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*Apartheid education legacies and new directions
in post-apartheid South Africa*

Introduction

The legacy of apartheid education has in recent months become a contested matter as public intellectuals have argued that the state of education today is worse than it was under apartheid.¹ An assessment of the legacy of apartheid education, and more recent efforts to change it, can therefore not be a neutral matter, as it touches directly on contemporary assessments and public debates about the state of public education. Its chief value for the purposes of this article is in the renewed attention it gives to history and the interpretation of history. The debate occurs in the context of a deepening attack on public education globally and advancement of the interests of private schooling and various forms of the privatization of public schooling. In South Africa, private schools comprise less than 5% of all schools, but the binary between public and private is not a sharp one: private schools receive government subsidies and are subject to regulation, while almost 20% of public schools charge fees and have private benefits. Nonetheless, the dis-

¹ www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Education-worse-than-under-apartheid-20120323; www.iol.co.za/capcargus/matric-is-as-tough-as-it-was-a-decade-ago-1.1209015; www.iol.co.za/mercury/playing-the-blame-game-with-education-1.1268919; www2.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2012-04-12-apartheid-was-not-that-bad-a-case-of-peculiar-nostalgia; www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=171645; www1.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2012-05-15-racism-killed-the-rainbow-nation.

course of a failing public sector system which can be saved by forms of privatization has powerful advocates.² The discourse becomes racialised by its focus on poor, all-African schools, those on whom the legacy of apartheid falls most decisively. In this discourse, the legacy of apartheid is denied and efforts to alter this legacy are minimized and dismissed.³

Given this debate, how does one assess the legacy of apartheid and contemporary efforts to transform it? What theoretical lenses are required to enable an understanding that neither romanticises the past nor excuses the present or contrasts a history of victims with one of victors? Jacob Dlamini⁴ draws on the concept of nostalgia to explore what it means to have lived under apartheid as a black person and reflect on it with longing and loss. He writes that:

Such longing and loss run counter to the dominant ‘romantic telling’ of the past in which there is a neat separation between a merry precolonial Africa, a miserable apartheid South Africa and a marvelous new South Africa in which everyone is living democratically ever after.⁵

For most South Africans, he says, it is not like this. The past for many black South Africans is much too complex and rich. He points out that «the irony about nostalgia is that, for all its fixation with the past, it is essentially about the present. It is about present anxieties refracted through the prism of the past».⁶ Cheryl Walker,⁷ writing about the discourse of loss and longing in relation to land restoration, argues that in some cases land restitution efforts are not about restoring the actual land, but the communities and relationships that existed on that land in the past. The desire for the restoration of the land symbolises the restoration of that community. It is often no longer possible however «to recreate the relationships to places and people and ways of being in the world that are past».⁸

² Centre for Development and Enterprise, *Hidden assets. South Africa’s low-fee private schools*, «CDE in Depth», n. 10, August 2010, www.cde.org.za/article.php?a_id=371.

³ Aubrey Matshiqi, *New racism erases sins of apartheid*, «Business Day», 14 May 2012, www.businessday.co.za/articles/Content.aspx?id=171645.

⁴ Jacob Dlamini, *Native nostalgia*, Johannesburg, Jacana, 2009.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 16.

⁷ Cheryl Walker, *Landmarked. Land claims and land restitution in South Africa*, Johannesburg, Jacana; Athens, Ohio U.P., 2009.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

And so the discourse of loss and restoration of apartheid education can be read through these approaches as in part an effort to rekindle a sense of relationship and community that existed in the past in the midst of conflict and fracture.

The sense of loss also often co-exists with a sense of unresolved issues from the past still haunting the present. Dr Mamphela Ramphele, writer, anti-apartheid activist, later University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor, World Bank staffer, businesswoman, and one of the protagonists in the debate, opens her book, *Laying Ghosts to Rest*, with the sentence, «My childhood was shaped in the idyllic village of Kranspoort at the foot of the Soutpansberg mountains in what is now the Limpopo province. Both my parents were teachers at the local school...».⁹ The purpose of the book is to name those ghosts that still haunt the present and future and that «we are often too afraid to mention: racism, ethnic chauvinism, sexism and authoritarianism».¹⁰ In her chapter on education, she writes that «there is a real dilemma for those in political leadership in acknowledging the realities of the impact of Bantu Education. Part of the ambivalence about acknowledging its impact [...] stems from the fundamental question it raises about the readiness to govern».¹¹ Here and in her assertion about apartheid education being better than education almost twenty years after apartheid, she throws open the question of the legacy of apartheid education, expresses the fundamental ambivalence about acknowledging its continued presence in the body politic, and the pain at policies that have not succeeded in shifting this legacy.

The approach taken in this paper is informed by this debate. An historical approach can best provide insight into the complexity of both past and present. Periodising and problematising the concept of legacy is essential. This is as important for the apartheid as post-apartheid period. Harold Wolpe, writing in *Race, Class and the Apartheid State*¹² emphasizes that such periodisation is critical to understanding the nature and conditions of change in different periods, including structural transformations, discontinuities, tensions and contradictions produced in each period. As such, dif-

⁹ Mamphela Ramphele, *Laying ghosts to rest. Dilemmas of transformation in South Africa*, Cape Town, Tafelberg, 2008, p. 7.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

¹² Harold Wolpe, *Race, class and the apartheid state*, London, James Currey; Addis Ababa, OAU; Paris, UNESCO, 1988, p. 6.

ferent periods leave different legacies. Apartheid was preceded by many years of segregation and grew out of it, but differed from previous periods in key respects and also passed through different phases. The post-apartheid period, likewise, can be seen as having different phases. There are legacies of the past (apartheid) and present (post-apartheid) policies. Legacies can be economic, political, social, discursive. Legacies also differ and are perceived differently across space and time depending on how people differently located in social life have lived and understood their lives. So there are multiple legacies, rather than one only. To understand these legacies in education, it is necessary to situate educational development within broader economic and political processes and to see educational change as part of a complex social reality, a long-range process of change and continuity, contest and contradiction.

