homeland area located in the eastern part of the Orange Free State in the Drakensburg Mountains bordering on Lesotho. It is also disadvantaged by its remote location. Phuthaditjhaba is the main settlement of roughly half a million people, predominantly of Southern Sotho speaking Africans living in residential tracts terms townships under apartheid. It has high unemployment and poverty rates, and minimal potential for economic development. The surrounding rural areas are desolate, semi-arid, mountain environment unfit for much agriculture. The population is predominantly of Southern Sotho speakers. Under apartheid, the homeland was administered by Afrikaans speaking whites, and the suburb of Witsieshoek was the white enclave housing this population. Under the new dispensation, QwaQwa was incorporated into the Orange Free State. Many whites left the area and moved to largely Afrikaans speaking towns such as Harrismith and Bethlehem. Witsieshoek became a multiracial suburb of Phuthaditjhaba.

Our research interest was underpinned by broader considerations of the degree to which democracy was penetrating this relatively remote, and historically disadvantaged area; whether or not reform initiatives were evident in the schools such as in addressing language rights as human rights, reducing backlogs among African pupils, addressing teachers' needs and needs of the local community, and promoting overall tenets of a more democratic form of schooling.

Consequently, in the most general terms, we were interested whether national ideas for educational transformation enhanced social harmony in this area and whether local sustainable development was being assisted by national and provincial educational reforms.

In the first Phase of the study, in 1999-2000, we selected two primary schools in Phuthaditjhaba as cases in point, on the basis of recommendations by Lebeta. Lebeta and Brook-Napier visited the schools in August 1999, interviewed the administration and some teachers, and observed one class at each grade level (1 – 6). We also arranged to collect data in July 2000 when Napier joined the team to make site visits to the two schools. The three researchers worked together, conducting in-depth group interviews with the entire staff (faculty and administration) focusing on key needs and issues they identified for their schools as well as on their perceptions of Curriculum 2005 implementation and training activities. We asked the same questions in both schools to obtain comparable responses. We took photographs and observed classes and playground activities to obtain contextual data. We held more in-depth individual interviews with the principals and a few teachers at each school. We employed qualitative data analysis methods including overview, structural, and microscopic coding; and we used researcher triangulation to cross-check our findings and to combine our interpretations.

The two schools emerged as contrasting cases in point. The "former township school" was situated in a residential area of Phuthaditjhaba designated an African township under apartheid. After apartheid, it retained its totally African enrollments and staff, and enrollments climbed steadily. The second school was originally an Afrikaans-medium school in the former white suburb of Witsieshoek, established to serve white families. The school lost its white enrollments by 1996 as whites left the area; by 2000 its enrollments were all African but it retained its white administration and ethos, and a predominantly white Afrikaans speaking staff. We term this school the "former white town-area school".

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In 2000, there were 28 teachers at the former township school. All were African and they spoke the home language of the students (Southern Sotho); the principal and assistant principal were African; and the staff was largely local residents. Although English medium of instruction was the policy at the school, early grade students were allowed to use their home language as they transitioned to instruction in English. Outside of class, teachers and pupils used the vernacular as well as English.

In 2000, there were 12 teachers and 4 additional temporary teachers at the former white town-area school. Of these, only five teachers were African and two of these were temporary hires paid roughly half the salary of the regular teachers. The administration and office staff was white Afrikaners who had been at the school since the apartheid era. The instructional medium at this school was an issue of argument: while English was the language of instruction in some classes, several classes were still taught in Afrikaans. The principal and most teachers defended Afrikaans as the desirable instructional medium (although Lebeta reported that the parents and governing board wanted it to be English). Students were not allowed to use their home language anywhere at school, and most of the teachers did not speak Southern Sotho. Several of the white teachers had poor English skills.

Staff at both schools portrayed their school as disadvantaged in terms of resources, and serving students from impoverished homes. Both schools had governing boards that included the principal and elected parents, as required by law. The governing boards made the major decisions about expenditures, hiring teachers, and curriculum. However, in both schools, the principals still retained much influence over decisions and over the ethos of their schools. The former white town-area school was slightly better resourced, having a photocopy machine and charging school fees five times higher than those at the African staffed township school.

In 2000, we also had an unexpected opportunity to interview a group of 61 teachers from surrounding rural schools outside of Phuthaditjhaba, who were at the University of the North, QwaQwa Campus (UNIQWA) in Phuthaditjhaba doing courses to upgrade their teaching qualifications. We took the opportunity to interview the group on their perceptions of what their real needs were as rural teachers, how they were being impacted by Curriculum 2005, what benefit the training workshops for Curriculum 2005 were, and the general nature of the democratic process. Their responses added rich insight into the overall findings from our observations and interviews at the two schools in this first phase of the research.

Table 1: Enrollments in the Former Township and Former Afrikaner Schools for 1996-2000

Year	The Former Township School	The Former Afrikaner School
1996	834	166
1997	961	326
1998	989	359
1999	1088	422
2000	1096	516

Three Researchers, Different Perspectives:

We worked as a team of three researchers to collect the data from the faculty and administrators of each school. Each researcher represented a different point-of-view and familiarity with the cases. Lebeta was the insider (an emic perspective), as the Dean of the School of Education at UNIQWA, a parent of children in one of the schools, and a member of the governing board of that school. With his emic perspective, he provided elaboration on the setting and schools with which he was most familiar. He offered an African perspective, as

someone who spoke Southern Sotho, Afrikaans, and English, and who helped gain the cooperation of the faculty and administration of the two schools.

A second researcher operated in the roles of insider-outsider. Brook Napier was born in and educated in South Africa. While having international experience as an American researcher and teacher educator, she remained current with South African reform, conducting research on policy implementation in South African schools. With this insider-outsider perspective, and being fluent in English and Afrikaans, she was able to win the confidence of the faculty members of the former township school and the African faculty of the former white town-area school. This gave the researchers access to information about the schools that might have been lost to just an insider, especially at the school the insider was on the governing board and had control over funding.

The third researcher operated in the role of an outsider, bringing an etic perspective to the study. This was the first trip to South Africa for this American researcher who joined the team to provide additional objectivity since he had no ties to the past and present political climate of the country. In addition, he could provide another perspective to the case since his interests include civic education (life skills). The inclusion of an outsider's unjaundiced view of the data assisted in our overall interpretations in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis:

Data from both schools were collected in joint interviews of the faculties of the two schools and in interviews with the principals and vice principals. We each used a list of specific questions to be asked at the meetings with the faculties. However, these interviews often raised other issues and additional questions were asked. We kept separate notes of the interviews. In addition, we made observations of classroom activities and student behavior in and out of class. Brook Napier took photographs to make a visual record of the physical settings and interactions

as they occurred. These included scenes from students in classrooms and in play. Each member of the team examined and added observational notes.

Brook Napier conducted the initial analysis of the data from the interviews and school visits, and from use of the photographs. She compiled detailed field notes and a tentative list of issues. The other two researchers examined these, made modifications and additions until we arrived at a consensus list based on all the data collected. Thus, we subjected the data and our interpretations to triangulation, to verify and cross check the findings. We analyzed our interview notes from the discussions with the 61 rural school teachers and we found that these confirmed some of the findings obtained in the former township school and the former white town-area school, particularly with regard to teachers' frustations over inadequate workshops, and their cynicism over the overall curriculum reform effort.

Findings

Analysis of the data resulted in our identification of 21 issues (Table 2) related to transformation, implementation issues, and internal contextual factors that were important determinants of the character of these two contrasting schools. These are the main points of comparison for the two schools. Some emerged as an issue more negative or serious in the one school than the other. Others emerged as issues present in both schools equally, or present in just one school. Still others emerged as a positive element in one school but a negative element in the other. There is no prioritizing or ranking of the issues. They are presented in the following order based on the chronology of questions and interview/observation data gathered in both schools.