Instead of following the «sad past/bright present» or «bright past/sad present» narrative, this paper will first show how South Africa's system of racially-differentiated mass schooling came into being over the last century. The conditions and manner under which this occurred entrenched deep inequalities. The next section will show how and in what context these legacies were addressed in the post-1994 period. The paper concludes with a discussion of continuities and contradictions between the achievements of democracy and continuing historical and structural inequalities and their impact on education in a period of economic decline. As an overview, it relies mainly on secondary literature.

Emergence of racially-differentiated mass schooling in South Africa: an overview (1905-1976)

The history of mass schooling in South Africa is distinctive in its racially-defined origins. Universal schooling was gradually introduced in South Africa for whites from the beginning of the twentieth century, from 1905 onwards.¹³ Union in 1910, of English and Afrikaans-speakers, effectively excluded Africans from a life as citizens in the polity and economy. At this time, African and many coloured children were mainly educated in mission schools, which became increasingly inadequate to the purpose as numbers increased but funds remained static. In exchange for state aid, mission schools

¹³ Ernst Gideon Malherbe, *Education in South Africa*, vol. 1: 1652-1922, Cape Town, Juta, 1925.

began to adopt state curricula. But increasing crisis within the mission schools, combined with the goals of Afrikaner nationalists to crush what they saw as the breeding ground of African nationalism, led to the transfer of control from missions to the state once the Afrikaner National Party came to power in 1948. The Bantu Education Act of 1953 provided the conditions for full state control of hitherto semi-private mission schools. Although more and more Africans were drawn into under-financed and poor-quality schooling from the 1960s, it is only since 1994 that government has become committed to ensuring that full universal education is in place for all South Africans. The demand for free and compulsory schooling for all had been a long-standing ideal, its first exponents being members of the newly-formed African National Congress in 1912.¹⁴

This racially-differentiated system of schooling was steadily consolidated from the 1950s into four main organizationally-segregated and unequally financed streams for African, Indian, Coloured and White children. The aims of education were explicitly to maintain white superiority and dominance in the economy and state. The policy of grand apartheid was inaugurated with the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959. In terms of it, six territorial authorities were granted “independence” in 1968 and 1969. Here, Africans were supposedly to exercise their political rights. They were all based on putative cultural and linguistic commonalities. Throughout the next three decades, Africans were systematically removed from urban and “white” areas to these Bantustans, the so-called homelands. As Magubane points out, these Bantustans created all the trappings of states: they established development boards and parliaments, built capitals, inaugurated presidents, designed flags, composed national anthems and, above all, devised mechanisms of control and compulsion.¹⁵ They had their own departments of education, separately funded and staffed but controlled from Pretoria. Teacher training colleges and universities were established in these pseudo-“homelands” to produce the teachers and bureaucrats for the system. But education here was underfunded relative to education for other races as well as Africans

¹⁴ Muriel Horrell, *Bantu education to 1968*, Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 1968; Freda Troup, *Forbidden pastures. Education under apartheid*, London, International Defence and Aid Fund, 1977.

¹⁵ Bernard Magubane, *Resistance and repression in the Bantustans*, in South African Democracy Education Trust (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa, 1970-1980*, II, Pretoria, UNISA Press, n.d., p. 754.

in urban areas. The Bantustan legacy remains strong into the present.¹⁶ These areas remain the poorest in the country. The majority of children continue to go to school in these areas, and the quality of schooling overall is considered to be poorest here too.

The particular race-class hierarchy of privilege constructed through apartheid and Bantustan education was underpinned by gender inequality.¹⁷ If Bantu Education served to «place Africans psycho-ideologically where the Bantustans placed them physically».¹⁸ its particular contribution to gender oppression lay in that «it served to cement women into “traditional” patriarchal relationships».¹⁹ The state feminised the teaching profession and subordinated women to a «double-edged system of patriarchal controls emanating from the state and chiefs».²⁰ Low-budget primary schooling for Africans was financed at least partly by the use of African women teachers.²¹ But while white teachers, with the advantage of secondary schooling, were increasingly trained in post-secondary school colleges of education, African teachers were enrolling in teacher training colleges having achieved the bare rudiments of literacy and numeracy. Teacher training expanded for African teachers in the Bantustans, but the quality deteriorated over time. As repression intensified in the 1960s, the proportion of African teachers in secondary and high schools possessing university degrees fell. In 1965, only 25.5% of African teachers had university degrees. Not surprisingly, by 1968, for every 100,000 in the population group concerned, 866 whites, 322 Indians, 74 coloureds and only 13 Africans reached the final year of schooling. Indeed, the average school life of Africans during the 1960s was four years. Only one-tenth of a cohort succeeded to secondary classes. Of the cohort that started school in 1957, for example, only 8.6% made it

¹⁶ See «South African Historical Journal», Special Issue *Let's speak about the Bantustans*, 64, 2012, n. 1.

¹⁷ Elaine Unterhalter, *The impact of apartheid on women's education in South Africa*, «Review of African Political Economy», 1991.

¹⁸ Frank Molteno, *The Historical Foundations of Schooling for Black South Africans*, in Peter Kallaway (ed.), *Apartheid and education. The education of Black South Africans*, Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984, pp. 45-108.

¹⁹ Kate Truscott, *Gender in education*, Johannesburg, Education Policy Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, 1992.

²⁰ Anne Mager, *Girls' wars, mission institutions and reproduction of the educated elite in the Eastern Cape, 1945-1959*, «Perspectives in Education», 14, 1992/1993, n. 1, p. 17.

²¹ Brian Rose, Raymond Tunmer (eds.), *Documents in South African education*, Johannesburg, Juta, 1974.

through secondary schooling by 1967.²² The level of functional illiteracy in the general population, and adults, was high.