Table 2: Comparison Issues found in the Case Schools

1. RELATIONS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
2. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

3. STRONG PRINCIPAL, EVIDENCE OF LEADERSHIP AND VISION

4. SCHOOL SERVING STUDENTS' AND THE COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

5. LANGUAGE MEDIUM (English, English/Afrikaans versus vernacular)

6. POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE

7. TEACHERS BASED IN THE FEEDER COMMUNITY; African/White
    teachers teaching African pupils?

8. HOME-SCHOOL CONTINUITY

9. HOME-SCHOOL DISCONTINUITY

10. FEAR AND JOB SECURITY

11. SCHOOLS UNDERRESOURCED

12. AIM TO BE A "BLACK SENTINEL" SCHOOL

13. OBE, C2005/C21, and TRANSFORMATION/CHANGE

14. DISCIPLINE ISSUES

15. PUPIL DIVERSITY (in terms of race, and in terms of SES)

16. CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION, DEMOCRACY, AND THE NEW SOUTH
    AFRICA   (In Life Skills/ Social Studies curriculum?)

17 TEACHER SHORTAGE PERCEIVED

18. AFRICANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

19. QUALITY/SPECIAL SCHOOL QUESTION

20. ETHOS/ ENVIRONMENT/ ATTITUDE/ TONE of school?

21. SCHOOL FUTURE?

In the following section, we present a more detailed account of the insights obtained in the study, from the overall data set summarized in Table 2. These accounts are drawn from our field notes and they represent our joint interpretations of the data from the school visits, the interviews, observations, and photographs. We highlight several of the issues that provide the most interesting insights into the micro-level realities at these contrasting schools.

Relations with the Department of Education

Responses at both schools suggest a mixed relationship with the National or Provincial Department of Education. Respondents gave cautious answers in terms of the real support or help received from these agencies. There were admissions at both schools that workshops on the new national curriculum had been held but there was no overt comment on the effectiveness of the workshops or support from the Provincial Department. At the former township school, the teachers talked about things not happening or coming from the Provincial Department such as in the feeding scheme collapsing, that the "money does not arrive". At the former white town-area school, the principal was quite outspoken about how she feels left in the lurch by the Provincial Department. She stated that the books and desks promised never came, the desks went to a black school instead (i.e. a school with an African administration), that they were still (like the previous year) being deprived of additional teacher funding and are having to" make do". The principal also said at that school their biggest worry is "the Department." Lebeta observed that he suspects that the former white town-area school was losing out on these resources because the Provincial Departments knew it was an Afrikaner making the requests. So, there appeared to be political motives at work in who gets what resources from the Provincial Department.

Relationship between Administration and Staff

There seemed to be a strong relationship between the administration and staff at both schools, as indicated by the atmosphere in the group meetings and the spontaneous comments back and forth. But, at the former white town-area school the nonwhite teachers seemed withdrawn and reluctant to say much at the group meeting. Later, two of the non-white teachers came up to one member of the team and talked more openly about the school and administration. In fact these two were temporary hires and there seemed to be a concern on their part that they cannot be as open as they would like if they want to continue working.

Strong Principal, Evidence of Leadership and Vision

The principal at the former township school was not present at the group meeting, but the teachers' comments suggested a strong bond and a good working relationship between teachers and administration at the school. At the former white school it was evident on both visits (1999 and 2000) that the principal ruled the school as a dominant figure but with a great deal of loyalty from the majority of the staff.

School Serving Students and the Community Needs

This was one of the strongest issues to emerge. The former township school appeared far more in consort with its feeder community--an African school serving an African community and led and staffed by Africans who understand their own needs. In contrast, the former white town-area school emerged as a school serving the needs and agenda of its staff and leadership perhaps more than the needs of the students--what was being addressed appeared to be the white staff and administration's interpretation of what the African pupils in the school need. Given that the white staff at the school had moved out of the surrounding community (away to white dominated towns such as Bethlehem and Harrismith) and the school enrollments were now entirely African and from the town area, this school was now characterized by a strong discordance between school (ethos and administration, and staff) and home community.

Language Medium Issue

This was a prominent issue at both schools where English was reportedly the accepted high status language, necessary and desirable. But this was clear and unequivocal at the former township school (see the issue on Quality and Special School Question below) where the consensus was that the pupils learn in English. At the former white town-area school there were tensions over which classes were being taught in English and which in Afrikaans. There appeared to be no formal logic for using Afrikaans in any of the classes except on the insistence

of the principal. This appeared to be a political issue pushed by the principal while parents of students in the school really wanted instruction in English only, an observation offered by Lebeta who was a member of this school's governing body and who could speak for the other parents. The issue of home language (vernacular) versus English was evident in both schools. At the former township school, teachers reported that they had a school policy of no vernacular in the classroom; it was English only after grade 1. At the former white town-area school, none of the white teachers used any vernacular except the principal who spoke Zulu (but not Sotho), and the question remained whether the African teachers at that school did use the vernacular and code switching with the pupils. One of the black teachers said that in the Afrikaans medium classes "few (pupils) understand" while the English medium classes are "full." He, we believe was the one who was actually teaching in Afrikaans.

Poverty and Disadvantage

Teachers at both schools portrayed their schools as poor, and their pupils as impoverished. By national standards and in terms of regional location, this is clearly true. But there were indications that the former township school served an even more impoverished population than the former white town-area school. Many students at the former township school wore tattered uniforms and no shoes, not so at the other school. The teachers at the former township school said 75% of the students were too poor to pay the low school fees. They described how the collapse of the feeding program really hurt attendance because many of the pupils came for the food, now they go to shopping centers and are truant instead. The teachers described how many grandmothers made food to bring to the school for children to eat-- there is no tuckshop (candy store) here as there was at the other school. At the former white town-area school the fees were five times higher than at the former township school. Teachers at the former white school talked about having a range of SES levels of pupils. At both schools the

expense of school uniforms was commented on and the fact that the school helped pupils whose families could not afford uniforms, or they closed their eyes to those who came in street clothes.

Teachers based in the Feeder Community; Black/White Teachers Teaching Black Students

In the former township school African teachers teach African pupils in an African school setting. The teachers live in the feeder community surrounding the school. In contrast, many/ most of the staff at the former white town-area school reported that they had moved out of the surrounding community to other white communities; only the African teachers lived in town, in Phuthaditjhaba. The principal herself reported that she has recently moved out of the neighborhood near the school. Here, teachers had followed the larger demographic shifts of the community, with whites moving out to the still white towns like Harrismith, as Africans moved in to the formerly white neighborhoods. In this latter school there was now the issue of white teachers teaching black students, with all of its implications, a problem widespread in the changing educational landscape of South Africa.

Home School Continuity

There were many indications of a strong bond and degree of continuity between home and school culture and environment at the former township school, whereas at the former white town-area school this was not a straightforward issue. For the majority of pupils who reportedly live in Phuthaditjhaba, and who have mostly white Afrikaans teachers, there is a pretty marked lack of continuity.

Home-School Discontinuity

There were many more indications of discontinuity between home and school at the former white town-areas school than of continuity. This has emerged as another key issue in educational transformation in South Africa: how to deal with issues of discontinuity for African pupils attending the formerly white schools because these are seen to provide a better education

than former African schools, yet many remain staffed still with whites who likely lack cultural understanding of nonwhite pupils and their needs.

Fear and Job Security

The question of job security was posed to the teachers by the researchers at both schools. The teachers at the former township school indicated far less concern, reporting that they did not think they would see their school closed down or see themselves re-deployed, also because of increasing enrollments. At the other school the white teachers seemed to be putting on a good face, saying they felt no concern about being laid off or redeployed. However we did document some comments suggesting teachers' thinking that the Provincial Department was "squeezing them out" because of the prevailing Afrikaner ethos at the school. The one African female teacher did comment that in the old days teachers were in demand; now many qualified teachers are without jobs, and she said, "we cannot be secure in this job nowadays." The other two African teachers who are on the staff at considerably less pay and temporarily, did not comment, but the whole discussion about them revolved around "trying" to keep them on the staff, so theirs was obviously an insecure position.

Schools Underresourced

There was roughly equivalent talk about lack of resources both schools, in terms of the resources obtained from the Provincial Department of Education and the need for teachers to make do without materials and support. At the former township school we were shown the room that the staff and administration wanted to make into a library but they had no stocks of books. At the former white town-areas school the principal described the "whole storeroom full of books" but that they need a place or space for a library. This principal also observed that she wondered how other schools that do not have a photocopy machine cope with OBE (making the judgment that OBE methods demand much in the way of photocopies of worksheets).