Between 1962 and 1971, a period when the space for political struggle was effectively closed down, secondary school expansion for Africans in urban areas was also effectively blocked.²³ But from 1973, when nation-wide strikes and the plunging oil price hit South Africa hard, secondary school enrolments rocketed. At least one of the structural features accounting for the 1976 Soweto youth uprising was a squeeze on the limited secondary school resources in urban areas. This squeeze occurred in a context of both a growing number of students demanding secondary education, as well as pressures from industry on the state for meeting its needs, in the urban areas, for skilled labour. An expanded building programme in urban areas since 1976 did not keep pace with need or demand. Between 1960 and 1975, the numbers of Africans in high schools increased seven-fold. Between 1975 and 1985, they trebled again. The numbers going through to matriculation (the highest school-leaving standard) increased even more startlingly. Between 1960 and 1984 there was more than a hundredfold increase.²⁴ These school and university students formed a substantial component of the anti-apartheid organisations and insurrectionary struggles of the 1980s.

Late apartheid education legacies (1976-1994)

Partly in response to the re-emergence of mass resistance, the regime initiated a process of reform to restructure institutions for black political representation. The 1984 tri-cameral Parliament framed these within the context of separate development: it provided for separate houses for Whites, Indians and Coloureds, but excluded Africans. A Commission of Inquiry into Education in 1981 proposed reforms to the education system, but these too were made within the framework of the existing unequal political dispensation. As a consequence, mass struggles during the 1980s to end apartheid rejected these reforms in their totality.

Despite the fact that by the 1980s secondary schooling had become a mass phenomenon, provision of buildings and facilities at

²² Horrell, 1968, *passim*.

²³ Jonathan Hyslop, *State education policy and the social reproduction of the urban African working class. The case of the Southern Transvaal 1955-1976*, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 14, 1988, n. 3, pp. 446-476.

²⁴ Colin Bundy, *South Africa on the switchback*, «New Society», 3 January 1986.

this level remained extremely limited. Schools in townships were bursting at the seams. Organisations arose for the opening of white schools. The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), Congress of South African Students (COSAS), various youth and tertiary education student formations all placed resources such as furniture and books in African schools as high on the agenda as they did democratic control over and deracialisation of the system as a whole.

Throughout this period, real expenditure on white schools outstripped the absolute level of expenditure on any other race group until the mid 1980s. Even though real expenditure on black schools overtook spending on white schools, this happened at the same time as black pupil enrolments expanded rapidly, with the result that the latter remained substantially better resourced.²⁵

New universities had been established in 1969 to cater for specific ethnic groups in the Bantustans and for those designated Indian and Coloured. Subjects were restricted, lecture halls overcrowded, libraries understocked and teaching methods authoritarian. Racially segregated, “white” universities accommodated less than 5% of those designated Africans, Indian and Coloureds. Under-resourced and understaffed, this structure of the education system reinforced the reproduction of a racial division of labour in which black people constituted the majority of the population but in 1988 constituted only 3,8% of all engineers, 10,9% of all scientists, 12,5% of all technicians and technologists, 11,8% of accountants and auditors and 6,7% of all administrative occupations.²⁶

Conflict and contestation over education in the 1980s was deeply connected to wider struggles taking place for democracy. But in 1990, when Nelson Mandela was released, the economic outlook was not good. South Africa had a low annual growth rate of about 1.5% during the 1980s, persistently high inflation and heavy debt burdens. One of the consequences was a rise in unemployment. Unemployment figures varied substantially but overall estimates

²⁵ Johannes Fedderke, Raphael de Kadt, John Luis, *Uneducating South Africa. The failure to address the 1910-1993 legacy*, «International Review of Education», 46, 2000, nn. 3/4, pp. 257-281.

²⁶ J.B. Clarke, *Science and Technology in the New South Africa*, Public lecture presented by the President, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 24 September 1990 [unpublished]; see also Pundy Pillay, *The development and underdevelopment of education in South Africa*, in Bill Nasson, John Samuel (eds.), *Education. From poverty to liberty*, Cape Town-Johannesburg, David Philip, 1990.

agreed that unemployment was concentrated among black youth and, in particular women.²⁷

Over a period of forty years a system of education was developed which attempted to exercise a degree of social control over the political and economic aspirations of black people, but also served to reproduce social relations of domination and subordination between black and white, male and female. Massive inequalities in every aspect of educational provision combined with high levels of poverty resulted by 1994 in an inheritance of deep differences between black and white educational provision in school resourcing, infrastructure, teacher quality and post-school and employment futures. The principal legacies that new policy in the post-apartheid period accordingly intended to address included (i) The racially-segregated and unequal financing, organization and provision of education; (ii) poor quality of education for black people; (iii) high youth unemployment and (iv) low levels of participation in adult, technical and higher education. The period saw a major demobilization of mass organizations in education and the absorption of many previous activists into government who began to work side-by-side with former apartheid and Bantustan bureaucrats.

New directions and legacies of post-apartheid South African education (1994-2009)

Educational development is deeply influenced by the economic and political environment with which it operates. There have been three distinct phases since 1994. The first phase occurred between 1994 and 1999. The unbanning of political organizations, the negotiated political solution and transition to democratic elections between 1990 and 1994 occurred under specific global and local economic and political conditions. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and rapid global spread of neo-liberalism placed limits on change as socialist solutions faced massive delegitimization internationally. Internally, a new Constitution was drafted and political change occurred in the context of double-digit inflation, a fierce recession with average GDP growth of -0.5% per annum between 1990 and 1993, annual decline in formal sector employment and a

²⁷ F.S. Barker, *Manpower development, a critical element to address South Africa's unemployment problem*, in Department of Manpower, *In-service training, 1: Perspectives on in-service training*, Pretoria, Government Printer, 1988.

rise in real wages of only 0.5% per annum.²⁸ Within this context, government reached an accommodation with international lending institutions as well as local business. National race “reconciliation” policies permitted the continued employ of former apartheid and Bantustan bureaucrats within the system. Educational restructuring between 1994 and 1999 thus occurred within the context of fiscal constraint. Infrastructure spending was held back to permit social service spending.²⁹ The infrastructure backlog was growing.