Again just by virtue of where they are in the country, these schools in Phuthaditjhaba are disadvantaged and remote from access to resources that are concentrated in the urban areas of the country, but the teachers did not agree that this is so when we asked. Their response could indicate that they do not know what teachers and schools in urban and less remote areas receive; alternatively, are they any worse off than teachers in Soweto and other townships?

Aim to be a "Black Sentinel" School

This aim was mentioned several times at the former township school, in terms of the teachers' desire to see the school develop into a black version of Sentinel Primary School, the former white school they believe to be the best in Phuthaditjhaba. However the staff here criticized this school on the grounds that it rejected nonwhites as inferior, retaining an apartheid-era ethos. The white staff at the other school rejected the idea of aiming to be like this school, adding that their school was not inferior to Sentinel (the African staff were quiet and it would be nice to know what they think on this point).

OBE, Curriculum 2005/21, and Transformation/Change

Staff at both schools voiced frustrations and some cynicism over OBE and Curriculum 2005/21 mandates, and the paucity of real staff training and support for proper implementation. Both groups mentioned 2-3 day workshops and presentations that were made by Department of Education people, but there was a significant absence of enthusiastic comment on how great the reforms and new approaches are or on the real impact at these schools. At the former township school the teachers laughed and said they were "relieved" at the news (that just broke that week in June 2000) that Curriculum 2005 was to be scrapped or significantly overhauled. Unfortunately, the Curriculum 2005 was just renamed Curriculum 21 and delayed full implementation for a few years.

One of the teachers at the former township school ("I" he was called) said there could be impact in the classroom if what was learned in the workshops was put into practice in the classroom. When we asked the faculty about changes in education and if things were better, "I" did most of the talking: he said on the issue of transformation he feels "discouraged" because there is too little time to implement OBE, "we are pushed that we must know [learn?] this in a very short space of time." He said there is too much paperwork and too little time for the children now, and they (teachers) need a report for the district, "we do it to look good, so we are safe," he added, and "I am trying!" He also said he thinks OBE is better, but expensive, but "better because it cuts off selfishness [among teachers, towards children?]."

At the other school, when asked the same question some of the teachers said that in the junior primary grades OBE was "doing fine", but they also commented that there are too many pupils (37, 38 per class) to "apply the OBE effectively." They also said, "group work disrupts discipline" (they clearly associate OBE with groupwork, which in itself is interesting). They commented on OBE and "paperwork!" but they mentioned this in terms of producing worksheets for the pupils (and how these have to be photocopied) not in terms of reporting. The principal of this school described how the Provincial Department of Education only supplies one box of copy paper per year, and "what about schools who don't have these [facilities like Xerox machines]?"

Alternatively, one of the temporary African male teachers hired the previous year eventually commented that "practical learning" brings the "best success." He was referring to the democratic system when we were asking them about civic education. He said he thinks the pupils learn by doing things themselves; and he did not look as if he agreed with the complaints about OBE that were voiced by the principal of the Former Afrikaner School and some of the white teachers.

Our conversations with the 61 rural school teachers on the UNIQWA campus reinforced these notions of cynicism and reserve about the effectiveness of OBE workshops, as well as the fact that many African teachers remain very reluctant to speak out openly. In this group too, all African teachers, there was acknowledgment that they were not used to having the right to speak out and there were cautious glances thrown at the university official presiding.

Discipline Issues

There was more vocal comment about discipline strategies at the former white town-area school than at the former township school. At the former township school the teachers described their focus on the "whole child" and pointed out their activities in music, dance, and other things outside academics as evidence of this. They did not give any specifics on disciplinary measures except that they do not use corporal punishment because it is illegal. One teacher commented that they are "afraid" to; another added that the pupils are "quick to remind us" of the law against using corporal punishment, and another said it was "frustrating" not to be able to use it.

At the former white town-area school, the principal described their system with the "black book". Pupils sign the book as a warning on the first offenses. After three violations, parents are called in and do the spanking in the office in the presence of the principal. This, according to the principal, was the "team" approach to discipline (principal, teacher, and parents). The one African male teacher said he uses a plastic ball to redirect naughty pupils (apparently he throw the ball at them). Thus, corporal punishment was still used at this school despite the stipulations in the 1996 South African Schools Act making use of corporal punishment illegal. Here was a compelling example of how, at the micro level and within individual schools, contextual factors and highly localized mediation of reforms can maintain the old status quo despite all of the pressure for change.

Pupil Diversity

Both schools had little pupil diversity. The former township school had always been an African school while the other school had undergone a complete transformation in terms of pupil enrollments, from having an all white student body under the old system (pre-1990) to a student body of no white students in 2000. Here, there were some pupils who were (or would have been formerly classified as) Coloured but the majority were African (Sotho). The principal said they had no refugee children here that these tend to go to bigger places. She was referring to regional refugees. There were no mentions of refugee children at the former township school. This is one way in which these remote area schools are different to the city schools in South Africa, that have had an influx of refugees from other African countries as well as from Eastern Europe.

Citizenship Education and the New South Africa

At the former township school, when Napier posed questions about the nature of civic or citizenship education in the school program, the responses were related to students learning about their rights: "I think they know about that [rights]," said one teacher and the others agreed. The reports were that students know about the new Constitution and the new dispensation, largely from the media reports (TV, radio, newspapers). The prevalence of "rights talk" in South Africa is a documented phenomenon. But how specifically the students know about their rights needs to be investigated. Life Skills emerged as the subject area pertinent to the question, where students did learn about their rights. The teacher who called himself MK described the attention to rights and civic issues in his grade 6-history curriculum in which he said there were 2 questions on this topic on the final exam. He described how in grade 6 students learn about South African history (traditional version), medieval history, colonial period, and then the "road to democracy". In grade 5 he described how they study Mandela, which presumably can also be

regarded as part of the civic education focus, and in grade 4 they study the history of the home environment.

A nice illustration of students learning about their rights and about citizenship of their country was in the grade 2 presentation of the Children's Bill of Rights (in Life Skills class) and the grade 1 class presentations we observed, ". . . my name is-------, I am 7 years old, I am a boy/girl, I am a pupil at ------ School, my principal is-------, my teacher is ---------, Today I am Minister of ---------(one of the leading figures in the country), I promise to --------(a statement about democracy or development or improving life), thank you." The students were very serious about their work.

At the former white town-area school, the staff readily identified Life Skills as the area within which civic education falls. They listed several topics: life skills and orientation, grade 1; environment and housing, personal safety, behavior, broken families, life orientation grade 7, children's bill of rights, AIDS (several families impacted), but they did not mention the Constitution even when we asked. They said the students are too young to learn about the Constitution. We did not have the chance to see any presentations or other evidence as we did at the former township school.

Teacher Shortage Perceived

This was a relatively small part of the conversations at both schools but at the former white town-area school it emerged across the visits in 1999 and 2000. The principal bemoaned the fact that they are short 2 teachers for their needs, that the Provincial Department only allocated 12. Last year (1999) the principal complained that the Provincial Department was trying to impose teachers on her that she did not want or consider competent. There was the issue here again of whether the Provincial Department is playing politics with this Afrikaans administered school. We heard much about the two young men (African) who were taken on

with internal funds and paid at a much lower rate than the rest of the staff (interestingly they hired two new white teachers in 2001).

At the former township school, there was not much said about a teacher shortage, only that this school was not likely to be impacted in the same way given that most of its teachers lived in the local community. They called themselves "veterans" not likely to be unemployed as teachers.

Africanisation of the School and Community

This was clearly a major issue at the former white town-area school but not at the former township school. While both schools had all-African enrollments, the former white school was little Africanized in terms of its ethos and staffing, as well as its dominant medium of instruction. This school represents a subtype of schools that can likely be found in many communities in South Africa, where the new laws and regulations allowing for devolution of (some) authority to the local level and for choice in terms of instructional medium result in the persistence of pockets of white domination even in the face of changed enrollments. This is also an example of how one cannot generalize about the impact of educational reform policies, even within the same local community.