The second phase, from the early 2000s, was one of growth. This can be seen in spending patterns. National expenditure on education grew in the immediate aftermath of the elections, but dipped from 1997 to 2003. From 2003 economic growth began to accelerate and spending rose. The proportion of people living below the poverty line also dropped from about 53% in 1995 to 48% in 2008.³⁰ The proportion of Africans in the top 20 percent of income earners, according to the Presidency, increased from 39 percent in 1995 to 48 percent in 2009, and inequality within the African population increased sharply. Inroads were made into South Africa’s high rates of unemployment, particularly among out-of-school youth, in the growth years up to 2008. But inequality and poverty remained key features of the society. South Africa’s Gini coefficient was 0.67 in 2005. The majority of low income households remained black. And poverty remained concentrated in the rural areas and especially former Bantustans.

Economically linked to the European economy, South Africa’s economic prospects are linked to the Eurocrisis. The economic downturn since 2009, inaugurating the third phase, has reduced gains made in the 2001-2008 period, and seen incomes and employment falling.³¹ Almost all of the job losses in 2009/10 were experienced by those under the age of 30, and with less than a grade 12 education.³² And yet education spending has not declined. Education is the highest item of budgetary expenditure in South Africa, and per capita expenditure has increased substantially in

²⁸ Stephen Gelb, *Inequality in South Africa. Nature, causes and responses. DfID policy initiative on addressing inequality in middle income countries*, Johannesburg, The EDGE Institute, 2003, www.tips.org.za/files/Gelb_Inequality_in_SouthAfrica.pdf.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 42

³⁰ National Planning Commission (NPC), *Diagnostic overview*, Pretoria, The Presidency, 2011, p. 8.

³¹ National Planning Commission, *Diagnostic overview*, p. 8.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 9-11.

both nominal and real terms since 1995. Government expenditure on schooling as a percentage of the country's Gross Domestic Product declined from 4.9% in 1995 to 4.1% in 2009 and education's share of total government expenditure declined from 22% in 1996/97 to 17.7% in 2009/10.³³ This is attributed to the fact that the economy and government spending in total grew faster than education spending. From 2008/09 real growth rates of education, however, accelerated and education expenditure as a proportion of GDP and of government expenditure has increased, to as much as 6% of GDP in 2010/11 and 19.5% of government expenditure in 2010/11.³⁴ Even so, there are significant under-spending and financial management challenges in several provinces.³⁵ And overall budget constraints, combined with capacity problems at provincial level, corruption, and unequal levels of household income, all play a role in reproducing inequality in education.

As in the apartheid period, themes in South African schooling have shown similarities with international, global trends. Integrated as South Africa is into the global world, and becoming more so in the post-apartheid period of porous borders and internationalization of institutions and information, it has emphasised access, equity, quality and relevance in education. Specific models and ideas were scrutinised and borrowed in the immediate post-apartheid period from as widely-diverging contexts as Australia, Scotland and Germany to inform local change. Depending on the reform, these were indigenized with greater or lesser success. This history is well-documented³⁶ and will be treated lightly in the text below.

During Mandela's Presidency, 1994-1999, a period of belt-tightening, education was reorganized and the eighteen racially-divided departments of education were integrated into one national and nine provincial departments. The national department became responsible for policy, frameworks, norms and standards and

³³ Department of Basic Education (DBE), *MacroIndicator trends in schooling, final report*, Pretoria, Government Printer, 2011.

³⁴ John Kruger, Georgina Rawle, *Public expenditure analysis for the basic education sector in South Africa*, Draft Report 2, Overall national and provincial trends, Oxford Policy Management and researchers at the University of Stellenbosch, Unpublished report, 2012, p. 7.

³⁵ See www.pmg.org.za/report/20111019-financial-performance-provincial-departments-briefing-office-auditor-.

³⁶ Jonathan Jansen, *Importing outcomes-based education into South Africa. Policy borrowing in a post-communist world*, in David Phillips, Kimberley Ochs (eds.), *Educational policy borrowing Historical perspectives*, Oxford, Symposium Books, 2004.

monitoring and evaluation, and the provinces for implementation of policy. The overall discourse was one of re-organisation rather than expansion. In line with the global decentralization consensus, facilitated by the Jomtien Education for All Conference in 1990, education control was effectively decentralized on the grounds of efficiency and democracy. The South African Schools' Act of 1996 vested substantial powers in School Governing Bodies which were given the right, among other things, to decide on school language policy and the level of school fees to supplement government funding. Education budgets were redesigned and spending was no longer allocated on the basis of race. School spending was equalized on the basis of pupil/teacher ratios, but the right given to School Governing Bodies to raise fees helped ensure that schools in wealthier communities were able to use fees to appoint additional teachers and maintain infrastructure and so maintain quality.³⁷ Poor and rural families suffering the ravages of poverty and an HIV/AIDS epidemic were especially vulnerable.³⁸

The extension of free and compulsory schooling to all children has been a key demand of democrats in South Africa since it was introduced for white children almost a century ago. Since 1994, it has been introduced in a piecemeal manner. The South African Schools Act (1996) made education compulsory but not free. Instead of being free, all schools became state-aided, such aid being equitably provided to cover salaries equally and some learning resources. But fees for poor parents grew into a major source of contention. From 1999, as resources began to flow, and human rights groups strengthened their campaigns on the inequity resulting from school fees, a review of financing policy was instituted. Over the next decade, the school fees policy was gradually overturned. The Department of Education first introduced fee-exemptions for chil-

³⁷ Servaas Van der Berg, Ronel Burger, *The Stories behind the numbers. An investigation of efforts to deliver services to the South African poor*. A report prepared for the World Bank, as background study to the World Development Report 2004, Stellenbosch, November 2002, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2003/10/15/000160016_20031015111954/additional/310436360_20050276033612.pdf; Katerina Nicolau, *The Link between macroeconomic policies, education policies and the education budget*, in Enver Motala, John Pampallis (eds.) *Education & equity. The impact of state policies on South African education*, Johannesburg, Heinemann, 2001; Edward Fiske, Helen Ladd, *Elusive equity. Education reform in post-apartheid South Africa*, Washington, D.C., Brookings Institution Press, 2005.