Quality/Special School Question

Both school faculties commented freely on how they saw their school to be a "quality school". At the former township school, some of the talk here revolved around the stated desire to be "a black Sentinel" (see discussion above). Other comments focused on how this is a community school and how they try to reach/teach the "whole child." The staff claimed that the school had a good name and many teachers asked to be transferred here, that the English policy in the school added to its reputation. One of the young male teachers gave the quote of the day in response to this question. He said, "children from this school can speak English". Others

added that the parents see the quality of the school also in terms of teaching the children English. English as cultural capital was a classic example here.

In contrast, at the former white town-area school, the same question evoked a very different response from the principal and the staff. Here, students were actually not mentioned in responses to what makes this a quality school. Answers included committed teachers, who clock in at 7:30 and stay the whole day, dedicated headmaster who patrols even at night and who does battle to get teachers/books/desks; "guidance of the Lord" came up too. English came up in the responses here too, but in terms of parents finding it important. The principal did add that Afrikaans and a student's home language were also important, as well as Religious Education. In fact, the principal specifically mentioned using a "Jesus film" shown in periods when there was no teacher to take the class which is actually contrary to the new regulations not allowing such films in public schools. This is an interesting ideological issue that reflects an administration that holds it own ideology despite what regulations say.

Ethos/Environment/Attitude

The contrasts between schools were interesting indeed. At the former township school, both visits (1999 and 2000) produced many signs of a close-knit school with staff and administration in a close positive relationship. There was also a positive relationship and ethos between students and staff, and community. In contrast, at the former white town-area school there was much enthusiasm for the positive ethos of the school as reported by the principal and the Afrikaans staff; but the Africans were very quiet and reluctant to speak out, and then there are the issues listed earlier in terms of white teachers in black schools, language medium issues, etc. The Africans were also reluctant to speak with Lebeta, the insider on the team, which might relate to his being on the governing board of the school and therefore with power over

them. At the very least one might say that the ethos at this school was one that reflected a variety of tensions although on the surface the school was reputedly "doing fine".

School Future

Respondents at both schools were readily frank about where they see their school going or what they want to see. At the former township school, there was the talk of wanting to become a black Sentinel and of addressing the "whole child", and of being a strong community school. With little real threat of closure or disruption regarding staff and treatment by the Provincial Department of Education, this school's future seemed the more secure of the two.

In contrast, at the other school, there was the talk of job insecurity, there were the issues of teacher shortage and denial by the Provincial Department for help, and there was a great deal more focus on the staff and their situation rather than on the students. The principal did portray the missionary zeal she and her teachers project. She reported how she tells each child "they must have a dream", "you must now already decide you are going to be President of South Africa," and then she added words to the effect that if they don't achieve their dream they will still achieve something. "We are building here [sic] a movement, a foundation, as good as we can," she said. She said when this generation of students are adults they will realize their ambition. Noble ideas here too, but with an interesting twist, being voiced in terms of what these teachers and administrators think is good for the pupils--their version imposed on the pupils.

Discussion

The data presented in the previous section provide some preliminary clues to answers for the questions we posed in the study: 1) to what degree are African students enrolled in remote rural area schools are benefiting from transformation? 2) what needs are emerging for teachers and administrators in remote rural areas facing new curriculum mandates and structural changes? and 3) what is the extent of emergence of a truly equitable, nonracial, democratic education? While

this research is still on-going, reflection on the current answers to these three questions provide useful information for policy decisions and provide guidance to the next round of interviews and observations as we seek to find out how well schools are being transformed in such a remote area of South Africa.

Student Benefits from Reform

While we did not have the opportunity to talk to students directly, our interview and observation data indicate some benefits but numerous lack of benefits in this remote area school setting. At the Former Township school the faculty clearly had a goal to teach English as the language of opportunity. The conflicting loyalties to English versus

Afrikaans in these two schools are significant in that they mirror much of the wider debate in South Africa over the renewed importance of English (as the language of emancipation and global participation) and the now imperiled status of Afrikaans even though it remains the home language of many South Africans (see Brook Napier, in press, for an account of these tensions).

The interview and observation data indicate that the students at both schools lack resources found in schools in more affluent regions. The system of providing a base-operating budget that a school enhances with school fees is a problem. The former township school was clearly the more disadvantaged of these two schools. Resources needed to provide a more equal education in such remote areas are lacking.