³⁸ Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging voices. A report on education in South African rural communities*, Researched for the Nelson Mandela Foundation by the HSRC and the EPC, Cape Town, H[uman]S[ciences]R[esearch]C[ouncil] Press, 2005.

dren from poor families from 2003. Following the Human Rights Commission's Public Hearings on and cumulative evidence of the burden of fees on poor communities despite the exemption policy, government in 2006 amended the National Norms and Standards for School Funding. In terms of it there was no longer a legal obligation for children in low-income communities to pay school fees. Departmental allocations for stationery, textbooks and so on were increased at fee-free schools and processes for obtaining exemptions for poor children in formerly white suburban schools charging fees were strengthened. African schools in poor communities are now fully state-funded rather than state-aided. Currently, approximately 70% of schools are fee-free schools. What this means is that there is currently a two-tiered system of state-aided, fee-paying and state-funded, non-fee paying public schools in South Africa. School nutrition policies introduced after 1994 now also reach some 8 million out of 12 million learners. And yet inequalities persist, particularly in infrastructure backlogs, learning outcomes and learning and teaching resources.³⁹

One of the major legacies of apartheid was the poor quality of schooling. Teachers were unequally schooled, qualified and trained. A critical priority after 1994 was therefore to ensure more and better quality teachers. Between 1994 and 1999, the state undertook three main initiatives in this regard. First, policies were effected to rationalise, redeploy and redistribute teachers within the system rather than train new teachers. The results were contrary to the intentions. Many, especially qualified, teachers left the profession rather than move.⁴⁰ Second, in line with international trends and on the basis of the poor quality of the majority of teacher training colleges in the former Bantustans, the state set in motion processes to bring teacher education within the ambit of higher education. This entailed the closure of many colleges of education. Both efforts resulted in immediate shortages of teachers and the third initiative, the introduction in 2005 of bursaries to attract young, new teachers to the profession. The period also saw equalisation of salaries for men and women and marginal salary improvements for teachers overall. South Africa's strong union and especially teacher education union resulted in the creation of new institutions such

³⁹ DBE, *Trends*.

⁴⁰ Linda Chisholm, Crain Soudien, Salim Vally, Dave Gilmour, *Teachers and structural adjustment in South Africa*, «Educational Policy», 13, 1999, n. 4, pp. 386-401.

as the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC), a negotiating chamber for unions and the Department. Despite these changes, as well as improvements in teachers' formal qualifications, ongoing evidence of extremely poor reading, writing and numeracy capabilities amongst the majority of learners, has raised questions about teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge.⁴¹ The majority of teachers in the system were trained in the apartheid period and have had difficulty adjusting to the demands and requirements of the new curriculum initiated after 1994.⁴²

The curriculum changes introduced between 1994 and 1999 were radical in their implications. The school curriculum was replaced in 1997 with one based on constructivist rather than prescriptive principles. This outcomes-based curriculum unravelled as fast as it was set in place; requiring well-qualified teachers and well-resourced schools for its effective realisation, those schools without such teachers and resources were least able to appropriate it.⁴³ Kader Asmal, Minister of Education who reviewed the outcomes-based curriculum in 2000, explains in his memoir⁴⁴ that he considered the starting point for curriculum change to be the rote-learning that was the norm in township and rural schools. This required an alternative, a national curriculum, founded on the Constitution, that would «help us overcome the passivity and lack of interest in education that a history of inferior education had bred. And this meant tackling a curriculum that was under heavy pressure».⁴⁵ He resolved to keep the principles of change intact while attempting to reform the processes that supported its implementation. But his reform was still too demanding and implementation inadequate to

⁴¹ NPC, *An overview*; Martin Carnoy, Linda Chisholm, Bagele Chilisa (eds.) *The low achievement trap. Comparing schooling in Botswana and South Africa*, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2012; Servaas Van der Berg, *Low education quality as a poverty trap*, Stellenbosch, University of Stellenbosch. March, 2011, www.andover.edu/gpgconference/documents/low-quality-education-poverty-trap.pdf.

⁴² Carnoy, Chisholm, Chilisa (eds.), *The low achievement trap*.

⁴³ Jonathan Jansen, Pam Christie (eds.), *Changing curriculum. Studies on outcomes-based education in South Africa*, Cape Town, Juta Academic Publishers, South Africa, 1999, pp. 3-21; Nick Taylor, Penny Vinjevold, *Getting learning right. Report of the President's education initiative*, Johannesburg, Joint Education Trust, 1999; Ken Harley, Volker Wedekind, *Political change, curriculum change and social formation, 1990-2002*, in Linda Chisholm (ed.) *Changing class. Education and social change in post-apartheid South Africa*, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2004, pp. 195-221.

⁴⁴ Kader Asmal, Adrian Hadland, Moira Levy, *Politics in my blood. A memoir*, Johannesburg, Jacana Press, 2011.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 263.

the task of meeting the needs of teachers in township and rural schools. And so, in 2009, the curriculum was reviewed again, its remaining outcomes-based elements reconfigured and a more tightly-scripted curriculum developed.

The skills development system that was set in place by the Skills Development Act (1998) was equally controversial. It sought to build strong connections between firms and 25 newly-established Sector Education and Training Authorities through a skills-training levy on companies. It was intended to address skills shortages of artisans and high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people under the age of 35. In 2003, 31.2% of the working age population was unemployed, using the ‘narrow’ definition of that proportion of economically active people who had sought work in the previous four weeks. On the ‘broad’ definition – those who want to work but have become discouraged from doing so – unemployment was at 42.1%.⁴⁶

A study to assess and evaluate skills development since 2005 shows mixed results.⁴⁷ Considerable amounts of public funding are invested in skills upgrading but not all pathways to skills and employment are equally successful. Work-based learning programmes, known as learnerships, and apprenticeships, appear to be most successful in ensuring the transition to work.⁴⁸ Programmes for the unemployed also «provided one of the very few means of gaining access to both skills and a first job».⁴⁹ By contrast, technical and vocational training in the college sector is abysmal, with only 30% of those enrolling graduating between 2007 and 2009.⁵⁰ Significantly, the legacies of apartheid still loom large, as «the tendency for complicated and uncomplicated trajectories into and out of the learnership system is noticeably informed by race, age, gender and socio-economic status».⁵¹ Wildschut shows that African women are more likely to experience complicated trajectories and Africans remain over-represented and whites under-represented in the group that remains unemployed. The framework within which quality was undertaken, as well as the quality of train-

⁴⁶ Gelb, *Inequality*, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Published in «HSRC Review», 10, 2012, n. 1.

⁴⁸ Genevieve Haupt, *Apprentices remain undervalued*, «HSRC Review», 10, 2012, n. 1, pp. 22-23.

⁴⁹ Renette Du Toit, *Skills development for the unemployed*, *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17.

⁵⁰ Michael Cosser, *FET college sector fails to meet great expectations*, *Ibidem*, pp. 28-29.

⁵¹ Angelique Wildschut, *Journey through the learnership system mired by the past*, *Ibidem*, pp. 20-21.

ing, have also been criticised for using the wrong tools to address the skills challenges the country faced.⁵²

The National Plan for Higher Education (2001) aimed among other things to redress racial inequalities and meet skill shortages at higher levels, of doctors, engineers and accountants. Shortages of high-level skills have been largely attributed to the poor performance of the schooling system, «although South Africa is subject to the same pressures of push and pull which characterise the international market for knowledge and skills».⁵³ Much of the challenge lies in the ongoing poor quality of school mathematics and physical science. Shortages of such teachers are severe and many teachers not trained to teach maths and physics are in fact teaching these subjects. These legacies are hard to reverse.⁵⁴ Between 1996 and 2005 there was only a marginal increase in the number of engineers graduating from universities and technologists and technicians graduating from universities of technology. But the proportions of African students enrolling and graduating increased. Whereas African graduations increased by an average annual growth rate of 13.5% between 1996 and 2005, it decreased by an annual average of 5% among whites.⁵⁵ Female engineering graduation rates were even higher at 15.4% over this period.⁵⁶

The changes in higher education have included radical demographic shifts in the spread of students across institutions, a “sea change” in management from collegial to new managerial models, changing roles of students and their organizations, growth in distance education, the growth of private higher education, and a changing academic workplace.⁵⁷ Despite these changes, some things remained constant, reflecting the apartheid legacy: the difficulty of recruiting black scholars to universities whose salaries cannot keep pace with the private sector; the dominance of white men in knowledge-production, and institutional cultures that «still bear their racial

⁵² Stephanie Matseleng Allais, *Why the South African NQF failed. Lessons for countries wanting to introduce National Qualifications Framework*, «European Journal of Education», 42, 2007, n. 4, pp. 523-547; Stephanie Allais, *The changing faces of the National Qualifications Framework*, «Journal of Education and Work», 24, 2011, nn. 3-4, pp. 343-358.

⁵³ Mignonne Breier, *Introduction* in Johan Erasmus, Mignonne Breier (eds.), *Skills shortages in South Africa. Case studies of key professions*, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2009, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Renette du Toit, Joan Roodt, *Engineering professionals*, in Erasmus, Breier (eds.), *Skills shortages*, pp. 78-79.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 104-105.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁵⁷ Jonathan Jansen, *Changes and continuities in South Africa's higher education system, 1994-2004*, in Chisholm (ed.) *Changing class*, pp. 293-315.

birthmarks in terms of dominant traditions, symbols and patterns of behavior that remain distinctive despite the broader changes sweeping higher education».⁵⁸

In short, despite new policies, and the overlay of new trends coming from a new era of international educational reform, researchers repeatedly point to the presence of the past in the present education system.

Long-range continuities and contradictions (2009-2012)

Since the early 1990s, the quality of education linked to equity in the system has been identified as the main challenge facing South African education. But as international and provincial assessments of children's literacy and numeracy skills lower down in the system have gathered momentum, so new concerns have arisen about the efficacy of existing policies to deal with the evidence relating to underperformance and dysfunctionality of schools.⁵⁹ Despite improvements in more equitable spending, relieving poor schools of fee burdens, introducing school nutrition, increasing the number of children attending pre-school classes, achieving near-universal enrolments in the compulsory phase of schooling and dramatically expanding the number of formally qualified teachers in the system, learning outcomes are still abysmal by any measure.⁶⁰

In comparison with other Southern and Eastern African countries, for example, South Africa does well on gender achievement and the gradual reduction of its high repetition rates over the period, but it performs below the UNESCO Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) mean in Grade 6 literacy and numeracy assessments. South Africa also performs worse than other much poorer countries in the region, such as Swaziland and Tanzania.⁶¹ One of the most telling findings is the as-

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 311.

⁵⁹ Vijay Reddy, *Mathematics and science achievement at South African schools in TIMSS 2003*, Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2006; Sarah Howie, *South Africa*, in Ann Kennedy, Ina Mullins, Michael Martin, Kathleen Trong (Eds) *PIRLS 2006 encyclopedia. A guide to reading education in the forty PIRLS 2006 countries*, Chestnut Hill (MA), TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2007; Sarah Howie, Tjeerd Plomp, *Reading achievement. International perspectives from IEA's Progress in International Reading Literacy Studies (PIRLS)*, «Education Research and Evaluation», 14, 2008, n. 6.

⁶⁰ DBE, *Macroindicators*.

⁶¹ «[International] Institute for [E]ducational [P]lanning» Newsletter», 27, 2010, n. 3, http://www.iiep.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Info_Services_

sociation between household poverty and learning achievement.⁶² Most disturbing of all, however, have been the results of the Department's own Grades 1-6 Annual National Assessments (ANA), first conducted in 2009 and again in 2011.⁶³ The ANAs documented 35% literacy and 28% numeracy in Grade 3, progressive deterioration in results from grades 1 – 6, wide dispersion of test scores between schools located in different socio-economic contexts, and details of what children were getting wrong and are thus not learning to do.⁶⁴ On the whole, children simply did not understand what they were being asked, and are clearly not learning the elementary skills of reading, writing and counting.