One other issue about students' benefiting from reform involves teacher training. The OBE Outcomes model is a radical departure from the pedagogy learned by the teachers in these schools. The training they have received is minimal and the teachers' ability to implement the new curriculum is jeopardized. Although we observed classrooms with movable seating, the traditional recitation mode was still pervasive. A teacher controlled learning environment remained the mainstay and a logical pedagogy given the large class size and absences found in

both schools. Thus, students are not benefiting from the new curriculum, but whether the new curriculum would be better than a traditional model is still an unknown factor to be investigated in subsequent phases of the research.

Teacher and Administrator Needs

Teacher and administrator needs at both schools were emphasized as serious. The most serious need mentioned at both schools was resources to implement the new OBE curriculum. Lack of library facilities, copying facilities, classroom furniture, staff to reduce class size, training, and so forth were deemed a major problem in trying to teach students in these two schools. Lack of money for in school breakfast and lunch programs also was an issue at the former township school. Given the remoteness of QwaQwa and the improvised nature of the area, resources from the Provincial Department of Education is the only source that these schools can depend upon. At the former township school, some students could not even pay the minimal school fees, but were not turned away.

At the former white town-area school, the administration felt more at odds with the Provincial Department of Education. This difference was likely the result of the composition of the faculties. At this school, the need for job security was much higher than at the former township school. Unfortunately, the fluid nature of government and education jobs in South Africa is a national problem but may be more so for white South Africans than non-whites. The observation that the principal at the former white school was very strong and liked by the staff did help to keep the moral of the white teachers higher. The African teachers were more cautious in their feelings.

Discipline was an issue raised at both schools. Both school staffs were used to the idea of corporal punishment. However, it is illegal to employ that discipline mode in South Africa now. Although the Former Afrikaner School found a unique way around the issue by having parents

do the corporal punishment, there appears a need to find a solution to the problem perceived by the teachers.

Emergence of an Equitable, Nonracial, Democratic Education

While we saw in the former township school, Life Skills or citizenship education is in place in the curriculum are the students in these two schools getting a truly equitable, nonracial, and democratic education. Our findings from the research reported here suggest that the early signs of democratized education are there, but that a host of implementation issues ands internal contextual factors are dominating to make the individual character and programs in schools markedly different even within the same community.

A democratic school might be considered a place where students, teachers, staff, and administrators have the freedom to express their beliefs without concern for retribution. During our interviews at both schools we saw apprehension on the part of the teachers to talk to strangers and also to talk in front of the administrator. It was at the former white school that we noted a lack of openness by the African teachers in front of the white principal and teachers. It is logical to infer that freedom of expression is still not felt at these schools. The fact that students are not allowed to speak in their home language anytime at this school is also an issue of freedom of expression. Perhaps the teachers and administrators here prohibit the use of home language because they do not understand the students. But the control of language is an issue in a democratic education. The control of language was one of the sparks that set off the school riots in the 1970s that ultimately lead to the founding of a new democratic state in South Africa.

We suggest that the findings in these two contrasting schools in Phuthaditjhaba shed light on their unique contexts, but at the same time they represent illustrations of issues that are likely to be found in different forms all over the country. Examinations of micro level realities are a pressing need, to uncover the variety of ways in which educational transformation is emerging.

Our research agrees with the findings in, and the calls for more, implementation-focused research by other South African researchers (see for instance Khumalo et al, 1999; Luneta, 2001; and Pitsoe & Niewenhuis, 2001).

Summary

In sum, the answers to our research questions are tentative, but they provide useful and interesting leads. Teachers have needs related to the problem of resources that frustrate their implementation of the new national curriculum and their use of new approaches. Some white teachers even fear their jobs. In communities like Phuthaditjhaba, far from the main centers of power and remote from access to training and other resources, internal conditions in schools show how important it is to consider contextual factors and persistent legacies, as well as loopholes in the new laws which are variously implemented, mediated, or even rejected in local practices. Education in this remote rural area is not equitable, nonracial or completely democratic yet which makes for the need to examine the impact of national reforms in all areas and corners of the country.

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32

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