Not surprisingly, in part as a consequence of such little learning, there are high repetition rates in the lower grades and high repetition and drop-out rates in the higher grades. So although South Africa is proud of its high enrolment and attendance rate, as well as the achievement of gender parity in enrolment and performance since 1994, its repetition rates at 9% are much higher than the international norm at 5%, especially among boys in the lower grades. Far fewer girls than should do so, excel academically.⁶⁵ Linked to this is considerable evidence of gender-based violence in schools. Teenage pregnancy is a strong factor in determining girls' participation in schooling.⁶⁶ Over-age learners are much less likely to persist in school and much more likely to repeat and drop out. These "silent exclusions," where children are nominally enrolled but learn very little and are at risk of dropping out, mask the deeper quality challenge of providing "meaningful access" to learners.⁶⁷

Newsletter/pdf/eng/2010/2010_3En.pdf; see also IIEP, UNESCO, SACMEQ, *Pupil achievement among Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality school systems*, IIEP, UNESCO, SACMEQ, September 2011, see <http://www.sacmeq.org/achievement.htm> and http://www.sacmeq.org/downloads/Posters/Poster01_Pupil_Achievement_17Nov2011.pdf.

⁶² IIEP, *Pupil achievement*, 2011, p. 87.

⁶³ DBE, *Trends*.

⁶⁴ Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Annual national assessments*, Report to the Basic Education Portfolio Committee, 16 August, 2011.

⁶⁵ Shireen Motala, Veerle Dieltiens, *Educational access in South Africa. Country Research Summary* (Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and equity, CREATE, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Education Policy Unit., November 2011, http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/South_Africa_Country_Research_Summary.pdf).

⁶⁶ Relebohile Moletsane, *Gender Review in South African Basic Education*, Pretoria, Department of Basic Education/UNICEF, 2010, p. 57.

⁶⁷ Keith Lewin, *Access, age and grade*, University of Sussex, Centre for International Education, Consortium for Research on Educational Access, CREATE

For those who do survive, the secondary school-leaving certificate is still their gateway to the labour market. More candidates now enroll and pass this final hurdle. But results at both the lower and upper levels of the schooling system remain heavily skewed by race and class. And given the well-known poor quality of schooling, the quality of the pass is questioned. This situation of continuing racial inequality and poor quality of African schools manifested in assessments at the start and end of schooling has occasioned considerable disquiet. Deep historical patterns are seemingly unaffected by new policies. This is a contradiction so profound that it has resulted in significant doubt about current directions and a call for private alternatives. This article has shown that public education has changed, under specific conditions, and that the past still weighs heavily on the present. To understand why the education system reinforces current patterns of poverty and privilege van der Berg refers to a “double burden” that learners from poor communities in South Africa face: the burden of poverty and «the burden of attending a school that still bears the scars of neglect and underfunding under the apartheid dispensation». ⁶⁸ New state-driven policies have enabled individuals and individual schools to escape this legacy, and particularly those within the new middle class able to access formerly privileged schools, but not yet the majority.

Within this broader context, competing and complementary approaches to resolving the challenges in education have emerged. Within the private sector, corporations and think tanks promote various forms of the privatization of public schooling and private schooling. “Choice,” “accountability” “school improvement,” and “effectiveness” are all key words in the South African educational discourse, evidence for Stephen Ball of “endogenous” forms of privatization, namely the importation of techniques and values from

Policy Brief 2, 2008; www.create-rpc.org/research/findings; Keith Lewin, *Access to education in sub-Saharan Africa. Patterns, problems and possibilities*, «Comparative Education», Special Issue *Access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 45, 2009, n. 2; Sabine Strassburg, Sarah Meny-Gilbert, Bev Russell, *Left unfinished. Temporary absence and drop-out from South African schools, Findings from the Access to Education Study*, vol. 2, November 2010, Social Surveys Africa and Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Johannesburg, Social Surveys Africa, 2010, http://pari.academia.edu/SarahMenyGibert/Papers/772170/Left_unfinished_Temporary_absence_and_dropout_from_South_African_schools_Access_to_Education_Series_Volume_2_Social_Surveys_Africa; Dave Gilmour, Crain Soudien, *Learning and equitable access in the Western Cape, South Africa*, «Comparative Education» Special Issue *Access to education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, 45, 2009, n. 2.

⁶⁸ Van der Berg, *Low education quality*, p. 8.

the private sector. Different kinds of public-private partnerships exist, also evidence of «endogenous privatization».⁶⁹ An example at national level is the harnessing of private sector funds and initiatives for the improvement of school infrastructure and teacher mathematics and science upgrading. Indeed, a National Accord, with protocols for engagement with schools, has been struck between government, business and labour to enable corporates and unions to “adopt-a-school”. This does not entail managing the finances or other aspects of the school, which legally remains the responsibility of the School Governing Body. “Exogenous privatization”, or «the opening up of public education services to private sector participation on a for-profit basis and using the private sector to design, manage or deliver aspects of public education», has increasingly been an aspect of government and Department of Education work since 1994. But, as John Pampallis has argued, in preliminary research on this, it «should not be exaggerated as it still forms a very small proportion of the national and provincial budgets for education».⁷⁰ Nonetheless, research on this very important area, which is not in advocacy mode, remains negligible.

Within the state sector, there are two broad approaches, that of the National Planning Commission and the Department of Basic Education. While there are overlaps, there are also key differences between them. There is broad agreement that learning outcomes are the key challenge. There is also agreement on the National Planning Commission’s diagnosis that, while acknowledging the role of inequality and contextual factors, «the main problems in schools lie in teacher performance and school leadership».⁷¹ Its vision and plans drive towards an approach that places teacher accountability and professionalism at the centre of its educational strategy.

The Department of Basic Education shares the diagnosis and works closely with the teacher unions, but has focused on a variety of interventions linked to a testing and target-setting strategy. The Department’s intervention strategies include a more scripted but still relatively broad curriculum guideline, re-centralisation of decentralized schoolbook development and provisioning processes, and a funded role for teacher unions in teacher professional de-

⁶⁹ Stephen J. Ball, Deborah Youdell, *Hidden privatisation in public education*, «Education Review», 2, 2009, n. 2.

⁷⁰ John Pampallis, *The education business. Private contractors in public education*, in Chisholm (ed.), *Changing class*, pp. 421-435.

⁷¹ National Planning Commission, *Diagnostic overview*, p. 15.

velopment. Target-setting and performance-monitoring are common international tools, well-known in the UNESCO Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) processes, but also the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) assessments, and, among others the UK national curriculum and testing and US No Child Left Behind policies.

These have had both strengths and limitations as strategies for intervention: while few analysts question the good that targets can do, there is now considerable knowledge about why and how they are not always achieved. Here, as elsewhere, the value of tests and targets as against teacher education and textbooks is debated. Among university-based teacher educationists, a critique of the logic of performativity of policy expectations has led to an emphasis on the discursive gap between students' subjectivities and the modalities of the school, and the need for inclusive and responsive pedagogies. These should enable student engagement with the middle class registers and knowledge codes of the school by connecting pedagogical practices with students' own lifeworld experiences and everyday knowledge.⁷²

Civil society initiatives have also once again emerged to mobilize communities in the interests of education and around a broader vision of educational rights and active citizenship. They have established reading clubs, homework centres, matric catch-up classes and campaigns for school libraries as well as innovative projects that use «mentoring as an alternative model for teacher training».⁷³ Perhaps the most visible and successful of such mobilisation initiatives has been the NGO, Equal Education, which campaigns for and establishes school libraries and librarians, and conducts various forms of youth leadership training and educational programmes as a means not only of mobilising communities but enabling youth and interested supporters to become active agents in their own educational and social development.⁷⁴ Equal Education has also begun to use the courts to force departments to provide what the Con-

⁷² Aslam Fataar, *Schooling subjectivities across the post-apartheid city*, «African Education Review», 6, 2009, n. 1, pp. 1-18; Aslam Fataar, *Pedagogical justice and student engagement in South African schooling Working with the cultural capital of disadvantaged students*, «Perspectives in Education» (forthcoming 2013)

⁷³ Carole Bloch [et al.], *Learning and language*, «HSRC Review», 9, 2011, p. 37; see also Paul Kgobc, *Mobilising communities*, «HSRC Review», 9, 2011, n. 3.

⁷⁴ www.equaleducation.org.za/.

stitution guarantees for all children: the right to basic education. Provision of infrastructure and textbooks, where the state has failed to do so, are central to this campaign. Equal Education draws on the education and other struggles of the past for its inspiration and methods; its vision is rooted in the ideals established in the Constitution of 1996.

Conclusion

The legacies of apartheid education bequeathed to a democratic government were immense, spanning everything from inequality across all spheres to the persistence of racism (and sexism) despite a negotiated solution and national reconciliation policies. These legacies were addressed immediately and decisively in the post-1994 period. But changes were conditioned on the one hand by the nature of the new state and on the other by the economic circumstances within which it found itself. The new state was a fragile one, forging new policies for a non-racial and democratic future within at first an adverse economic climate, and then a modestly improving one. While race continued to operate as a leitmotif in all institutions, by law all institutions were deracialised and racism declared illegal. Significant strides were made in the representation of women, the achievement of parity in salaries for teachers and establishment of bargaining chambers where gender matters could be brought into focus. These new dynamics reshaped old and new social classes.

In the first phase, all policy development was marked by fiscal constraint. Instead of free public education, the state introduced equal, state-aided schooling with fees. Instead of expanding teacher education, it closed some colleges and absorbed others into universities. Rather than supporting a process of incremental curriculum change with more and better resources equally spread, radical curriculum change was rushed and assumed the existence of resources that did not exist. An entirely new framework for skills training was set in place, and higher education was reshaped in a manner that saw dramatic shifts in the nature of the institutions.

Contestation, research and advocacy all resulted in changes in the second phase, the 2000s. Over the decade, fees for poor children were abolished; teacher bursaries were re-introduced for teachers, especially from rural areas and in scarce subjects and African languages; the curriculum supports necessary for transformation to become effective were anticipated and planned for; technical colleges were recapitalized, while new institutions were set in place, and the higher

education system was incentivized to become both more research-productive and representative of the population as a whole.

These changes exist side-by-side with the continuities remarked on in the course of the article. Deep structural historical continuities, and contradictions between intentions and outcomes of more recent policies, are evident in continuing racially unequal learning outcomes, overall poor quality of education and high youth unemployment. And yet, although it has to be recognized that education is not a panacea that can «compensate for society»,⁷⁵ social justice and equality remain the clarion call across broad sectors of the society. Remain the clarion call across broad sectors of the society.

Abstract: Questo saggio prende in considerazione i retaggi della educazione dell'apartheid e le nuove direttive entrate in vigore dal 1994, innanzitutto problematizzando il concetto di retaggio dell'apartheid e poi esaminandolo all'interno del più vasto contesto storico che vede l'emergere di un sistema di scolarizzazione di massa differenziato su base razziale, nelle particolari condizioni politiche ed economiche del Novecento. I principali retaggi che la nuova politica del periodo post-apartheid si proponeva di affrontare comprendevano: 1) i finanziamenti, l'organizzazione e le risorse diseguali riservati alle diverse razze; 2) la scarsa qualità dell'istruzione per la popolazione nera; 3) l'alto livello di disoccupazione giovanile; 4) i bassi livelli di partecipazione all'educazione degli adulti e all'istruzione tecnica e superiore. Il saggio mostra come le nuove iniziative per la riorganizzazione dell'istruzione, la politica sul personale docente, il curriculum, lo sviluppo delle competenze e l'istruzione superiore siano state prese in condizioni economiche e politiche particolari e dimostra che non hanno modificato marcate disuguaglianze e non hanno segnato una discontinuità rispetto ai risultati dell'apprendimento. Contrariamente alle posizioni di chi nega l'apartheid, questa contraddizione è spiegata in rapporto alla forte presenza del passato nel presente, alla contraddizione fra intenti educativi e risultati, e al ruolo subordinato dell'istruzione in qualunque ordine sociale.

Keywords: History of South African education, apartheid education, education in post-apartheid South Africa; Sudafrica, storia dell'istruzione, Apartheid, Sistema educativo nel Sudafrica post-coloniale.

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⁷⁵ See Bill Nasson, *Education and poverty*, in Bill Nasson, John Samuel (eds.) *Education*.

